

GFH emerges as sole bidder for Bahrain National Stadium

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Winning investor would secure naming rights, VIP catering



concessions and commercial leasing opportunities within the stadium.

Project aims to generate

new revenue through sponsorships, hospitality, restaurants, cafés and event hosting.

Proposal forms part of Bahrain's Economic Recovery Plan to attract private investment into government-owned assets.

Bahrain's National Stadium could soon come under private management after GFH Financial Group emerged as the sole bidder with an offer of BD770,000 to develop, operate and

maintain the Kingdom's premier sports venue.

The bid, opened by the General Sports Authority through the Government Land Investment Platform, will now undergo technical and financial evaluation before a final decision is made.

The tender covers Bahrain National Stadium, the country's largest sporting arena, located within Isa Sports City in North Riffa. For decades, it has hosted major football matches, national competitions and international sporting events.

If awarded the contract, GFH would be responsible for developing and maintaining the stadium, managing

its day-to-day operations and paying annual fees set by the authority.

The investment package also grants commercial opportunities, including naming rights for selected parts of the stadium, exclusive catering rights for VIP areas and the ability to lease existing restaurants, cafés and other commercial facilities.

The General Sports Authority launched the tender in January under a competitive negotiation process aimed at attracting private-sector investment into one of Bahrain's most prominent public sports facilities.

The move is expected to unlock new revenue streams through sponsorships, hospitality, commercial naming rights, food and beverage outlets and event hosting, while ensuring

the stadium continues to serve as a venue for local and international sporting events.

Economic Recovery Plan

The project forms part of Bahrain's Economic Recovery Plan, under which government-owned land and properties are being offered to private investors through the Government Land Investment Platform.

The platform has already been used to market projects across sectors including education, healthcare, retail, leisure, real estate and public services.

Opening the bid does not constitute an award. GFH's proposal must first satisfy all technical and financial requirements under Tender Board procedures before any contract is approved.



Bahrain National Stadium, opened in 1982, has hosted the Kingdom's biggest football matches and was renovated ahead of the 21st Arabian Gulf Cup in 2013

With a capacity of around 24,000 spectators, Bahrain National Stadium is the country's principal venue for international football and major national sporting events

The stadium is located within Isa Sports City in North Riffa, Bahrain's largest sports complex, which also includes indoor sports halls, football facilities and supporting infrastructure

In 2022, Bahrain National Stadium was transformed into an open-air venue for Pope Francis' historic Mass—the first papal Mass ever held in Bahrain



Investment in people key to Bahrain's AI ambitions

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Investment in people, supported by secure digital infrastructure, is central to Bahrain's transition to an artificial intelligence-driven economy, a senior government official has said.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Isa bin Duaij Al Khalifa, Assistant Undersecretary for Telecommunications at the Ministry of Transportation and Telecom-

munications, made the remarks during the WSIS+20 High-Level Event in Geneva, organised by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) alongside the inaugural Global Dialogue on AI Governance.

He said the telecommunications sector provides the high-performance networks needed to support AI applications, innovation, cloud computing and digital services.

Shaikh Ahmed said Bahrain is

investing in AI and digital skills through partnerships with universities, the private sector and technology companies, with a focus on empowering young people and increasing women's participation in the technology sector.

He added that the Kingdom continues to strengthen its digital infrastructure to support wider AI adoption and keep pace with the rapidly evolving digital economy.



From a Zinj home to a Gulf jewellery brand

Bahraini entrepreneur transforms a wedding project into a brand inspired by Gulf culture and lab-grown diamonds

Mohammed Darwish
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A decade after designing her own wedding jewellery at her home in Zinj, Amna Al Hawaj has built Manjam Jewellery into a brand centred on Gulf-inspired design and lab-grown diamonds.

The Bahrain-based jewellery house creates diamond jewellery, natural gemstone pieces and designs inspired by Gulf forms, colours and symbols. Al Hawaj said her ideas are drawn from architecture, geometry, light and the visual language of the region.

'I always try to explore the meaning of culture and the limits of culture through my designs,' Al Hawaj told The Daily Tribune. 'I speak about modern Gulf culture through my work.'

One design, she said, is based on the 'serpent of eternity'. It draws on the saw-scaled viper found in the Arabian Peninsula and refers to the Epic of Gilgamesh, with a flower of immortality made from mother-of-



Palm tree-inspired jewellery designed by Amna Al Hawaj

pearl incorporated into the piece.

Another design draws on the palm frond, a form she said continues to hold a place in modern Gulf life.

'The palm tree symbolises blessing, giving and strength in the desert,' she said.

Al Hawaj has also created pieces inspired by Islamic ornament, including a sun-inspired

design.

'Through design, I try to explore how our cultures affect people and how they connect to meaning. That is very important to me,' she said.

Ethical stones

She said the American film *Blood Diamond* changed the way she thought about gemstones and inspired her to embrace lab-grown diamonds.

Her first experiments began about 10 years ago at her home in Zinj, where she designed jewellery for herself as an ethical choice for her wedding.

'Lab-grown stones are certainly an ethical alternative to mining, and this matters to me. It is part of the brand,' she said. 'They are also beautiful, and I feel people now lean towards them because they are a good choice in every respect.'

'With a lab-grown diamond, you have the same quality, hardness, brilliance and phys-

ical characteristics, but it is created in a laboratory. Many people prefer this because they want to distance themselves from blood diamonds and the monopolised diamond trade.'

Manjam's collections include diamond jewellery, rare natural gemstones and pieces shaped by Gulf heritage. Al Hawaj said the use of lab-grown diamonds was not intended to replace tradition, but to broaden the choices available to clients.

Bahrain's jewellery industry

She said Bahrain's jewellery industry and design scene had also played an important role in shaping the brand.



Amna Al Hawaj, gemologist and jewellery designer

'Bahrain has a remarkable jewellery tradition, and I'm fortunate to be part of it,' she said. 'There are many talented designers here whose work I ad-

mire, and our clients have a deep love of craft, beauty and culture.'

Designed to last

'Manjam is simply my contribution to that tradition, my own reading of Gulf design through a modern lens. If our work resonates with people, I'm grateful for that.'

Al Hawaj said jewellery is often bought to mark a milestone, celebrate a relationship or preserve a family memory. That philosophy, she said, guides how Manjam approaches the scale, form and longevity of each piece.

Some creations begin as sketches. Others emerge from conversations with clients or from the unique character of a single gemstone.

'The pieces we wear often become part of our lives,' she said. 'They celebrate milestones, mark memories and are sometimes passed from one generation to the next. Designing something that can become part of someone's story is both a privilege and a responsibility.'