

Zain Group’s MSCI rating for ESG upgraded to ‘A’

● Bader Al-Kharafi, “Zain’s transformative ‘4WARD-Progress with Purpose’ strategy is driving the company’s sustainability, corporate governance and ethical leadership agenda to new heights”

● Upgrade reaffirms the success of the company’s focus on innovation and responsibility, powered by a resilient, sustainable and data-powered ecosystem

● In the environmental pillar Zain scored 10/10 – a best-in-class recognition reflecting progress on its region-wide 2050 Net Zero Emissions targets

Manama

Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative ICT and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, has attained a significant improvement in its Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) rating in ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance), which was upgraded from ‘BBB’ to ‘A’ as of September 2025.

This milestone underscores Zain’s unwavering commitment to strengthening corporate governance frameworks, upholding the highest standards of transparency, proactively complying



with regulatory requirements, and adopting global best practices in disclosure and risk management. This commitment helps Zain mitigate risks and facilitates an effective Board oversight over the company’s executive management by promoting strong internal controls to improve integrity of financials and establishing a culture of compliance.

The Group recently intensified its efforts to build a flexible and sustainable operating model, reinforcing its leadership in guiding the region toward a future where technological advancement and corporate responsibility are closely aligned. Zain’s focus on accountability, transparency, and ethical practices further cements its standing as a leading force in the ICT sector, known for generating sustainable value.

Zain’s latest ESG rating highlights its ongoing advancement in data privacy and security initiatives. The Group has launched several oversight mechanisms and initiatives to safeguard data and manage risks, demonstrated by recent ISO certifications across multiple business units. The Group continues to enhance data security to mitigate risks while handling sensitive data—particularly in markets with tightening privacy laws, such as Kuwait.

Furthermore, the Group has

enhanced its corporate governance structure by clarifying responsibilities and refining board oversight mechanisms. The MSCI upgrade also reflects Zain’s commitment to ethical conduct, responsible corporate behavior, and the adoption of best-in-class labor management practices, such as executive training programs and employee engagement initiatives.

Notably, Zain achieved a perfect 10/10 in the environmental category reflecting its progress on its region-wide 2050 Net Zero Emissions targets.

Zain Vice Chairman & Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi stated: “Zain’s transformative ‘4WARD-Progress with Purpose’ strategy is driving the company’s sustainability, corporate governance and ethical leadership agenda to new heights. Integrating ESG principles at the core of our business strategy is essential for achieving true industry leadership.”

He added; “This upgrade on the MSCI ESG Index reaffirms the success of the company’s focus on innovation and responsibility, powered by a resilient, sustainable and data powered ecosystem built on transparency and adherence to the highest global standards. By reinforcing our oversight and control frameworks, we have fostered a supportive work environment that drives sustainable growth

and long-term value for all stakeholders”

“ESG is not just about risk management—it offers strategic vision that empowers us to meet future challenges with confidence and resilience. We are building a collaborative culture that champions innovation and expands strategic partnerships for greater synergy and shared success. Responsible governance is essential to address the challenges emerging from rapid technological advancement and artificial intelligence.”

Al-Kharafi emphasized Zain’s commitment to leading regional transformation through the development of advanced digital infrastructure, the ethical and sustainable application of AI and technology, and the launch of breakthrough initiatives supporting responsible innovation, all while ensuring business continuity and community well-being.

Zain’s sustained progress on

the MSCI ESG Index reinforces its status as a catalyst for sustainability and responsible governance. The recent upgrade reflects Zain’s alignment with evolving ESG regulations across its operational markets and its dedication to world-class transparency in reporting.

The Group’s leadership in climate action, governance reforms, effective environmental policies, and major strides in data privacy remain evident, even amid geopolitical challenges. Zain’s innovative responses and continuous improvement reinforce its position as a driver of long-term sustainable prosperity for the communities it serves.

As the business landscape evolves, Zain continues to set the benchmark for governance and sustainability. Its latest climb on the global MSCI ESG Index, particularly for data privacy and protection, underscores its commitment to a data-driven

corporate culture grounded in precision and informed decision-making.

ZAIN DATA OFFICE

Recognizing that robust data governance is now a regulatory necessity, Zain established the “ZAIN DATA OFFICE” as a foundational pillar for high-quality information, enabling compliance with data protection and cloud computing laws. This office enhances Zain’s resilience against data threats and regulatory constraints, strengthening its adaptability to global information management requirements.

Reinforcing its environmental objectives, Zain remains at the forefront of global efforts to combat climate change, consistently adopting nature-based, sustainable solutions that position it as a regional leader in environmental transformation.

On the labor rights front, Zain’s policies embed human rights principles across human resources and codes of conduct, with special emphasis on anti-discrimination and employee treatments.

Zain’s sustainability policies reflect a comprehensive vision for a more equitable and prosperous future, founded on strategic partnerships that drive economic growth and community well-being.

The renowned MSCI ESG Ratings methodology evaluates companies on their management of material ESG risks and opportunities including climate change, human capital, and corporate governance, with a focus on policies, performance metrics, and controversies. Ratings are industry-relative and range from ‘AAA’ to ‘CCC,’ with scores determined by a company’s exposure to ESG risks and the effectiveness of its management strategies.

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ZAIN VICE CHAIRMAN & GROUP CEO, BADER AL-KHARAFI

Trump’s tech visa fee challenged in court

AFP | San Francisco, United States

A coalition of workers in a variety of fields filed a lawsuit Friday to halt the new \$100,000 H-1B visa fee introduced by the Trump administration.

The group, representing health care workers, university professors and religious groups, among others, argued in federal court in San Francisco that the new fee is illegal and will thwart a key conduit for innovation and economic growth in the United States.

“Without relief, hospitals will lose medical staff, churches will lose pastors, classrooms will lose teachers, and industries losing key innovators,” the coalition said in a statement.

“The suit asks the court to immediately block the order and restore predictability for employers and workers,” it added.

The \$100,000 fee announced last month gave companies just 36



hours notice before it went into effect, triggering chaos and confusion over how it would work and who would be hit.

The H-1B fee is part of a larger crackdown by President Donald Trump, who has unleashed a massive push against immigration since returning to the White House -- though until now it had not targeted the visa on which Silicon Valley relies heavily.

Trump argued that the H-1B visa system was being abused to replace American workers with people willing to work for less money.

The United States awards 85,000 H-1B visas per year on a lottery system. India accounts for around three-quarters of the recipients.

Tech entrepreneurs -- including Trump’s former ally Elon Musk -- have warned against targeting H-1B visas, saying that the United States does not have enough home-grown talent to fill important tech sector job vacancies.

Iraqi farmers protest cultivation ban amid drought

AFP | Diwaniyah, Iraq

Hundreds of Iraqi farmers protested yesterday against the government’s policy of curbing land cultivation to preserve dwindling water supplies, an AFP correspondent said.

Year-on-year droughts and declining rainfall have brought agriculture to its knees in a country still recovering from decades of war and chaos, and where rice and bread are diet staples.

Water scarcity has forced many farmers to abandon their plots, and authorities have drastically reduced farm activity to ensure sufficient drinking water for Iraq’s 46 million people.

In the Ghammas area in the southern province of Diwaniyah, hundreds of farmers, including from neighbouring provinces, gathered to urge the government to allow them to farm their lands.

They called on the authorities to compensate them for their losses and distribute water for agriculture.

“We have come from four provinces to demand the rights and compensation owed to



Iraqi farmers gather on a street in the central city of Diwaniyah to protest against the government’s policy of curbing land cultivation to preserve dwindling water supplies

farmers,” one of the protesters, Mahmoud Saleh, said.

“The farmer has been wronged. They will not let us cultivate the wheat crop next year, and they have cut off water supplies,” he added.

Mohammed Amoush, who used to cultivate 100 dunum (25 hectares) of farms, said “our land has become fallow.”

“There is no agriculture, only financial loss. We are devastated,” he added.

Iraq’s historically fertile plains stretched along the once-mighty Tigris and Euphrates,

but water levels have plummeted drastically over the past decades.

In addition to the drought, authorities also blame upstream dams in neighbouring countries for reducing the rivers’ flow.

In recent weeks, the Euphrates has seen its lowest levels in decades, especially in the southern provinces, and water reserves in artificial lakes are at their lowest in the country’s recent history.

Iraq currently receives less than 35 percent of its share of the river water allocated ac-

cording to preexisting agreements and understandings with neighbouring countries, according to authorities.

Decades of war have also left the country’s water management systems in disrepair.

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Iraq has experienced a dramatic decline in rainfall over the past two decades, with average annual precipitation dropping by nearly 30% compared to historical levels. This prolonged drought has severely reduced water levels in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, threatening agriculture and leaving millions at risk of water scarcity.