

# Bahrain's Smart Transit Breakthrough

First-of-its-kind project unveiled

- Landmark transport milestone
- Vision 2030 alignment
- Passenger experience upgrade

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Bahrain has marked a milestone in its digital transformation with the launch of the Kingdom's first digital bus station, a pioneering step hailed as a breakthrough for public transport and smart mobility. The Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications signed a strategic cooperation agreement with stc Bahrain to establish the hub, which officials say will consolidate Bahrain's position as a regional leader in



Representatives from the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications and stc Bahrain

**Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 was launched in 2008 as a long-term plan to diversify the economy and improve quality of life, with infrastructure and transport seen as key pillars.**

smart and sustainable urban mobility.

### Milestone project

H.E. Fatima Abdullah Al-Dhaen, Undersecretary of Land Transport and Post, said the new station represented a significant advance in the country's trans-

port sector. She noted that the initiative strengthens reliance on advanced digital solutions, enhances the passenger experience, and supports national efforts towards sustainable communities under Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 and the United Nations Sustainable De-

velopment Goal 11.

Sh. Zeyad bin Faisal Al Khalifa, Chief Government Affairs Officer at stc Bahrain, described the move as more than a technological upgrade, calling it a strategic investment in transport infrastructure and the Kingdom's economic future. He said the



H.E. Fatima Abdullah Al-Dhaen and Sh. Zeyad bin Faisal Al Khalifa sign the agreement

station would support the government's digital transformation agenda through intelligent, connected, and sustainable mobility solutions that drive competitiveness and serve the public.

### Blueprint for future

The stc Digital Bus Station is designed to serve as a blueprint for future smart transport hubs across Bahrain. Officials say it will enable data-driven trans-

port planning, improve service reliability, and contribute to the sustainability of the national economy.

The agreement also highlights the importance of public-private partnerships in advancing Bahrain's comprehensive development and showcases stc Bahrain's role in leveraging technology to empower communities, drive growth, and enhance quality of life.

## India's GST 2.0 reforms: bold, scientific and historic in equal measures

By H.E. Ambassador Vinod K Jacob.

On 15th August 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had, during his Independence Day speech, spoken about the intention to carry out the Next-Generation reforms in Goods and Sales Tax (GST). Working with a sense of purpose, the GST Council comprising the Union and the States collectively agreed in early September 2025 to GST rate cuts and reforms, which is expected to benefit the common man, farmers, MSMEs, middle-class, women and youth.

Welcoming these reforms, Prime Minister Modi observed, "The wide ranging reforms will improve lives of our citizens and ensure ease of doing business for all, especially small traders and businesses."

### The pith and substance of the GST reforms

At its core these reforms simplify the processes related to India's GST system with a two tier tax structure (5 % and 18 %) which also facilitates filing through efficient technology.

The higher 40% rate is reserved for goods such as tobacco and luxury products.

In case of essential goods and daily use items, the drop in GST rates is considerable and the concomitant benefits are expected to reach the consumers efficaciously.

In case of high value items like cars and appliances the rates are going down from 28% to 18%.

It is reasonable to expect therefore that the arrival of lower taxes would encourage more consumption and give a boost to industrial and economic growth.

### The way forward

The revised rates and exemp-



H.E. Ambassador Vinod K Jacob

**The GST Council comprising the Union and the States collectively agreed in early September 2025 to GST rate cuts and reforms.**

tions will come into effect from 22nd September 2025, ensuring timely relief for the common man, households, farmers, and businesses.

Only exception will be specified goods namely, cigarettes, chewing tobacco products like zarda, unmanufactured tobacco and beedi, for which the existing rates of GST and compensation cess will continue to apply and the new rates will be implemented at a later date to be notified, based on discharging of entire loan and interest liabilities on account of compensation cess.

In other words, effective from 22nd September 2025, the reforms are expected to build a simpler, fairer, and growth-oriented GST framework, ensuring both ease of living for people and ease of doing business for enterprises.

**GST 2.0 has the potential to make India more competitive**

The emphasis on achieving simplicity of tax structure has been a guiding lodestar for India ever since the GST framework was introduced in the last decade.

With the learnings of the past eight years, the governments at the Union and in the States and Union Territories have worked scientifically and constructively to address new challenges posed by the international ecosystem and other domestic constraints to create an advanced system.

It is accepted wisdom that a simpler and unified tax system will cut trade costs and boost exports.

Indian economy can utilise these reforms to make the country a stronger player in the global market.

At a 5 % rate of tax, it becomes an attractive proposition in any geography.

This will also further the impetus for inclusive growth within India. The initial feedback from Indian industry is one of excitement and determination.

These reforms, occurring in the immediate aftermath of the announcement of Q1 2025 GDP growth rate of 7.8% for the Indian economy, reinforces our collective commitment to ensuring the stability and promoting the prosperity of the international system.

This approach is an article of firm conviction for Indian foreign policy and is expected to enrich all its bilateral relationships including with the friendly Kingdom of Bahrain in the years to come.

*(The author is the Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Bahrain since August 2023. He has previously served as Director General for Economic Diplomacy in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs from 2017 to 2018.)*

## ICAI Bahrain Hosts Session on 'Future of Capital'



ICAI Bahrain officials with distinguished guests and participants

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The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), Bahrain Chapter, successfully kicked off its 2025-26 technical sessions with a well-attended event titled "Future of Capital – Investment Reimagined."

Held on September 6, 2025, at the Diplomat Radisson Blu Hotel in Manama, the session drew over 150 participants eager to

gain insights into the evolving investment landscape.

### Speakers

The speakers for the event were Mr. Ajay Sharma, President of Edelweiss, Singapore, Mr. Gaurav Sharma, CFA, Solutions Portfolio Manager at Franklin Templeton Investment Solutions, Dubai and Mr. Veerappan Aiyappan, CFA, FRM, MBA, Director at EVA Mera Funds Investment Private Limited, India

Attendees were provided with valuable insights into global markets, various investment strategies, and effective wealth creation methods. To make the learning experience both fun and impactful, the session included an interactive game designed to help participants better understand the capital market.

The event was a resounding success, thanks to the enthusiastic participation of the speakers, members, and guests.

## International Artistic Residency Program for Bahraini Artists



Representatives from the Embassy of France, BACA and the Alliance Française Bahrain

● Embassy of France launches event

● Apply before October 3rd

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The Embassy of France in Bahrain, in partnership with the Bahrain Authority for

Culture and Antiquities (BACA) and the Alliance Française Bahrain, has announced an exceptional opportunity for Bahraini artists: the 2026 International Residency Program at the "Cité Internationale des Arts" in Paris, France.

This three-month, fully funded residency offers established and professional artists the chance to create, connect, and immerse themselves in France's vibrant artistic scene.

The program is open to all artistic disciplines, including architecture, design, street art, cinema, dance, literature, gastronomy, crafts, fashion, music, photography, theater, and more.

Selected participants will spend three months in residence in Paris between April 2026 and April 2027.

It is a unique platform to develop artistic projects, expand networks, and engage in intercultural dialogue