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Despite Global Headwinds, Kuwait Economy to Grow in 2026

The Times Kuwait Report

After a resilient start in the first-half of 2025, global economic growth appeared to moderate by year end. The robust resilience witnessed in the first six months is now largely attributed to temporary factors such as the front-loading of trade, investment, and inventory management strategies, rather than core strengths in the global economy. With uncertainty about the stability and trajectory of the world economy remaining acute, global growth in 2026 is forecast to be subdued.

Despite tariff shocks unleashed by the United States in April, overall global economic activity performed better than expected, as most tariff impacts were tempered through one-on-one deals and resets. Nevertheless, headwinds from the heightened incertitude raised by the tariff announcements, have fueled protectionism, trade fragmentation, and non-tariff barriers that



could impact global growth prospects in 2026.

According to projections by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), global growth is projected

to slow from 3.3 percent in 2024 to 3.2 percent in 2025 and 3.1 percent in 2026, with advanced economies growing around 1.5 percent and

emerging market and developing economies just over 4 percent. Global trade volume is also forecast to grow at a much slower rate than the 3.5 percent exhibited in 2024-25, to average around 2.9 percent in 2025-26. Meanwhile, inflation is expected to decline by 0.5 percent to 3.7 in 2026, however, in the US it could remain above-target.

The latest World Economic Outlook report by the IMF noted that risks to global growth remain tilted to the downside, with prolonged policy uncertainty, escalation of protectionist measures, and trade fragmentation dampening consumption, discouraging investment, disrupting supply chains, and stifling productivity growth in 2026. Major shocks to labor supply, mainly from restrictive immigration policies could also reduce growth, especially in states with aging populations or skill gaps.

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aahār
PROUDLY VEG

We chose the name "aahār" since it is rooted in "Sanskrit" - the mother of all Indian languages -. "aahār" is the word of "nourishment" and its a name unites culture, just as our food unites people.



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Reading Among Youth: Decline or Transformation?

The decline of young people in public libraries does not signal the death of reading, but rather a profound transformation in how knowledge is consumed. In an age of smartphones and instant information, reading has moved from immersive books to fragmented digital content—raising urgent questions about depth, reflection, and the future of intellectual engagement.



By Sheikha Suhaila Al-Sabah
Managing Editor



Not so long ago, public libraries teemed with life, bustling with seekers of knowledge, their shelves overflowing with eager hands turning pages with passion, while bags laden with paper treasures were carried home like precious relics. Then, the scene gradually changed, that activity waned, screens replaced shelves, and fingers glided effortlessly across cold glass, while libraries stood silent, as if waiting for someone to breathe life back into them.

This raises the pressing question: Have young people truly turned away from reading, or have they simply changed their direction and tools to align with the rhythm of the times? The undeniable truth is that reading has not died; it has transformed and its forms have changed. The young person who is rarely seen carrying a physical book devours dozens of articles, publications, and titles daily through their smartphone.

However, this transformation has not come without a cost; The prevalence of rapid, fragmented reading has imposed a new pattern of engagement, weakening the capacity for in-depth study and reflection, and replacing immersion in a lengthy book with a superficial skimming of catchy, flashy titles.

Furthermore, libraries have often failed to keep pace with these transformations, leaving

their books confined to outdated shelves, failing to reflect the interests of the new generation or address their evolving questions. Educational institutions, for their part, have also contributed to widening the gap by focusing on rote learning and memorization, neglecting the teaching of research and inquiry skills, thus transforming reading into an academic burden rather than an intellectual pursuit.

On the other hand, the internet has emerged as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it has flung open the doors of knowledge, making access to information faster and easier than ever before. On the other hand, it has encouraged intellectual laziness and diminished patience with printed books. The internet, with its diversity and allure, has become the preferred choice for many, especially given the availability

of books and resources that may not be found in public libraries, further discouraging young people from visiting them. The problem is exacerbated by the proliferation of ready-made research papers, which commodify knowledge and eliminate the need for research and reading, allowing students to simply submit a quick product to obtain a degree. This phenomenon not only stifles the passion for reading but also empties the educational process of its essence, severs the connection between students and books, and transforms knowledge into a mere formality rather than an intellectual experience.

Despite this seemingly bleak picture, hope has not been entirely extinguished. Book fairs continue to attract significant numbers of young people, a clear indication that the

generation's relationship with books has not been severed, but rather needs to be rekindled and nurtured. Furthermore, a growing segment of the population seeks serious digital content that transcends superficiality and simplistic summaries, restoring the profound meaning of reading, even if only through a screen.

Therefore, salvaging this landscape becomes a collective responsibility that cannot be postponed. Families are called upon to instill a love of reading from childhood, even if only through a small home library that serves as a constant window to knowledge. Educational institutions are called upon to reinstate the value of independent research, teach library and resource literacy skills, and organize reading competitions that stimulate curiosity and reward effort. Public libraries, for their part, must modernize their content and resources, keep pace with the interests of young people, and integrate print and digital materials to become engaging spaces rather than silent repositories.

Amidst all this, it remains essential to recall the profound significance of the first word revealed in the Quran: 'Read'. It is not a fleeting command or a mere cultural slogan, but a way of life, a foundation for progress, and the key to advancement. Reading has always been, and remains, the broadest path to awareness and the strongest bridge to civilization.

Reading among young people has not declined in its absolute sense, but its medium and pace have changed. It has shifted from paper to screen, from leisure to speed, and from depth to brevity.

What is required today is not to fight technology or dwell on the past, but to find a smart balance that combines the old and the new, the paper and the digital, so that reading remains a beacon of knowledge, a tool of enlightenment, and an active force in creating a more conscious and mature future.

Kuwait reasserts investment attractiveness with ongoing mega projects

Kuwait's development pipeline has surged to a record US\$220.9 billion, up from \$195 billion in 2024, as the GCC project landscape accelerates at a historic pace, driven by renewed investment in infrastructure, energy, real estate, and public-sector projects across the region.

Project landscape in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states is accelerating at a historic pace, with Kuwait's pipeline of planned and ongoing developments surging to US\$220.9 billion, up from \$195 billion in 2024, according to a new report by Kamco Invest. The jump reflects renewed momentum in infrastructure, energy, real estate, and public-sector investment, positioning Kuwait for a more assertive development cycle.

Across the region, Saudi Arabia has tightened its grip on the crown, leading Gulf markets with an extraordinary \$2.05 trillion in planned and ongoing projects, compared to \$1.91 trillion in 2024. The Kingdom's project boom continues to be driven by Vision 2030 megaprojects, urban transformation schemes, tourism hubs, and large-scale industrial expansion.

The United Arab Emirates secured second place, with project values soaring to \$1.14 trillion, a dramatic rise from \$878.3 billion the previous year. The increase underscores the UAE's aggressive push in real estate, transport, renewable energy, and digital infrastructure.

Oman emerged as one of the fastest climbers, with planned and ongoing projects jumping to \$33.3 billion, up from \$248.1 billion in 2024. The Sultanate's rise reflects major investments in logistics, ports, energy diversification, and tourism-led development.

Qatar ranked fourth, with project values reaching \$251.6 billion, compared to \$237.3 billion in the previous year, supported by continued infrastructure upgrades and long-term national development initiatives.

Bahrain was the only market to record a



decline, with planned and ongoing projects easing to \$52.1 billion, down from \$62.7 billion in 2024, indicating a more cautious development stance amid fiscal recalibration.

On the fiscal front, Kamco Invest's report delivered an upbeat outlook for public finances across the region. The firm expects Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) budgets to post combined surpluses of \$23.1 billion in 2026, up from projected surpluses of \$19.6 billion in 2025.

The improving surplus outlook reflects stronger oil revenues, tighter spending controls, and expanding non-oil income streams, providing governments with greater flexibility to fund strategic projects without compromising fiscal stability.

For Kuwait, the rise to over \$220 billion in projects signals more than just numbers. It points to an inflection point in development planning, with opportunities opening across construction, contracting, finance, logistics, and services—and a clear message that the country is reasserting itself on the regional investment map.

Qahwah Arabiya: A Timeless Ritual of Hospitality in the Arabian Peninsula

"All over Arabia the elaborate ceremony of coffee making is the sign the guest is welcome and honored above all men by his host. From the highest to the lowest this making and offering of coffee is the first duty of a householder, whether he be a town- or tent-dweller, when entertaining a stranger or an acquaintance."

By Claudia Farkas Al Rashoud
Special to The Times Kuwait

Originally from California, Claudia Farkas Al Rashoud has enjoyed working in Kuwait since 1979, when she became the first professional female photojournalist for the Arab Times newspaper. She has written five books, with photographs, about Kuwait. Working as a freelance photographer for London-based picture libraries, her articles and photographs have appeared in many publications. She also serves as an ethnographic researcher and consultant.

Claudia has also worked in the field of animal welfare in Kuwait for many years. All proceeds from her books and other work benefit Touch of Hope Kuwait, the largest animal shelter in the country. As a founding board member of the Kuwait Society for Animal Welfare and director of the education program, she gives presentations on animal welfare for schools, universities and community groups. She also speaks on other subjects including Kuwait's history, heritage, natural history and environment, journalism and photography, and palliative care.

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So wrote Colonel H.R.P. Dickson of the social importance of Arabian coffee in his famous book, "The Arab of the Desert." Colonel Dickson came to Kuwait as British Political Agent in 1929. While the pre-oil era Kuwait that he describes in his book has changed beyond recognition, an age-old custom still widely practiced today is the ceremonial serving of Arabian coffee.

The bitter brew originated in North Yemen, where coffee is grown on terraced slopes. In the sizzling temperatures, people discovered that drinking small cups of hot coffee was a more effective thirst quencher than cold liquids. Arabian coffee, or



Qahwah Arabiya, is also known to have a soothing effect on the stomach after heavy or greasy food. It's always flavored with cardamom and sometimes also with cloves, and it's a mild blend, much lighter than Turkish coffee.

The coffee serving ritual is still conducted in much the same time-honored way, whether the guests are being served in a



Kuwaiti home, a bedouin tent, a shop or office, at a conference, reception, or other official venue. The traditional serving vessel is a brass pot with a long, beak-like spout, which the server carries in his left hand. Nowadays, a thermos of the same shape is also sometimes used. In his right hand the coffee server carries a stack of tiny china cups. He goes to every person in the room pouring about three sips of coffee in each cup. He will continue to refill the cup until the guest jiggles it from side to side indicating he has had enough. Arabian coffee is often preceded by small cups of strong, sweet tea, and is usually the signal that it's time for the guest to leave.

At ladies wedding receptions however, tiny cups of coffee are served throughout the evening to fortify the guests during the long, late night party. Dates are the traditional accompaniment to Qahwah Arabia, but at weddings and other special occasions, chocolates, and other bite-sized sweets are also offered. Serving coffee is traditionally a male role, but at the segregated wedding celebrations a coffee lady serves the female guests.

The ceremonial preparation of Arabian coffee was of particular importance to the bedouins of the Arabian Peninsula in the days when they practiced a traditional nomadic lifestyle. At the end of a long day's toil in the desert, the coffee fire served as an important gathering place, where visitors were received and news, gossip, and the events of the day discussed.

Dame Violet Dickson, the wife of Colonel Dickson, often accompanied her husband on his extended sojourns with Kuwait's bedouins and was intimately acquainted with their customs. She wrote a book titled "Forty Years in Kuwait" in which she described the preparation of coffee at the tent of some Murra tribesmen.

"The menfolk were now glad to take a rest and sat round the

coffee fire. As the fire blazed up, the coffee-maker called to the women beyond the divide, 'Atini qahwa' ('Give me coffee') and after a little while, 'gudua' which means dish of sweet dates... Mubarak's son, Mohammad, began preparing the coffee over the glowing camel-dung fire and, having roasted the beans, he made the brass of the mortar (hawan) ring as he pounded the coffee, a sign to passers-by or neighbors that coffee was being prepared and that they were welcome."

In his book, Colonel Dickson gave a much more lengthy account of the ancient coffee making and serving ritual. He described the pounding of freshly roasted coffee beans in mortar and pestle as being performed with intricate musical rhythm, with the ringing sound the embodiment of traditional bedouin hospitality. He noted that, "A man famous among his fellows for his hospitality practically never allows this 'ting ting' of the pestle and mortar to



die down, and the Badawin who hears this music, be he ever so far off, will at once make for the joyful sound, sure of his welcome. So-and-so makes coffee from morn till night...is a nice way of saying that So-and-so is a generous and hospitable man: and no greater praise can be bestowed in Arabia on any man."

Those who prepare Qahwah Arabiya today have a number of options. They can buy ready mixed coffee or have it mixed and ground according to their taste at one of the many mills that also sell nuts, dried fruits, and other delicacies. There's even an instant version sold in small individual pouches that only need to be mixed into boiling water.

For those who'd like to try making it, here's the recipe for Arabian coffee.

Either buy a ready blend or ask for Qahwah Arabia at a mill and have it custom mixed and ground. You can choose from lighter or darker roasted beans, request more or less cardamom, and opt whether or not to add cloves. Put one half cup of coffee in a pot with four cups of water and bring to the boil. When the coffee has boiled, reduce the temperature and leave the pot simmering for at least fifteen minutes, so the coffee ground settles on the bottom. Serve without sugar in small handleless cups about one third full.

Have you met the World?
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Proudly celebrating the Golden Anniversary of Viet Nam - Kuwait friendship and cooperation

As Viet Nam and Kuwait mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations on 10 January 2026, the milestone offers an opportunity to reflect on a remarkable journey shaped by solidarity, mutual respect, and shared historical empathy. From the early days following Viet Nam's reunification to today's expanding cooperation, the relationship has evolved from humble beginnings into a mature and trusted partnership.

H.E. Dr. Duc Thang Nguyen
Ambassador of Viet Nam
Special to The Times Kuwait

The year 2026 holds special significance for Viet Nam and Kuwait as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations (10 January 1976–10 January 2026). On this occasion, we would like to highlight the historical pathway paved and built by both Viet Nam and Kuwait from humble beginnings towards a strategic partnership.

The evolution of bilateral ties over the five decades: Over the past half-century, the relationship between Viet Nam and Kuwait has achieved certain memorable milestones, striving for the interest of our peoples and the prosperous future of our nations.

Shortly after Viet Nam's reunification, Viet Nam and Kuwait established diplomatic relations on 10 January 1976. As the first country in the Gulf region establishing diplomatic ties with Viet Nam, Kuwait made a substantial contribution to the relationship between Viet Nam and the Gulf countries in particular, and other ones in the Middle East in general.

Viet Nam appreciated very much the Kuwaiti people's demonstrations against the Viet Nam War and their solidarity with Vietnamese people for the noble cause of protecting national independence and sovereignty. And as a matter of fact, Viet Nam fully supported Kuwait's efforts to gain liberation during the 1991 war with Iraq.

In June 1993, the Viet Nam Trade Representative Office was set up in Kuwait, marking it the first trade office of Viet Nam in the Gulf region. Ten years later, cooperation between the two countries was further strengthened when Viet Nam officially opened its embassy in Kuwait in October 2003. On the Kuwaiti side, Prime Minister Nasser Al Mohammed Al Sabah paid an official visit to Viet Nam in May 2007, followed by the opening of Kuwait's embassy in Hanoi in August 2007 and the Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City in September 2007.

The 50-year journey of Viet Nam - Kuwait friendship (1976 - 2026) is entering a new chapter as the two countries elevated their relationship to a Strategic Partnership during the landmark visit of Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh to Kuwait in November 2025. This breakthrough displayed a deep bond between the two countries on the basis of political trust, substantive economic cooperation, culture exchange, people contacts and a shared commitment to peace and development.

Notable achievements in Viet Nam - Kuwait relations: Most telling is the impressive progress in trade and investment. Kuwait has become the leading trade and investment partner of Viet Nam in the Middle East as of today. Bilateral trade has been estimated to reach nearly US\$7 billion in 2025, the largest volume between Viet Nam and one country in the whole region. On the other hand, Nghi Son Refinery and Petrochemical Complex project in Vietnam has showcased its very effective



“ Fifty years after establishing diplomatic relations, Viet Nam and Kuwait enter 2026 with renewed momentum and a shared vision for the future. The elevation of bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership in late 2025 underscores the depth of political trust, economic cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges that now define a relationship built on resilience, friendship, and common aspirations for peace and development. **”**

operation with the joint-venture share of \$3.5 billion from Kuwait, ranking among top regional investors so far.

Viet Nam and Kuwait have stood side by side during the tough times. Viet Nam will remember for a long time Kuwait's generous provision of 600,000 vaccine doses in the gravest period of the COVID-19 pandemic. This shared experience has fostered a natural friendship and political trust, allowing the two countries to mutually understand and support each other from the early start of their diplomatic relations.

This spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance has been further manifested when Kuwait provided the largest amount of preferential Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding to Viet Nam. The Dau Tieng irrigation project was the first to receive ODA from Kuwait in 1979. For the past many years, Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) has supported essential infrastructure projects in Viet Nam, financing the total of \$182 million through 15 projects across various provinces, particularly in remote areas.

Shared Vision for Peace, Cooperation and Development: The relationship between

Viet Nam and Kuwait was laid on the ground of historical empathy and common will. Both countries have endured challenging periods in defending our sovereignty, building our nations, and asserting our national standing. This shared experience has fostered a natural friendship and political trust, allowing the two countries to mutually understand and support each other from the early start of their diplomatic relations.

Over 50 years of relations, the two countries have consistently supported each other's independence and sovereignty, refrained from interfering in internal affairs, maintained sincere dialogue, and pursued substantive cooperation. This has ensured that our relationship remains unaffected by the many challenges such as global economic turbulence, regional and international conflicts, climate change, non-traditional security issues, etc.

Furthermore, the solid foundation of strong bond between Viet Nam and Kuwait lies in our shared vision for peace, cooperation, and development. Viet Nam and Kuwait always uphold common views on national independence, aspirations for development,

and commitment to peace and collaboration both regionally and globally. The utmost efforts and coordination between Viet Nam and Kuwait in promoting multilateralism, peace, sustainable development, as well as actively participating in humanitarian missions, have made significant contributions to enhancing the roles of both nations on the international stage.

Recommendations for promoting practical cooperation: As the Viet Nam Embassy in Kuwait, we would like to suggest the following focuses of cooperation should be implemented by both countries' relevant agencies and businesses.

First, cooperation in the field of energy could be expanded to include storage facilities, transshipment centers for oil and gas, and energy logistics in Viet Nam.

Simultaneously, the two countries need to link oil cooperation with the energy transition to jointly research and invest into solar power, wind power, and green hydrogen projects. This is a feasible step to optimize the oil and gas value chain, adapt to global trends, and bring sustainable benefits to both Viet Nam and Kuwait.

Second, with its dynamic economy and favorable investment environment, Viet Nam has become an increasingly attractive destination for Kuwaiti investment funds. In the coming time, the two countries could enhance cooperation on large-scale projects, particularly building civil infrastructures and establishing a new financial center in Southeast Asia.

Third, Viet Nam confidently positions itself as one of the world's leading exporters of agricultural and aquatic products, capable of ensuring food security and providing an abundant, stable, and long-term supply of Halal-certified products to the Kuwaiti market. Cooperation in this area will not only help Kuwait diversify its food supply but also create opportunities for Viet Nam to develop a Halal agricultural value chain, thereby expanding its market to the GCC countries and the wider Middle East region.

Fourth, Viet Nam's beautiful landscapes, vibrant culture and benevolent people have won admiration worldwide. The S-shaped country is increasingly becoming a favored destination for international tourists, including many from the Middle East. The high potential for tourism cooperation between Viet Nam and Kuwait could be realized in the coming years, owing to the obvious complementarity in demand, excellent products, and seasonality. We already discussed opening direct flights between Kuwait and Ho Chi Minh City.

Fifth, in a volatile global context, Viet Nam and Kuwait must strengthen our coordination and support for each other in multilateral forums. Furthermore, Viet Nam can serve as a gateway for Kuwait to expand investment into Southeast Asia, while Kuwait can give a hand of strategic partner, helping Vietnam access into the Middle East and neighboring markets.

We strongly believe that Viet Nam and Kuwait will continue, today and tomorrow, to work side by side, embarking on the next half century of brighter, friendly, and cooperative relations.

Year 2025 marks shift in travel trends among Kuwaiti travelers

Europe leads as Kuwaiti travelers redefine their destinations in 2025; from the Dolomites to Vietnam: How Kuwaiti travel patterns changed in 2025

While 2025 recorded only marginal growth in the number of Kuwaiti travelers compared to 2024, the year marked a decisive shift in travel preferences, with new destination choices, and booking behavior, and Europe rising to the forefront.

According to statistics from the Public Authority of Civil Aviation (PACA), Kuwait International Airport handled 14.93 million passengers in 2025, reflecting sustained travel momentum. Of this total, 7.64 million passengers departed, averaging 644,400 travelers per month, while 7.295 million arrivals were recorded,



with a monthly average of 628,600. Commenting on the figures, Mohammad Al-Mutairi, Chairman of the Federation of Tourism and Travel Offices, noted that local travel agencies have successfully adapted to digital transformation, entering the world of online platforms and travel applications, while meeting growing demand for integrated, end-to-end travel services.

PACA data shows that August 2025 recorded the highest passenger traffic, with 926,400 travelers, followed by September (775,400) and January (720,900). In contrast, November was the least active month, with 498,900

passengers, highlighting the strong seasonality of Kuwaiti travel patterns. Besides exceptional activity during peak seasons, travel in 2025 was driven by a surge in demand for new and alternative destinations. Northern Italy, particularly the Dolomites region, emerged as a standout destination, followed closely by Madrid, which captured a significant share of Kuwaiti bookings. The Czech Republic also rose as a preferred option, alongside Russia, which is witnessing steadily increasing demand.

Traditional European favorites such as France, London, and Switzerland remained strong, while travel behavior in Asia showed notable diversification. Many Kuwaitis chose Vietnam as a new Asian destination in 2025, often using Thailand as a transit hub, alongside continued demand for Dubai, Beirut, and Egypt, particularly Egypt's North Coast. He added that Abu Dhabi emerged as the preferred family travel destination for Kuwaitis.

The average travel budget per person to high-demand destinations ranged between 500 and 1,300 Kuwaiti dinars, typically covering airfare and accommodation. Travelers increasingly opted to add services such as transportation, train tickets, domestic flights, and guided experiences, enhancing trip quality and flexibility.

According to travel platform Wego, Paris and London topped the list of most searched destinations from Kuwait in 2025, while interest in Barcelona and Vienna rose noticeably. In Asia, Manila recorded the highest number of flight searches, followed by Guangzhou and Thailand.

Data from Flightradar24 confirms that Dubai remained the most connected destination from Kuwait, with 113 flights per week, followed by Jeddah (89), Cairo (85), and Riyadh (56). Doha ranked fifth with 48 weekly flights, followed by Bahrain (45) and Abu Dhabi (44), with Madinah, Mumbai, and Amman also featuring prominently.

Committee formed to settle disputes over expat health insurance

The official gazette, Kuwait Al-Youm, has published a ministerial decision establishing a specialized committee to adjudicate disputes arising from the application of Law No. 1 of 1999 on health insurance for foreigners, as well as disputes related to the fees imposed for health services. The committee will also handle matters linked to Ministerial Decision No. 306 of 2025, which issued the executive regulations for the law and its amendments.

As per the decision, the committee will be chaired by a member of the Fatwa and Legislation Department, with the Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Affairs serving as vice-chairman. Its members will include the Director of the Insurance and Health Guarantee Department, the Director of the Legal Affairs Department, the Director of the Financial Accounting Department, a representative of the Insurance Regulation Unit, and a physician representing the Kuwait Medical Association.

The committee is mandated to resolve disputes related to the implementation of the law and its executive regulations. Its meetings will be held at the headquarters of the Health Insurance and Guarantee Administration, upon invitation by the chairman or his deputy.

The decision further stipulates that the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health will assign a sufficient number of employees from the Health Insurance and Guarantee Department to receive and process complaints, based on nominations by the department's director. These employees will register each complaint under a serial number, refer it to the committee, and issue proof of registration to the complainant.

The designated staff will also coordinate with the committee to schedule the first hearing session and notify all concerned parties within two weeks of the complaint's registration date. Complaints may be submitted electronically. If a complaint is filed against the Ministry of Health, the Health Insurance and Guarantee Department will formally notify the Ministry's Legal Affairs Department, whose director will appoint a legal representative to appear before the committee on behalf of the ministry.

The decision aims to institutionalize dispute resolution procedures, enhance transparency, and ensure the consistent application of health insurance regulations affecting foreign residents.



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Forty years of Kuwait-EU ties forged in history, shaped by common vision

As the European Union and Kuwait prepare to mark four decades of formal diplomatic relations in 2026, EU Ambassador H.E. Anne Koistinen reflects on a partnership rooted in history, shaped by shared values, and driven by a forward-looking ambition to deepen cooperation across security, trade, sustainability, education and innovation.

The Times Kuwait Report

When the European Union (EU) and Kuwait formally established diplomatic relations in 1986, they set in motion a partnership that would steadily mature into one of mutual trust, respect and strategic cooperation. In 2026, both sides will mark the 40th anniversary of that milestone—a moment that not only celebrates the past but also charts the course for a more ambitious future.

Yet the story of EU-Kuwait relations did not begin in 1986. As EU Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen noted, the bonds between Europe and Kuwait stretch back centuries, shaped by trade routes, cultural exchange and shared interests. These early connections laid the groundwork for the resilient and dynamic relationship that exists today.

Over the past four decades, cooperation between the EU, its Member States and Kuwait has expanded far beyond diplomacy. Political dialogue, economic partnership, people-to-people exchanges, and collaboration in green transition and digitalization have all become

pillars of a relationship built on shared values and mutual respect.

Ambassador Koistinen stressed that the 40th anniversary is not merely a ceremonial marker. It reflects a sustained commitment by both sides to work together in confronting regional and global challenges. From regional security and stability to climate action and technological advancement, the EU and Kuwait have consistently aligned their efforts to promote peace, development and prosperity.

Trade and investment ties have flourished, with the EU and its Member States standing among Kuwait's most significant partners across a wide spectrum of sectors. Cooperation spans infrastructure development, clean technologies, women's empowerment, education, research and innovation, reinforcing the depth and breadth of the partnership.

Looking ahead, both sides are intent on building a more forward-looking and future-ready relationship. Priorities include accelerating green and digital transitions, expanding scientific and technological cooperation, enhancing educational and cultural exchanges, and strengthening connectivity between



Europe and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. Regional stability remains a shared strategic objective. Ambassador Koistinen highlighted that by pooling expertise, resources and values, the EU and Kuwait aim to develop innovative solutions that not only benefit their

own societies but also contribute to wider global prosperity. In a significant step toward deepening this cooperation, the EU proposed in July 2025 to advance negotiations with Kuwait on a Strategic Partnership Agreement. The initiative seeks to establish a comprehensive and ambitious framework reflecting shared priorities and a forward-looking vision across key areas of mutual interest.

Ambassador Koistinen noted: "This 40th anniversary is not just another milestone; it builds on a resilient and enduring partnership. The EU remains committed to strengthening ties with Kuwait, promoting sustainable growth, encouraging dialogue and innovation, and ensuring that close relations continue to deliver tangible benefits for both peoples in the decades ahead."

To mark the occasion, the EU will host a series of functions and activities throughout the anniversary year. Ambassador Koistinen revealed that a range of events is already in preparation and encouraged the public to follow the EU Delegation's social media platforms (EUinKuwait) to stay informed about upcoming celebrations.

Local banks revise credit policies, opens credit to select expats

Kuwaiti banks are reshaping their retail lending strategies, offering expatriates loans of up to KD70,000 as intensified competition and easing residency indicators prompt a recalibration of credit risk and growth priorities.



Several major banks in the country have revised their credit policies, amid the persistent slowdown in retail credit growth witnessed since 2023. The updated policies encourage providing loans to high-income and professionally stable expatriates

Banks are now offering loans of up to KD70,000 for customers who earn upwards of KD3,000 per month. Those with salaries starting at KD1,500 but below KD3,000 are eligible to borrow up to KD50,000, while customers earning KD600 to less than KD1,500 can access loans of up to KD15,000. While consumer loans remain capped at KD25,000, housing and renovation loans may reach KD70,000, with repayable terms stretching up to seven years.

Eligible borrowers may also receive financing exceeding the value of end-of-service benefits, depending on employment grade and stability. Categories most likely to benefit include government employees, healthcare workers, engineers, teachers, and business owners, with limits calculated

based on salary, benefits, deposits, and overall solvency.

While higher limit loans are processed mainly at bank headquarters and branches, smaller loans are increasingly offered digitally. Banks continue to apply strict eligibility requirements, focusing on job stability, employer reputation, and genuine salaries, to prevent defaults linked to shell companies. The policy shift signals intensified competition with medium and smaller banks, which had previously dominated the expatriate lending segment. The new policies adhere to Central Bank of Kuwait rules, including the cap that monthly installments on the loan cannot exceed 40 percent of salary.

The shift reflects evolving market conditions and recent liberalization measures, including civil ID validity extension to 10 years for non-Kuwaiti property owners and foreign investor card validity set at 15 years, providing banks with stronger indicators for risk assessment.



Ministerial committee reviews progress on major projects

Addressing the 42nd meeting of the Ministerial Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of Major Development Projects last week, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, who chaired the meeting, affirmed the keen interest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad in providing continuous guidance to achieve Kuwait's comprehensive and sustainable development vision across all sectors, and to accelerate completion rates of ongoing projects.

The Prime Minister directed committee members to continue their joint efforts to overcome all obstacles, in accordance with clear strategies, mechanisms and procedures for implementing the previously approved plans, stressing the importance of coordination among government entities to ensure timely execution. The meeting reviewed the latest reports from relevant authorities on progress in a number of strategic projects, including Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, development of the electricity grid and renewable energy, a low-carbon green waste-recycling system, housing projects, environmental infrastructure for wastewater treatment plants, free zones, economic zones,

and combating desertification.

His Highness underlined that these projects form the backbone of Kuwait's development path and are essential to strengthening the country's economic and environmental sustainability, improving quality of life and achieving long-term strategic goals.

The committee also reviewed key achievements in launching new major development projects and opening avenues for strategic cooperation with various countries to deepen economic, trade and investment relations, enhance shared interests and support national development priorities.

The meeting was attended by Head of the Prime Minister's Office Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel, Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ali, Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mishaan, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdul Latif Al-Meshari, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority Sheikh Dr. Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad, Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Al-Majed, and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamel.

Kuwait National Library, recording memory of a nation

Kuwait National Library stands as the nation's living memory—safeguarding Kuwait's historical, intellectual, and cultural heritage while serving as a central hub for research, documentation, and intellectual property protection.

Kuwait National Library (KNL) stands as the country's living memory, preserving its history and intellectual heritage while serving as a key center for research and intellectual property protection.

The library, founded in 1923 as the Public Library during the rule of late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, has evolved through the decades, going through several name changes over the decades.

In 1936, the library was renamed as Library of Public Information, a name it retained until 1957, when it came to be known as the Main Information Library. This name-plate continued until 1962, when it became the Main Public Library for four years. From 1966 to 1985 it was known as Central Library, before becoming the State Central Library for nine years.

Amiri Decree No. 52 of 1994, transformed the library establishing it as the National Library



of Kuwait, and was located at Al-Mubarakiyah School until 2011, when the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad inaugurated its current landmark building on Arabian Gulf Street.

The library preserves national memory by collecting and documenting Kuwaiti, Arab, and Islamic heritage, preparing the unified national catalog, developing advanced information systems to support research, and assigning International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) to all publications issued in Kuwait.

The library's new building was designed to house more than one million volumes and currently contains tens of thousands of books, references, manuscripts, and periodicals. The Kuwait National Library launched the 'Memory of a Nation' project to digitally preserve rare books, documents, stamps, and coins, ensuring protected and modern access to cultural heritage for researchers and the public. - KUNA

Kuwait tops GCC states in Human Freedom Index

Kuwait has solidified its position as one of the region's most free and open countries, ranking first in the Gulf and second in the Arab world, behind only Jordan, according to the latest Human Freedom Index (HFI) report, covering the period up to the end of 2025.

The HFI, a respected annual report produced jointly by the American Cato Institute and the Canadian Fraser Institute, evaluates 165 countries worldwide. Globally, Kuwait ranked 113th, achieving a total score of 6.18. Its performance was particularly notable in key sub-indicators of Personal freedom: 6.33 points (109th globally); Economic freedom: 6.56 points (88th globally); and Civil liberties: 6.43 points (104th globally).

Among other GCC states, improvements were observed across the board, with global rankings for the UAE 121, Oman 122, Qatar 128, Bahrain 129, and Saudi Arabia 148.

At the global level, the countries demonstrating the highest levels of human freedom were, Thailand and Switzerland tied with a score of 9.14, followed by New Zealand (9.08), Denmark (9.04), Luxembourg (8.93), Ireland (8.91), Finland (8.84), Tanzania, Australia, Sweden, and Iceland tied with a score of 8.8, Estonia (8.78), Canada (8.74), Japan (8.73) and Norway (8.73). These nations consistently excel in both personal and economic freedom indicators. The Human Freedom Index is widely regarded as the most comprehensive global measure of liberty, encompassing 87 sub-indicators ranging from the rule of law and freedom of expression to property rights and regulatory efficiency, covering roughly 98 percent of the world's population.

Kuwait's strong ranking reflects continued progress in enhancing personal, economic, and civil liberties, and underscores its standing as a regional leader in promoting human freedom.

Trade surplus rises in first-half of 2025, but drops below that in 2024

Kuwait's trade surplus in the first seven months of 2025 jumped to KD1.17 billion, the hike in value of total exports to imports was lower than that during the same period a year earlier, when trade surplus stood at KD1.51 billion, marking a decline of KD336 million—a drop of 22.24 percent.

Latest figures from the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) shows that total trade volume during the first seven months of 2025 stood at around KD20.09 billion, down from the nearly KD20.7 billion during the corresponding period in 2024.

This represents a decrease of KD551.7 million, or 2.67 percent in total trade volume. The data also showed that Kuwait's trade balance during the same period reached about KD5.02 billion, reflecting a sharp year-on-year decline of KD2.5 billion, or 33.4 percent, compared to KD7.54 billion recorded in the first seven months of 2024. In terms of trade flows, total exports and imports combined amounted to approximately KD7.53 billion during the period under review.

Meanwhile, total exports in the first seven months of 2025 reached around KD12.56 billion dinars, posting a year-on-year decline of 10.9 percent, equivalent to 1.53 billion dinars, compared to the same period last year.

The figures reflect continued pressure on Kuwait's external trade performance, amid fluctuations in global markets and lower export values, particularly in the oil sector, which remains the main driver of the country's trade revenues.

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Five pillars shaping trajectory of GCC economies in 2026

A new PwC report, “5 Economic Pillars Shaping the GCC 2026”, projects a pivotal year for the Gulf economies, as governments recalibrate fiscal policy, accelerate AI adoption, deepen global integration and push ahead with diversification to strengthen resilience in a changing global landscape.

PwC has released a comprehensive economic report outlining five key pillars expected to shape the trajectory of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) economies in 2026, signaling a decisive shift toward resilience, diversification and long-term competitiveness.

The report states that Gulf economic policies are moving firmly toward strengthening resilience through trade, investment and supply chains, accelerating the adoption of modern technologies, enhancing workforce readiness and reinforcing financial stability in response to intensifying global challenges.

PwC described 2026 as a pivotal year for fiscal rebalancing across the GCC, as governments adjust policies to lower oil and gas revenues. The focus will be on reprioritizing spending, monetizing assets, managing liabilities and boosting non-oil income streams. Priority will be given to projects with strong economic impact, particularly in digital infrastructure, logistics and industrial development.

Non-Oil Revenues and Kuwait's Outlook

With specific reference to Kuwait, the report highlighted planned financial developments as Gulf states move forward in diversifying revenue sources. PwC noted that Kuwait and the UAE, following the introduction of additional local minimum taxes, are expected to achieve more stable non-oil revenues. This reflects Kuwait's commitment to aligning its tax framework with international standards, strengthening public revenues and reducing reliance on oil.

Productivity and the AI Opportunity

The report warned that productivity growth across the GCC has declined over the past



decade, as measured by Total Factor Productivity (TFP), which reflects gains from technology, management practices and workforce skills.

This decline contrasts with continued improvements in developed economies and is attributed to slow technology adoption, limited process innovation and skills gaps in high-growth sectors.

PwC stressed that the scale of the AI-driven transformation presents a major opportunity to reverse this trend. Through widespread adoption of artificial intelligence, the region can boost real gains and drive productivity growth.

The report noted that Kuwait's average annual change in TFP between 2015 and 2025 stood at -3.6 percent, the second-highest decline in the GCC after Qatar at -5.4 percent.

PwC said the Gulf states will work to build broader and more diversified trade bridges to counter geopolitical instability. The report predicted progress in concluding free trade agreements with strategic partners including the United Kingdom, China and the European Union.

It also underscored the importance of securing access to supply chains for critical minerals to support diversification plans, particularly in advanced manufacturing.

On the technology front, PwC described 2026 as the year of “turning AI ambitions into reality,” as the focus shifts from building digital infrastructure to deploying AI across vital sectors. The report stressed that this transformation will require active management of workforce transitions through reskilling and

upskilling to prepare human capital for an AI-powered economy.

Debt, Financing and Capital Projects

The report noted that the ratio of government debt to GDP in GCC countries remains well below that of advanced economies. However, borrowing is expected to rise, including through sukuk and sustainability-linked bonds, to finance deficits and support strategic investments. Recent credit rating upgrades for Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait are expected to improve access to capital markets.

Public-private partnerships will continue to play a central role in implementing capital projects, helping to ease pressure on government budgets. According to PwC figures, Kuwait's public debt is forecast to rise from 7 percent of GDP in 2025 to 11 percent this year, remaining the lowest level among GCC states.

Deepening Integration

PwC concluded that the GCC is entering 2026 with a clear agenda to deepen global economic integration, lay the foundations for new industries and enhance resilience in an increasingly uncertain global environment. Progress in trade, technology, supply chains, workforce transformation and fiscal policy reflects a region positioning itself for long-term competitiveness rather than short-term adjustments. The report emphasized that the ability of governments and businesses to implement these priorities — by mobilizing capital, accelerating capacity building and maintaining reform momentum — will determine how effectively current opportunities are converted into sustainable economic gains.

Bangladesh Embassy honors memory of former prime minister



Embassy of Bangladesh hosted a solemn condolence book signing event from 4–6 January honoring the memory and legacy of three-time former Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Begum Khaleda Zia, who passed away on 20 December 2025.

The three-day event witnessed a steady flow of ambassadors, diplomats, representatives of international organizations, members of the news media, officials from the Government of Kuwait and other distinguished guests, visiting the Embassy to sign the condolence book and express their sympathy.

The gathering provided a dignified platform for the diplomatic community and well-wishers to pay tribute to Begum Khaleda Zia's political legacy and lifelong service, while conveying their solidarity with the government and people of Bangladesh during this period of national mourning. In a powerful gesture reflecting the depth of bilateral ties and mutual respect, the leadership of the State of Kuwait, including His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, had earlier sent official cables of condolence to the President of Bangladesh following the former prime minister's passing.



The Embassy of Bangladesh expressed its sincere gratitude to all dignitaries, diplomatic missions, international organizations and individuals who visited in person or sent messages of condolence, noting that the overwhelming response reflected the international respect and esteem held for the late leader. Begum Khaleda Zia, a towering figure in Bangladesh's political history, served three terms as prime minister and played a central role in shaping the country's modern political landscape. Her passing has drawn tributes from across the world, underscoring her lasting influence and enduring legacy.

Indian Embassy celebrates 'Vishwa Hindi Diwas'



The Times Kuwait Report

Embassy of India in Kuwait celebrated 'Vishwa Hindi Diwas (World Hindi Day) on 10 January at the embassy auditorium. More than 350 people participated in the event, including the faculty and students from all 25 Indian CBSE Schools in Kuwait along with friends of India with special interest in Hindi. The event showcased the growing interest in Hindi language and Indian culture in Kuwait, which

hosts more than a million strong Indian diaspora.

In the run up to World Hindi Day, Hindi recitation competitions were held among students of the 25 CBSE schools in Kuwait, based on three age-groups. The winners were invited to perform on stage during the 'Vishwa Hindi Diwas' event. The faculty also joined in and presented beautiful renditions of Hindi poems. Referring to the message of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on the occasion, Indian Ambassador H.E. Paramita Tripathi expressed her appreciation to

all participants for their enthusiastic involvement in the World Hindi Diwas celebrations. She then presented awards to the winners of the Hindi Recitation Competition and honoured four Kuwaiti nationals, Mubarak Rashed Al-Azmi, Saad Dhaher Saadoun Al-Rasheedi, Eman Hussain Ali Alkout, and Salah A.M. Khalaf, for their knowledge of and interest in Hindi.

World Hindi Day is celebrated annually on 10 January to promote Hindi, a language spoken by millions of people worldwide, and to spread

awareness about its cultural and historical importance. Hindi holds a crucial place not only in India but also on the global stage with a vast diaspora of Hindi speakers across the globe.

Embassy of India has been instrumental in promoting Hindi in Kuwait through a variety of initiatives and events throughout the year such as competitions, workshops, and cultural programs that have fostered a deeper appreciation of the language among local communities and the Indian diaspora.

Stricter regulations ensure efficient markets, protect genuine entrepreneurs

The weekly cabinet meeting, chaired last week by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah, signaled a firm shift toward stricter regulations aimed at more efficient markets, and protecting serious, law-abiding entrepreneurs and project owners from unfair competition.

Elaborating on the initiative, Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajil briefed the Cabinet on the results of a field inspection tour he conducted, alongside Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan and Minister of State for Municipal and Housing Affairs Abdul Latif Al-Mashari on 8 January. The tour covered the newly designated sites and spaces for mobile carts, part of an integrated plan to impose order on a sector that has expanded rapidly in recent years. Al-Ajil explained that the ministry, in coordination with the Ministry of Public Works and Kuwait Municipality, has initiated the following measures:

- Prepared new parking sites for food trucks,
- Facilitated the handover of plots of 5,000 square metres per site in various areas,
- Tightened control through continuous inspection campaigns,



- Implemented immediate measures against violators,
- Reviewed licenses and compliance with specifications and conditions, and
- Enforced the use of the smart license system.

Al-Ajil reaffirmed that the government's policies focus on safeguarding legally compliant businesses, and stressed that the ministry will not tolerate practices that undermine fairness, distort competition or harm those who have adhered to the law and approved requirements.

The objective, he said, is to create a fairer, more sustainable business environment, enhance service quality, and maximize the efficient use of designated spaces.

As part of an ongoing review of commercial records, Al-Ajil revealed that the ministry has cancelled more than 1,100 food truck licenses after determining that they were inactive, unrenewed, or failed to meet regulatory requirements. The move forms part of a broader plan to cleanup commercial registers; redirect opportunities to deserving operators; and restore discipline in a vital and growing sector.

He added that a decision has been issued to designate five new locations for mobile food trucks starting this January, geographically distributed across several regions of Kuwait, in line with an organizational vision aimed at ensuring fair spatial distribution and facilitating monitoring and regulation.

The Council during its weekly meeting also reviewed several agenda items, approved a number of them, and referred others to the relevant ministerial committees for further study and report preparation to complete the required procedures.

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ALSAWER Group advances sustainability, safety, and social impact in 2025



At the end of 2025, ALSAYER Group reaffirmed its position as a leading responsible corporate citizen through measurable progress across sustainability, environmental health and safety (EHS), and community development. Guided by its Sustainability Gear Values, Nature, Society, Economy, and Wellbeing, the Group delivered integrated initiatives that advanced education, empowered youth, enhanced workplace safety, and supported long-term societal wellbeing.

Commenting on these achievements, Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer, Executive Board Member and Chairman of the ALSAYER Sustainability Committee, emphasized that sustainability is deeply embedded in the Group's culture and decision-making. He noted that ALSAYER Group's 2025 accomplishments reflect a shared responsibility toward future generations, employees, and communities, while ensuring sustainable growth aligned with national and global priorities.

Sustainable Growth, Infrastructure, and Customer-Centric Innovation

In parallel with its environmental and social initiatives, ALSAYER Group continued to strengthen sustainable business growth through forward-looking investments and innovation. During 2025, the Group commenced construction of a new flagship showroom, launched development of the largest body and paint service center, and began building a new MNSS automotive service center.

These infrastructure expansions were complemented by the introduction of new electric vehicle models and the deployment of enhanced digital applications and platforms aimed at elevating customer experience. Together, these developments reflect ALSAYER Group's commitment to integrating sustainability, innovation, and operational excellence into its long-term growth strategy.

Strategic Partnerships and Education for a Sustainable Future

Throughout 2025, ALSAYER Group strengthened its sustainability and innovation agenda through high-impact partnerships centered on education and youth empowerment. The Group became a Platinum Member of the Kuwait Green Building Council, enabling ALSAYER employees to participate in LEED Green Associate 101 training to enhance green building expertise, alongside EV DC Charger technical training to support the development of clean mobility infrastructure.

In parallel, ALSAYER Group collaborated with Kuwait University's College of Architecture to nurture future green professionals. Through this partnership, students gained access to GSAS certification training and a hands-on educational immersion program in Qatar, delivered in collaboration with GORD, providing practical exposure to sustainable design and construction practices.

The Group also renewed its strategic partnership for the fourth edition of the Kuwait National Robotics Competition, reinforcing its belief in collaboration between academia, government entities, and the private sector. This initiative brought together Kuwait University, the Ministry of Education, the Public Authority for Youth, and private sector partners to empower youth innovation in alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035.

Further strengthening applied learning, ALSAYER Group served as a strategic partner for the H2 Grand Prix Regional Hydrogen Vehicle Race, providing students with real-world exposure to renewable energy and engineering concepts and enabling qualifying teams to compete in the World Finals in Switzerland in June 2026.

Employee Development, Engagement, and Transparency

Employee engagement and continuous development remained a cornerstone of ALSAYER Group's sustainability journey in 2025. The Group celebrated employee achievements during its Annual Convention, reinforcing a culture of excellence, transparency, and continuous improvement, and highlighting why ALSAYER Group continues to be recognized as "Best in Town." During the event, Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer, Chief Executive Officer, emphasized that ALSAYER Group's long-term success is fundamentally driven by its people. He highlighted that curiosity, dedication, accountability, and

collaboration are central to sustaining performance and innovation, while reaffirming management's commitment to empowering employees through continuous learning, open communication, and a strong customer-centric mindset.

He further underscored that investing in people is essential to building resilient operations and achieving sustainable growth. In support of sustainable operations, ALSAYER Group continued to invest in developing employee capabilities through targeted training and development initiatives aligned with its long-term sustainability and operational excellence goals.

Sustainable Operations and Renewable Energy Leadership

Operational excellence was recognized across multiple facilities. The Auto Showroom in Abu Fuitara was honored for excellence in sustainable design. The Toyota Service Center in Rai 2 received recognition for operational excellence, and the Lexus Quick Service Center was awarded for HSE compliance.

Renewable energy initiatives continued to gain momentum. The Ardhya Delivery Center now operates on 25% solar energy. Since 2015, ALSAYER Group's renewable energy projects have generated more than 13,000 MWh of clean energy and avoided over 8,000 tons of CO₂ emissions, demonstrating a long-term commitment to climate responsibility.



Reflecting on these achievements, Bengt Kurt Schultz, Chief Operating Officer, underscored that operational efficiency, sustainability, and innovation are deliberately embedded across ALSAYER Group's facilities and expansion plans. He highlighted that these efforts play a critical role in strengthening operational resilience, enhancing performance, and reinforcing the Group's long-term growth strategy.

Empowering Youth and Enhancing Community Wellbeing

Social investment in 2025 focused on education, inclusion, innovation, health, and safety. At the regional level, ALSAYER Group organized the First Gulf Conference on Responsible Citizenship, engaging more than 750 youth in discussions addressing digital wellbeing, substance abuse awareness, nutrition, psychological development, and the role of family and society in shaping positive behavior.

Lexus Kuwait engaged thousands of visitors during the Bayan Bilingual School Carnival, where students experienced virtual reality racing simulations and received Lexus "driving licenses," promoting STEM learning through technology and teamwork.

The GR Yaris Cup Kuwait further demonstrated ALSAYER Group's commitment to youth engagement and motorsport excellence, with the Kuwaiti team securing the inaugural Gulf Championship title in Season Two, reinforcing regional collaboration and sporting achievement. Educational outreach continued through hybrid vehicle awareness sessions hosted at the Fahaheel Service Center for high school students, highlighting ALSAYER Group's innovative transition toward hybrid and clean mobility solutions.

Sports, Health, and Social Impact

Inclusivity remained central to ALSAYER Group's community initiatives. In partnership with the Kuwait Down Syndrome

Association, the Group supported sports and cultural activities benefiting more than 250 individuals with special needs. Support was also extended to elderly Parkinson's patients through the provision of tremor-canceling spoons, helping improve daily independence and quality of life.

Education access was strengthened through Toyota's Miles for Minds campaign, which raised KWD 15,000 to support underprivileged children's education. Health awareness initiatives included sponsorship of the Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign and delivery of the "Healthy Living = Healthy Life" session in collaboration with PHFS and the Ministry of Health, combining expert-led education with on-site health check-ups for employees.

Driving Innovation and Future Skills

ALSAWER Group continued investing in future-ready skills. Through its sponsorship of the Kuwait National Robotics Competition, the Group engaged 170 teams and over 800 students across VEX Robotics, SeaPerch, Drones, and Open Innovation categories. Kuwaiti talents achieved international recognition, winning the Judges Award at the VEX Robotics Competition in Texas and the SeaPerch West Asia Championship in the UAE.

The Group formalized collaborations with Kuwait University, Horizon Educational, and the Kuwait National Robotics Competition to advance renewable energy robotics education for university and school students. Innovation was further celebrated through the Toyota Dream Car Contest, where competition materials were digitized using QR codes, and a Kuwaiti participant won the Best Finalist Award at the 2025 World Art Contest in Japan.

ALSAWER Car Rental supported the Google Summit 2025, empowering educators from more than 20 schools and 250 attendees with AI-driven teaching tools. In partnership with Enviro Group, affiliated with UN-Habitat, a six-month youth program trained over 200 students, culminating in original engineering and environmental solutions. The Fahaheel Service Center contributed creatively to the "Share Your Ideas Contest," showcasing innovative designs developed from spare materials.

Advancing Road Safety and Active Lifestyles

ALSAWER Group promoted active lifestyles through impactful community initiatives. The "Let's Ride Safe Kuwait" campaign engaged 2,000 cyclists who collectively covered 180,000 kilometers over six months, supported by safety vehicles provided by ALSAYER Car Rental. The Group also supported Kuwait Modern Pentathlon – Season 3, hosting the first West Asian Laser Run Championship and winning seven medals across various age categories, along with a silver medal at the Arab Modern Pentathlon Championship in Egypt. Community marathons further reinforced work-life balance and employee wellbeing, with 137 ALSAYER participants recognized for their achievements.

Environmental Stewardship and EHS Excellence

ALSAWER Group strengthened its environmental stewardship through collaboration with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research to support desert ecosystem rehabilitation initiatives. In parallel, the Group achieved significant Environment, Health, and Safety milestones, including ISO 45001 certification across key locations and ISO 27001 Cybersecurity Certification, reinforcing its commitment to safety, resilience, and information security.

Ongoing inspections, training programs, and emergency preparedness initiatives enhanced hazard awareness, first aid readiness, and fire safety compliance, contributing to a skilled, safety-focused, and sustainability-driven workforce.

Eng. Nehad Al-Haj Ali, Group Manager of Corporate Excellence at ALSAYER Group, noted that these achievements reflect a structured and integrated sustainability approach that embeds excellence across governance, operations, health and safety, and community engagement. By aligning sustainability with corporate excellence frameworks, digital transformation, and continuous performance monitoring, ALSAYER Group continues to create long-term shared value, support Kuwait's national development priorities, and reinforce its role as a responsible leader shaping a sustainable future for generations to come.

Turkey's bilateral trade breaks \$1bn barrier as investment ties deepen

From construction to defense: Türkiye, Kuwait set to multiply trade and investment

The Times Kuwait Report

With rapid growth across construction, defense, tourism and infrastructure, Türkiye and Kuwait are positioning their partnership for a new phase of expanded trade, investment and strategic cooperation.

Trade relations between Türkiye and Kuwait have recorded a significant leap, with bilateral trade volume rising by 52 percent in 2025 compared to the previous year, reaching approximately \$1.08 billion, says H.E. Tuba Nur Sönmez, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the State of Kuwait. The milestone marks the first time trade has surpassed the one-billion-dollar threshold since the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting renewed economic momentum and growing confidence between the two countries, said the Ambassador. Türkiye's exports to Kuwait posted strong growth, climbing 58 percent to \$887 million, while Kuwaiti exports to Türkiye increased by 29 percent, reaching \$195 million.

Ambassador Sönmez, said the figures demonstrate the strength and resilience of bilateral relations and expressed confidence that trade volumes could multiply further in the near term.

"The construction, defense and tourism sectors in Türkiye offer highly attractive opportunities for Kuwaiti investors, and as the Embassy, we stand ready to provide all necessary support, guidance and facilitation to Kuwaiti business leaders and investors," she added. Ambassador Sönmez attributed the recent surge in trade and



investment to the intensification of high-level exchanges between the two countries. She noted that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Kuwait last October resulted in a clear leadership-level consensus to expand trade, with initial results already becoming

visible. Economic cooperation between the two countries continues to deepen, with more than 400 Kuwaiti companies currently operating in Türkiye, while around 50 Turkish firms, particularly in the construction sector, are active in Kuwait. Turkish companies are also playing a key role in major infrastructure projects across the country, she said. On the investment front, Ambassador Sönmez highlighted notable progress, citing the visit of a delegation from the Investment and Finance Office of the Presidency of Türkiye to Kuwait on September 29-30, 2025.

The visit included meetings with several institutions and an investment reception hosted by the Turkish Embassy, bringing together Kuwaiti investors and Turkish officials. Similar events are planned in the future to further strengthen business ties.

Looking ahead, Ambassador Sönmez announced plans to hold the 11th round of the Joint Economic Commission meeting in Türkiye later this year, where both sides will comprehensively review and advance their bilateral trade agenda. In addition, a Türkiye-Kuwait Business Forum and B2B meetings are scheduled for the end of this month in cooperation with MÜSİAD and the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Pre-registration for the forum has already opened, reflecting strong interest from the private sector.

Ambassador Sönmez concluded by expressing confidence that the growing partnerships between Türkiye and Kuwait will continue to expand and serve as a successful model for cooperation between countries.

Despite Global Headwinds, Kuwait Economy to Grow in 2026

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Additional upsets could arise from artificial intelligence (AI) failing to deliver on its productivity gains and earnings expectations, tamping down financial market exuberance and potentially impacting broader macrofinancial stability. Commodity price spikes, from climate shocks or geopolitical tensions, could also pose risks, especially for low-income, commodity-importing countries. On the upside, a breakthrough in trade negotiations could lower tariffs and non-tariff barriers, as well as reduce market uncertainty. Renewed reform momentum, credible, predictable, and sustainable policy actions, and productivity gains from AI that bring economy-wide, inclusive gains could further boost medium-term global growth.

The Fund urged policymakers, particularly in emerging and developing states, to establish clear, transparent, and rules-based trade policy road maps, to reduce uncertainty and support investment, and to reap the productivity and growth benefits that accrue from more trade. Modernizing trade rules to align with the digital age, ensuring stronger multilateral cooperation, calibrating monetary policies to balance price stability and growth risks, and implementing fiscal policies that combine spending rationalization and revenue generation, could boost growth.

Amid subdued prospects for the global economy in 2026, recent media reports indicate that Kuwait's initiatives over the past year, in particular, updates to the country's legislative framework, are expected to spur economic growth in 2026. The government aims to leverage the new legislative frameworks as a structural reform tool to align economic growth with global sustainable development goals for 2030, and push forward Kuwait's ambitious Vision 2035 development plan.

Implementing the updated legislative framework is also expected to strengthen transparency and accountability in government institutions, achieve social justice and equality before the law, and ensure sustainable stability. Latest insights on the local economy, by the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), lends further credence to the positive view on Kuwait's growth prospects in the new year.

According to analysts at NBK, improvements in the economic environment—higher project

awards, improved real estate activity, and stronger credit growth—could help push non-oil GDP to a five-year high of 3.3 percent in 2026. Boosted by rising oil output, overall GDP is forecast to hover around 4.5 percent in 2026. Meanwhile, fiscal deficit is expected to widen to 4.9 percent of GDP in financial year 2025/26, before narrowing slightly in 2026/27 as oil production rises, non-oil revenues expand, and authorities maintain a firm control on spending.

Additionally, the reforms initiated last year aim to reduce legal and procedural risks for investors, encourage innovation, enhance entrepreneurship, and improve market efficiency through fair competition by curbing monopolistic and illegal practices. These initiatives are expected to positively impact growth rates, job creation, and productivity. As a key step to support innovation and entrepreneurship, the cabinet approved in November last year a draft law providing comprehensive regulation for digital commerce that enhanced investment attractiveness in the digital economy, balancing economic freedom with regulatory oversight, and supporting sustainable development objectives.

In efforts to reinforce financial stability and support economic growth, Decree-Law 60 of 2025 on financing and liquidity was issued in March last year. The law sets a public debt ceiling of KD30 billion and allows issuance of financial instruments with maturities of up to 50 years, granting the authorities greater fiscal flexibility to access local and international markets and improve liquidity management. To enhance transparency in real estate transactions, the Ministry of Justice issued Decision 194 of 2025, which requires all real-estate transactions to have proof of payment through bank transfers or certified checks. The decision aims to support anti-money laundering efforts, limit fictitious mortgages, and put an end to legal loopholes previously exploited for unlawful transactions.

Decree Law No. 58 of 2025 published in April made key amendments to the Bankruptcy Law No.71 of 2020, in the Civil and Commercial Procedures Law, which introduced a rehabilitation-focused framework on debtors. The new amendments deleted articles in the 2020 law, and reinstated the power to arrest and imprison debtors, who have the financial solvency but intentionally refuse to settle final judgments. These changes balance debtor rehabilitation with

stronger creditor protection, reinforcing the legal obligations of those who can pay their debts.

In August, Decree Law 89 of 2025 entered into force, amending certain provisions of Law 118 of 2023 on establishing and developing residential cities or areas economically, known as the real estate developer law. The amendments granted developers greater flexibility to offer diverse housing products tailored to varying family needs, capacities, and unit sizes, supporting market responsiveness and housing supply diversity.

In a major step toward economic reform, fair investment conditions, and tax equity, the Ministry of Finance issued in January 2025 the executive regulations for the decree law on the tax on multinational enterprise groups. The regulations clarify legal provisions, define procedures and implementation mechanisms, enhance transparency, and provide clear guidance to stakeholders in line with international standards and guidelines. To safeguard financial security and strengthen anti-money laundering efforts, the cabinet approved in December 2025

a draft decree law, adding Article 12 bis to Law 111 of 2013 on commercial shop licensing. The amendment criminalizes alternative remittance systems, considered among the most dangerous illegal financial practices and a serious threat to Kuwait's financial and economic security.

The government's proactive approach signals a new phase of institutional reform aligned with global developments and Kuwait's development vision. The reforms balance social, criminal, and economic pillars, reflecting a comprehensive development vision that recognizes economic reforms cannot succeed without parallel social and judicial reforms ensuring justice and stability.

The reforms are expected to enhance transparency and efficiency of government institutions, improve business climate, raise non-oil sector growth, encourage greater private-sector participation and foreign investments in the economy, increase employment opportunities for national youth, and overall boost the country's sustainable growth and development going into the future.

PAFN withdraws select batches of Nestle infant formula

Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) has ordered the withdrawal of a limited number of batches of Nestle's infant formula products after laboratory analysis detected traces of 'cereulide', a toxin that can be produced by the bacteria *Bacillus cereus*, in one of the primary ingredients used in manufacturing.

The PAFN announcement came in the wake of an official notification from Nestle confirming that the company had initiated a voluntary precautionary recall following an internal investigation. The inquiry revealed traces of the substance in arachidonic acid oil (ARA), a key ingredient used in infant formula.

The Authority emphasized that the withdrawal is a proactive preventive measure taken in full compliance with food safety regulations and quality control requirements, underscoring Kuwait's strict standards in protecting public health, particularly in

products intended for infants.

Suppliers and distributors have been instructed to fully comply with the recall procedures and to immediately halt the sale, distribution, and circulation of any products bearing the operational batch numbers listed in the official recall notice.

The Authority stressed that all affected batches must be withdrawn from shelves without delay and isolated according to approved regulatory procedures until further notice. Consumers were strongly urged to check the batch numbers of infant formula products currently in their possession. If a match is found, they are advised to stop using the product immediately, dispose of it safely, and follow the guidance issued through official channels. The Authority reiterated that the recall is limited to specific batches only and does not affect all products, noting that continuous monitoring and inspection procedures remain in place to ensure the highest levels of food safety across the market. It reaffirmed its commitment to swift action, transparency, and strict enforcement whenever any potential risk to public health is identified, particularly where infant and child nutrition is concerned.

Building Peace Together



Yvette Cooper
Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom.

“We are bound to one another by a single fate. If we go down, we go down together; if we are to reach the heights, we do so not by conflict but by common effort.” Those words were spoken a century ago, by a German foreign minister, standing in the British Foreign Office, having just signed a pact that sought to guarantee peace between the nations of Europe and avoid a descent into another world war.

For Gustav Stresemann and the other foreign ministers who signed the Locarno Treaties, that moment of hope was short-lived: a decade and a half later, worldwide conflict erupted once more. But the vision Stresemann and the others set out at that time has endured as a brave experiment in putting cooperation before division. At the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in 1926, the Norwegian humanitarian Fridtjof Nansen described the ‘Locarno spirit’ as “the almost unprecedented attempt to base politics on the principle of mutual friendship and trust.”

That is why the British government recently



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chose to mark the centenary of the pact in the Foreign Office, with representatives of several countries involved in the original negotiations gathering in the same historic rooms where the treaties were signed. But as we commemorated the events of a hundred years ago, it was impossible to ignore the acute conflicts that haunt our world today, the humanitarian crises they are causing, and the wider regional and global risks to security and stability they pose.

And in so many of those cases, from the Middle East and Sudan to Ukraine, we know it will take that same Locarno spirit—of countries working

together in partnership—to overcome our shared challenges, rather than letting them divide and defeat us. First in mind is the challenge of creating lasting peace and security in the Middle East. The United States-led peace plan unveiled in September came after two years of the most unimaginable suffering for the civilian population in Gaza, and two years of torment for Israeli hostages and their families, following the horrific terror attacks on 7 October 2023.

The international community united to support that ceasefire agreement, and we need to continue working together to advance every part of US President Donald Trump’s 20-point plan and turn the ceasefire into a just and lasting peace. November’s United Nations Security Council resolution in support of the plan was widely backed, including by the Arab and Muslim-majority states in the region. It provided the UN mandate needed for the International Stabilization Force to help implement the plan, support the ceasefire, and avoid leaving a vacuum which Hamas could exploit. The resolution also emphasized the importance of increased humanitarian aid, which is still desperately needed in Gaza. As long as children are going hungry, and young mothers cannot get basic care, the most urgent priority must be to open all the crossings, lift restrictions, and flood Gaza with aid.

In supporting that UN resolution, the United Kingdom reiterated the importance of implementing the proposed transitional arrangements in accordance with international law. Implementation must respect Palestinian sovereignty and self-determination, strengthen the unity of Gaza and the West Bank, and empower Palestinian institutions in order to enable a reformed Palestinian Authority to resume governance in Gaza. This is essential to maintain progress toward a two-state solution, which remains the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace, with Israelis and Palestinians living securely side by side.

The challenges of the next stage will be even harder than achieving a ceasefire, and it would be easy at this point for individuals, governments, and the global community to start to pull back or to walk away, because they think it is too difficult, or will take too long. So, it is more important than ever to maintain our international cooperation, to redouble our shared commitment to peace, and to enable the fragile hope of recent months to grow. Just as international cooperation and support secured the ceasefire in Gaza, we need the same determination and commitment to end the brutal war in Sudan and relieve the terrible suffering of the Sudanese people. Over 30 million people need lifesaving aid. Twelve million have been forced from their homes. Famine is spreading. Cholera and other diseases are rampant.

Wherever the war rages, there are appalling atrocities—mass executions of civilians and systematic rape as a weapon of war. This cannot

be allowed to continue. It is not just a vast human-rights and humanitarian emergency, but a vital test of international resolve.

In November, the UK called a special session of the UN Human Rights Council, where a UK-drafted resolution was unanimously passed, demanding an immediate ceasefire, unimpeded humanitarian access, and an end to the external support that is prolonging the conflict. Crucially, the resolution also mandated urgent new investigations of atrocities by the UN Fact-Finding Mission, to document the truth and help us ensure that those responsible for the mass rape and murder of civilians will one day face justice. The message from the international community was clear: impunity will not be tolerated; the suffering of the Sudanese people cannot go on, and this war must end.

We also need to bring that same collective effort to bear to end Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. Nearly four years after the Kremlin launched its full-scale invasion, it is clear that Russian President Vladimir Putin’s war aims have failed. But even after a million Russian casualties, his economy ailing, and 40 percent of Russian federal spending going to the war, he is still refusing to pursue peace. Although Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has emphasized that he is ready for a ceasefire and serious talks, Putin’s only instinct is to escalate the conflict further, launching some of the largest attacks in Europe since the height of World War II.

But the Ukrainian people are standing strong, and we continue to stand with them. Together with our allies in the ‘coalition of the willing’, the UK is ensuring that there is a strong flow of weapons, air-defense systems, and infrastructure support to sustain Ukraine in its fight. And in concert with the US and the European Union, we have also introduced new sanctions packages to target Russian oil and gas revenues and Russia’s suppliers of defense equipment.

Ukraine’s security is Europe’s security. That is why the UK will continue to support Ukraine, now and for decades to come. We are determined not just to help brave people defend themselves but also to defend principles that matter for the whole world: aggression will not pay and will be resisted.

As we work for peace in the Middle East, Sudan, and Ukraine in 2026, we must not forget other conflicts that have also gone on for too long, from Myanmar to the Sahel, and the terrible humanitarian crises they have caused. It is all too easy to turn away from conflicts where there is no simple solution, or crises where there is no quick fix, but the spirit of international cooperation demands that we work together to find answers and provide hope.

The same is true of many other great challenges we face in today’s world: helping every child around the world to realize their full potential; enabling women and girls to live their lives free from violence; avoiding the point of no return on climate change; restoring sustainable growth and prosperity to all our economies; ensuring that the incredible power of AI becomes a force for good; protecting our countries against terrorism and state threats, and our democracies against interference; dealing with the mass migration caused by famine, conflict, and economic insecurity; and ensuring that we are better prepared for the next major pandemic than we were for COVID-19.

One thing is certain: a retreat into isolationism will not help any country, let alone the world as a whole, deal with these challenges. It is only through international cooperation and the power of joint action that we will succeed.

As Nansen put it at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in 1926, “the only chance of creating a real future for mankind is to stand united in a sincere desire to work together.” That was true a century ago, and it remains true today. It is high time we acted accordingly.



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Ocean Has Finally Entered the Global Climate Debate



Kilaparti Ramakrishna
Senior Advisor to the President and Director on Ocean and Climate Policy at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

In global climate policy, the ocean was long treated as an afterthought, too vast to manage effectively and too resilient to be degraded. Instead, the focus was almost exclusively on reducing greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions and preserving forests. That era is now over.

At the most recent United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Belém, the ocean moved from the margins to the mainstream of climate governance. It featured prominently in national climate plans, adaptation frameworks, the follow-up to the first 'global stocktake' under the Paris climate agreement, and even the evolving architecture of climate finance.

This shift in the global agenda was likely inevitable, as the ocean increasingly suffers the effects of absorbing over 90 percent of the excess heat trapped by GHGs and about one-quarter of annual carbon dioxide emissions. The consequences include warming, acidification, deoxygenation, collapsing fisheries, and coastal erosion. But small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs), many of which are extremely vulnerable to sea-level rise, accelerated the shift by framing ocean governance as a matter not just of environmental management, but of survival and justice.

Consider, for example, COP30's headline political declaration, the Global Mutirão, which frames climate change, biodiversity loss, and land and ocean degradation as interconnected crises demanding shared solutions and collective action. It explicitly recognizes the role of marine ecosystems in climate stability and sustainable development, giving governments the political cover to integrate ocean and coastal issues into their national climate strategies, development plans, and funding proposals.

A new baseline has been established. For the first time in the UN climate process, the official synthesis of national climate plans contains a section dedicated to the ocean. Roughly three-quarters of these national plans include marine references, such as blue carbon, offshore renewables, fisheries resilience, and maritime decarbonization. The next step



“ International law has started to converge with climate science. In 2024, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea ruled that GHG emissions constitute marine pollution under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. **”**

is to move toward quantified ocean-based targets, measurable blue-carbon accounting, and concrete investment pledges for coastal communities.

At COP30, governments also adopted the Belém Adaptation Indicators to track action and progress under the Global Goal on Adaptation. While these indicators are sector-neutral, they are still highly relevant to the health of coastal ecosystems, the resilience of fisheries, the vulnerability of coastal infrastructure and livelihoods, and early-warning coverage. Crucially, climate funds, including the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, and the Adaptation Fund, have been encouraged to align their support with these indicators. This could give

rise to a new generation of bankable ocean-adaptation projects.

Moreover, ocean-based solutions are attracting more resources. The One Ocean Partnership, which launched at COP30, aims to mobilize \$20 billion for coastal resilience, blue-carbon ecosystems, and ocean protection; create 20 million blue jobs worldwide; and restore 20 million hectares of marine ecosystems by 2030. More consequential was the UN Standing Committee on Finance's announcement that its 2026 forum will focus on financing climate action in water systems and the ocean—a formal push for blue investment that would have been unthinkable a decade ago.

But treaties and conferences are no longer

the only means for creating climate obligations. International law has started to converge with climate science. In 2024, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea ruled that GHG emissions constitute marine pollution under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. In 2025, the International Court of Justice affirmed that states have a binding legal duty to prevent foreseeable climate harm.

This legal evolution will be important for disputes over state conduct at sea, particularly as the world confronts the next frontier of climate intervention: marine CO₂ removal. Techniques such as alkalinity enhancement and large-scale algal cultivation may eventually contribute to net-zero strategies, but they could pose ecological risks and currently exist in a fragmented regulatory landscape. In the absence of coordinated ocean governance, unilateral experimentation could trigger transboundary effects and conflict.

As influence continues to shift away from traditional power centers (a trend on display at COP30), and as SIDS and LDCs increasingly shape global climate norms, ocean and coastal resilience will continue to gain prominence in policy debates. Even advanced economies have begun to realize the importance of a sustainable approach to marine resources and ocean management, with the G20 establishing Oceans 20, a group focused on this goal, under Brazil's presidency in 2024.

The design of COP31 points toward a new geopolitical landscape: Australia and Turkey will co-lead the conference, while a pre-COP gathering will be held on a Pacific island state with Australian support. This has raised hopes that it could be the first truly 'blue' COP. In that case, ocean-based targets and action will become even more important in national climate strategies, global stocktake metrics, climate-finance rules, and technology-transfer systems over the next few years.

In fact, the maritime century may be upon us. The ocean is the planet's largest carbon sink, the backbone of global trade, a critical source of food and energy, and the frontline of climate vulnerability. It is also becoming a site of strategic competition for data, technology, resources, and legal leverage.

The climate's fate depends on what happens to the ocean, and fragmented mandates, outdated treaties, and siloed financing are no longer sufficient to ensure its health. The question is whether institutions can evolve quickly enough to establish the durable, equitable, and effective governance structures required for safeguarding this critical planetary system.



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Thought[“] for the week

If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilizations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon.

- Sir David Attenborough
English broadcaster and natural historian.



Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy

Moving up from the weight loss plateau

Hitting a weight loss plateau is really frustrating for anyone looking to lose weight. Everyone who has, at some time or other in their lives, tried to lose weight can understand what I am talking about.

Those who are trying to lose weight often hit a time when the scale will no longer budge, and this becomes really annoying and disappointing. We start to feel guilty and blame ourselves for this condition. But weight loss plateau is common, it can easily be solved.

Ways to move out of the weight loss plateau

Change what you are eating: If you are eating a moderate diet that is high in carbs, try now to eat less carbs and more proteins. If you are used to eating a cheese sandwich in the morning, switch to an omelet for example with no bread. In summary, change the count of your macros and macros.

Add snacks between your meals: When you eat small meals at more frequent intervals during the day, you tend to burn more calories, helping you move out of the plateau. Skipping meals will shut down your metabolism, so even if you are not hungry, include some fresh fruits, a bowl of yogurt, three dates, but vary your choices, the whole idea is to vary the foods you take in.

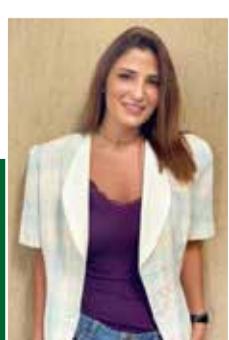
Alter your calorie intake: Vary your daily calorie intake. If you are eating 1,000 calories today, take it to 1200 calories tomorrow, 1500 calories the next day, and so on for a week. This can be done if you simply double or divide the portion size of the lunch, add or remove a post workout



Apply the above easy tips and you will notice your weight dropping unexpectedly.

Eat like Mira
Create healthy habits, not restrictions

To subscribe to my diet programs,
don't forget to log in to:
www.eatlikemira.com.



Mira is a go-to source for nutrition and wellness and has joined The Times Kuwait team in a new weekly column discussing nutrition and answering queries. You can send in your questions to infotimeskuwait@gmail.com

If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilizations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon.

- Sir David Attenborough
English broadcaster and natural historian.

RECIPE



Hot Chili Cheese Fatayer

Middle eastern pastries in general have different dough types, shapes and fillings. They can be filled, or topped with literally anything. Fatayer is an Arabic pie that can be stuffed with mincemeat, spinach or Arabic cheese. Jibneh or Arabic semi-hard cheese pies are baked till golden on the outside.

Fatayer is a popular breakfast or snack in Lebanon, Jordan, and other Middle Eastern. They are available not only in bakeries, but even supermarket deli counters that offer these convenient ready-to-go savory treats.

Total time : 1 hour 30 minutes.
Serving: 10-12.



Chef Chhaya Thakker

Ingredients:

For the dough:

- 2 cup all purpose flour
- 1 tsp instant dry yeast
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Luke warm Water or milk as needed (3/4 – 1 cup)

For the filling:

- 3/4 cup Halloumi cheese
- 1/2 cup Mozzarella cheese
- Hot chili sauce.

Instructions:

Making the dough:

- In a large bowl, combine flour, salt, sugar and yeast and stir to combine. Add the oil and water and knead for about a couple of minutes
- Transfer to a lightly greased bowl, cover with damp muslin cloth and let it rest for 1 hour.
- Meanwhile in a bowl take grated halloumi and mozzarella cheeses and mix well

Assembling the fatayer:

- Divide dough into small balls, (10-12) and cover with a kitchen towel so that dough does not dry out.
- Roll out the balls in a circle shape and place a tablespoon of the cheese mixture in the middle.
- Drizzle some hot chili sauce, sprinkle with parsley or olive slices
- Hold the edges on one side and press the ends together.
- Do the same with edges on the opposite side to form a boat shaped dough
- Make sure the center remains open
- Brush the surrounding edge of the dough with egg wash or milk/ olive oil to give it a golden color before baking.
- Bake in the oven for 10-15 minutes at 200°C or until golden brown
- Serve warm with a tahini parsley dip



Indian Chef Chhaya Thakker, who has a huge following online on WhatsApp and YouTube will be sharing her favorite recipes and cooking tips with readers of The Times Kuwait. For feedback, you can write to editortimeskuwait@gmail.com

Scientists discover innovative way to slow aging inside cells

Improvements in healthcare, wider availability of nourishing diets, and pursuit of healthy lifestyles have led to people around the world living longer. However, longer lifespans have not led to a corresponding increase in the quality of health, with many people now looking at not just living longer, but enjoying a quality lifespan. Often referred to as 'healthspan', it is the period where people continue to remain energetic, independent, and generally free of serious age-related issues.

A major focus of the scientific community's efforts in improving 'healthspan' has been on mitochondria, the tiny organelles within cells that are often referred to as the powerhouse of the cell. Mitochondria generate the energy that allows cells to perform their various functions by generating adenosine triphosphate (ATP)—a fundamental organic molecule composed of the nitrogenous base adenine, joined to the pentose sugar ribose, and linked to a tri-phosphate group via glycosidic bonds. ATP stores, transports and releases the energy needed to power vital life processes.

Inside the mitochondria, ATP acts as a rechargeable battery producing and releasing energy through respiratory complexes. When the cell needs energy, it hydrolyzes (breaks-up) the terminal phosphate bond in an ATP molecule to create Adenosine Diphosphate (ADP) and a free phosphate (P), releasing energy in the process. The ADP molecule is then recharged back into ATP using energy from food by cellular respiration.

Because aging and many age-related diseases are closely tied to declining mitochondrial function, scientists see mitochondria as an important target for research aimed at healthier longevity. For instance, mitochondrial dysfunction has been found to be responsible for brain aging and major neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's



diseases. Researchers have known for years that the respiratory chain complexes can assemble into larger, flexible groupings called supercomplexes. These supercomplexes are thought to improve the efficiency of mitochondrial respiration.

Even so, solid evidence that directly connects supercomplexes to clear health benefits had been limited, especially from studies in animals. That gap has left an important question unresolved: do these structures actually make a measurable difference for aging and overall health?

To explore this, a team of researchers at the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute for Geriatrics and Gerontology and at the Saitama Medical University in Japan examined COX7RP, a mitochondrial protein which serves as a key factor that promotes the formation of mitochondrial respiratory supercomplexes.

Previous studies have identified COX7RP as vital to enhancing energy production and reducing reactive oxygen species (ROS) that cause oxidative stress in cells.

Leveraging this previous knowledge, the researchers investigated the role of COX7RP and mitochondrial respiratory supercomplexes in regulating aging and anti-aging processes. For their study, the scientists created COX7RP-transgenic (COX7RP-Tg) mice—a transgenic organism or cell is one which has a foreign DNA (a 'transgene') from another species inserted into its genome, to give it new traits—that were designed to produce higher levels of COX7RP throughout their lives.

Using this transgenic model, the team could closely track how the protein affected lifespan, aging-related changes, and metabolism. The results were striking. On average, the COX7RP-Tg mice lived 6.6 percent longer than wild-type

mice. The benefits were not limited to lifespan alone, since the engineered mice also showed signs of better healthspan. They had improved blood sugar levels from greater insulin sensitivity, improved lipid measures with lower blood triglycerides and total cholesterol, as well as better muscle endurance and less fat buildup in the liver.

The data pointed to a clear improvement in mitochondrial performance at the cellular level, with tissues from COX7RP-Tg mice showing an increased formation of mitochondrial respiratory supercomplexes and higher levels of ATP production. A closer look at white adipose tissue—the body's main fat storage—also revealed shifts in multiple aging-related biomarkers. Using single-nucleus RNA sequencing on white adipose tissue from older mice, the researchers also found reduced activity in genes associated with age-related inflammation.

Taken together, the findings suggest that making mitochondria more energy efficient may help delay or reduce common problems linked to aging.

The pivotal nature of the study comes from its findings of novel mitochondrial mechanisms underlying anti-aging and longevity, and providing new insights into strategies for promoting healthspan and extending lifespan. For instance, supplements and medications that enhance the assembly and function of mitochondrial respiratory supercomplexes may contribute to longevity expansion in future.

The researchers say additional work would be needed to strengthen the case for mitochondrial supercomplexes as treatment targets. If confirmed, this line of research could support new approaches to preserving vitality and addressing age-related metabolic disorders including diabetes, dyslipidemia, and obesity.

Vitamin D3 breakthrough halves risk of second heart attack

Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) shows that cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading cause of death globally, taking an estimated 18 million lives each year. CVDs are a group of disorders of the heart and blood vessels and include coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, rheumatic heart disease and other conditions. More than four out of five CVD deaths are due to heart attacks and strokes.

Heart attacks, or myocardial infarction in scientific terms, results from a severe reduction or block of blood flow to the heart. A new study by scientists at Intermountain Health, an integrated health support institute, in the United States reports that a personalized vitamin D3 treatment plan for patients who have suffered a heart attack can greatly reduce their chances of another one.

In a large randomized clinical trial, researchers found that managing vitamin D levels in patients through a 'target-to-treat' approach—where blood levels were regularly monitored and dosages adjusted to reach an optimal range—cut the likelihood of a second heart attack by 50 percent.

The study findings are revealing, in particular as giving patients higher doses of vitamin D3 supplementation not only significantly reduced their chances of being subject to a second bout of attack but also the additional dosage resulted in no adverse health outcomes. But more work is needed to further validate the findings, said doctors working in frontline clinical environments.



According to researchers, the results carry global importance, as between one-half and two-thirds of people worldwide have low levels of vitamin D. In the past, most people received sufficient vitamin D through exposure to natural sunlight. However, changing lifestyle patterns and prevailing medical recommendations to avoid overexposure to sunlight to reduce skin cancer risk, has led to people spending less time in the sun. Many people now rely on dietary supplements such as vitamin D3 to maintain healthy vitamin D levels.

Low vitamin D levels have long been linked to poor cardiovascular outcomes in observational studies. However, earlier clinical

trials that provided standard supplementation doses failed to show measurable reductions in heart disease risk.

Scientists behind the new study wanted to test a different approach. Rather than giving everyone the same dose, they postulated that adjusting the supplementation to reach a specific, personalized healthy vitamin D level would be more beneficial.

The study, called the TARGET-D trial, was conducted over a period of six years from 2017 to 2023 and included 630 patients who had suffered a heart attack within a month of enrolling. The participants were followed until March 2025 to monitor cardiovascular

outcomes. Patients were randomly assigned to one of two groups: one received no vitamin D management, and the other underwent active, targeted vitamin D3 treatment.

The goal for the treatment group was to raise blood vitamin D levels to above 40 nanograms per milliliter (ng/mL). At the start, 85 percent of participants had vitamin D3 levels below that threshold (<40 ng/mL). More than half of the patients receiving targeted therapy required an initial dose of 5,000 international units (IU) of vitamin D3, compared to typical supplement recommendations of 600-800 IU.

Vitamin D blood levels were checked annually for those maintaining healthy levels. Patients with lower levels were tested every three months and had their dosage adjusted until reaching the 40 ng/mL target. Afterward, their levels were monitored once a year.

Researchers tracked major cardiac events (MACE), including heart attacks, strokes, heart failure hospitalizations, or deaths. Out of 630 participants, 107 experienced such events. While there was no significant difference in the overall risk of MACE between the two groups, the chance of having a second heart attack was cut in half among those receiving targeted vitamin D treatment.

Researchers now plan to expand their work with a larger clinical trial to confirm and build upon these findings. A larger study group will also allow the team to more fully evaluate whether targeted vitamin D management can reduce not only repeat heart attacks but also other forms of cardiovascular disease.

Japan poised to be the World's Next AI Leader



Mickey Mikitani
Founder, Chairman, and CEO
of Rakuten Group

Pessimism about AI abounds, with many fearing widespread job losses, soaring inequality, and even the creation of deadly machines. In Japan, however, one finds marked optimism. We believe AI will help our country to overcome acute labor shortages, improve people's daily lives, and recover global tech leadership.

According to an Ipsos survey, a quarter of Japanese feel anxious about AI's predicted impact on their lives—the lowest share of the 32 countries surveyed. Only about one in ten Japanese believe AI will make the future worse, a far cry from the more than one-third of Americans who are pessimistic about the technology.

This divergence reflects several factors, but one of the most important may be Japan's long history of working with machines. It is easy for us to imagine AI-powered applications and devices that aid, not replace, humans. At a time when Japan's labor pool is shrinking—30 percent of Japanese are already aged 65 and older—AI labor savings will be key to boosting productivity and saving critical industries.

It is with this future in mind that my company, Rakuten, has invested in developing both large language models and small language models optimized for the Japanese language and culture. We are using AI to transform critical services, such as mobile networks. Instead of the vendor-locked, hardware-centric networks of the past, Rakuten Mobile's network makes flexible systems possible, enabling operators to mix and match components, while also minimizing energy



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

consumption. Potential glitches are reported, reviewed, and fixed; all at a distance. Software upgrades are pushed out frequently. The network 'learns' and makes fixes autonomously.

This innovation depends on an enabling regulatory environment. Fortunately, Japan has so far taken an 'innovation-first' approach to AI governance. Japan's AI Promotion Act, passed last year, imposes no stringent rules or penalties that could stifle AI adoption or experimentation, and creates space for close cooperation between the public and private sectors. As noted in a 2024 white paper, the goal is to make Japan the world's 'most AI-friendly country'.

This contrasts with the European Union's focus on mitigating risks, reflected not only in its 2024 AI Act, but also in rules that limit access to data AI developers need. Other AI innovators lag behind Japan when it comes to establishing supportive environments. Some emphasize social stability and state-directed innovation, while others are bogged down by long legal battles between

rights-holders and AI developers.

Japan's AI-optimism translates into AI-friendly policies. Japanese courts interpret our copyright framework to allow the use of third-party copyrighted works for training AI models. This access to data attracts leading American frontier AI firms, such as OpenAI, to collaborative efforts with Japan-based companies like mine.

To be sure, Japan recognizes the importance of ensuring the safe development of AI. It was under Japan's presidency that the G7 launched its Hiroshima AI Process, aimed at promoting 'safe, secure, and trustworthy AI worldwide' and providing 'guidance for organizations developing and using the most advanced AI systems'. But the resulting framework focuses not on stifling regulations or threats of fines. Instead, it aims to help companies design effective risk-management mechanisms and encourages transparent information-sharing and reporting.

While Japan's AI-friendly approach is already bearing fruit, there are pitfalls the country must

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Japan's AI Promotion Act imposes no stringent rules or penalties that stifle AI adoption or experimentation, and creates space for close cooperation between public and private sectors, making Japan the world's most AI-friendly country.

”

avoid. For starters, Japan must encourage wider adoption of AI tools: as it stands, only half of Japanese firms are using generative AI, compared to more than 90 percent in the United States, China, and Germany. Japan must also avoid getting so hung up on small-scale AI adoption that we lose sight of the bigger picture—the critical importance of generating our own global AI leaders. We must strengthen our energy and cloud infrastructure, investing in electricity production (preferably from clean sources) and accelerating data center permitting. We should avoid being swept up by counterproductive notions of 'digital sovereignty', instead encouraging Japanese innovators to collaborate with frontier firms from the US and elsewhere.

With our highly skilled population, supportive regulatory environment, and openness to AI, Japan is well equipped to emerge as a global AI leader. Now the government and business community must translate these strengths into concrete results.



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