BBK Recognized as Bahrain's Leader in Strategic Digital Finance Partnerships

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BBK, a leader in retail and corporate banking in the Kingdom of Bahrain, has been awarded the "Most Strategic Banking Partnerships in Digital Finance – Bahrain 2026" by The Global Economics, recognizing the Bank's success in accelerating digital transformation, strengthening its digital capabilities, and delivering innovative financial solutions through strategic collaborations.

The award reflects BBK's growing portfolio of strategic partnerships that are shaping its digital banking agenda. Recent examples include its collaboration with Tarabut to advance open banking capabilities and deliver more integrated financial services, as well as its partnership with AX Coin, Bahrain's first licensee to receive a Stablecoin issuance license, to explore new initiatives in the Stablecoin space, that are beneficial to Bahrain and to the financial sector. Together, these initiatives highlight BBK's commitment to adopting emerging technologies that enhance customer experience, improve accessibility and create long-term value.

BBK has also engaged in strategic partnerships with Singapore Gulf Bank (SGB), Rain, ARP Digital and Binance that are aimed at advancing financial technologies and driving innovation, in the areas of cross-border payments, financial education, tokenization, crypto and stablecoins.

Commenting on the achievement, Mr. Nadeem Al Kooheji, Chief Wholesale Banking Officer at BBK, said: "Strategic partnerships have become central to the way financial institutions accelerate transformation and respond to rapid change.

Mr. Nadeem Al Kooheji, Chief Wholesale Banking Officer, BBK

By working closely with technology and innovation partners, BBK has been able to strengthen its digital capabilities, introduce more relevant solutions, and enhance the way customers access and experience our services. This recognition reflects the practical value of that collaborative approach and the progress it continues to deliver."

He added: "Innovation remains a key priority for BBK, and our focus is firmly on creating digital banking experiences that are secure, intuitive and built around customer needs. Collaboration plays an important role in generating sustainable value for our customers and shareholders, while also contributing to the continued development of Bahrain's financial sector. We will continue to expand our digital ecosystem and pursue partnerships that support future growth, operational resilience and long-term competitiveness."

BBK was selected following a comprehensive evaluation of several criteria, including the effectiveness and impact of its partnerships, its ability to foster innovation through collaboration, the development of an interconnected digital services ecosystem, and the scalability of its initiatives. The assessment also considered the value delivered to customers and the Bank's contribution to advancing Bahrain's digital finance landscape.

The award further recognizes BBK's ability to convert strategic partnerships into tangible results, including enhanced customer experience, broader access to digital banking services, and the successful integration of emerging technologies across its operations. These achievements are underpinned by strong governance, regulatory compliance, and a clear focus on sustainable growth.

This recognition reinforces BBK's position at the forefront of digital banking innovation in Bahrain and underscores its commitment to shaping the future of financial services through strategic collaboration, technological advancement, and customer-centric innovation.

150 mobile subscriptions for every 100 people in Bahrain

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Mohammed Darwish

For every 100 people in Bahrain, there were 150 mobile subscriptions by the second quarter of last year, as the telecoms watchdog posted a BD15.4 million surplus and transferred nearly BD16m to the Finance Ministry.

Mobile subscriptions reached 2.387m, up 2pc from the end of 2024, while broadband subscriptions stood at 2.595m, or 163 for every 100 people.

Audited accounts for the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority show its surplus slipped 3.4pc from BD15.946m in 2024 to BD15.402m last year.

The authority also transferred about BD15.95m to the Ministry of Finance and National Economy.

Operating revenue barely changed at BD21.156m, while costs rose 7.5pc to BD7.125m, cutting the operating surplus to BD14.031m.

Annual telecoms licence fees remained the authority's biggest source of revenue at BD8.433m, or 39.9pc of operating income.

Spectrum availability fees brought in BD5.289m, while frequency and spectrum-band charges fell 7.5pc to BD3.541m.

Together, those three sources accounted for 81.6pc of operating revenue.

Staff costs remained the largest expense at BD4.023m.

Consultancy and legal costs rose 25.5pc to BD738,000, while the authority made a BD568,000 provision for doubtful debts. No such charge was recorded in 2024.

The provision explains much of the BD500,000 rise in operating expenses.

Non-operating income fell 2.3pc to BD1.371m, including BD1.254m from changes in the fair value of investments.

Investments rose 28.2pc from BD22.173m to BD28.427m, even as total assets fell 9.7pc to BD37.483m.

Total liabilities fell 13.6pc to BD22.081m, with deferred revenue accounting for BD20.807m of the total.

Fibre subscriptions stood at about 182,000, equal to 63pc of households, while 86pc of fibre customers were on packages offering speeds of at least 100 megabits per second.

Broadband data use reached 1.971 billion gigabytes in 2024, with fixed-network use up 7pc and mobile data use up 15pc.

Gulf Banking Sector Posts Record Lending

GCC banks reached a record $2.59 trillion in gross lending during the second quarter of 2026, an 11.6% increase from the same period last year. Lending expanded across all six GCC markets, reflecting continued financing demand and resilient regional economies.

UAE-listed banks led quarterly growth, with gross loans rising 4.5%, while Saudi banks reached $876.1 billion. Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar also recorded lending growth during the quarter.

Islamic banks posted stronger financing growth than conventional lenders, highlighting continued demand for Sharia-compliant banking services.

Customer deposits at listed GCC banks climbed to a record $2.92 trillion, while combined net profit reached $17.7 billion.

With interest rates easing, lenders are expected to increasingly focus on loan volumes, fee-generating services and broader business activity to sustain earnings. The outlook remains supported by regional economic resilience and continued demand for corporate and consumer financing.

Global Markets Shuffle as Geopolitical Risks Inject Volatility

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Global financial markets are entering September with a sharp contrast emerging between Western equities facing renewed inflation and interest-rate concerns and Gulf markets benefiting from elevated energy prices and structural reforms.

After a strong August for global stocks, investors are becoming more cautious as geopolitical tensions, higher crude prices and uncertainty over monetary policy introduce fresh volatility. Meanwhile, GCC markets are showing resilience, supported by stronger energy revenues and efforts to deepen regional capital markets.

Global Markets Face Renewed Pressure

Global equities entered September after reaching elevated levels in August, supported by corporate earnings and hopes that major economies were moving toward relatively soft landings.

That optimism is now being tested.

Investors are closely watching the US Federal Reserve and upcoming inflation data as they reassess the path of interest rates. Higher energy prices are adding another layer of uncertainty, as a sustained rise in crude could slow progress on inflation.

Brent crude has moved toward $99 a barrel, while West Texas Intermediate has climbed above $92. The increase has renewed concerns about energy costs for consumers, businesses and global supply chains.

For oil-importing economies, expensive energy can translate into higher inflation and weaker consumer spending, potentially putting further pressure on equity valuations.

Gulf Markets See a Different Picture

The same oil-price environment is producing a different dynamic across the GCC.

Higher crude prices can strengthen government revenues, provide greater fiscal flexibility and support infrastructure and development projects. This creates a degree of protection for Gulf economies against pressures affecting major oil-consuming markets.

Saudi Arabia's Tadawul All Share Index has remained resilient, supported by major companies and expectations surrounding infrastructure and economic activity.

Oman has been an especially notable performer. The Muscat Stock Exchange's MSX 30 has recorded a strong year-to-date advance, making it one of the region's standout equity markets.

Beyond Oil: Gulf Markets Are Changing

The Gulf's market story is increasingly about more than crude prices.

Regulatory reforms and greater regional financial integration are changing how investors access GCC markets. Discussions around a cross-border regional fund-passporting framework could make it easier for investment funds to operate across multiple GCC jurisdictions.

Greater harmonisation of investor requirements and KYC procedures could help address one of the region's longstanding challenges: fragmented markets and limited cross-border liquidity.

A Tale of Two Market Environments

The current environment highlights the different economic structures of Western and Gulf markets.

For major import-dependent economies, higher oil prices represent an inflationary threat. For the GCC, they can provide additional fiscal support while governments continue investing in economic diversification.

That does not make Gulf markets immune to global shocks. GCC equities remain exposed to international interest rates, foreign investor flows, global growth and commodity-price volatility.

However, the combination of energy revenues, sovereign financial strength and structural reforms gives the region a distinctive position as global markets navigate a more uncertain second half of 2026.

The Bottom Line

The latest market moves underline an increasingly important investment theme: geography matters.

While higher energy prices and monetary uncertainty are creating challenges for developed markets, Gulf economies are entering the period with stronger commodity-linked revenues and increasingly diversified economic bases.

The result is not necessarily a complete decoupling between global and GCC equities, but it suggests the Gulf could continue to offer investors a combination of defensive strength, energy exposure and long-term growth potential as global volatility persists.