

The Business



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BAB forum spotlight on digital banking

MANAMA: A seminar entitled "Digital Banking: Leveraging Opportunities and Overcoming Challenges" was organised by the Bahrain Association of Banks (BAB)'s Digital and Cyber Security Committee.

Held at the headquarters of Al Baraka Banking Group in

Bahrain Bay, the event was attended by a large number of executives from banks and financial institutions, including BAB chairman Adnan Ahmed Yousif, digital and cybersecurity committee chairman Ahmed Albalooshi, deputy chairman Dr Yousif Almas and member Jordan Savvides.



■ Officials at the seminar

Alba backs conference

MANAMA: Alba has announced it is a strategic partner for the 12th Professional Development Conference and Exhibition being held at the Bahrain International Convention Centre, Gulf Hotel Bahrain.

Held under the patronage of Interior Minister Lieutenant General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, the event, which concludes tomorrow, is organised in co-ordination with the American Society of Safety Engineers – Middle East Chapter (ASSE-MEC).

The opening ceremony was held at the Gulf Hotel and was attended by Alba deputy chief executive Ali Al Baqali, senior manager safety, health and environment Mohammed Khalil and acting public relations manager Fatema Al Mohri.

The conference is organised by the ASSE, an independent non-profit professional organisation that brings together key health, safety and environment professionals from public and private sectors as well as regional academic institutions to share experience, insights and latest innovative ideas to address key challenges.

Bahrain eyes major role in franchise business

By AVINASH SAXENA

MANAMA: Pasta Express, an Italian food brand managed by the ANG Holdings Group in Bahrain, has won the Best Bahrain Franchisee award at the first-ever Bahrain Franchise and Dine Expo.

The brand will now represent the kingdom for the first time in the seventh edition of Best Franchisee of the World (BFW) awards in Florence, Italy next month.

The other winners were: Talabat – Best Service Provider Bahrain, Bunkers GCC – Best Bahrain Homegrown Brand, Inventors Hive – Best Emerging Education Brand, Komandor Middle East – Best Bahrain Retail Brand, and Young Trader – Best Emerging Entrepreneur Award.

BFW founder Manuel Vescovi presented the awards and said he hoped to organise the next BFW Awards in partnership with Quick Media Solutions in Bahrain next year.

"We have serious plans for Bahrain... I am pleased to see Bahrain take its first steps towards



■ Shaikh Hisham, second from left, receiving a memento from the expo organisers

growing and expanding in the world of franchising," he added.

The Best Franchisee of the World (BFW) was created in 2010 in response to a lack of franchisee events in the world.

"The number of franchisers in the world is about 30,000, while the number of franchisees worldwide is about 1,200,000," he said.

Held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel's Bahrain Conference Centre under the patronage of Capital Governor Shaikh Hisham bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa, the two-day expo saw participation

from more than 300 delegates.

Over a 100 brands and 50 exhibitors representing 20 countries including the UK, the USA, India, Morocco, Canada, New Zealand, Italy, Spain, Austria, Russia, Switzerland, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Jordan, Kuwait, the UAE, Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain were present.

More than 15 experts from regional and international consultancies delivered presentations on development and growth opportunities in the franchising business.

Organised by Quick Media

Solutions and the Middle East and North Africa Franchise Association (Menafa), with Tamkeen as the official strategic partner and Talabat as the platinum sponsor, the expo was also supported by the Economic Development Board, Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority, Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bahrain Businesswomen Society and the Bahrain SMEs Society.

"The Mena region franchise industry is worth approximately \$30 billion and growing at a rate of 27 per cent annually," said Menafa founder and chairman Dr Khalid Al Sharafa.

QMS managing director and co-organiser of the expo Benoy Kumar said the expo had delivered beyond expectations.

"Many of the participating exhibitors are going back with signed deals and leads. The franchising business was introduced on a large scale for the first time in Bahrain through this expo and with it being a success, we look forward to growing bigger and in return create bigger opportunities in our future franchise expos; nationally and internationally," he added.

Concurring with him, QMS Event co-director M Pradeep Raj said the event had proved to be a platform for potential homegrown brands in the kingdom to take their first steps towards turning into franchises, which not only helps them to expand into the international markets, but also contribute to the development of the local economy.

According to Tamkeen chief executive Dr Ebrahim Janahi the labour fund authority used the expo to showcase the "wide range of enterprise schemes that support Bahraini entrepreneurs and international enterprises existing and working in the Bahraini market".

"This support will apparently, pave the way for business growth and diversification of local enterprises to eventually take its place in the franchise market.

"The franchise business is a growing business in the region and the world, offering great business opportunities that Bahrain enterprises can benefit from, be part of and work constantly towards developing and expanding their businesses to access new markets," added Dr Janahi.

The awards event also saw the launch of a new mobile app named Citipal for supermarket shopping developed by IBA Software House in collaboration with Al Muntazah Group.

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