

# Landmark GCC-UK Partnership Signed

In the context of the Kingdom of Bahrain's presidency of the 46th session of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), His Excellency Abdullah bin Adel Fakhro, Minister of Industry and Commerce, affirmed that today's signing of the joint statement, which concludes the negotiations for the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the GCC states and the United Kingdom in London, exemplifies the GCC nations' commitment to strengthening their strategic economic partnerships with global economies, particularly the UK. He noted that this agreement supports the paths of integration and sustainable development, realising the visions and aspirations of the leaders of the GCC countries.

His Excellency highlighted that the successful conclusion of these negotiations represents a significant strategic advancement in the well-established economic partnership between the GCC states and the UK. He pointed out that it culminates a diligent negotiating process that commenced in 2022, demonstrating the GCC countries' steadfast determination to enhance economic engagement with major global economies. This agreement is expected to further develop Gulf-British relations and open promising avenues for enhancing trade and investment cooperation.

His Excellency expressed his sincere gratitude to the General



UK and GCC officials after concluding negotiations on a landmark Free Trade Agreement set to boost trade and investment with Bahrain and the wider Gulf region.



H.E. Abdullah bin Adel Fakhro, Minister of Industry and Commerce

Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council and all negotiating teams from both the GCC and British sides. He commended their constructive flexibility, professionalism, and genuine

commitment throughout the successive rounds of negotiations to achieve a balanced agreement that serves the common interests of all parties involved. He also took immense pride in the national teams who have demonstrated exceptional capability and professionalism in representing the Kingdom within the framework of joint Gulf action.

The Minister explained that this agreement transcends mere regulation of trade exchange; it is a natural extension of the rich historical heritage connecting the GCC countries with the UK, embodying the strength of the deep-rooted bilateral relations and the close bonds of friendship between the two sides. He emphasised that the agreement

will facilitate economic growth and diversify its foundations by easing access for Gulf goods and services to British markets, reducing or eliminating customs duties, and fostering an environment conducive to sustainable investment partnerships based on mutual benefits.

In closing, the Minister of Industry and Commerce reaffirmed the economic significance of this agreement for the GCC nations as a whole, and for the Kingdom of Bahrain in particular. He highlighted its positive impact on supporting economic growth, diversifying the economic base, and enhancing trade and investment exchanges between Bahrain and the UK, which reached approximately USD601.7 million in 2025.

## Adeeb Ahamed Named to Washington Post Intelligence Council on AI & Technology

Abu Dhabi, UAE: Washington Post Intelligence, the intelligence and advisory platform of The Washington Post, has named Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, to its Council on AI & Technology.

The council is a global leadership forum focused on advancing policy and industry innovation across artificial intelligence, emerging technologies and digital transformation.

Mr Ahamed is among the first Middle East-based business leaders to join the council, bringing the perspective of a region rapidly emerging as a global centre for AI-driven innovation, digital infrastructure and next-generation financial ecosystems.

His appointment also reflects the growing importance of financial services and cross-border payment infrastructure in global AI conversations, particularly as emerging technologies increasingly shape the future of commerce, compliance, financial accessibility and real-time global connectivity.

Under Mr Ahamed's leadership, LuLu Financial Holdings has grown into one of the region's leading financial services groups, operating across the GCC, Indian subcontinent and Asia Pacific, with a strong focus on cross-border payments, fintech innovation and digital financial inclusion.

Commenting on the appointment, Mr Ahamed said: "The future of artificial intelligence will be shaped by regions that can combine innovation, infrastructure and global connectivity at scale. The GCC and the broader Middle East are increasingly emerging as one of those centres, driven by am-



One of the first Middle East business leaders on the council. Reflects GCC's growing role in AI and digital innovation. Underscores rising importance of finance in global AI policy discussions.

bitious technology agendas, forward-looking leadership and rapidly evolving financial ecosystems. I look forward to contributing a perspective from a region that sits at the intersection of global commerce, finance and human mobility, where digital infrastructure and financial innovation are evolving at remarkable speed."

# Arab banking leaders to meet in Tripoli

Bahrain-based conference organiser MenaMoney will hold the fifth Arab Conference on Savings and Financial Literacy in the Libyan capital Tripoli from September 7 to 9, 2026, in partnership with the Central Bank of Libya.

The conference, to be held at the Rixos Hotel Tripoli under the theme "Financial Intelligence in the Era of Transformation", is expected to attract central banks, financial institutions, fintech firms and specialists in financial inclusion from across the Arab world.

The event will also bring together representatives from social protection bodies and organisations focused on youth

and women's empowerment, organisers said.

Sponsored by Central Bank of Libya Governor Naji Mohamed Issa, the conference is expected to see broad participation from Libyan ministries and institutions involved in finance, education, social affairs, insurance, capital markets, postal services and entrepreneurship.

Discussions will focus on financial literacy, savings awareness, investment inclusion and insurance accessibility, alongside national strategies aimed at expanding financial inclusion across Arab countries.

Organisers said the conference would also highlight ongoing projects in Libya and the



wider Arab region designed to improve financial awareness and strengthen savings and investment culture.

"We are very pleased to host

this distinguished gathering of Arab financial institutions in Libya to discuss the design and implementation of strategies and address gaps in current fi-

ancial inclusion and literacy programmes across the region," Issa said in a statement.

He added that hosting the event formed part of the central bank's broader efforts to stimulate regional economic activity in Libya and support programmes aimed at improving financial awareness and resilience among citizens.

Issa said the conference coincides with the launch of Libya's national financial inclusion strategy, which seeks to reduce poverty, promote equitable economic growth and improve financial stability by expanding access to affordable and secure financial services, particularly for women, youth, small busi-

nesses and people without bank accounts.

Ibrahim Khalil Ibrahim, chief executive of MenaMoney, said the conference aimed to create a regional platform for specialists and stakeholders to discuss savings, financial literacy, investment and financial inclusion.

He said the event was designed to help strengthen the financial resilience of Arab households.

The 2026 edition of the conference will also feature an exhibition showcasing financial and savings solutions, including digital platforms for payments, investment and insurance services, as well as initiatives promoting financial literacy and inclusion across Arab countries.

# Japan to sell eels bred in captivity in 'world first'

AFP | Tokyo, Japan

Eels bred in captivity will be sold in Japanese shops for the first time, in a move that could ease eventually pressure on the endangered fish, officials said yesterday.

Eel populations are falling worldwide, scientists say, largely due to factors linked to human activity such as the pollution of

waterways, destruction of wetlands, hydroelectric dams, and fishing.

Eel is an enormously popular food in Japan and other parts of Asia.

The fish has proved stubbornly unwilling to reproduce in captivity without intervention, but Japanese researchers succeeded in breeding Japanese eels from eggs in a laboratory setting in



Representative image

2010 at great expense.

Since then, they have been trying to reduce the "huge cost... so that the price could be accepted in the market," Yasutaka Okamoto, a fisheries agency official in charge of aquaculture promotion, told AFP.

"With countless small technological breakthroughs, the cost is now some 1,800 yen (\$11) per one baby eel, down from

more than a million yen at the initial stages, and down from some 40,000 yen in 2016," he said.

The price is still three to four times higher than a wild baby eel, "but we think it's time to test market reactions," he explained.

The project brought together government researchers, universities and the private sector.