

business

Bahrain improves competitiveness: WEF

Ranks 45th on a scale of 141 economies around the globe; placed fourth in the Middle East

- **United Arab Emirates (25th) leads in ME**
- **Kuwait is the most improved in the region**

- **WEF says greater investments in human capital are needed to transform the countries in the region**

- **Region has caught up significantly on ICT adoption**

- **Singapore is the country closest to the frontier of competitiveness**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain has jumped five places to rank 45th on the Global Competitiveness Index 2019 of World Economic Forum which assess the progress of 141 economies around the globe to determine productivity and support countries to identify relevant policies and practices.

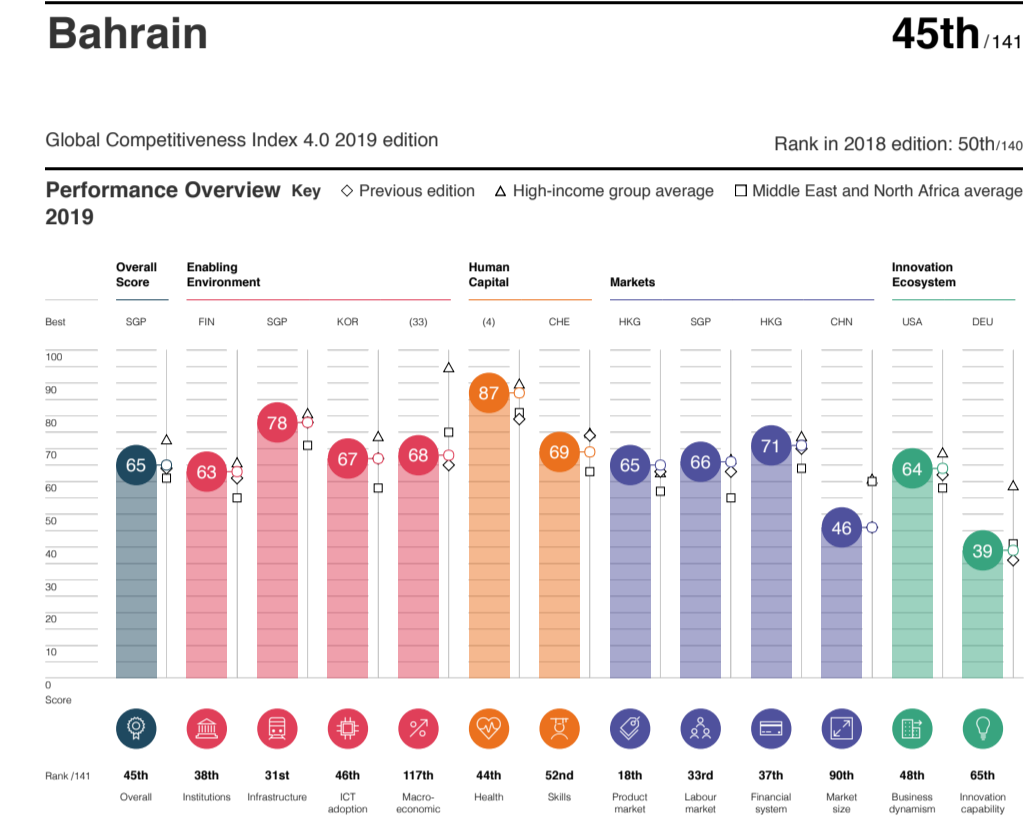
Competitiveness Rank in Bahrain averaged 41.69 from 2007 until 2019, reaching an all-time high of 50 in 2018 and a record low of 35 in 2013.

The development suggests, amid the persistent slowdown in the global economy, increasing trade animosities, political polarisation and rapid technological changes, Bahrain held its head straight and went ahead in improving its economy.

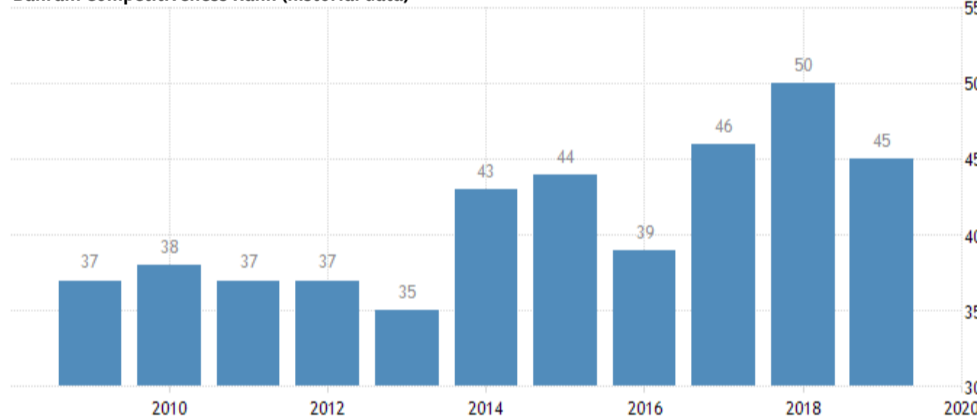
The 2019 edition, which features the Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 (GCI 4.0), covers 141 economies, which account for 99 per cent of the world's GDP. The GCI 4.0 is the fourth and latest iteration of the methodology used by the Global Competitiveness Report, which has been assessing countries every year since its first edition in 1979.

Security: Bahrain 4th globally

The index which assesses the progress of 12 metrics through 103 indicators to determine the productivity finds Bahrain at the top portion of the table when it comes to Security. Bahrain ranks 4th on this scale with a score of



Bahrain Competitiveness Rank (historical data)



92.8 where Finland is the top performer. The rank is based on assessments in organised crime, Homicide rate, terrorism incidence and reliability of police services.

Public-sector performance: Ranks 22nd

This is another areas in which Bahrain performs well globally, where Singapore tops the list. The efficiency of the legal framework in settling dispute, government regulations and E-participation all are on par or well ahead of several advanced economies.

Corporate gov: Ranks 28th

Strength of auditing and accounting standards, Conflict of

interest regulation and Shareholder governance are the areas where Bahrain shines in this category, where Luxembourg is the top performer.

Infrastructure: ranks 31

In terms of infrastructural growth, Bahrain managed a one-point improvement from 30th ranks on the 2018 report to the current 31st rank. Supporting Bahrain was Transport infrastructure which ranks 25 and utility infrastructure at 36, both of which have improved well from the prior year. Bahrain is also poised to grow further in this sector with the launch of Railroad infrastructure in a few years.

Road connectivity, electricity

access

Transport infrastructure ranking assesses Bahrain's capabilities in Road Connectivity, Quality of Road infrastructure (improved to 24th), Airport connectivity (remains the same at 60th), efficiency of air transport services (improved to 33rd), liner shipping connectivity (declined to 55th) and efficiency of seaport services (improved to 28th).

The report also places Bahrain at second rank globally in terms of Electricity access, 4th for electricity supply quality and 23rd for the reliability of water supply in the Utility infrastructure section. Exposure to unsafe drinking water is an area of con-

cern, with the country declining to 66th rank in this regard.

ICT adoption, Health, skill

Bahrain's ranking based on ICT adoption, as per the report, is 46th globally, where Korea stands tall.

Health conditions in Bahrain remain excellent with the sector as a whole ranking 44 globally, as reflected in the high life expectancy (67.8, 43rd) compared to other Middle Eastern states.

Skills of the current workforce were ranked 28th, which is impressive compared to several advanced economies. However, improvements are recommended to enhance the quality of vocational training and skillset of graduates. Another advantage, Bahrain has here is in ease of finding skilled employees for which the Kingdom is ranked 18th globally.

Stable economy, R&D

Bahrain's economy, ranked 38, is rated at 'stable' with the backing of a sound banking system (34th), while non-performing loans need improvement.

Bahrain needs to improve a lot when it comes to Research and Development. At present, the Kingdom is ranked lower at 91.

Other areas in which Bahrain shines are skills of the future workforce (25th), domestic competition (19th), trade openness (20th), Labour market (33rd), business dynamism (48th) and Entrepreneurial culture (30th).

UAE leads in MENA

Israel (20th) and the United Arab Emirates (25th) lead in the Middle East and North Africa followed by Qatar (29th) and Saudi Arabia (36th). Kuwait is the most improved in the region (46th, up 8 places) while Iran (99th) and Yemen (140th) lose some ground.

The Global Competitiveness Report says the region has caught up significantly on ICT adoption and many countries boast well-developed infrastructure. It, however, warns that greater investments in human capital are needed to transform the countries in the region into more diversified, innovative and creative economies.

Singapore tops globally

With a 2019 GCI score of 84.8 out of 100, Singapore is the country closest to the frontier

of competitiveness. The country ranks first in terms of infrastructure, health, labour market functioning and financial system. However, in going forward, to become a global innovation hub, Singapore will need to promote entrepreneurship and further improve its skills base.

Among the G20, the United States (2nd, down 1 place), Japan (6th), Germany (7th, down 4) and the United Kingdom (9th, down 1) feature in the top 10, but they all have experienced erosion in their performance.

So has Canada (14th, down 2). Korea (13th, up 2), France (15th, up 2) and Italy (30th, up 1) are the only advanced economies to improve this year.

Argentina (83rd, down 2 places) is the lowest-ranked. Among the BRICS, China is by far the best performer, ahead of the Russian Federation, 32 places ahead of South Africa (60th) and some 40 places ahead of both India (68th) and Brazil (71st).

Led by Singapore, East Asia and the Pacific region is the most competitive in the world, followed by Europe and North America. Hong Kong SAR (3rd) and Japan (6th) also feature in the top 10.

India 68th

In South Asia, India, in 68th position, loses ground in the rankings despite a relatively stable score, mostly due to faster improvements of several countries previously ranked lower. It is followed by Sri Lanka (the most improved country in the region at 84th), Bangladesh (105th), Nepal (108th) and Pakistan (110th).

One of the crucial aspects highlighted by the study is the fact that the global economy is not prepared for a major slowdown.

Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of WEF, said, "The Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 provides a compass for thriving in the new economy where innovation becomes the key factor of competitiveness."

"The report shows that those countries which integrate into their economic policies an emphasis on infrastructure, skills, research and development and support those left behind are more successful compared to those that focus only on traditional factors of growth."

Turner painting unveiled on Britain's new £20 note

London (AFP)

The Bank of England unveiled Britain's new £20 polymer banknote yesterday, featuring artist J. M. W. Turner and his most cherished masterpiece.

The note includes Joseph Mallord William Turner's self-portrait and his 1838 oil painting "The Fighting Temeraire".

It will enter general circulation on February 2, 2020. "As the new Turner £20 testi-



The note includes J. M. W. Turner's self-portrait and his 1838 oil painting "The Fighting Temeraire"

fies, money can be a work of art in everyone's pocket," Bank of England Governor Mark Carney said.

The note was unveiled at the Turner Contemporary art gallery in the southeast English seaside resort of Margate.

The £20 note (\$24.50, 22.20 euro) accounts for more than half the banknotes in circulation.

"Our banknotes celebrate the UK's heritage, salute its culture, and testify to the achievements

of its most notable individuals," said Carney.

Turner was selected by Britain's central bank following nominations from the public.

The Bank of England issues £5, £10, £20 and £50 notes. The latest series is being printed for the first time on polymer rather than paper. They retain a regular layout, featuring a 1990 portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, and a historical figure on the reverse.

The new £5 and £10 notes have already been rolled out.

The £5 note features World War II prime minister Winston Churchill and novelist Jane Austen appears on the £10 note.

The bank claims the new £20 note is its most secure one yet.

World War II code-breaker Alan Turing, a computer science pioneer, will appear on the new rarely-used £50 note, to enter circulation by the end of 2021.