

Industry ministry launches Digital Business Champions Overseas Programme

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce has embarked on an ambitious initiative with the launch of the Digital Business Champions Overseas Programme. The programme's inaugural mentoring session, held at the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance (BIBF), brought together representatives from 142 licensed companies in Bahrain. This initiative is a significant step towards equipping Bahraini



Maram AlMahmeed

businesses with cutting-edge digital expertise, aiming to boost their global competitiveness in

the export market.

Mrs Maram AlMahmeed, Director of Information Systems, announced that representatives from various nationalities attended the first mentoring session to gain insights from mentors' pioneering experiences in the field of exports through digital business. The session aimed to equip these companies with the necessary expertise to enter and succeed in this sector.

The programme includes specialised mentoring sessions de-

signed to facilitate the exchange of valuable expertise in digital business and exports. During these sessions, mentors share their extensive experience, offering insights into innovative solutions used to enhance product and service quality. The discussions also cover various challenges encountered in the field and proactive strategies for overcoming them.

AlMahmeed noted that companies and establishments that successfully complete the pro-

gramme will be awarded the title of Digital Business Champions Overseas. This title will be based on the digital transformation plans they submit at the end of the programme, outlining their strategies for transitioning to digital business and exporting overseas.

Alnafnoofi Online For Trading Via Internet was named the "eCommerce Champion" of the first version of the eCommerce Champions Overseas programme, in recognition of

its commitment to the work programme and for meeting all criteria.

This year's notable participants include Lalabella Events, The Gentlemen's Club Bahrain Clothing, and Alnafnoofi Online For Trading Via Internet. Additionally, several digital business service provider companies, such as National Bank Of Bahrain, Aramex Bahrain and Lion Impact Bahrain Online Operations, also took part in the programme.

Cash-strapped Hungary borrows 1 bn euros from China

AFP | Budapest, Hungary

Hungary borrowed one billion euros (\$1.1 billion) from Chinese banks earlier this year, its debt management agency said yesterday, as the EU member state faces a difficult financial situation.

The Hungarian government did not announce the deal, which was first reported by the local financial news site Portfolio based on publicly available data.

Budapest took out a three-year, floating-rate loan from Chinese banks on April 19, data on the Hungarian Government Debt Management Agency's website showed.

"The one-billion-euro loan agreement with the China Development Bank, the Export-Import Bank of China and the Hungarian branch of the Bank of China Limited will finance infrastructure and energy development, among other projects," the agency told AFP in a statement.

US economy beats Q2 growth expectations

AFP | Washington, United States

US economic growth blew past expectations in the second quarter, boosted by consumer spending and inventory building despite high interest rates, government data showed yesterday, after a slow start to the year.

The world's biggest economy grew 2.8% in the April to June period, up from 1.4% in the first three months this year, said the Commerce Department.

The figure was markedly above the 1.9% rate economists anticipated -- a reassuring sign that consumption remains resilient.

The acceleration "primarily reflected an upturn in private inventory investment and an acceleration in consumer spending," said the Commerce Department.

This was "partly offset by a downturn in residential fixed investment," it added.

While sectors like manufac-



Shoppers walk through the Fashion Centre at Pentagon City, a shopping mall in Arlington, Virginia

turing and housing have been struggling after the Federal Reserve rapidly hiked interest rates in 2022 to combat surging inflation, consumption has been stronger than analysts expected.

This gave the economy a boost despite rates hovering at their highest levels in more

than two decades -- making borrowing more expensive for individuals and companies.

A key factor underpinning consumption has been the robust labor market, which saw continued wage growth and businesses reluctant to let go of workers after difficulties in hiring during the pandemic.

Climate activists halt traffic at Germany's Frankfurt airport



Passengers queuing under the schedule board at the departures hall at Frankfurt's International Airport, western Germany

AFP | Frankfurt, Germany

Frankfurt police yesterday arrested climate activists who brought Germany's busiest airport to a standstill by gluing themselves to the tarmac. Traffic was halted for two hours during the busy summer holiday season before the first of the airport's landing runways was able to operate again at 0502 GMT, said an airport spokesman.

Seven activists had managed to reach the runway where they glued themselves onto the tarmac, a police spokesman said. An eighth was still trying to get through the perimeter fence when he was detained.

Police were able to remove the activists from the airport's

restricted grounds by 0815 GMT. All eight were placed under provisional arrest.

Climate activist group "Letzte Generation" (Last Generation) claimed responsibility for the civil disobedience action.

Its members used pincers to cut openings in the wire fence before making their way "by foot, with bicycles and skateboards to different points around the runways", the group said.

A photo circulated by the group depicted a protester sitting on the tarmac with an orange banner that read: "Oil kills". The group is pushing for a binding international accord that would lead to an end in oil, gas and coal use by 2030.

Batelco introduces Basma – An AI powered digital assistant

TDT | Manama

Batelco, part of the Beyon Group, has introduced Basma the new digital assistant powered by advanced generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology at a launch event. Basma is designed to enhance customer experience and provide digital assistance on Batelco's App and website. Basma is available anywhere and at any time enabling customers to receive assistance 24/7.

Users can now interact with Basma in English and Arabic through seamless voice and chat conversations directly within the Batelco mobile app and web-



Basma Launch - Management and team members

site. Basma can understand the user's needs and provide efficient solutions in real-time, her capabilities include responding to FAQs, bill inquiry, usage inquiry, package and device

installment, fiber order tracking, line reconnection, add on activation, and more. Basma's AI-powered system is designed to continuously learn and improve its capabilities, ensuring

that it can provide increasingly accurate and relevant assistance over time.

Yesterday, Basma was introduced by Batelco General Manager Consumer, Aseel Mattar

during a press conference that took place at Beyon headquarters in the presence of Batelco's Chief Executive Officer Maitham Abdulla. The event was well-attended by members

of the media, who were eager to learn more about this latest innovation. During the press conference, Batelco Head of Digital Channels, Khaled Alayoobi showcased Basma's capabilities through a live demonstration.

Batelco GM Consumer Aseel Mattar said, "Batelco has designed Basma to be more than just a functional digital assistant – she is a trusted companion, ready to assist customers with all their telecommunications needs. With Basma, Batelco customers can now enjoy a high level of support and convenience around the clock."

Update the Batelco App to start chatting with Basma.



Sameer Nass, Chairman of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, met with an Indian business delegation at the Chamber's headquarters yesterday. The meeting was also attended by India's ambassador to Bahrain, Vinod K. Jacob. During the discussions, Nass emphasized the potential to enhance trade and investment between Bahrain and India, particularly in the food sector. He noted that Bahrain has a strong demand for diverse food products, while India has significant expertise in these areas. It was highlighted that India was Bahrain's sixth-largest export partner and seventh-largest import partner in 2023, with trade exceeding 1 billion US dollars that year. Khalid Najibi, the First Vice Chairman of the Bahrain Chamber, pointed out that the trade gap between the two countries is minimal. He noted that India represents a substantial market for Bahraini exports and is a major supplier of rice. Najibi emphasized the importance of building on current achievements and further developing Bahrain as a market for Indian products, both through imports and re-exports. Vinod K. Jacob, the Indian Ambassador to Bahrain, praised the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry for its efforts to enhance trade relations between the two countries. He also acknowledged the significance of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in strengthening these ties.

