



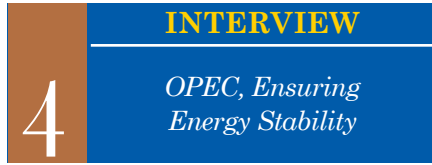
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## Plastics, an Existential Threat to Planet



### THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Plastics are undoubtedly versatile material; they are moldable, durable, lightweight, and inexpensive, making them the ideal choice for various products we use in daily life. However, the enormous amount of plastic production, its ubiquitous use, and unstructured disposal make them a pervasive pollutant that impacts human health, the environment, and poses an existential threat to the planet.

Plastic pollution permeates every corner of the world, affects every aspect of life, and has become one of the defining environmental challenges of our time. Over 75 percent of all plastics produced since large-scale synthetic plastic manufacturing began in the 1950s, still pollutes the environment, leaching into the soil, contaminating water bodies, and polluting the land, air and oceans around us.

Highlighting the severity of global plastic pollution, a recent report titled 'Global Plastic Production', published by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), notes that plastic consumption more than



quadrupled over the past 30 years. The report shows that from 2000–2019, plastic production nearly doubled from 234 million tonnes (Mt) to 460 Mt while plastic waste generation more than doubled from 156 Mt to 353 Mt.

Of this total plastic waste only 9 percent was

recycled; around 19 percent was incinerated, 50 percent ended up in landfills, and 22 percent completely evaded waste management systems. The report also found that in 2019, more than 6 Mt of mismanaged plastic waste leaked into aquatic environments, with 1.7

Mt flowing into oceans, and the remaining accumulating in rivers and lakes. This implies that even if leaked waste is reduced, drainage into oceans will continue for decades.

The OECD report warned that in a 'business-as-usual' scenario, plastic production is expected to triple to over a billion tonnes by mid-century. The corresponding plastic waste generation over this period could likely overwhelm the waste management capabilities of many countries. This would catalyze even more flow of mismanaged plastic waste on land and in aquatic systems and oceans, further exacerbating global warming and climate change.

Equally alarming are studies by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which show that nano-plastics, formed from micro plastic ingredients and from disintegration of larger plastics, find their way into human food chains, pollute the water we drink and the air we breathe. These tiny particles eventually end up in our arteries, lungs, brains and even in breast milk, harming the health and well-being of people everywhere.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



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# Kuwait's Future Mindset Shift for a Sustainable, Innovative Nation



By Sarah Al Sabah  
Special to The Times Kuwait

In boardrooms, classrooms, cabinet rooms, and community gatherings across Kuwait, a quiet but urgent realization is taking root: we are living the future we once planned for.

Kuwait Vision 2035 and its Master Plan 2040 are national compasses that lay out a future where Kuwait is no longer defined solely by its oil wealth. Kuwait is defined by its ingenuity,



resilience, and leadership in a fast-evolving global landscape. Yet, as any seasoned strategist will tell you: a vision without velocity is just a dream.

The challenge we now face is not a lack of resources, ambition, or planning. It is a mindset challenge. How we think, how we lead, and how

we choose to move beyond inherited structures that no longer serve Kuwait's next chapter.

## The Courage to Rethink the Old Playbook:

The global economy is transforming rapidly. Energy markets are shifting, technology is redefining productivity, and young populations are demanding relevance and opportunity. For Kuwait, the old ways of doing business with its heavy bureaucracy, oil dependence and state dominated workforce, is no longer an option.

This is the moment to embrace creative disruption from within: to reform the regulatory environment, welcome private-sector leadership, and empower a new generation of Kuwaitis to design the systems, services, and solutions of tomorrow.

**From Wealth to Wisdom:** Redefining Economic Strength: Diversification has long been part of the conversation, but the time for conversations is over. We must actively build an economy where growth is driven by knowledge, not barrels. That starts with reimagining Kuwait as a financial and innovation hub, where SMEs, creative industries, and digital pioneers thrive. Regulatory frameworks must move from risk-averse to enabling.

**Logistics, Geography, and Speed:** The Race We Must Win: Kuwait's location is not just a point on a map. It is a strategic advantage waiting to be activated. With ports, rail, and a well-executed Northern Economic Zone, Kuwait can become the commercial heartbeat of the northern Gulf. But projects must move faster.

**A Green Transition Worth Leading:** The global energy transition is not about abandoning hydrocarbons overnight; it is about leading with foresight and balance. Kuwait's 15 percent renewable target by 2035 is commendable. We need to be ambitious and agile and aim higher.

**People Before Policy:** The Real Catalyst of Change: Policy does not change a nation. People do. Half of Kuwait's population is under 35. But youth cannot build the future if they are left navigating outdated education systems, job market mismatches, and a public sector that rewards security over innovation.

**Reinventing Government from the Inside Out:** To truly deliver Vision 2035, government itself must evolve. Not just through digital



services, but through culture change. Create a National Delivery Unit that tracks, measures, and accelerates the transformation agenda.

**Quality of Life:** The Measure That Matters Most: A future-ready Kuwait is not one with just skyscrapers or smart cities. It is one where quality healthcare is accessible, housing is dignified, public spaces inspire, and culture flourishes.

It Is Time to Act, Not Admire the Plan

Too often, nations spend years perfecting

strategies that sit on shelves. Kuwait's plans are excellent. What we need now is national mobilization.

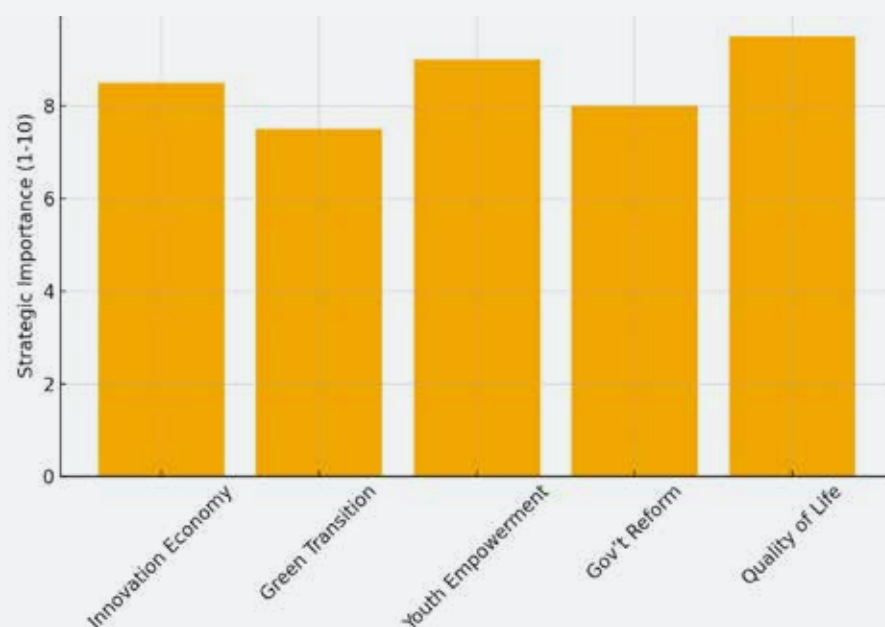
**The mindset shift must be this:** from "managing the status quo" to architecting a new Kuwait. A Kuwait that is bold, entrepreneurial, and unapologetically future-focused.

The future is not something to wait for. It is something to lead.

Let us lead together.

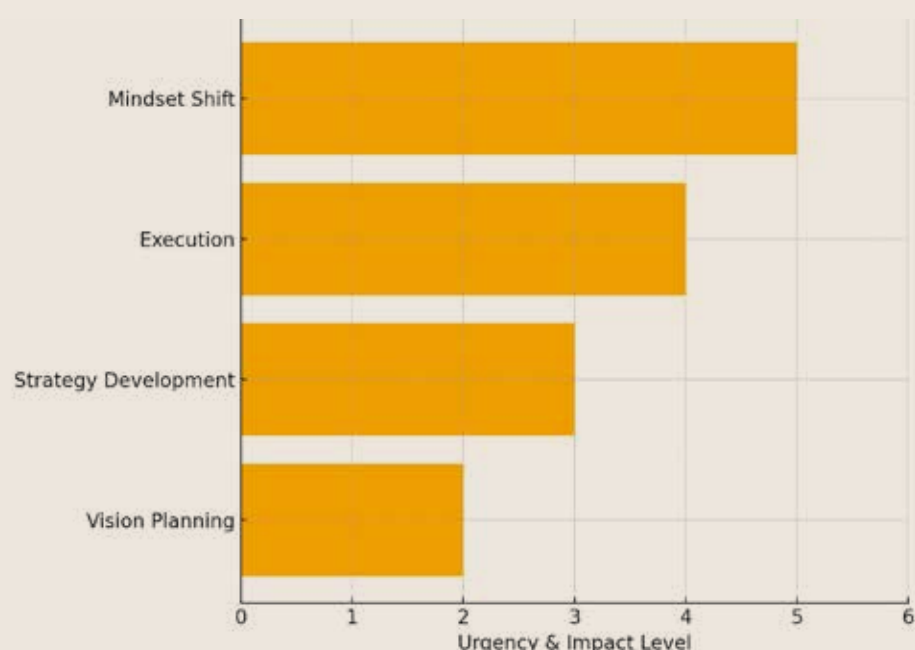
*Editor's Note: This op-ed explores how aligning Kuwait's Vision 2035 with environmental leadership offers a strategic pathway for economic diversification, societal well-being, and global competitiveness. It emphasizes the critical role of Generation Z (Kuwait's largest youth cohort) in shaping a sustainable, digital, and diversified economy. By connecting infrastructure, governance, human capital, and global positioning with environmental innovation, the article provides a call to action for policymakers, private sector leaders, and citizens to build a Kuwait that is prosperous, resilient, and future-ready.*

## Strategic Pillars for Kuwait's Sustainable Future



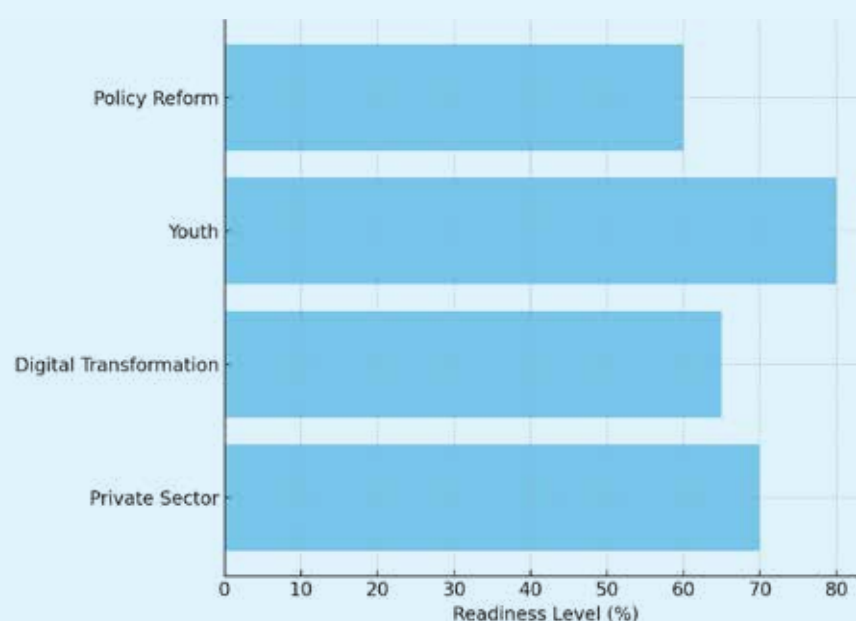
This chart ranks the core pillars vital to Kuwait's long-term success: innovation, green growth, youth engagement, governance reform, and quality of life.

## Kuwait's Transformation: From Planning to Mindset Shift



• This chart highlights the progression from traditional vision planning to the essential shift in mindset required to achieve transformation.

## Readiness of Key Enablers



This visual illustrates how ready Kuwait is across enablers such as youth capacity, digital infrastructure, private sector involvement, and policy reform.



# Lithuania, Kuwait ties embody a multifaceted relationship

*Elaborating on diplomatic relations between the two friendly states, Ambassador of Lithuania H.E. Ramnas Davidonis pointed out, "Lithuania and Kuwait established diplomatic relations in April 1994, and since then the relationship has grown in strength in various sectors, paving the way for continued cooperation, trade, and cultural exchange."*

By Reaven D'Souza  
Executive Managing Editor

In a recent exclusive interview with The Times Kuwait, Ambassador of Lithuania H.E. Ramnas Davidonis expounded on his country's growing relations with Kuwait and the potential for further enhancing ties in various domains. The ambassador also emphasized that Lithuania's reentry on the global stage in 1990 marked a significant geopolitical shift, underscored the nation's sovereignty, and provided an unique opportunity for the country to build diplomatic, developmental, and cultural relations with the global community, in particular with the Arab world.

Ambassador Davidonis began by highlighting the role of diplomacy in amplifying Lithuania's voice on the international stage. "Lithuania's journey back onto the global arena, following its return to international maps

crafting bilateral agreements is akin to opening a blank page and writing a new chapter in history. Every decision, every negotiation, is a step toward defining Lithuania's future on the world stage. The coming years will be crucial in strengthening Lithuania's presence and influence, ensuring its position is well-rooted in diplomatic and economic progress."

He added, "Diplomacy is more than negotiations and agreements—it is the art of shaping international relationships, fostering cooperation, and navigating the ever-changing geopolitical landscape. For those of us who have dedicated our lives to this field, the experience is nothing short of extraordinary. The journey of diplomacy is never static—it evolves, strengthens, and adapts to new challenges and opportunities."

Elaborating on diplomatic relations between the two friendly states, Ambassador Davidonis pointed out, "Lithuania and Kuwait established diplomatic relations in April 1994, and since then the relationship has grown in strength in various sectors, paving the way for continued cooperation, trade, and cultural exchange."

"Thirty years of diplomatic relations between Lithuania and Kuwait present a valuable opportunity to assess the progress made and explore new avenues for cooperation. Despite differences in geography and history, the two nations share remarkable similarities in their geopolitical experiences—both having endured occupation and worked tirelessly to build their countries into strong, independent entities."

"Kuwait's open and welcoming society is a defining characteristic of its diplomatic identity. Having had the opportunity to engage with Kuwait's leadership and citizens, it is clear that the country fosters an atmosphere of warmth and collaboration, making diplomatic engagement a rewarding experience."

"Recent discussions with Kuwait's Assistant Minister for European Affairs reflect the momentum in diplomatic exchanges. It signals a willingness to deepen engagement and expand opportunities for mutual cooperation, strengthened partnerships, and new prospects for cultural and economic collaboration."

"Diplomatic visits are an essential tool in fostering deeper understanding between countries. Both nations now have the freedom to define their own direction in foreign relations. The future of Kuwait-Lithuania ties should be built on understanding, collaboration, and shared interests. With more visits and deeper exchanges, the connection between these two nations can flourish, creating lasting bonds for generations to come."

Turning to economic relations and investment opportunities in Lithuania, Ambassador Davidonis stated: "Lithuania and Kuwait have the potential to grow significantly through economic cooperation and strategic investment. Today, Lithuania has the largest economy among the Baltic states, with a track record of innovation, particularly in fields like scientific lasers and nanosatellites."

"Lithuania is now actively diversifying its trade portfolio and investing in renewable energy sources. We are also aiming to become a hub for high-value, knowledge-based jobs, focusing on research, innovation, and technology-driven industries. However, trade volume with Kuwait does not reflect Lithuania's full potential."

"In 2023, Lithuania exported \$12.7 million worth of goods to Kuwait, with furniture being the top product, accounting for \$5.92 million. Other notable exports included plastic products and seeds. On the other hand, Kuwait's exports to Lithuania have been relatively smaller, with plastics and vehicles among the primary goods traded. The current economic relationship presents opportunities for expansion, especially in investments in agriculture, high technologies, life sciences, and real estate sector."

"In particular, Lithuania has established itself as a leader in life sciences. With advancements in biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and medical research, Kuwaiti investment could contribute to collaborative efforts in healthcare innovation and medical infrastructure development."



Strengthening ties in this sector would not only bring economic benefits but also foster knowledge sharing between medical professionals from both countries.

"Foreign investors, including Kuwaitis, can freely buy, sell, and rent out real estate in Lithuania. The market has shown steady growth, with residential property prices increasing by an average of 2.5 percent annually. Investors can purchase apartments, commercial properties, and luxury residences. As economic and investment opportunities widen, Kuwait investors could also find investment opportunities in seaport infrastructure, green energy, and technology startups."

Explaining about his country's immense tourism potential, Ambassador Davidonis stated: "Lithuania's reputation as a safe and welcoming destination makes it an attractive place for Kuwaiti travelers seeking a new yet familiar experience. Safety is a crucial factor when choosing a destination, and Lithuania stands out as one of the most secure countries in Europe."

"Visitors also find English widely spoken, making interactions easy and enjoyable. Summer is the best time to visit, with lush green landscapes, seaside resorts, and comfortable weather creating an ideal getaway that offers the full experience of Lithuania's natural beauty and vibrant cultural scene.. While winter presents a different kind of magic, with stunning Christmas lights and festive atmospheres,

"However, currently, there are no direct flights between Kuwait and Lithuania, but travelers can find connecting flights through major airlines and international hubs. Given Kuwait's reputation for luxury travel and Lithuania's growing importance in diplomatic and business circles, a direct flight could be a strategic move in the future. The joy and optimism of the country contribute to its appeal, making it an excellent place for deeper cultural exchanges with Kuwait and the wider Arab world."

Ambassador Davidonis concluded by stating: "For decades, history and geographical distances shaped relations between Kuwait and Lithuania, limiting interactions and cultural exchange. However, as two independent nations today, the opportunity to build bridges and embrace the beauty of Arab civilization is fully within reach."

"Looking ahead, Kuwait and Lithuania stand poised to build on their shared experiences, fostering a dynamic diplomatic relationship that reflects the progress of the past three decades while paving the way for future successes. The foundation for stronger bilateral relations is set, and with continued engagement, the partnership will only grow."



“

*Foreign investors, including Kuwaitis, can freely buy, sell, and rent out real estate in Lithuania. The market has shown steady growth, with residential property prices increasing by an average of 2.5 percent annually. Investors can purchase apartments, commercial properties, and luxury residences. As economic and investment opportunities widen, Kuwait investors could also find investment opportunities in seaport infrastructure, green energy, and technology startups.*

”

on dissolution of the former Soviet Union in 1990, offered the chance to build fresh bilateral agendas from the ground up. The ability to define relationships with other countries is a rare and exciting privilege. Diplomacy offers the opportunity to shape policies, foster trade, and create impactful recommendations that can guide international interactions.

"Being part of such efforts since the early 1990s has meant that I had the opportunity to witness the evolution of Lithuania's foreign relations firsthand. In many ways,



# OPEC, Ensuring Energy Stability

*"In our World Oil Outlook (WOO), we see oil demand at just over 120 million barrels per day by 2050."*

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Kuwait's active participation in OPEC's key decisions and negotiations since 1960 and new developments like the Al-Nokhatha field and Al Zour refinery exemplify the country's pivotal role in global energy security.

In an exclusive interview with The Business Year's (TBY) team in Kuwait, Secretary-General of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Haitham Al Ghais, spoke about the role of OPEC in stabilizing the global oil market, and warned that under-investment in the industry would likely trigger market volatility. The secretary-general, who hails from Kuwait, also highlighted the vital role played by Kuwait in ensuring global energy stability.

**The latest World Oil Outlook (WOO) by OPEC envisions a US\$17-trillion investment need by 2050, even as calls for halting new oil projects gather steam. How critical are these investments and potential risks?**

There are no signs of global oil demand peaking anytime soon. In our WOO, we see oil demand at just over 120 million barrels per day by 2050. Consequently, sufficient investments in capacity and infrastructure to produce, refine and distribute the oil are of utmost importance. We need to invest adequately—today, tomorrow, and many decades into the future—in a manner reflecting realistic assumptions about what each energy source can offer and given the need to reduce emissions.

Underinvestment would lead to market tightness and volatility, with all the negative economic and social consequences for

populations. There are manifold energy security risks stemming from the narrative that oil is part of the past, for both producers and consumers. The right investment is paramount. The energy futures of more than 8 billion people, or 9.7 billion by 2050, depend on it.

**How do Kuwait and its advancements, such as the recent discovery of the offshore Al-Nokhatha oil and gas field align with OPEC's overarching goals and contribute to stability in the global oil market?**

Kuwait was a Founder Member of OPEC back in 1960, and over the years Kuwait's many contributions to OPEC stand as a testament to the country's unwavering dedication to the organization's principles and its focus on a stable and balanced market. This continues today. The Al-Nokhatha field with huge commercial amounts of light oil and associated gas, is just one upstream example. We should also not forget the downstream, with the Al Zour refinery at 615,000 bpd, the world's largest grass-root refinery. As OPEC continues to navigate the complexities of a complex energy landscape, Kuwait's active participation in the organization's key decisions and negotiations remain indispensable. In this respect, I am certain that Kuwait will continue to be as integral to OPEC's future as it has been to its past, under the wise and able leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

**Could you elaborate on COP29 outcomes and the role that technologies play in reducing emissions?**

To put it simply, we will need an all-energies approach. Otherwise, the world cannot meet rising energy demand, maintain energy security, and ensure affordable universal energy access. We will need an all-peoples approach. The capacities, national circumstances, and development priorities of all countries must be considered to ensure

that no one is left behind. And we will need an all-technologies approach. The world needs to develop and finance all forms of technologies to help reduce emissions while meeting demand. With regard to

Secretary-General of the  
Organization of Petroleum  
Exporting Countries (OPEC)  
**Haitham Al Ghais**

technologies, our member countries are mobilizing cleaner technologies to reduce industry emissions and making major investments in renewables and hydrogen capacity.

**Primary energy demand is expected to grow by 24 percent by 2050. What are the main drivers behind this growth, and what role will oil play in the future?**

There are many reasons for the increasing need for energy, such as population growth and urbanization, a growing middle class, economic expansion, expanding energy access and emerging technologies. For example, by 2030 alone, over half a billion people are expected to move into cities across the world. This is the equivalent of around 150 new cities the size of Kuwait City. Moreover, billions of people are playing energy catch-up.

We should remember that oil consumption in developing countries currently ranges from less than one to just below two barrels per person per year, compared to nine in the EU and 22 in the US. The future of energy and oil demand growth lies primarily within the non-OECD developing world. From now until 2050, non-OECD oil demand is set to expand by over 28 million barrels per day. Overall, we see oil retaining the largest share in the global energy mix, at over 29 percent by 2050.



[ Haitham Al Ghais assumed office as Secretary-General of OPEC on 1 August 2022. With more than 30 years of experience in the global energy industry, he has held key senior managerial positions at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation in Kuwait, as well as in Beijing and London. He has previously represented Kuwait in multiple OPEC governing bodies and various other international institutions, such as the International Energy Forum and the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies. He played a leading role in the historic Declaration of Cooperation between OPEC and non-OPEC oil-producing countries. In 2017, he was appointed as the first Chairman of the Joint Technical Committee that helped facilitate the development of the methodology for monitoring the conformity of production adjustments, and he was the leader of Kuwait's team involved in finalizing and signing the Charter of Cooperation. ]

## LOT – The Value Shop makes its debut in Kuwait at LuLu Center Fahaheel



Kuwait shoppers now have a new destination for unbeatable bargains with the grand opening of LOT – The Value Shop, officially launched on 3 June 2025 at LuLu Center Fahaheel.

Spanning a spacious 2,500 square meters, the store promises an exceptional shopping experience, offering a wide range of products at remarkably affordable prices.

True to its name, LOT – The Value Shop is 'The Lowest Value Store,' where more item is priced below KD 1.900. It redefines value shopping by combining quality with affordability, ensuring that customers never have to compromise when it comes to their choices.

One of the store's most attractive high-

lights is its impressive collection of products under KD 1.900, allowing everyone to discover great finds that fit any budget.

Designed to be the perfect shopping hub for families and individuals alike, the store features a vibrant variety of categories including garments, footwear, toys, ladies' bags, household essentials, stationery, jewelry, home furnishings, and travel accessories. The shelves are stocked with thoughtfully curated items to meet the everyday needs of modern shoppers.

In tune with the season, LOT also unveiled its trendy summer collection for men, women, and children, offering fashion-forward looks at unbeatable prices.

The inauguration ceremony was a grand affair, led by Mr. Ashraf Ali M.A., Executive Director of LuLu Group International, along with Muejeb



Rahman (Buying Director), Muhamed Haris (Director – Kuwait Region), Sreejith (Regional Director – Kuwait) and other officials. The event drew a distinguished crowd, including members of Lulu Top management and notable social media influencers, who explored the store's offerings and shared their excitement online.

Strategically located within LuLu Center Fahaheel, the store spans the ground floor, mezzanine, and first floor, offering customers easy access and a seamless shopping experience.

With its unbeatable pricing, wide variety, and dedication to quality, LOT – The Value Shop is set to become Kuwait's go-to destination for smart shopping and exceptional value.



# Private sector workers require permit to exit Kuwait

*The new service, available around the clock, including on public holidays, is designed to be quick, user-friendly, and free of bureaucratic hurdles, does not interfere with the worker's approved leave duration and does not impose a limit on the number of exit permits issued annually, provided employer approval is granted; time required to obtain the permit depends on how swiftly the employer approves the request.*

In a move aimed at tightening regulatory oversight of labor mobility and reinforce the balance between workers' rights and employer obligations, Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, has issued a ministerial circular mandating that all expatriate workers in the private sector (under Article 18) must obtain an exit permit from their employer before departing the country.

The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) confirmed that the new regulation, effective July 1, 2025, is part of wider efforts to improve the labor environment and reduce legal violations associated with uncoordinated worker departures.

According to the circular, expatriates must submit a travel request to their employer — outlining personal details and intended departure date — using an official PAM-approved form. The application process is entirely electronic and facilitated through the 'Sahel Individuals' app or the 'Ashal Manpower Portal.' Once submitted, employers must approve the request through their own channels — either the 'Sahel Business' app or the 'Ashal - Companies' portal. In emergency cases or for workers unable to use the application, employers can file on their behalf.

The approved permit, once issued, must be printed and presented at border checkpoints, where it

will be scanned via barcode. The new procedure does not interfere with the worker's approved leave duration and does not impose a limit on the number of exit permits issued annually, provided employer approval is granted.

The PAM emphasized that the exit permit service is available around the clock, including on public holidays, and is designed to be quick, user-friendly, and free of bureaucratic hurdles.

Acting Director-General of PAM, Marzouq Al-Otaibi, explained that the time required to obtain a permit depends on how swiftly the employer approves the request. He encouraged workers to apply well in advance of travel and to communicate directly with employers in urgent cases.

Should an employer act arbitrarily, refuse, or obstruct the leave process, workers have the right to file a formal complaint with the Labor Relations Unit aligned with their company's file, in accordance with legal procedures. Only accredited authorized signatories registered with PAM may approve exit permits. However, a recent update to the Ashal platform allows designated employer representatives to issue permits, offering flexibility and reducing dependence on a single individual.

A security source noted that the General Administration of Ports Affairs is convening a meeting to finalize implementation details and



determine the permit's validity period.

The government views this policy

as a critical step toward modernizing the labor system, enhancing transparency, and fostering

accountability within Kuwait's private sector employment landscape.

## Steps to issue an exit permit

- Submit an exit permit request to the employer, complete with personal data and the specified travel date, via the 'Sahel' app or the 'Ashal' portal.
- Upload the electronic signature of the employer
- Approval of the request from the authority and notification via 'Sahel' or approval via the 'Ashal' portal.
- The 'barcode' appears on the form and is submitted by phone or in paper form at the ports.

## Newly introduced 'Exit Permit' for Article 18 workers valid for seven days

The Public Authority for Manpower has officially launched two new digital services to facilitate exit permit requests for private sector expatriate workers holding Article (18) residency, in line with recent government regulations.

The new services — available through the "Sahel" mobile app and the Authority's "Ashal" e-portal — allow workers to electronically request exit permits from their employers. Employers, in turn, can review and approve these requests via the "Sahel/Business" app.



and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef.

The circular mandates that all expatriate workers in the private sector must secure an exit permit from their employer before leaving Kuwait, effective July 1. The authority emphasized that this step aims to streamline procedures and strengthen oversight, ensuring compliance with labor and residency regulations.

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# KMA organizes 7th International Chopin Competition

*This year's Seventh Edition was held under the patronage of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, in collaboration with the Embassy of Poland. The competition also enjoyed the generous support of the Ambassadors of France and the United Kingdom, who sponsored special prizes for the participants.*

## The Times Kuwait Report

**K**uwait Music Academy (KMA) held a cultural extravaganza to mark the 7th International Chopin Competition, in a year marked by rich cultural milestones — Kuwait being named the Arab Capital of Culture and Poland holding the presidency of the European Union.

This year also carries special significance for admirers of classical music. In October, Warsaw will host the 19th edition of the International Chopin Piano Competition, one of the world's oldest and most prestigious music contests. Held every five years, the competition has, for nearly a century, been a launching pad for exceptional pianistic talent, opening doors for young musicians to the global stage.

In Kuwait, the spirit of Chopin has echoed since 1999 through the International Chopin Competition, organized by the Kuwait Music Academy. Co-founded by Polish musicians

and dedicated to promoting classical music for over 30 years, the academy has become a cornerstone of high-level musical education in the country.

This year's Seventh Edition was held under the patronage of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, in collaboration with the Embassy of Poland. The competition also enjoyed the generous support of the Ambassadors of France and the United Kingdom, who sponsored special prizes for the participants.

The 2025 competition attracted impressive global interest, with over 120 applications from young pianists of more than thirty nationalities. Following a rigorous selection process, the Grand Prix Prize, sponsored by the Ambassador of Poland, was awarded jointly to Shaun Thomas from India and Shahad Tarik AlAsad from Kuwait.

The gala concert and awards ceremony, held at the Yarmouk Cultural Centre, was graced by the presence of Secretary General

of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Dr. Mohammed Al Jassar, along with the Ambassadors of Poland, France, and Great Britain. The evening began with a performance by distinguished Kuwaiti pianist Faisal Al-Bahairi, followed by captivating renditions of Chopin's works by the award-winning musicians.

In his remarks the Ambassador of Poland H.E. Michal Cholewa said it was a privilege for the Embassy to participate in the 7th Chopin International Competition in Kuwait, a meaningful celebration of the timeless beauty and emotional depth of Fryderyk Chopin's music, an enduring symbol of both Polish and global cultural heritage. The Embassy, he said, expresses deep honor in joining the Kuwaiti community and international guests in recognizing Chopin's artistic legacy and extends heartfelt congratulations to the competitors, as well as their instructors and families, for their dedication to mastering Chopin's works, an effort described as both commendable and

admirable.

The Polish envoy said, appreciation also goes to the Kuwait Music Academy, particularly Professor Cezary Owerkowicz, Fajer Al-Mazidi, and Karol Masternak, for their leadership in organizing the competition, which has now been held in Kuwait for over 25 years.

Gratitude was also offered to the Kuwaiti hosts, including the YCC and Sheikha Hussah Al-Sabah, and to the NCCAL for granting its patronage to the event.

The Embassy also acknowledged the support of the Ambassadors of France and the United Kingdom, who sponsored several awards, noting Chopin's strong ties to both countries. "Finally, sincere thanks go to the jury for their expertise and contribution to shaping the future of classical music in Kuwait and beyond.

The concert marked the closing event of Europe Month celebrations in Kuwait, capping a month-long tribute to cultural exchange, artistic excellence, and international friendship.

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# Africa Day celebrations reiterate continent's relations with Kuwait

*'Africa Day celebration in Kuwait served not only as a commemoration of a significant occasion but also as a reaffirmation of enduring friendship, cooperation, and shared aspirations between Kuwait and Africa'*



## The Times Kuwait Report

Africa Day celebrations organized last week under the patronage of ambassadors and heads of African diplomatic missions accredited to Kuwait, witnessed the participation of a large gathering of diplomats, officials, and distinguished guests. Kuwait was represented at the event by Foreign Minister, Abdullah Al-Yahya, along with other foreign ministry officials. The event was held under the theme, 'Africa-Kuwait Cooperation for Enhanced Kuwaiti Investment in Africa Toward a Strategic Partnership'.



In a media statement issued on the occasion, Minister Al-Yahya stated that Kuwait's ties with African nations are deep-rooted and historic in nature. He extended his sincere congratulations to all African nations, highlighting Kuwait's commitment to strengthening cooperation and

coordination with the African continent.

He said Kuwait is proud of its longstanding partnership with Africa, particularly through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), which has, since its founding in 1961, played a vital role in supporting infrastructure and key development projects across the continent.

Al-Yahya added that Kuwait's approach to Africa is built on mutual respect and shared goals for development, peace, and prosperity, and noted that Africa continues to be a strategic partner in Kuwait's global outreach.

Speaking on the occasion, Dean of African Countries and Ambassador of the Union of the Comoros Al-Arif Said Hassan praised Kuwait's enduring support for African nations. He expressed his gratitude to Minister Al-Yahya for his active support of the diplomatic corps, stating, "Your presence among us today is a powerful testament to your deep appreciation for Africa and its people. On behalf of myself and my fellow African ambassadors, I extend our heartfelt thanks for honoring this historic occasion with your participation."

He added, "Kuwait is writing its name in gold on the forehead of the African continent, reinforcing and deepening its ties with African nations." Ambassador Hassan emphasized that this year's event, which coincides with the 61st anniversary of the founding of the African Union, is an opportunity to spotlight the continent's diversity, creativity, and progress.

He noted that each African diplomatic mission had the chance to present its national achievements, innovations, and artistic contributions, reflecting the collective resilience of African nations in overcoming challenges and pursuing African-led solutions.

He also highlighted the African Union's ambitious vision of continental integration—through regional economic blocs and the gradual establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area—as essential to

achieving long-term prosperity.

"In this dynamic context, African countries need to rely on strong partners with proven development expertise. We highly value the Kuwait Fund's collaboration with 51 African countries and its successful initiatives in partnership with the African Development Bank to support African economies," said Ambassador Hassan.

The Africa Day celebration in Kuwait served not only as a commemoration of a significant

occasion but also as a reaffirmation of enduring friendship, cooperation, and shared aspirations between Kuwait and Africa.

An art exhibition was inaugurated on the occasion, displaying both contemporary and traditional works by African artists. The event also featured captivating musical performances by several African folkloric troupes, celebrating the continent's rich cultural heritage and the longstanding people-to-people connections between Kuwait and African nations.

## Kuwait Flour Mills fully prepared for any contingency

Nabil Jahil, Sales Director at the Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company, affirmed on Friday that the company is fully prepared to respond to any emergency scenario, assuring citizens and residents that both the strategic inventory and supply chains are stable and sufficient.

"The company has extensive experience in handling such situations and is always ready," Jahil stated. "We operate with detailed emergency and backup plans — there is no place for coincidence or

reactionary decisions in our operations."

Jahil emphasized that the current situation is completely normal, with all factories running efficiently and with a high degree of operational flexibility. "If needed, we can double production within a matter of hours and fully meet market demands," he said.

He added that the company continuously monitors the market through its dedicated "Mills" teams, and all indicators confirm a stable situation. He urged the public to purchase responsibly, noting that the company's production facilities are located within Kuwait and fully capable of supplying the market without disruption reports Al-Rai daily.

"There's no need for panic buying," Jahil said. "Withdrawing more than necessary affects the strategic stock, which is best preserved for real emergencies."

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# MoE readies emergency shelters amid ongoing military escalation

In response to the ongoing military escalation in the region, Ministry of Education (MoE) announced on 13 June that 90 fully equipped emergency shelters have been prepared for students and staff, which are under continuous monitoring by Civil Defense teams.

Minister of Education, Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, held a meeting remotely with senior educational officials last week to assess field readiness and strengthen emergency

coordination across all educational institutions.

He emphasized the importance of activating rapid response teams and ensuring seamless communication among agencies to safeguard students, teachers, and administrative staff—particularly during the critical exam period.

A statement from the ministry noted comprehensive efforts to ensure the safety of students and the continuity of the educational process had been put in place, and that the ministry was “monitoring the situation on a

daily and continuous basis in coordination with relevant authorities, and is prepared to respond in full readiness to any developments”.

The ministry also reassured students and parents that twelfth-grade second semester exams will continue as scheduled, with no changes to the timeline. Control procedures are proceeding smoothly under the direct oversight of the Minister and educational leadership.

Rapid response teams across school districts have been mobilized and are fully prepared to handle any emergencies, ensuring minimal disruption to education and maintaining high levels of institutional preparedness.

The ministry concluded by wishing students success in their exams and called on God Almighty to protect Kuwait, its leadership, and its people, and to preserve the nation's security and stability



## Indian Embassy, FID organize blood donation camp

Embassy of India, in collaboration with the Forum of Indian Doctors (FID), organized a blood donation camp at Adan Hospital today to commemorate World Blood Donors Day on 14 June. The initiative highlights the strong commitment of the Indian community in Kuwait to public health and humanitarian service.

The event was inaugurated by HMinister of Health Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al Awadhi, along with Ambassador of India H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika, in the presence of senior Kuwaiti health officials Dr. Reem Al Radwan and Dr. Hanan Al Awadh, and senior members of the FID and Adan Hospital officials.



A large turnout of donors from the Indian expatriate community as well as other foreign nationalities demonstrated strong participation in the event, reinforcing the Indian community's well-established tradition of regularly donating blood in Kuwait in support of the country's healthcare system.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Swaika emphasized the Indian community's enduring commitment to community welfare and volunteerism, not just through blood donations but also in broader initiatives related to environmental sustainability such as tree plantation campaigns, beach clean-up drives, and

awareness efforts aimed at protecting Kuwait's natural environment.

For his part, Minister Dr. Al-Awadhi reaffirmed Kuwait's firm commitment to modernizing the national blood transfusion system, emphasizing ongoing efforts to upgrade infrastructure, train medical and technical staff, and expand the pool of voluntary donors.

Dr. Al-Awadhi noted, “Blood donation is not just a medical necessity—it is a noble reflection of belonging, compassion, and societal maturity in the face of health challenges.”

He praised the Forum of Indian Doctors and the Embassy of India in Kuwait for launching the campaign and promoting a culture of voluntary blood donation, which he described as a key indicator of solidarity and community resilience.

This year, the World Blood Donation Day campaign, which is held under the slogan ‘Donate Blood – Give Hope – With Our Blood Together We Save Lives,’ highlights the vital role of blood donors in saving lives and instilling humanitarian values across society.

Dr. Al-Awadhi shared impressive figures from the past year, revealing that Kuwait's Blood Bank received more than 90,000 donors and provided approximately 150,000 units of blood, producing over 190,000 blood products. He expressed his deep appreciation to all donors and volunteers, affirming that Kuwait remains a regional leader in humanitarian and health support.

Dr. Hanan Al-Awadhi, Acting Director of the Blood Transfusion Services Department, noted that this is the second consecutive year that the Indian Embassy and the Forum of Indian Doctors have partnered with Kuwait's Ministry of Health to host this campaign. “As long as there are patients in hospitals, the need for blood will remain constant,” she said, underscoring the importance of maintaining a strong strategic reserve through regular and voluntary donation campaigns.



## US Embassy issues ‘security alert’ for US citizens in the region

In the wake of ongoing military conflict in the region, the US Embassy issued a security alert for Americans, stating:

“Due to rising tensions in the region, the security environment remains complex and can change quickly. We remind US citizens in Israel and the broader Middle East region of the continued need for caution and encourage them to monitor the news for breaking developments.

Potential for Hostilities: US citizens should know the location of the nearest shelter in the event of hostilities.

Actions to Take: Be aware of your surroundings; Avoid all demonstrations and large gatherings; Avoid all areas where there is a heavy police presence; Monitor local media; Follow the instructions of local authorities;



Contact your airline directly for flight change details if your flight is affected; Exercise caution and stay alert at locations publicly associated with the United States. Keep a low profile.

Enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates and makes it easier for the US Embassy to contact you in an emergency.

## LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait unveils eco-friendly campaign in honor of World Environment Day



In celebration of World Environment Day, LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait has launched a powerful and engaging eco-conscious initiative that puts sustainability at the heart of the shopping experience.

This impactful campaign not only highlights LuLu's commitment to the environment but also encourages customers to take meaningful steps toward a greener future.

At the core of the campaign is a specially curated Environment Day Display showcased across select LuLu outlets, featuring an extensive range of sustainable, biodegradable, and reusable products.

From eco-safe cleaning solutions and bamboo kitchenware to organic groceries and recycled paper goods, the display is designed to educate and inspire shoppers to adopt more environmentally friendly habits in their daily lives.

A key highlight of the campaign is the

launch of LuLu's “Go Paperless” E-Receipt Initiative, aimed at reducing the environmental impact of printed receipts.

Shoppers are encouraged to switch to digital receipts, helping to minimize paper waste while enjoying a more convenient, secure, and eco-friendly shopping experience.

This initiative is part of LuLu Hypermarket's ongoing commitment to sustainability, aligning with global environmental goals and supporting Kuwait's national vision for a greener tomorrow.

Through this campaign, LuLu continues to lead by example in promoting sustainable retail practices and creating greater environmental awareness within the community.

LuLu Hypermarket invites all shoppers to join in the celebration of World Environment Day by making conscious choices that protect the planet—because every small step counts toward a big change.



# Russia proud about past relations with Kuwait, optimistic on future

*I am confident that our relations will continue to grow in a way that serves the interests of our two friendly nations and peoples – Ambassador Zheltov*



## The Times Kuwait Report

**E**mbassy of Russia held a reception to mark the country's National Day on 12 June. attended by Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs, Sadiq Marafi, along with members of the diplomatic corps and other distinguished guests.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador of Russia H.E. Vladimir Zheltov, highlighted the depth of Russia-Kuwait relations and praised the wisdom and pragmatism of Kuwait's leadership. He added, "Relations between Russia and Kuwait will continue to develop for the benefit of our two friendly nations and peoples."

Recalling historical moments of bilateral contact dating back to the early 20th century when Russian ships visited Kuwait during the era of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Ambassador Zheltov noted that Kuwait was also the first Gulf

country to establish diplomatic ties with Russia in 1963."

He emphasized that bilateral cooperation spans various fields including trade, energy, technical military collaboration, and humanitarian initiatives. The ambassador also pointed to Russia's emerging tourism sector, and said that despite modest beginnings, the sector has witnessed rapid growth in recent years and has become a preferred destination for many Gulf citizens.

Reflecting on the significance of National Day celebrations, Ambassador Zheltov remarked that Russia's National Day is relatively new, just 35 years old, but that Russia itself boasts a history stretching back over a millennium.

He went on to say, "We are proud of our ancestors who built a unique civilization with a distinct identity and a grand Russian culture that extended across Eurasia, spanning 11 time zones," He emphasized the deep historical-connect

between generations of Russians, from ancient Rus (known to historians as Kievan Rus) through the Soviet era, and into the modern Russian Federation, which he described as the legitimate successor to this vast legacy.

The top Russian envoy in Kuwait also addressed the geopolitical challenges facing Russia today, particularly the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, which he attributed to NATO's desire for eastward expansion. "Throughout history, due to Russia's vast geography, self-reliance, and sovereignty, adversaries have tried repeatedly to subjugate it. Even today, we face attempts to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia. Our historical memory still remembers invasions by European powers like Napoleon and Hitler, and we know how those invasions ended."

He added that Russia rejects the so-called "rules-based international order" promoted by the West, and instead advocates for a just, multipolar

world built on genuine equality and the indivisible security of all nations. He also stressed Russia's long-standing respect for the Arab world, stating that cooperation with countries like Kuwait is based on mutual understanding and shared interests, dating back to the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Ambassador Zheltov concluded by stating, "I am confident that our relations will continue to grow in a way that serves the interests of our two friendly nations and peoples."

For his part, Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs, Marafi noted that Kuwaiti-Russian relations are growing steadily and that both sides are eager to strengthen them further. He disclosed that a joint committee meeting is scheduled to take place on the sidelines of the upcoming Energy Summit, where new investment opportunities will be explored. Marafi also praised the noticeable increase in tourism flows between the two countries in recent years.

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## Philippine Embassy extends greeting to all Filipinos

On the occasion of the 127th Anniversary of Philippine Independence, the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait conveys its warmest greetings and congratulations to all Filipinos in the State of Kuwait and all over the world.

Today, we honor the sacrifices of the generations before us and continue the project of nation-building even as we try to provide better lives for ourselves and our families.

We reaffirm the aspirations of the Filipino nation for global peace, stability, and sustainable development. We also reassert our commitment to the amicable and lasting resolution of disputes and a rules-based international order. These principles guide our diplomacy and underpin our partnerships.



The Philippines stands united in solidarity with friends and partners who have a shared interest and determination in sincere and meaningful dialogue and

understanding to achieve mutual respect and friendly cooperation among nations.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude and admiration to the Filipino nationals in Kuwait for their steadfast dedication, hard work, and contribution to both our homeland and the host country.

We also celebrate the enduring and mutually respectful relationship between the Republic of the Philippines and the State of Kuwait.

The strong and friendly ties between our two nations have been further enriched through engagements at the highest levels between the leaders of both countries, thereby opening the way for deeper and broader collaboration and exchange for the benefit of our peoples and countries.

We convey our great appreciation for

the kindness and hospitality of the State of Kuwait, guided by the leadership and wisdom of His Highness Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah through the government under His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad.

May this Independence Day inspire all Filipinos to embrace and build a more responsible, caring, and compassionate society and nation.

Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas!

**- H.E. Jose Cabrera Iii**

Ambassador, Embassy Of The Republic Of  
The Philippines  
127th Anniversary Of The Philippine  
Independence

## Plastics, an Existential Threat to Planet

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Tackling plastic pollution is an inextricable part of environmental conservation and requires concerted efforts by everyone from nations to individuals. This level of cooperation is needed to address the issue comprehensively, as well as to promote and stimulate conservation efforts. World Environment Day, observed annually on 5 June, serves as a platform to raise awareness on environmental pollution. This year the emphasis was on plastic pollution and the need for governments to adopt measures to bring about systemic changes in efforts to combat plastic pollution.

In a statement on World Environment Day, Nouf Behbehani, the acting director-general of Kuwait's Environment Public Authority (EPA) noted that environmental conservation efforts form a major component of Kuwait's sustainable development plans. This, she said, includes encouraging 'positive behavior' across individual and at institutional levels, while phasing out single-use plastics.

For his part, Dr. Mubarak Al-Hajeri from

Kuwait Society for Earth Sciences lamented the increasing amount of plastic waste flowing into oceans and other water bodies, choking Kuwait's marine environment and threatening the existence of fish and other creatures through entanglement, ingestion and the spread of harmful plastic and other chemicals into aquatic systems.

A study in 2021, conducted in coordination with the US Florida State University and UNEP, found that a little over 14,000 tonnes of mismanaged plastic waste, including plastic beach-litter, end up in the waters around Kuwait. While 10 percent of this waste pollutes the sea, the remaining 90 percent is washed ashore along the coastline of the country.

Relevantly, a study in 2018 showed that on average, 44,437 items of plastic beach-litter are found per square kilometer on beaches and along the coastline in Kuwait. That data once again emphasizes the need to raise public awareness on the hazards of plastic pollution to human health and the environment, and the need to protect and preserve ecosystems, as well as instill and encourage greater civic

sense among the public, starting right from the school stage..

In this regard, it is noteworthy that in her comments on World Environment Day, head of Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) Dr. Wejdan Al-Oqab stated that KEPS recently launched an initiative titled 'Green Schools' targeting school students. The initiative aims to raise awareness among children on the need to conserve and promote the environment, and to educate them on the detrimental effects of plastic pollution on the environment as well as on human health.

Al-Oqab added that it was imperative for the general public to develop 'proper behavior' that limits any potential perils to the environment. The KEPS initiative highlights the pivotal role of individuals and their daily habits in combating plastic pollution and protecting ecosystems. Even simple acts at home such as using sustainable material instead of plastic can go a long way in contributing towards environment conservation efforts. Environmental experts also point to the lack of accurate and disintegrated data on plastic waste and its environmental impact in Kuwait. A recent primary data collection conducted through a waste composition survey in selected areas of Kuwait found no data available on a number of important pollution parameters, including the share of plastic waste within collected waste, and reliable per capita MSW generation.

Comprehensive and accurate metrics covering things like the production of plastic polymers, and how plastic products are designed, manufactured and recycled still remains scant. Better understanding of the entire life cycle of plastics, from production to disposal, is necessary to develop evidence-based policies and strategies that effectively counter the use of plastics, its waste, and

pollution, as well as to make investments in waste management infrastructure..

A holistic approach that addresses the full lifecycle of plastic should include eliminating unnecessary single-use and short-lived plastics—such as water bottles, dispensing containers, takeaway bags, disposable cutlery, freezer bags and packaging foam—rolling out refill and reuse models and producing less problematic plastic. It also means designing for circularity, where the focus is on prolonging the life of plastic products and keeping plastics out of the environment.

With UNEP-led negotiations on an international legally-binding treaty on plastic pollution scheduled for August in Geneva, Switzerland, world leaders need to adopt strong, enforceable measures, including a global ban on hazardous plastic chemicals; mandatory safety testing of all plastic components; long-term monitoring of human exposure to plastic pollution; independent research funding into health impacts, and a phase-down of fossil fuel-based plastic production.

Bringing down plastic production from fossil fuels is vital, as nearly 99 percent of all plastics are by-products of the petrochemical industry, which is poised to become the largest driver of fossil-fuel demand by mid-century. Additionally, the strong link between fossil fuels and plastic production means that plastics are one of the largest catalysts of climate change.

The science is undeniable, plastics are toxic at every stage of life. From unborn fetuses to the elderly, no one, and no environment is safe from the plastic that pollutes our land, water, and air. The world cannot recycle its way out of the plastic crisis; we need to implement innovative, bold, and binding global action, and we need to implement them now, in Kuwait and elsewhere around the world.

## Kuwait boosts power generation ahead of summer

In a significant step toward strengthening the national power grid, informed sources at Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy said three major power-generating units at the Al-Zour South Power Plant have recently been brought back into service following the completion of scheduled maintenance operations.



The successful reactivation of these units has added more than 600 megawatts to the country's electricity production capacity.

The move is part of the ministry's broader strategy to prepare for peak summer demand, when electricity usage typically surges due to high temperatures. According to the sources, the maintenance was executed to high technical standards, with

the involvement of skilled Kuwaiti engineers and technicians, underscoring the ministry's commitment to relying on national talent in critical infrastructure projects.

The ministry emphasized that it continues to implement periodic maintenance plans across all power generation plants, aiming to ensure the stability and reliability of Kuwait's electricity grid and minimize the risk of outages during high-load periods. Specialized teams are monitoring the progress of maintenance work daily, ensuring that all tasks are completed on time and in accordance with stringent quality benchmarks. In parallel with maintenance efforts, the ministry is also focusing on modernizing existing power stations and enhancing operational efficiency to meet the country's rising electricity demand, driven by ongoing population growth and urban development.

Among the major initiatives under its future planning is the expansion of electricity production capacity at the Subbiya power plant, with announcements expected soon upon the completion of the necessary tendering procedures. These initiatives reflect the ministry's strategic vision to ensure sustainable, uninterrupted power supply across Kuwait, especially during periods of increased demand, while also positioning the country for long-term energy resilience.

## PAFN committed to protecting health, safety of consumers

The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition has reiterated its firm commitment to protecting the health and safety of consumers through rigorous supervision and control over all food products, whether imported or produced locally.

In a statement, PAFN confirmed that its monitoring operations are continuous and comprehensive, 24/7, seven days a week. These operations are conducted at all key points, including border crossings, ports of entry, and across local markets throughout the country, reports Al-Rai daily.

The Authority emphasized that its inspection teams are well-trained and operate with high efficiency and professionalism. Their responsibilities include conducting thorough checks to verify that food products meet established safety standards and are free from harmful substances or contaminants.

ng vigilance is part of the Authority's broader strategy to ensure that every food item available to consumers in Kuwait is subject to strict quality control. By maintaining such high levels of scrutiny, the Authority aims to prevent health risks and uphold public confidence in the national food supply chain.

The Authority also highlighted the importance of cooperation with other government bodies and stakeholders in the food industry to support its mission and respond swiftly to any violations or emergencies that may arise.



# Kuwait accelerates China-backed development projects

*Prime Minister calls for the swift removal of any obstacles to development projects linked to Kuwait-China cooperation, stressing the need for stronger technical coordination; reviews progress on key initiatives including Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, energy and housing projects, waste recycling, and economic zones, all in line with Kuwait Vision 2035.*

Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah has issued firm directives to ensure that no obstacles stand in the way of implementing development projects linked to Kuwait's cooperation with the People's Republic of China.

He also called for intensifying communication and technical coordination with the Chinese side to ensure that these projects are expedited and completed within the shortest timeframe possible.

These directives were issued when His Highness's chaired the 14th meeting of the Ministerial Committee for the Follow-up on the Implementation of Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between Kuwait and China, at the Bayan Palace.

During the meeting, His Highness reviewed the current status and latest developments concerning a number of strategic projects that are part of the cooperation framework established through agreements and MoUs signed by the two governments.

Among the most prominent of these projects is the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, which is considered a cornerstone of Kuwait's future economic and logistical infrastructure. The discussions also covered projects in the electricity



sector, particularly in enhancing the power grid and supporting the transition to renewable energy sources. The meeting further addressed cooperation in establishing a low-carbon green system focused on waste recycling, in line with global environmental sustainability goals.

Other key areas of collaboration include housing development, the expansion of environmental infrastructure particularly in relation to wastewater treatment plants, and the development of free and economic zones to attract international investment and diversify Kuwait's economy.

In addition to reviewing the progress of

ongoing initiatives, the committee explored new opportunities to deepen strategic partnerships with China. The aim is to accelerate implementation of these large-scale projects in alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, which seeks to transform the country into a regional hub for trade, finance, and sustainable innovation.

Ambassador Samih Hayat, the Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs, who also serves as a member and rapporteur of the committee, presented a comprehensive briefing on the current status of coordination efforts.

He emphasized the active engagement between Kuwait and China at both governmental

and diplomatic levels. This includes continued dialogue with senior Chinese officials and regular consultations with the Chinese embassy in Kuwait to ensure timely implementation of all agreements and MoUs.

The meeting was attended by key government figures responsible for overseeing and executing the strategic initiatives. Attendees including Abdulaziz Al-Dakhil, Head of the Prime Minister's Court; Abdullah Al-Yahya, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, Minister of Public Works; Abdullatif Al-Mishari, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs; Noura Al-Fassam, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment; Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy; Sheikh Dr. Mishaal Al-Jaber, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority and Counselor Salah Al-Majed, Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department.

This meeting marked a reaffirmation of Kuwait's commitment to advancing its strategic cooperation with China and underscored the leadership's determination to remove bureaucratic obstacles, ensure seamless coordination, and implement projects that are vital to the nation's economic future.



## India-Kuwait ties strengthened through ICAIKC's successful CPE event

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India Kuwait Chapter (ICAIKC) successfully hosted an engaging and motivational Continuing Professional Education (CPE) event titled "Focus Gives Success" at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Kuwait. The session featured a captivating keynote address by Dr. A. Velumani, Creator of Thyrocare, and drew participation from a large number of finance professionals, their spouse and distinguished guests across Kuwait.

The event was graced by His Excellency Dr. Adarsh Swaika, Ambassador of India to the State of Kuwait, who praised ICAIKC's continuous efforts in advancing professional development and strengthening India-Kuwait ties in the financial and corporate sectors. Also in attendance was Mr. Sabah Al-Jalawi, Chairman of the Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association (KAAA), who commended the chapter's commitment to promoting excellence, ethics, and education in the accounting profession.

Dr. Velumani shared his extraordinary journey from humble beginnings to building one of India's most successful diagnostic companies, emphasizing the transformative power of clarity, consistency, and unwavering focus. His session resonated deeply with attendees, offering a blend of humor, humility, and hard-earned wisdom. CA Rohit Agarwal, Chairman of ICAIKC

and CA Aditya Vikram Dhanuka, immediate past Chairman extended heartfelt thanks to Dr. Velumani, the dignitaries, and all participating members. "Dr. Velumani's story is a masterclass in resilience and vision," CA Rohit remarked. "It reminded us that success doesn't just come from skill, but from a focused and fearless mindset."

The event concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks delivered by CA Andaleeb Girkar. She expressed deep appreciation to the esteemed speaker, Dr. A. Velumani, for his inspiring and motivational address.

Special gratitude was extended to the Chief Guest, H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika, Ambassador of India to Kuwait, and Mr. Sabah Al-Jalawi, Chairman of the Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association (KAAA), along with other distinguished guests, attendees, and the dedicated organizing committee.

She also acknowledged the unwavering support of the Chapter's annual sponsors—NBK, Al Mulla Exchange, and Cube Innovators—and thanked the media partners, IndiansinKuwait.com (IHK), Times Kuwait, and Arab Times, for their continued collaboration and coverage.

For more information on future events and initiatives, visit [www.icaikw.org](http://www.icaikw.org) and join ICAIKC in its ongoing journey toward professional excellence.



## ALSAYER group promotes road safety education at Bayan Bilingual School

As part of its continued commitment to safety, sustainability, and community well-being, ALSAYER Group organized a dynamic road safety awareness session at Bayan Bilingual School, engaging more than 50 students.

The initiative reaffirmed the Group's leadership in fostering responsible citizenship among Kuwait's youth by emphasizing the critical importance of road safety education from an early age.

With traffic accidents remaining a leading cause of death and injury globally, the session was designed to highlight the value of following safety rules — whether walking, cycling, or driving. It focused on life-saving practices and the real-world consequences of violating traffic laws, aiming to reduce accidents and cultivate a culture of caution and respect on the roads.

A key feature of the program was empowering students to serve as road safety ambassadors within their homes and

communities. Through an engaging "child-to-parent" approach, the session encouraged children to influence their families by promoting the consistent use of seatbelts, responsible driving habits, and respect for traffic laws. This ripple effect is intended to extend the campaign's impact beyond the classroom.

To make the experience educational yet enjoyable, ALSAYER's CSR team conducted an interactive quiz that tested students' knowledge and reinforced key safety messages. The session concluded with students taking a public Road Safety Pledge, committing to safe practices and encouraging others to do the same.

According to Eng. Nehad Al-Haj Ali, Group Manager of Corporate Excellence, such initiatives plant the seeds of responsibility and inspire a generational shift toward safer communities—an integral part of ALSAYER's broader mission to support a healthier and more conscious society in Kuwait.



# Hotel Romeo Roma

## A New Era of Luxury in the Eternal City

*Romeo Collection opens its second luxury hotel, where art, architecture, fine-dining, and well-being meet in a unique and conscious experience.*

### Special to The Times Kuwait

The Italian luxury hospitality group Romeo Collection, renowned for its innovative vision and commitment to ethical and sustainable luxury, recently opened Hotel Romeo Roma, its second design hotel in the heart of the Eternal City, Rome. Located just steps from Piazza del Popolo, inside a historic 16th-century palace, this exclusive 74-room boutique hotel sets a new standard for urban resorts, embodying the concept of conscious luxury by blending art, architecture, design, gastronomy, and well-being in a timeless setting.

"Romeo Roma represents the expression of a new civilization of living and hospitality, combining beauty, functionality, and an innovative vision of hotellerie. Our mission is to add value to properties through a deep integration of design, art, and management know-how, capable of meeting the needs of an increasingly aware and demanding clientele. With Romeo Collection, we aim to create a small collection of hotels that carry authentic values, capable of interpreting change and redefining the experience of hospitality in terms of service, comfort, and connection with the territory, in short... in beauty," comments Avvocato Alfredo Romeo. CEO of Romeo Roma.



Alain Ducasse

Designed by the renowned architect Zaha Hadid, Hotel Romeo Roma is one of her last projects, seamlessly merging the centuries-old history of the building with contemporary, futuristic architectural elements. This balance of tradition and innovation is not only visual but also extends to sustainability, with the use of eco-friendly materials and cutting-edge techniques to minimize environmental impact.

Premium materials, such as Macassar ebony, Nero Marquina marble, and Carrara marble, create a dialogue between tradition and innovation, grounding the hotel in its Roman context while exploring new frontiers of sustainable design. Hadid's signature dynamic, fluid lines harmoniously blend with historical elements like frescoed ceilings, creating an environment where past and present coexist in perfect harmony.

Sustainability and respect for historical heritage are at the core of every design decision at Romeo Roma, proving that conscious luxury can coexist with avant-garde architecture.

At the heart of the hotel lies a unique internal courtyard, designed as a contemporary urban square where design and conviviality meet. This space, the vibrant core of the hotel, invites guests to socialize and relax in an exclusive atmosphere. Surrounded by the historical facades of the palace, the courtyard houses some of the hotel's most iconic experiences: IL BAR open all day, LA SPA Sisley Paris, and IL CORTILE, an all-day dining service, that creates a continuous dialogue between gastronomy, well-being, and architecture.

With designer furniture, artistic installations, and carefully selected greenery, the courtyard transforms into an urban oasis, where the hectic pace of Rome seems to dissolve. This 'square within a palace' is much more than just a passageway; it reflects the very essence of Romeo Roma—a meeting point for history, culture, and innovation, offering an unforgettable



experience in the heart of the Eternal City. Additionally, La Terrazza in collaboration with Krug offers unique moments with breathtaking views over Rome's rooftops, perfect for special events or luxurious aperitifs.

Like Romeo Napoli, Romeo Collection's first design hotel, Romeo Roma embodies the philosophy of conscious luxury—an approach to luxury that goes beyond opulence, embracing sustainability, ethics, and environmental responsibility. Every design decision, from material selection to resource management, is made with a focus on reducing environmental impact without compromising comfort or aesthetics.

This ethical luxury is also reflected in the use of natural materials, energy-efficient systems, and waste reduction, ensuring that guests enjoy a stay that respects both the planet and its people.



The 74 rooms and suites at Romeo Roma are the perfect synthesis of contemporary design and historical tradition. Each space is enhanced with high-quality materials such as Carrara marble, lava stone, glass, solid wood, and Krion, chosen not only for their refined aesthetic but also for their functionality in improving acoustics and naturally regulating room temperature.

Advanced technology integration allows for intuitive control of the environment, with customizable lighting, whirlpool tubs,



hidden televisions, and integrated fireplaces in some suites, offering a tailored stay. Some rooms feature private terraces, providing spectacular panoramic views of Rome's rooftops, creating unique and unforgettable relaxation spaces.

The noble floor, a focal point of the hotel, houses rooms adorned with original historical frescoes, including a highly valuable frescoed room with views over Via di Ripetta. Here, the dialogue between Renaissance architecture and contemporary details and innovative solutions comes to life, celebrating the beauty of tradition while embracing the comforts of modern design.

Romeo Roma is not just a hotel, but a true living art gallery. Every space is enriched with works by contemporary artists like Christian Leperino, Mario Schifano, Mimmo Paladino, and Francesco Clemente. Alongside these modern pieces, the hotel displays historical artifacts uncovered during restoration works, such as



the white marble head of Livia Drusilla, wife of Emperor Augustus, offering guests a unique connection with the history of Rome.

Art, like design, is an integral part of the Romeo experience, turning every stay into a cultural and sensory journey. The artworks not only decorate but also tell stories that bridge the past and present, immersing guests in a world of beauty and reflection. As Italian art critic Vittorio Sgarbi commented: Romeo Roma is "a museum that stops teaching and starts engaging, because it becomes an inevitable part of daily life. Just wandering from one side of a room to another, is enough to enjoy a detail, a painting, a sculpture that, in that moment, inhabits our very own space. Art is at home, no longer confined to the sterile towers of museums."

The opening of Romeo Roma marks a milestone for Rome's culinary scene: for the first time, the renowned chef Alain Ducasse, a global icon of haute cuisine, brings his culinary vision to Rome through an exclusive partnership with Romeo Collection. Following the success of the restaurant at Romeo Napoli, Ducasse now brings his innovative approach to Roman gastronomy, blending traditional flavors with cutting-edge techniques.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Political Changes Do Not Weaken Green Business



**Jonathan Hall**

Managing Partner of the Sustainable Transformation Practice at Kantar, is a non-executive director at Water Unite and a member of the Executive Council for the Oxford Future of Marketing Initiative.

Since Donald Trump's return to the White House, the United States has taken an everything-everywhere-all-at-once approach to disrupting the domestic and global status quo, and sustainability and climate commitments have been among its first targets. Trump immediately signed an executive order withdrawing the US from the Paris climate agreement, and his administration then canceled funding for clean-energy projects under the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Against this backdrop, some companies are quietly downplaying or abandoning their previously announced environmental and climate commitments.

But no amount of shock-and-awe policy disruption in one country compares to the disruption caused by climate change. Already, the financial costs from disrupted global supply chains—owing to water stress, biodiversity loss, and land degradation—are projected to reach up to \$25 trillion by 2060.

Businesses that fail to manage these risks will face higher costs, increased regulatory scrutiny, and reputational damage. For example, automakers that are slow-playing the transition to electric vehicles may find themselves scrambling to catch up as more governments enact legislation to phase out internal combustion engines in the coming

“Millennial and Gen Z consumers are seeking brands that reflect their values, and chief among these is a preference for mutualism over individualism: a sense of community and shared responsibility for collective gain.”

years. In time, legacy auto brands are likely to face the same kind of scrutiny and reputational fallout that oil and gas producers have.

By contrast, companies that proactively build greater resilience throughout their businesses and supply chains will benefit from greater investor confidence, and thus lower capital costs. For example, the champagne brand Taittinger has opened a vineyard in Kent to manage the risk that climate change poses to production in France. But with the climate-finance industry focused mostly on the net-zero agenda (reducing emissions), physical risks and climate-adaptation needs have not received the attention they merit. As a result, banks, asset managers, and especially



insurers are sitting on a time bomb of potential liabilities. Adapting to a world characterized by biodiversity loss, water stress, and other risks is now crucial to maintaining corporate profitability over the long term.

Far-sighted countries and companies will recognize that this upheaval represents an opportunity. In separate studies, McKinsey Sustainability and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) estimated the economic opportunity represented by the sustainable transition at \$12 trillion per year by 2030.

Similarly, Kantar BrandZ assessments show that perceptions of sustainability enhance brand equity (value in the eyes of customers), drive sales, and allow brands to command a premium. Yet even as sustainability perceptions add as much as 10 percent to the value of the top 100 brands, these companies are still leaving an estimated \$600 billion on the table. The next decade of business will be defined by companies that recognize sustainability as an economic imperative, rather than just a regulatory requirement.

Economic power is shifting fast with the impending generational transfer of wealth. In the US alone, the transfer of wealth from Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) to Millennials (1981-96) and Gen Z (1997-2012) could amount to \$84.4 trillion over the next 20 years.

As Millennial and Gen Z consumers become more dominant in the marketplace, they are seeking brands that reflect their values, and chief among these is a preference for mutualism over individualism: a sense of community and shared responsibility for collective gain in the face of anticipated uncertainty and adversity. In this context, businesses like Airbnb, Vinted, and IKEA are stealing a march with brand communications that focus on cooperation, community, and a sense of belonging. Airbnb's stated purpose, for example, is to “create a world where anyone can belong anywhere.”

Most of the business community understands what is at stake. In Kantar's work with the Climate Governance Initiative, 88 percent of board directors told us that climate change requires new thinking and new forms of leadership from top executives to the workforce, and 84 percent viewed climate-related challenges as opportunities for business innovation. As global business leaders increasingly recognize the need for a new mindset, one finds more

and more brands exploring circular business models—such as reuse, repair, and rental—that allow them to differentiate themselves, strengthen customer loyalty, and unlock new revenue streams. IKEA's CIRKULÄR initiative, for example, uses financial rewards, humor, and green imagery to encourage customers to buy and sell used IKEA items, decoupling growth from the production of new items.

As global markets increasingly focus on business resilience and respond to the rise of industrial policy and longer-term investment strategies, companies that adapt to generational change will be best positioned to lead the next industrial revolution. We are experiencing much

more than the shock of US policy shifts. To remain credible in the eyes of consumers and investors, brands and businesses will have to get serious about building climate resilience into their operations—whether by addressing single points of failure in their supply chains or by implementing robust crisis and recovery plans.

For businesses, the need to adapt to climate change is not going away, and neither is consumer demand for sustainable solutions. Globally, 85 percent of people surveyed still want to make ‘greener’ choices in their purchases. Companies that shun, renounce, or postpone climate-attuned strategies do so at their own peril.

## Hotel Romeo Roma: A New Era of Luxury in the Eternal City

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“Opening in Rome is a great joy. First of all, because I deeply and sincerely love Italy, and then because this new restaurant, in the heart of the capital, is a prestigious and very special place. I hope that Il Ristorante Alain Ducasse Roma will provide epicureans with an unforgettable experience of contemporary French gastronomy,” said Alain Ducasse.

Il Ristorante Alain Ducasse Roma will be a temple of culinary excellence, where tradition and modernity merge, enhancing the finest Italian ingredients with cutting-edge techniques. Even breakfast, a key moment for the group's hospitality, will be curated by the chef, offering an exclusive selection of options that combine quality, refinement, and the unmistakable Ducasse touch for a memorable start to the day.

Led by a team personally selected by Ducasse, the restaurant will offer a fine dining experience that promises to redefine the gastronomic standards of the Eternal City. This opening represents not only a groundbreaking novelty for Rome but also a testament to Romeo Collection's ongoing commitment to collaborating with prominent figures in global culture and culinary arts, creating unique and memorable experiences.

Romeo Roma offers a sanctuary of tranquility in the heart of the city with a 1,200-square-meter

wellness area, signed Sisley Paris. LA SPA Sisley Paris is a sanctuary for body and mind, offering treatments based on the Phyto-Aromatiques philosophy, which combines plant extracts and natural essences for a sensory relaxation experience. The indoor/outdoor pool, with a transparent bottom revealing the archaeological remains beneath, creates a visual connection with the history of Rome, enriching the wellness experience.

In addition to the treatments, LA SPA Sisley Paris includes a hammam, a gravitational tub, a salt wall, and a fitness center equipped with the latest Technogym technology, providing a comprehensive well-being and regeneration experience. With its opening, Romeo Roma joins Romeo Napoli and will soon be followed by Romeo Massa Lubrense in 2025, sharing the same dedication to conscious luxury and hospitality that leaves a lasting positive impact. Each stay at Romeo Roma is an emotional, cultural, and ethical experience, destined to leave an unforgettable mark on the memories of its guests.

At Romeo Roma, the philosophy of conscious luxury goes beyond material comfort, focusing on culture, sustainability, and personalized service. Every guest is welcomed into a space that celebrates the contrast between the ancient and the contemporary, East and West, nature and technology, where art and architecture intertwine to create indelible memories.



# Thought for the week

“ To ask what causes poverty is like asking what causes cold. It is the absence of energy. Similarly, poverty is the absence of wealth. We should ask, "what are the causes of wealth?"

- Madsen Pirie  
British Researcher and Author

## WAYS TO SUPPRESS YOUR APPETITE NATURALLY

Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



Many people wonder what can be the best way to decrease their appetite, and have no doubt tried a lot of diet pills and potions. However, besides the side effects caused by them, most of these pills only work for a few days before they stop producing the desired results.

Personally I love food, but I also have a strong control over my appetite. I have tried over the years a few successful means of suppressing my appetite, without the aid of any diet pill. It worked for me and it should work for you as well.

Below are some of the ways that have helped me suppress my appetite, naturally and effectively:

**Tea and Camomile:** Those are the best appetite suppressants that worked for me. Usually I try not to eat anything after my dinner which is usually between 8 and 9pm. So a better alternative to foods is camomile at night. I keep tea (mainly green) for the afternoon because of the caffeine content which will not help me to sleep at night. I sweeten it with a pack of Splenda

The best thing about hot tea is that it works well with almost every diet, and has no calories.

**Water:** Water is a great natural appetite suppressant. My all time advice for everyone is to drink two glasses before each meal, especially in the morning before having breakfast. Well this is usually what I do everyday. It decreases my appetite before each meal. Your body does not ask for water unless you are completely dehydrated. So it always mixes up between being thirsty or hungry. Try that tip, it works.

**Working out:** For some people exercise is just a way to burn calories and eventually lose weight. But when you workout, your body releases natural endorphins that suppress your appetite while exercising.

**Proteins:** Proteins take a long time to be digested and do not affect your blood sugar in the way that carbohydrates do. I am not telling you to shift to a protein diet, you can have a pure protein breakfast for example if you have a long day and you will feel full.

Personally, whenever I have a long day, I try to take for breakfast some cheese and lettuce, boiled eggs with vegetables, with a cup of skim milk. The protein will keep me satisfied longer.

**Vegetables:** I always tell my clients to eat their salads before their main meals, not within or after. Why? If you eat a salad with a low fat dressing at the start of every meal you will become full faster. It keeps you from eating a lot of calories at a meal as you normally would. It is low in fat, high in fiber (which gives you the satiety feeling). Chew your food well. Sometimes the simple motion of chewing can trick your brain into feeling full.

**Coffee:** Coffee is a natural appetite suppressant as well as a diuretic. Hot or cold, coffee is a great way to curb your appetite in the morning or afternoon. But be careful not to add cream to it. Just have it black.

**Popcorn:** Unlike most people I think, popcorn is a very healthy snack. It is very rich in fiber which keeps you feeling full longer. It might make you feel bloated but that is just due to its high fiber content. So whenever you feel a bit hungry, a cup of popped popcorn can be the solution.

Increase your metabolism and curb your appetite naturally.

*Eat like Mira*  
Create healthy habits, not restrictions

To subscribe to my diet programs,  
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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](mailto:infotimeskuwait@gmail.com)

### RECIPE

## Crispy Apple Rings with Rabdi



A unique twist on the traditional Indian dessert rabdi, this combination of rich, creamy, thickened milk and crisp rings of apple infused with syrup with rings of apple, blends the fruity flavors of apple with spicy cardamom to offer a perfect dessert for festive occasions or special gatherings.

**Total Time:** 1 hour 45 minutes

**Serves:** 6 people

**Ingredients:**

- For Apple Jalebi:
    - 2 large apples
    - 1 cup all-purpose flour (maida)
    - 2 tbsp cornflour
    - 1 tbsp curd
    - 1 pinch baking soda
    - A few strands of saffron (optional)
    - ¾ cup water (adjust for consistency)
    - Ghee or oil for deep frying
  - For Sugar Syrup:
    - 1 cup sugar
    - ½ cup water
    - ½ tsp lemon juice
    - 1 inch cinnamon stick
    - Few saffron strands
  - For Rabdi:
    - 1 litre full-fat milk
    - 2 tbsp sugar (adjust to taste)
    - ½ tsp cardamom powder
    - Few saffron strands
    - 1 tbsp chopped pistachios/almonds (optional)
- Rose water – 2–3 drops (optional)

**Instructions:**

- For making rabdi:
  - Boil milk in a thick-bottomed pan while stirring and scraping from the sides of the pan to prevent it adhering to the sides. Keep stirring over low heat until the quantity reduces to half
  - Add sugar, cardamom, saffron, and rose water. Cook for another 5–7 minutes, then remove the pan and set aside to cool. Once cool, garnish with nuts and refrigerate.
- For jalebi batter
  - Mix maida, cornflour, curd, saffron, and water into a slightly thick, smooth batter - Add baking soda just before frying.
- For sugar syrup:
  - Boil sugar and water together until it reaches a sticky consistency.
  - Add the cinnamon stick, saffron, and the lemon juice to avoid crystallization. Set aside while keeping warm
- For apple slices:
  - Wash and core apples. Slice into ½ cm thick rings.
  - Pat dry with paper towels.
  - Heat ghee/oil on medium flame.
  - Dip apple rings in the jalebi batter, coat well, and fry till golden crisp.
  - Dip the rings immediately in the warm sugar syrup for 10–15 seconds and remove.
- For serving:
  - Place the warm apple jalebis on a dessert plate.
  - Drizzle chilled rabdi over or serve it on the side.
  - Garnish with chopped nuts and dried rose petals (optional).



Chef Chhaya Thakker

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](mailto:editortimeskuwait@gmail.com)



# Habits traced to newly found learning system in brain

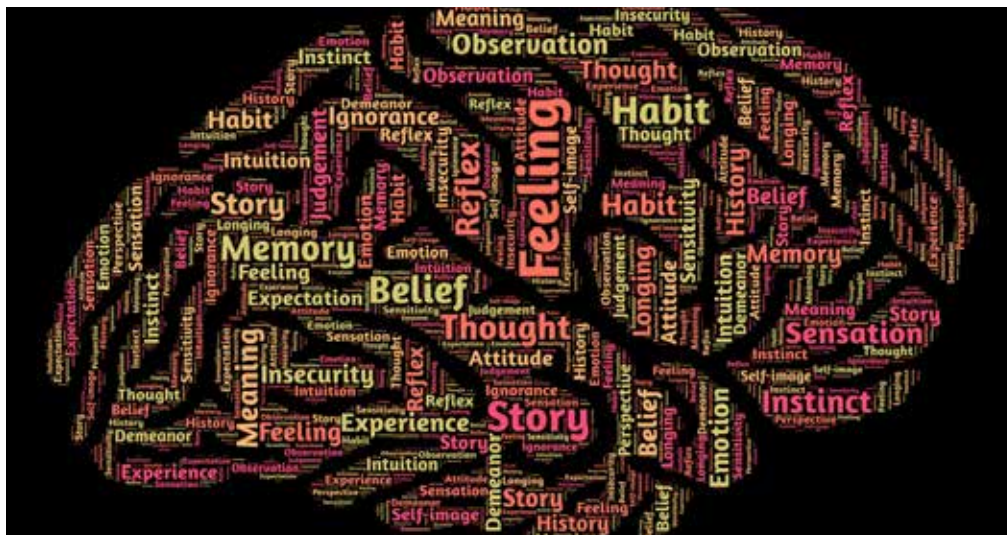
Neuroscientists at University College London (UCL) in the United Kingdom published a study on a new learning center located in the brain that they found was responsible for forming habits. The discovery in mice brains could have profound implications on strategies designed to address conditions related to habitual learning, including addictions and compulsions in humans. The finding could also potentially lead to developing therapeutics for habit-related illnesses such as Parkinson's.

The study is reportedly the first to find that the brain uses a dual system for learning through trial and error. Earlier studies have established that the brain has a values-based learning system. The new learning mechanism found in the brain enables you to form a preference for a certain action, which then allows you to bypass your values-based system in making decisions. This could free-up cognitive resources to make value-based decisions about something else.

The breakthrough discovery of a new learning pathway in the brain came after the scientists found that a dopamine signal in the brain acted as a different kind of teaching signal to the one previously known. Dopamine signals in the brain were already understood to form reward prediction errors (RPE)—the brain's way of learning and adapting based on the difference between what we expect and what we actually experience, thereby driving our behavior and motivation.

In the new study, the scientists discovered that, in parallel to RPE, there is an additional dopamine signal, called action prediction error (APE), which updates how often an action is performed. These two teaching signals give animals two different ways of learning to make a choice, learning to choose either the most valuable option or the most frequent option.

An analogy to this could be found in visiting a local coffee shop. The first time you go to



the shop, you might take time choosing what type of coffee to order. You may end up liking or disliking your choice. However, after you go back to the same shop on several occasions, you form a preference for a certain coffee. On subsequent visits you no longer need to spend time wondering which coffee to order as you already have a preferred choice.

The scientists postulated that it is the APE dopamine signal that enables you to store this default policy in the brain. The new learning system also provides a much simpler way of storing information than having to directly compare the value of different options on repeat occasions. This might free up the brain to engage in other decision-making processes.

Previous research had shown that the dopamine neurons involved in coding for reward lie in three areas of the midbrain. However, further studies showed that half of these neurons code for movement, but the reason remained a mystery. The new study shows that RPE neurons project to all areas of the striatum

in the midbrain except to one, called the tail of the striatum. Meanwhile, the movement-specific neurons project to all areas apart from the nucleus accumbens. This means that the nucleus accumbens exclusively signals reward, and the tail of the striatum exclusively signals movement.

By investigating the tail of the striatum in mice, using a genetically encoded dopamine sensor, the researchers were able to find that dopamine release in this area was related to movement and not to reward. To test this, the team lesioned the tail of the striatum and observed that while lesioned mice and control mice initially learn in the same way, once they get to about 60-70 percent performance, i.e. when they develop a preference, then the control mice rapidly learn and develop expert performance, whereas the lesioned mice only continue to learn in a linear fashion.

The scientists explained that this was because the lesioned mice can only use RPE, whereas the control mice have two learning systems, RPE and APE, which contribute to the

choice. To further understand this, the team silenced the tail of striatum in expert mice and found that this had a catastrophic effect on their performance in the task.

This showed that while in early learning animals form a preference using the value-based system based on RPE, in late learning they switch to exclusively use APE in the tail of striatum to drive their choice. The team also used extensive computational modelling to understand how the two systems, RPE and APE, learn together. These findings hint at why it is so hard to break bad habits and why replacing an action with something else may be the best strategy.

If you replace an action consistently enough, such as chewing on gum instead of smoking, the APE system may be able to take over and form a new habit on top of the other one. Up until now, most research on addictions and compulsions had focused on the nucleus accumbens. The new research opens up a new place to look in the brain for potential therapeutic targets.

These findings also have potential implications for Parkinson's, which is known to be caused by the death of midbrain dopamine neurons related to movement, which may be responsible for coding APE. This could explain why people with Parkinson's experience deficits in habitual behaviors such as walking, however they do not experience deficits in more flexible behaviors such as ice skating.

The movement related neurons that die in Parkinson's disease are the ones that drive habitual behaviour related to movement, but neurons that use the value-based flexible system are fine. This gives scientists a new place to look in the brain and a new way of thinking about Parkinson's. The research team is now said to be testing whether APE is really needed for habits. They are also exploring what exactly is being learned in each system and how the two work together.

## Trifecta of sustainability—green hydrogen, potable water, low cost

Finding a perfect sustainable system that addresses both environmental and economic concerns while providing energy and potable water to hundreds of millions of people, mainly in the developing world, without access to these resources, is a daunting task.

Now researchers at Cornell University in the United States say they have hit the trifecta of sustainable technology, by developing a low-cost method to produce carbon-free 'green hydrogen' via solar-powered electrolysis of seawater, with an fortuitous byproduct of the process being potable water.

In early April of this year the team published a study on their hybrid solar distillation-water electrolysis (HSD-WE) device, which can produce 200 milliliters of hydrogen per hour with 12.6 percent energy efficiency directly from seawater under natural sunlight. The researchers estimate that within 15 years, the technology could reduce the cost of green hydrogen production to \$1 per kilogram—a key step in the global target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

Water and energy are both critically needed for our everyday life, but typically, if you want



to produce more energy, you have to consume more water. On the other hand, to produce potable water through desalination you need to consume enormous energy. Access to drinking water is critical as two-thirds of the global population are facing water scarcity. So, there is a bottleneck in clean energy and pure water availability when it comes to cost.

Green hydrogen is produced by splitting

'high purity' (deionized) water molecules into hydrogen and oxygen through electrolysis. The high cost results from the massive amount of clean water that the process requires; the cost of manufacturing green hydrogen can be roughly 10 times higher than that of regular hydrogen. The scientists took their cue from the fact that solar and seawater are basically infinite resources and they are also free resources.

Working with researchers from MIT, Johns Hopkins University and Michigan State University, the Cornell University team devised a 10 centimeter by 10 centimeter prototype device that leverages one of the drawbacks of photovoltaics: their relatively low efficiency. Most PV cells can only convert up to approximately 30 percent of solar energy into electricity, and the rest dissipates as waste heat. But the team's device harnesses most of that waste heat and uses it to warm the seawater until it evaporates.

Basically, the short-wavelength sunlight interacts with the solar cell to generate electricity, and the longer wavelength light generates the waste heat to power the seawater distillation. This allows all of the solar energy to be used with no waste. Once the seawater evaporates, the salt is left behind, and the desalinated vapor condenses into clean water, which passes through an electrolyzer that splits the water molecules into hydrogen and oxygen.

The aim is to avoid carbon emission and avoid pollution while at the same time remaining affordable, as lower cost leads to higher market potential needed for large-scale adoption.







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