

Al Salam Bank Partners with Procural to Launch New SME Growth and Business Enablement Program

Al Salam Bank has announced a strategic partnership with Procural to introduce a new business enablement program designed to support the growth and expansion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by connecting clients with new commercial opportunities and strengthening their access to wider business networks.

The partnership marks a significant step in Al Salam Bank's continued efforts to enhance its SME banking proposition by extending support beyond traditional financial services and providing practical solutions that directly contribute to business growth, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability for entrepreneurs



and growing businesses.

Through this collaboration, SME clients of Al Salam Bank will gain access to Procural's digital business network, a specialized platform designed to connect businesses with procurement opportunities,

buyers, suppliers, and commercial partners across multiple sectors. The platform will enable clients to identify new opportunities more efficiently, improve access to sourcing and tendering activities, and expand their market reach

through a more connected and dynamic business ecosystem.

As businesses increasingly seek integrated solutions that combine financing with operational support, this partnership reflects Al Salam Bank's broader strategy of delivering value-added banking solutions that address the evolving needs of SMEs while contributing to the development of a stronger and more competitive private sector.

The initiative positions Al Salam Bank among the first financial institutions in Bahrain to introduce a business support offering of this nature, reinforcing the Bank's commitment to innovation and strengthening its role as a long-term growth partner for the King-

dom's entrepreneurial and SME community.

Commenting on the partnership, Mr. Mohammed Buhijji – Chief Retail Banking Officer at Al Salam Bank, said: "At Al Salam Bank, we recognize that supporting SMEs requires more than providing financial solutions alone. Businesses today require access to opportunities, stronger commercial networks, and practical tools that help them grow and compete more effectively. Through this partnership with Procural, we are extending our support beyond banking by introducing solutions that directly contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of our SME clients."

Mr. Uzair Usman – Founder & CEO of Procural, added: "We are

pleased to partner with Al Salam Bank on an initiative that delivers tangible value to SMEs and helps businesses connect more efficiently with new commercial opportunities. Our platform is designed to simplify access to procurement ecosystems and create stronger business connections, and together we look forward to supporting the continued growth of Bahrain's SME sector."

This partnership forms part of Al Salam Bank's wider commitment to empowering businesses through innovative and practical solutions that combine banking, technology, and strategic partnerships to create meaningful long-term value for clients while supporting economic development within the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Contractors face higher steel and paint costs

Rising steel, paint and waterproofing costs offset fuel savings as contractors warn of project delays

TDI | Manama
Mohammed Darwish

Bahrain's construction sector is navigating a split market: cheaper fuel brings some relief, while surging prices for key building materials squeeze project budgets and strain contracts signed at lower rates.

The recent fuel price reduction approved by the Fuel Prices Determination and Monitoring Committee has lowered running costs across several site services.

Khalaf Hujair, president of the Bahrain Contractors Association, said the cut had improved cash flow and reduced expenses for concrete pumping, crane hire and construction waste removal.

Prices for concrete, blocks, sand and cement also eased or held steady, offering contractors limited breathing room.

The relief, however, is being cancelled out by sharp rises elsewhere. Reinforcing steel has climbed to around BD280 per tonne, driven by



"Projects already under way are under financial strain – firms are finding it hard to absorb the gap between old and new prices"

- KHALAF HUJAIR, PRESIDENT OF THE BAHRAIN CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

higher raw material costs and regional market shifts. Waterproofing membranes have jumped from BD11.200 to BD16, while paint has surged from BD28 to BD47.

Ali Al Qahtani of Bianca Con-

tracting said average material price increases had exceeded 20 per cent across many products in recent weeks, with regional supply chain disruptions adding further pressure.

Contractors are now recalculating costs for new projects, while some investors are adopting a more cautious stance on development decisions.

"Continued price swings could slow the launch of new projects or delay some work," Al Qahtani warned, calling for closer market monitoring and stronger support for local supply chains.



Tourism Minister Meets BDB Chief to Drive SME Growth

Partnership aims to boost tourism investment under Vision 2030



Bahrain's Minister of Tourism and Chairperson of the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority, Fatima bint Jaafar Al Sairafi, met with Bahrain Development Bank CEO Dalal Ahmed Al Qais to explore expanded cooperation in tourism investment and SME development.

The talks centred on joint initiatives supporting the tourism and events sectors under the Tourism Strategy 2022-2026 and Bahrain

Economic Vision 2030. Al Sairafi underlined the critical role SMEs play in diversifying Bahrain's tourism landscape and enhancing visitor experiences.

Al Qais reaffirmed BDB's commitment to forging stronger government partnerships and developing innovative financing solutions to help tourism and events SMEs scale up and seize investment opportunities, advancing the Kingdom's sustainable economic goals.



Joint Bahrain Research Strengthens Thyroid Cancer Assessment through Local Clinical Evidence

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) – Medical University of Bahrain, in collaboration with King Hamad University Hospital – Royal Medical Services (RMS), has published new research that could help strengthen the assessment and management of thyroid nodules in Bahrain. Published in the international peer-reviewed journal *Diagnostics*, the study identifies thyroid nodule size as a key predictor of thyroid cancer risk, highlighting the importance of locally generated evidence to support more informed clinical decision-making and improve patient care.

The study analysed clinical data from 446 patients in Bahrain to investigate the relationship between thyroid nodule size and the likelihood of cancer. The findings demonstrated that nodule size was the strongest independent predictor of malignancy, even after accounting for ultrasound characteristics and other clinical factors.

The research was undertaken through a collaboration between RCSI Medical University of Bahrain and King Hamad University Hospital, led by Professor Alexandra Butler, Professor in Pathology at RCSI Medical University of Bahrain, Dr Jenan Obaid, Class of 2012 graduate and Consultant Endocrinologist at King Hamad University Hospital, alongside a multidisciplinary team of researchers and six medical students, reflecting the University's commitment to providing students meaningful opportunities to contribute to research addressing real-world healthcare challenges.

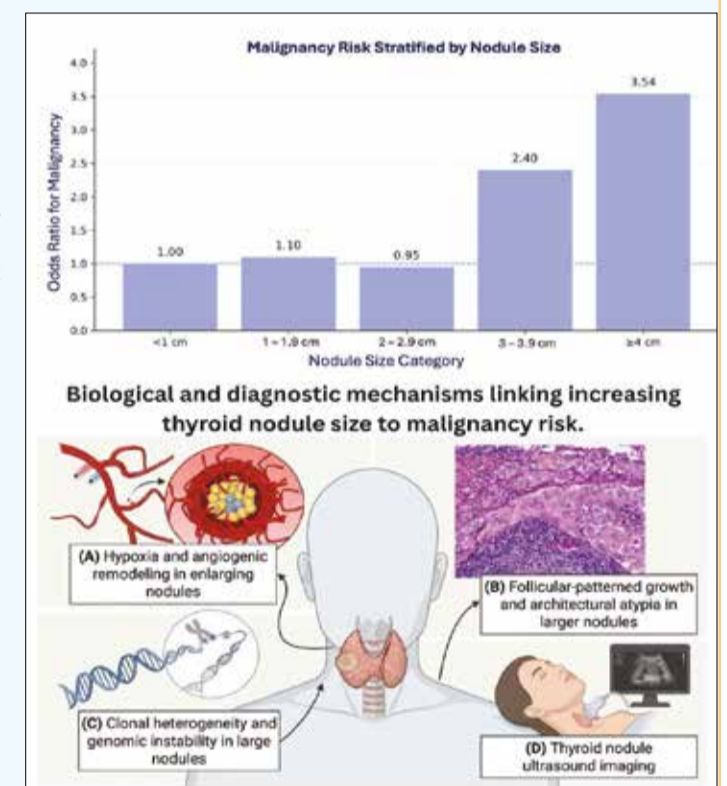
Thyroid nodules are lumps that develop within the thyroid

gland and are a common finding, particularly as people get older. While the vast majority are benign, determining which nodules may be cancerous remains a significant clinical challenge, making accurate diagnosis essential to ensure patients receive the most appropriate treatment.

The study found that patients with nodules larger than 3 cm had almost three times the odds of malignancy, while nodules exceeding 4 cm had more than three-and-a-half times the odds of being cancerous. The findings also suggest that patterns of thyroid cancer risk reported in international studies may not always reflect those seen in Bahrain, highlighting the importance of generating evidence within the local population to support clinical decision-making and improve patient care.

Professor Butler highlighted:

"Thyroid nodules are commonly encountered in clinical practice, yet determining which are malignant remains a significant challenge. This collaborative study demonstrates that nodule size is a particularly important predictor of cancer risk in the Bahraini population, emerging as the strongest independent predictor of malignancy even when ultrasound findings and other clinical factors



were considered. Importantly, the findings reinforce the value of conducting research within our own community. By generating evidence that reflects the needs of our population, we can support more informed clinical decision-making and ultimately improve patient care."

This study is believed to be the first in Bahrain and among the few in the Gulf region to specifically evaluate thyroid nodule size as an independent predictor of malignancy using multivariable analysis, thereby contributing to a growing body of regional evidence to support future clinical practice and research. The findings suggest that larger nodules may warrant closer evaluation and consideration for biopsy or specialist referral, even

when ultrasound features suggest a lower risk. The study also identified a higher rate of malignancy among older patients, underscoring the importance of careful assessment in this group.

This collaborative research reflects the shared commitment of RCSI Medical University of Bahrain and its partners to advancing evidence that addresses regional health priorities and improves patient care. As a research-intensive health sciences university, RCSI Medical University of Bahrain fosters a culture of research and innovation by engaging faculty and students in research that informs clinical practice, advances medical knowledge and contributes to improved health outcomes in Bahrain and beyond.