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Desertification, a silent threat to Kuwait's land

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Total land area in Kuwait is 17,818 sq km, which places it in the bottom quartile of world's countries based on size. Considering this relatively small area, it is vital that authorities pay particular attention to ensuring available land is utilized most efficiently, and also to implementing measures that prevent land loss to pollution, degradation, and natural encroachment by the sea or through desertification.



In particular, desertification is a significant challenge that has largely remained unaddressed over the years. Though the word connotes desert, in scientific terms desertification refers to the degradation of land in arid areas such as Kuwait, as well as in semi-arid and sub-humid areas that often create desert-like conditions.

Desertification in Kuwait is caused by various factors, including climatic variations, soil degradation, wind erosion, and human activities, and is characterized by the loss of fertile land and vegetated areas.

There is no specific agency in Kuwait dedicated to working proactively to prevent degradation and mitigate desertification of land. The Municipality is responsible for allocating land, preventing its usurp, and monitoring that land distributed is used as intended. Meanwhile, the Environmental Public Authority (EPA) is tasked with protecting and preserving the natural environment and preventing pollution. The Coastal and Desertification Monitoring Department at EPA passively monitors and reports on natural land and sea encroachments.

Lack of a dedicated entity has over the decades led to unbridled human activities polluting and degrading Kuwait's waters, coastline and land area. Additionally, natural processes such as sea encroachments into land, and soil erosion through sand and dust storms, have taken a steady toll on available land in the country. Absence of effective mitigatory measures has led to large swathes of fertile land being transformed by sand and dust storms into barren deserts.

Desertification damages the natural vegetation, spurs biodiversity loss, and disrupts ecological processes. In addition, desertification leads to economic and social impacts, as it can negatively affect agricultural productivity, livestock, and livelihoods, as well as human health by increasing the risks of respiratory diseases, heart disorders, eye and skin irritation, and other ailments.

While there is no straight-forward 'cause-effect' process that leads to desertification, the drivers of this process and their complex interactions are known. The direct drivers include climatic variations, especially low soil moisture, rainfall patterns, evaporation, and erosion of top soil by sand and dust storms. Indirect drivers are mostly human derived, such as overgrazing of sheep and camels, off-road vehicle traffic, sand and gravel quarrying, and unsustainable land management practices.

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Kuwait at the forefront of remote robotic surgery with advanced health infrastructure



By Sheikha Suhaila Al-Sabah
Managing Editor

In what is being described as a defining moment in Kuwait's medical history, the country has successfully completed nine remote robotic surgeries within six months, solidifying its standing among global leaders in medical innovation.

The achievement represents the culmination of decades of dedicated efforts to develop a robust national healthcare system and enhance the capabilities of its medical professionals.

The landmark accomplishment was praised by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who in his congratulatory message to Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi and Dr. Saad Al-Dousari, Kuwaiti consultant in kidney and urology surgery and head of the surgery department, hailed the achievement as an unprecedented medical breakthrough, emphasizing his ongoing support for all initiatives that elevate Kuwait's global reputation and serve the nation's well-being.

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Private Sector: Engine of Innovation and Diversification

Building the Future

Kuwait's Resilient Path to Vision 2035 **PART-3**

This op-ed, titled 'Building the Future: Kuwait's Resilient Path to Vision 2035,' examines how Kuwait can remain committed to its long-term national development goals amid current regional crises, climate pressures, and economic challenges. It highlights the importance of national preparedness and emphasizes the critical roles played by youth, women, civil society, and the private sector in building a resilient and future-ready Kuwait. The article offers actionable recommendations for policymakers, the business community, and citizens, encouraging collective action and cross-sectoral collaboration to stay the course on Vision 2035.



By Sarah Al Sabah
Special to The Times Kuwait

Our region faces a confluence of challenges that feel both heavy and defining, from geopolitical tensions to a deepening climate emergency and the ever-evolving technological advancements. These pressures impact us in real-time. Just this May, an unprecedented early heatwave sent temperatures soaring to 48°C, pushing Kuwait's power grid to its limits and forcing emergency outages. Such climate extremes underscore how vital national preparedness has become. Yet Kuwait has weathered storms before, both literal and figurative, and emerged stronger. Today, the call is to stay the course on our Vision 2035 transformation, using resilience and innovation to turn turbulence into opportunity.

Vision 2035, also known as New Kuwait, is our blueprint for a thriving future. It aspires to transform Kuwait into a diversified, sustainable economy and a regional financial and commercial hub led by a dynamic private sector. Crucially, this vision is not just about buildings and budgets; it is about people and purpose. National resilience in uncertain times means investing in our human capital, strengthening social cohesion, and thinking decades ahead. In a time of regional uncertainty, climate pressure, and rapid technological change, staying the course on long-term reforms and innovation is more important than ever.

In Part 1 and 2 of this 4-part series we examined how building a resilient path to Vision 2035 and the future of Kuwait needs to harness the full strength of society in its entirety, its grassroots energy and civic participation, including its youth and women and civil society. This week we look at the third component in the social engagement needed for Kuwait to remain future-ready in the face of global disruptions, the private sector.

Private Sector: Engine of Innovation and Diversification: No discussion of Kuwait's future-readiness is complete without the private sector. Entrepreneurs, businesses, and investors who will fuel the engine of growth towards the road to 'New Kuwait'. Vision 2035 envisions a profound shift where the private sector leads the economy and drives job creation, under the umbrella of a supportive public sector that safeguards social values and identity. In practical terms, this means reducing our historic over reliance on oil revenues and a bloated public sector. Instead, we cultivate a dynamic, competitive business environment. The goal is nurturing Kuwaiti small

businesses and start-ups, attracting foreign investment in new industries, and empowering the private sector to innovate solutions to national challenges.

Progress on this front is tangible. A fundamental pillar of the 2035 plan is to diversify Kuwait's economy away from oil, which currently still accounts for roughly 90-95 percent of exports. For years, Kuwait lagged behind GCC neighbors in its diversification efforts and renewable energy investment. This is changing. The government is investing in emerging sectors like information technology, finance, logistics, and clean energy. These areas are poised to create high-skill jobs for Kuwaitis and buffer the economy against oil price swings. By 2030, Kuwait aims to have over 22,000 MW

substantial resources to youth development programs (as mentioned earlier) and to fostering entrepreneurship ecosystems. The Kuwait Investment Authority, our sovereign wealth fund, has modernized its IT and cybersecurity systems to be a model of efficiency and innovation in finance. Even in traditionally state-dominated sectors like energy, we see pockets of excellence: the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), established in 2016, prides itself on a 'pro-youth culture' that pushes creativity and open data, leveraging young talent to drive innovation in oil and gas. Such examples show that even legacy sectors can reinvent themselves by empowering young professionals and adopting global best practices. To truly unleash the private sector's



of renewable energy capacity, signaling an unprecedented push into solar and wind power.

Meanwhile, new economic zones regulated by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) and fresh incentives for foreign investors are laying the groundwork for a more diversified, private-sector-led growth model. These zones are expected to generate new industries and employment opportunities. Opportunities that range from high-tech manufacturing to green technology, thus enhancing long-term economic stability. Every dollar of non-oil revenue earned, and every private-sector job created is a step toward greater national resilience.

Kuwait's private sector is not only an economic actor but also a partner in innovation and social progress. Our leading companies are increasingly embracing sustainability and community engagement as part of their business ethos. For instance, Kuwaiti telecom and finance firms are investing in local start-ups and digital infrastructure, accelerating the country's tech transformation. Major corporations like Zain have dedicated

potential, Kuwait is pursuing regulatory and fiscal reforms aimed at improving the business climate. Efforts to streamline business licensing, enforce transparency, and combat corruption are underway. Entrepreneurs thrive where bureaucracy and red tape are minimized. The government is also promoting Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure and utilities, an approach that has already seen success in the power sector. In response to the power capacity crunch, Kuwait is inviting private investment and expertise to help build new power and renewable energy plants quickly. Upcoming projects like Al-Dabdaba solar park and phases of Al-Zour North power plant involve PPP models, which bring in efficiency and capital from the private sector while sharing risks. Such collaboration not only resolves immediate issues but also transfers know-how to Kuwaiti professionals and demonstrates the viability of PPPs in other areas.

Another critical dimension is the role of the private sector in the green transition. As the world moves toward a low-carbon future, Kuwaiti businesses must adapt or be left behind.

Encouragingly, a recent survey and report by the International Labor Organization and Kuwait Chamber of Commerce found that many Kuwaiti companies see opportunity in a 'just transition' to a greener economy, and they emphasize the need for clear policies to guide this shift. The private sector can contribute to Kuwait's climate goals by adopting cleaner processes, investing in sustainable technologies, and creating 'green jobs' for Kuwaitis. Every solar panel installed by a local firm, every electric vehicle adopted into a corporate fleet, every eco-friendly startup funded are actions that help Kuwait prepare for a post-oil era and make our economy more competitive internationally. Notably, Kuwait's commitment to net-zero emissions in the oil and gas sector by 2050 and economy-wide by 2060 will require immense innovation that only the private sector can deliver at scale. Far from being a burden, this transition is a chance for Kuwaiti companies to pioneer new industries like hydrogen fuel, clean cooling technologies, waste-to-energy, and export their expertise.

An empowered private sector means a resilient nation. The private sector creates jobs for our youth, drives the innovation needed to solve national problems, and generates wealth that can be reinvested into our society. Vision 2035 explicitly calls for the private sector to be the 'primary engine of growth', recognizing that sustainable prosperity must be built on entrepreneurship and enterprise. By staying committed to economic reform and by fostering a culture of innovation in business, Kuwait is steadily moving toward that goal. The journey is not without obstacles. We still have bureaucratic hurdles to clear and a mindset to transform. Still, the momentum is real.

As we look to the future, public and private leaders alike must keep collaboration at the forefront: government setting the vision and level playing field, and businesses bringing solutions and agility. Together, they can diversify our economy in ways that make Kuwait more secure and less subject to the whims of global markets.

[Next week, in the concluding part of Building the Future Kuwait, we emphasize the need to stay the course to realize Vision 2035 with a call to action-Ed]

Editor's Note: This timely op-ed offers a compelling perspective on Kuwait's resilience in the face of regional and global challenges. By blending strategic policy analysis with a human-centered narrative, the article speaks to both decision-makers and the general public. The article effectively links Vision 2035 objectives to current events and calls for inclusive participation from all sectors of society. Its emphasis on youth empowerment, women's leadership, and private sector innovation makes it highly relevant for ongoing national conversations about reform, sustainability, and Kuwait's role in the Gulf and the world. The piece is recommended for publication as part of The Times Kuwait's ongoing series on Vision 2035 and national development.

Diplomacy Involves Empathy, Listening, Life-Long Learning

*In our ongoing series on 'Honoring Women Reshaping World Diplomacy', The Times Kuwait speaks this week with the Ambassador of the United States, **H.E. Karen Sasahara**, on her thoughts about the role and impact of women in leadership, and more specifically, in the field of diplomacy.*

The Times Kuwait Report

What made you decide to become a diplomat?

Becoming a diplomat was not something that I thought about consciously, but my university friends and classmates were from so many different countries. It was interesting to get to know them, their cultures and politics. I moved to Washington



DC for graduate school and began to meet Foreign Service Officers (diplomats) from the State Department. The work and the life seemed really interesting, and so I took the Foreign Service exam and passed. Taking the exam was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

What challenges have you faced as a female diplomat and how did you overcome them?

I have to be honest, I don't recall encountering any blatant or obvious discrimination because of my gender. Maybe I wasn't perceptive enough! I think that many countries are aware that American diplomats come from a variety of backgrounds, regions of our country, etc. I have spent virtually my entire career working in the Middle East. I have always been treated with respect. People always extended genuine hospitality to me. The trait that governments want to see in all diplomats is professionalism, strong job knowledge, and solid preparation for their assignment.

How does gender influence your approach as a diplomat?

I don't consciously think about it, but it's important to evaluate when my presence is or isn't appropriate for whatever reason. I think most women focus on establishing common ground and positive communication when working to establish a professional relationship in any field. It helps in both the smooth and rough times. I think all good diplomats seek to achieve that goal, male or female. Further, a good diplomat has the ability to interact with people from across the socio-economic spectrum. Anytime when you can make a connection with someone that leads to

collaboration on some project or resolves an issue you're making a meaningful impact in your work.

What leadership qualities are essential for success in the field?

The ability to listen, keep learning, and show empathy. Leadership can be customized, but it should not be personalized; i.e., a cult of personality. Likewise, leave your personal problems and biases outside of the workplace. You're a role model for people and they will watch very carefully how you handle stress, and difficult or sensitive issues.

Lastly, any leader who is not willing to say to someone "I was wrong," "you were right," or "I didn't know that" is not much of a leader. Frankly, they're probably not a very good friend, colleague, or even a spouse. Ego and insecurity often are the biggest obstacles to successful management or leadership and are the fastest ways to kill morale, motivation, and teamwork.

What advice do you have for young women who want to be diplomats?

First, don't dwell on the fact that you're a woman. That's pretty obvious to people. That said, you have to have, or develop, emotional intelligence to recognize when your gender is a 'problem' for someone. How you handle or resolve someone else's 'problem' is probably the most important diplomatic skill that you will ever develop. It will carry you through life, not just through your diplomatic career.

Secondly, have a good understanding of the profession/career. Learn about the pros and cons of the job. Traveling in a diplomatic career is great, but remember that you will have to spend many years away from your family and friends. It's a sacrifice to not be



able to attend important family events because you're on the other side of the planet. Be realistic about your abilities. Do you have the skill set to be a good diplomat or does it just sound prestigious? Are you willing to keep learning? Are you willing to work long hours on behalf of your country?

How can diplomacy better reflect the diversity of societies it represents?

Any country's diplomatic service can be stronger and more effective with representation from all of its communities. The non-negotiable criteria should be that every diplomat has the competence and the ability to do the job successfully.

I have spent virtually my entire career working in the Middle East. I have always been treated with respect. People always extended genuine hospitality to me. The trait that governments want to see in all diplomats is professionalism, strong job knowledge, and solid preparation for their assignment.



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Kuwait launches online visa platform 'KuwaitVisa'

Ministry of Interior announced the launch of the online 'Kuwait Visa' platform on 17 July, following instructions by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, and under the supervision of Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Major General Ali Al-Adwani.

The platform is designed for those wishing to visit the country on permitted tourist, business, family, and government visit visas, in accordance with the legal regulations of the Interior Ministry and the requirements issued by the General Administration of Residency Affairs.

The ministry stated that the visas available through the platform include tourist, family, business, and government visit visas, along with details about the entities eligible for each type and the corresponding duration of stay in Kuwait.

Tourist Visa: The ministry noted that the platform issues tourist visas to individuals

visiting Kuwait for tourism and leisure purposes. Beneficiaries of this visa are individuals, and it grants a three-month residency permit from the date of entry.

Business Visa: Individuals visiting Kuwait for business-related purposes, such as attending conferences or establishing partnerships with local companies can avail the business visa. Eligible beneficiaries include local companies that host businesspersons, organize meetings, or facilitate contract signings. Businessmen and representatives of foreign companies and institutions, as well as hotels and major corporations. This visa allows a one-month stay from the date of entry.

Family Visa: The family visit visa is intended for individuals wishing to visit their families residing in Kuwait for family gatherings or social occasions. It is issued to close relatives, and the application



must be submitted by a family member residing in Kuwait. The visa allows a one-month stay from the date of entry.

Government Visa: This visa is issued to government officials visiting Kuwait for official purposes such as participating in international

conferences or bilateral government meetings. It is granted based on an official invitation from the hosting government agency and follows diplomatic protocols. The visa provides a one-month residency from the date of entry.

The Ministry of Interior emphasized that all visit visas are subject to complete security checks and require all necessary identification documents from both the visitor and the sponsor—whether an individual, company, or government agency—along with relevant visa documentation. The Ministry also stressed that penalties for violating visa terms, including overstaying the granted period, are strictly enforced.

This initiative aligns with the vision of Kuwait's political leadership and government to transform the country into an economic and tourism hub, while also supporting the policy of enabling residents to reunite with their families and participate in important social events.

PAM suspends files of companies failing to pay employees on time

Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has begun suspending the files of private sector employers who fail to regularly transfer their workers' salaries into local bank accounts, in line with labor law regulations.

This action comes in response to repeated violations of Article 57 of Private Sector Labor Law No. 6/2010

and its amendments, which mandate that companies employing five or more workers must deposit wages through official financial institutions. The initial phase targets non-compliant employers, with the suspension serving as a warning and corrective measure. PAM will continue monitoring to ensure full adherence to wage

transfer obligations.

This move follows directives from First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, who stressed the importance of implementing the Cabinet's decision on the regular payment of wages. Authorities emphasized that the measure is part of efforts to uphold Kuwait's international reputation for labor rights, particularly in protecting expatriate workers.

Notably, the suspension of an employer's file does not impact existing workers—they can still renew residencies or transfer to other employers with compliant records. However, suspended companies will be barred from hiring new workers or undergoing workforce assessments until they resolve the violations.



This includes providing valid legal reasons for missed payments via PAM's digital system, 'Ash' and resuming salary transfers as required by law. PAM also emphasized that once full compliance is confirmed, suspensions will be lifted automatically without the need for review.

Two new Heritage Villages to come up in North and South Kuwait

Chairperson of the Volunteer Work Center, Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, expressed her profound gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his noble directives to establish two new heritage markets modeled after the iconic Mubarakiya Market—one in the northern region and another in the southern region of Kuwait.

In a statement to the state news agency on 17 July, Sheikha Amthal emphasized that these projects aim to serve the residents of both areas while reviving Kuwait's cultural identity and boosting economic activity through the promotion of traditional markets.

She noted that His Highness the Amir has assigned Minister of Information, Culture, and Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, to oversee the planning and execution of these projects, recognizing their cultural and national significance in enriching the heritage fabric of the country.

"We deeply thank His Highness the Amir for his generous and fatherly care, and for his dedication to fulfilling the aspirations of the people in both regions," she said. She prayed for his continued good health and for ongoing security and prosperity for Kuwait. Sheikha Amthal also thanked Minister Al-Mutairi for involving the Volunteer Work Center in this national initiative, referencing their previous experience in revitalizing the Mubarakiya Market in collaboration with the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait and the Kuwait Heritage Society. The goal, she explained, is to recreate the spirit of heritage markets in a modern framework that honors tradition while meeting today's needs.

She also thanked Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Housing, Abdullatif Al-Mishari, and the Kuwait Municipality for their support in designing and initiating the Northern Heritage Market in Jahra.





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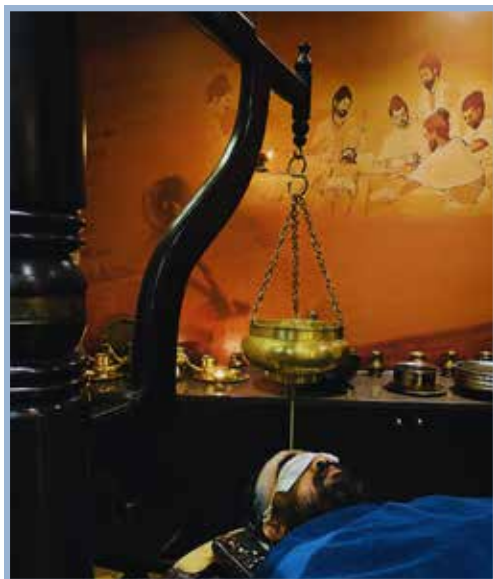


Panchakarma is performed in three stages which lead the body through a variety of therapies. The first stage is Purvakarma, Pradhanakarma (specialized treatment) and Paschatkarma.

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What is Takra Dhara?

Takra Dhara is a therapeutic treatment where a continuous stream of medicated buttermilk is poured over the forehead or body. The word Takra means buttermilk and Dhara means stream. This buttermilk is specially prepared with herbs like Amalaki and Musta, known for their cooling and healing properties.

The therapy stimulates the nerves, calms the mind, and improves overall nervous system function—making it highly effective for a range of conditions.

Benefits of Takra Dhara

- Relieves stress, anxiety, and insomnia
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As temperatures soar and summer heat drains your energy, your body and mind crave deep relaxation and cooling. Ksheeradhara, a calming Ayurvedic therapy, offers the perfect answer to summertime stress, fatigue, and heat-related imbalances.

What is Ksheeradhara?

Ksheeradhara is a gentle Ayurvedic treatment where a continuous stream of medicated milk (Ksheera) is poured over the forehead or entire body. The milk is infused with healing herbs like Sandalwood, Vetiver, and Rose, known for their cooling, nourishing, and calming properties.



Sarvanga Ksheera Dhara (Milk Therapy)

Shiro Ksheeradhara: Over the forehead,
Sarvanga Ksheeradhara: Over the full body

The soothing flow over the head relaxes the central nervous system, reduces internal heat, and brings mental clarity—making it ideal for the scorching summer season.

Benefits of Ksheeradhara

- ☀️ Reduces body heat and internal inflammation
- ☀️ Relieves headaches, eye strain, and mental fatigue
- ☀️ Calms stress, anxiety, and sleep disorders
- ☀️ Nourishes the skin, improves complexion
- ☀️ Soothes sunburn, dryness, and heat rashes
- ☀️ Supports hormonal balance and improves mood
- ☀️ Promotes relaxation, emotional balance, and deep sleep



Sarvanga Kashaya Dhara

Kashaya Dhara – Herbal Cooling Therapy for the Summer Season

When the **summer heat** intensifies, it not only affects your body temperature but also aggravates internal imbalances, especially Pitta dosha. One of the most effective Ayurvedic remedies for this is **Kashaya Dhara** – a unique therapy using warm, herbal decoctions (kashayas) poured in a continuous stream over the body or specific areas.

Benefits of Kashaya Dhara: Cools the body, Relieves skin issues, Reduces joint pain, Improves digestion, Promotes mental clarity, Detoxifies and refreshes the body.

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In the middle of Kuwait's busy lifestyle and extreme weather, Healing Touch Ayurveda in Salmiya brings you the ancient healing power of Kerala Ayurveda – offering personalized treatments to restore balance, reduce stress, and improve your overall health.

Pain in the back, neck, shoulders, knees, or sciatica can make everyday life difficult—especially in Kuwait's hot weather and fast-paced lifestyle. At **Healing Touch Ayurveda in Salmiya**, we offer **natural Kerala Ayurvedic treatments** that help reduce pain and improve movement without any side effects. Our therapies are based on traditional healing methods and are designed to bring long-lasting relief and better balance to your body and mind.



EU launches Phase II of EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification

European Union (EU) has rolled out Phase II of the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification, an ambitious regional initiative aimed at deepening economic cooperation and investment between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The initiative builds on the successful outcomes of Phase I, which ran from 2018 to 2024.

Phase II marks a significant milestone in bilateral relations to enhance institutional capacities, promote sustainable growth, and unlock expanded trade and investment opportunities. It is fully funded by the European Union and emphasizes strategic collaboration in policy-making, regulatory alignment, and technical expertise across priority economic sectors.

Team Leader of the project and a seasoned expert in sustainable development and economic cooperation, Dr. Rade Glomazić, said, "This project is not only about building stronger economies, it is about matching ambition with innovation." He added that by aligning EU and GCC expertise, the initiative lays the groundwork for a resilient, future-ready economic transformation anchored in inclusivity, reform, and long-term partnership.

The second phase deepens strategic alignment between the EU and GCC, strengthening policy dialogue and technical cooperation to drive innovation-led economic transformation. The project empowers GCC institutions to lead internal reforms while fostering an integrated environment for trade and investment.

A central component of the initiative is the evolution of the EU-GCC Business Forum, a platform for political and business leaders to advance mutual economic interests. The forum will serve as a hub for public-private dialogue, strengthening economic ties and promoting shared prosperity.



The project is especially focused on future-oriented sectors, such as digitalization, artificial intelligence, sustainable tourism, smart specialization, and integrated value chains. These areas represent the economic frontiers where EU-GCC collaboration can yield transformative outcomes.

Dr. Glomazić went on to say, "this partnership is rooted in aligning complementary strengths and regional expertise." He highlighted the project's commitment to translating strategic visions into actionable results by integrating policy frameworks, facilitating knowledge exchange, and engaging the private sector.

Over four years, he emphasized, Phase II will continue to harness the lessons of Phase I while scaling impact across the

GCC. One notable development includes the expansion of the EU Chamber of Commerce in Saudi Arabia, enabling it to serve businesses across all GCC countries and strengthening Europe's commercial footprint in the region.

With trade between the EU and GCC reaching €174 billion in 2022, the importance of closer cooperation has never been more critical. Phase II focuses on promoting climate-friendly trade and economic development, supporting GCC nations' diversification goals while encouraging sustainable and innovative investments, he disclosed.

Dr. Glomazić noted, "The complex, long-term path of economic diversification becomes more manageable when partners walk it together. The EU is committed to being a reliable partner to the GCC—sharing experiences, learning from our friends in the Gulf, and jointly addressing shared challenges."

The initiative is being implemented by a consortium that includes the German Chamber of Commerce Abroad (AHK), the Institute of Communication and Computer Systems (ICCS) of the National Technical University of Athens, and an expert team from DAI Global. This partnership brings together top-tier expertise in trade, regulation, innovation, and policy reform.

Dr. Glomazić brings nearly three decades of international experience to his leadership of Phase II. He has overseen more than 30 flagship economic reform and development programs across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. His work has spanned global institutions, including the EU Commission, United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and national governments, making him well-equipped to steer the project toward impactful results.

Kuwait's presidency of GCC to deepen relations with EU

Ambassador of the European Union, H.E. Ann Koistinen highlighted Kuwait's strategic location, rich history of trade, and strong ties with Europe through investment and tourism. She encouraged Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, startups, and investors to participate in the forum, saying it is time to "unleash the tremendous potential" of EU-GCC relations.

Ambassador of the European Union, H.E. Ann Koistinen, said the coming months will offer a significant opportunity to deepen relations between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. She emphasized that Kuwait, which currently holds the rotating GCC presidency, is well-positioned to act as a key platform for economic dialogue between Europe and the Gulf.

The EU envoy noted that Kuwait will host the 29th EU-GCC Joint Ministerial Meeting on 6 October, describing it as a vital moment in advancing political and economic cooperation between the two blocs. She added that this will be followed by the 9th EU-GCC Business Forum on 5 November, which will seek to transform shared ambitions into practical outcomes by enhancing trade, investment, and strategic cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

Ambassador Koistinen indicated that EU and GCC leaders had agreed during the Brussels Summit in October 2023 to strengthen their partnership by improving the business environment, advancing green and digital transformation, and developing sustainable energy, among other strategic priorities. The upcoming events in Kuwait will build on that progress. The EU, she stressed, is deeply committed to forging robust, mutually beneficial partnerships with all six GCC countries, including Kuwait, across multilateral,



regional, and bilateral frameworks. The November business forum will be a central platform for accelerating EU-GCC cooperation; with discussions to include market access and investment support, digital transformation and innovation; food security, infrastructure, and trade corridors; resilient supply chains, healthcare, and emerging technologies.

High-level stakeholders from governments, the private sector, and the innovation ecosystem will gather to translate dialogue into action and develop concrete solutions across sectors that matter to both economies.

Koistinen highlighted Kuwait's strategic location, rich history of trade, and strong ties with Europe through investment and tourism. She encouraged Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, startups, and investors to participate in the forum, saying it is time to "unleash the tremendous potential" of EU-GCC relations. She reiterated the EU's readiness to support Kuwait's Vision 2035, particularly in fields such as artificial intelligence, infrastructure, logistics, and sustainable tourism, where EU expertise is extensive.

"The EU is Kuwait's second-largest trading partner," Koistinen said. "But there is much more we can do together. I look forward to seeing strong private sector engagement this November as we work to realize the full promise of our partnership."

Economic cooperation a firm pillar of Czech-Kuwait relations

The Times Kuwait Report

Ambassador of the Czech Republic H.E. Juraj Chmiel, said the economic and trade cooperation remains a fundamental pillar of the bilateral relationship between the Czech Republic and the State of Kuwait. He added that the Czech Embassy remains committed to supporting and expanding this cooperation in ways that serve the mutual interests of both nations.

The ambassador was speaking at a farewell reception hosted by the Embassy to mark the conclusion of the assignment of Dr. Tereza Valašková, head of the Economic and Commercial Section at the embassy. Ambassador Chmiel expressed his deep appreciation for her outstanding contributions during her tenure in Kuwait.

He praised Dr. Valašková's dedication and professionalism, noting that her efforts significantly strengthened partnerships with local entities and yielded tangible results, particularly in boosting the visibility of Czech products and companies in the Kuwaiti market.

The Ambassador pointed out that recent years have witnessed growing demand for Czech products, reflecting their high quality and the confidence of Kuwaiti consumers. He further affirmed that the Czech Embassy will continue working to broaden the scope of economic cooperation, including efforts to attract more Czech companies interested in investing and exporting to Kuwait. Ambassador Chmiel paid tribute to Dr. Valašková's exceptional work, and described her as a model of professionalism, determination, and dedication. He wished her success in her next posting at the Czech Embassy in Amman, Jordan, expressing hope that their paths would cross again in the future, whether in Kuwait or elsewhere.

In conclusion, the Czech envoy reiterated his country's strong commitment to deepening bilateral ties with Kuwait across all sectors, particularly in trade and investment. He expressed confidence that this momentum will continue, thanks to the support of local partners and institutions who have played—and continue to play—a vital role in this shared success.

Lab tests prove suspected table-salt free of impurities

The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition has confirmed that laboratory tests conducted on a salt product — subject to public complaints over alleged impurities — have proven the product to be safe and compliant with standard specifications.

The Authority stated that no contaminants, glass particles, or foreign materials were detected in the samples,



assuring the public of the product's safety at the same time reiterating its ongoing commitment to food safety and quality control in the local market.

Turkish Embassy marks anniversary of Democracy and National Day

"What was meant to break the spirit of the nation, instead gave it new strength," said Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez. "Unarmed citizens took to the streets in defiance, challenging tanks and reclaiming sovereignty. Turks from all political and ideological backgrounds stood together for democracy—and that unity became our greatest weapon."



The Times Kuwait Report

The Embassy of Turkey held a commemorative ceremony to mark the 9th anniversary of the country's Democracy and National Day on 15 July. The event was attended by Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Affairs, Ambassador Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah, members of the diplomatic corps, Turkish nationals, and members of the Kuwaiti community.

Speaking on the occasion Ambassador of Turkey H.E. Tuba Nur Sönmez, praised Kuwait's "clear and principled position in support of legitimacy" during the failed coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016, emphasizing that such solidarity remains deeply appreciated by the Turkish people. She also expressed her gratitude for the presence

of fellow diplomats at the ceremony, describing the occasion as one "that matters not just to the Turkish people, but to all who value democracy." She highlighted the strong and growing relations between Kuwait and Turkey, describing Kuwait as "a sincere and enduring friend" of her country.

Ambassador Sönmez also revealed that the anticipated visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's to Kuwait, has been rescheduled but a new date has yet to be finalized. However, she noted that coordination is ongoing to reschedule the visit, and said she is optimistic it will take place later this year, after the summer season.

Recalling the events of that fateful night of 15 July, Ambassador Sönmez said, "Nine years ago the Turkish people witnessed a betrayal that tested the resilience of our institutions and the spirit of our free nation. Tanks blocked streets,

helicopters fired live rounds at civilians, and rogue elements bombed the parliament. Yet it was also a night of national rebirth—of unparalleled courage and unity in modern Turkish history."

The ambassador emphasized that the coup attempt was not merely a military uprising, but a calculated internal assault on democracy aimed at replacing the rule of law with sectarian tyranny. Fighter jets bombed strategic sites in Ankara, and armed soldiers opened fire on peaceful civilians. Media outlets were raided in an attempt to silence the press, and the president himself was targeted in an assassination attempt.

"What was meant to break the spirit of the nation, instead gave it new strength. Unarmed citizens took to the streets in defiance, challenging tanks and reclaiming sovereignty. Turks from all political and ideological backgrounds stood

together for democracy—and that unity became our greatest weapon." By dawn, the coup had failed—but at a heavy price: 252 lives lost, over 2,200 injured, and shattered buildings where dreams once lived. She added that the years since the coup have seen significant progress in political stability, self-reliance, and assertive foreign policy, driven by the lessons learned on 15 July. "The trauma of that night awakened a heightened civic consciousness. Turks today are more aware of the importance of defending democracy against anti-democratic threats."

"Nine years later, Turkey stands tall—still guided by the spirit of that night. The message of 15 July is not a memory of the past; it's a living force. As long as that spirit endures, no darkness can overcome the will of the Turkish people," concluded Ambassador Sönmez.



Al Muzaini Exchange opens its first branch in Jaber Al Ahmad

Al Muzaini Exchange Company, Kuwait's leading name in currency exchange and remittance services, proudly announces the opening of its newest branch at Jaber Al Ahmad Co-op, Block 7 on Tuesday, 15th July 2025.

This new addition marks a significant milestone in Al Muzaini's ongoing expansion strategy, reaffirming the brand's commitment to being "Always Near You." The new branch is designed to offer customers a seamless and secure experience across a wide range of services, including money transfers, foreign

currency exchange, and bill payments — available seven days a week at the most competitive rates.

Speaking at the inauguration, Mr. Hugh Fernandes, General Manager of Al Muzaini Exchange Company, said:

"We are proud to strengthen our presence in Jaber Al Ahmad and bring our trusted financial services even closer to the community. Our goal is to consistently deliver superior service, convenience, and accessibility to every customer across Kuwait."

The launch was attended by the company's department managers, senior personnel and media partners who celebrated this milestone as a step forward in meeting the evolving needs of customers in key residential areas.

In addition to its growing branch network, Al Muzaini continues to lead digital innovation with its user-friendly mobile application — offering 24/7 services such as new customer registration, adding beneficiaries, and making instant money transfers through Western Union and Visa Direct.



Bahrah Celebrates Prestigious Sales & Platinum Club Awards From Toyota Material Handling International

Bahrah Trading Company (BTC) is honored to announce its recent recognition with the esteemed Toyota Sales Award and the Platinum Club Award from Toyota Material Handling International (TMHI). The distinguished accolades commend BTC's exemplary performance throughout 2024, reflecting significant growth in market share for Toyota forklift trucks.

Mr. Bengt Kurt Schultz, Chief Operating Officer of ALSAYER Group, had the privilege of representing the company at the prestigious awards ceremony held in Japan. Accompanied by Mr. Elie Andraos, General Manager of BTC, and Mr. Mohamed Naheef, Assistant Manager of Material Handling, Mr. Schultz proudly accepted the awards from TMHI President, Mr. Yoichiro Yamazaki.

BTC expressed their sincere thanks to Toyota Material Handling International for their unwavering support, which has been instrumental in achieving this milestone. The awards underscore BTC's unwavering commitment to excellence in sales and service of Toyota forklift trucks, as well as the related brands BT Sweden and Raymond USA—renowned leaders in warehouse material handling equipment.

Mr. Schultz extended his heartfelt congratulations to the BTC team, acknowledging their dedication and hard work that contributed to this outstanding achievement.

Mr. Elie Andraos, General Manager of BTC, highlighted Toyota Forklifts' remarkable penetration in Kuwait's market, where Toyota Forklifts has cemented its reputation as a trusted partner for numerous businesses across Kuwait. This success is driven by



TMHI's superior-quality products and BTC's dedication to delivering exceptional customer service.

This recognition from TMHI also reaffirms the BTC's resolve to deliver unparalleled value to its customers, reinforcing its position as a leader in Kuwait's material handling industry.

Kuwait, France deepen strategic ties during Amir's landmark visit

Celebrating 60 years of enduring ties and charting a bold new chapter, His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's landmark state visit to France launched a future-focused era of Kuwaiti-French cooperation — spanning strategic investments, defense, security, education, healthcare, and cultural diplomacy — grounded in shared values and a unified vision for global engagement.

The Times Kuwait Report

The visit celebrated six decades of Kuwaiti-French friendship and launched a new era of dynamic cooperation—anchored in shared values, strategic alignment, and a mutual vision for the future.

In a significant milestone for Kuwaiti diplomacy, His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, concluded a successful official two-day visit to France at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron.

The visit, which took place over 13–14 July, coincided with France's Bastille Day celebrations, where His Highness was a guest of honor at the military parade.

The visit marked a reaffirmation of the historic and enduring ties between Kuwait and France that span over six decades and are built on mutual respect, trust, and a shared commitment to international cooperation.

In a cable of thanks to President Macron, His Highness the Amir expressed heartfelt appreciation for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to him and the Kuwaiti delegation, praising the friendly and constructive atmosphere of the meetings and emphasized the visit's value as a platform for open dialogue on regional and global matters.

The high-level talks at the Élysée Palace following the Bastille Day parade involved key figures including the foreign, defense, and finance ministers from both sides, as well as senior officials from the Kuwait Investment Authority and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority. Both heads of state hailed the strategic nature of their partnership and expressed optimism about enhanced cooperation across a broad range of sectors.

As part of the visit, Kuwait and France signed a Strategic Investment Partnership that aligns Kuwait Vision 2035 with France 2030. The partnership targets priority sectors



such as renewable energy, semiconductors, aerospace, artificial intelligence, healthcare, and digital technology. A joint action group will oversee cross-investment initiatives, and announcements are expected at the next 'Choose France Summit'.

The leaders also emphasized mutual support for major investment institutions, including the Banque Publique d'Investissement and Kuwait's sovereign wealth entities, to co-develop projects that generate growth and innovation.

The two sides also underscored the importance of bolstering defense ties, including military training exchanges, interoperability through joint exercises, and embedded personnel initiatives. Kuwait reaffirmed its continued use of French defense equipment to modernize its military capabilities.

Security cooperation was also expanded, with the appointment of a French gendarmerie liaison officer to Kuwait's National Guard and enhanced collaboration on counter-terrorism, intelligence-sharing, and international law enforcement.

Education and human capital development featured prominently in the discussions.

Kuwait plans to increase its state-sponsored scholarships to France to 250 annually, targeting fields such as medicine, AI, and engineering. A framework is being developed to improve recognition of French academic qualifications and vocational programs.

In healthcare, both nations pledged to deepen cooperation through partnerships with leading French institutions, including Institut Curie, Gustave Roussy, and Hôpital Rothschild. Kuwait's doctors and medical teams will benefit from knowledge exchange and advanced training opportunities in France.

His Highness the Amir and the French President also celebrated joint development goals, particularly through a partnership between the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). Upcoming projects will focus on health and water infrastructure in Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria.

Cultural diplomacy was also a cornerstone of the visit. A declaration of intent was signed to enhance cooperation in arts, heritage, and language education. Both leaders welcomed initiatives to establish a joint cultural campus

in Kuwait, promote French-language learning, and support the creation of a national orchestra.

Plans are underway to organize cultural events in both countries as part of the 65th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2026. The two leaders reaffirmed their shared commitment to intercultural dialogue and to the preservation of heritage, particularly in conflict zones.

To further bolster their partnership, Kuwait and France expressed their determination to enhance their dialogue and cooperation over the long term. An intergovernmental seminar chaired by the two Prime Ministers will shortly be held in France to implement this ambitious program.

During his visit to France, His Highness the Amir also extended a formal invitation to President Macron to visit Kuwait in 2026 to celebrate the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and France.

The landmark visit not only celebrated six decades of Kuwaiti-French friendship but also launched a new era of dynamic cooperation—anchored in shared values, strategic alignment, and a mutual vision for the future.



Lulu Kuwait Launches Premium Fresh Produce from Nepal

Lulu Hypermarket has officially launched a premium range of fresh produce from Nepal, with a special inauguration event held at Lulu Hypermarket, Al Rai. The launch was graced by H.E. Ghanshyam Lamsal, Ambassador of Nepal to Kuwait, Mr. Giri Acharya, Labour Attaché, and Mr. Ram Punit Yadav, Third Secretary, Embassy of Nepal in Kuwait, along with senior management from Lulu Hypermarket. This event marks a significant step in strengthening agri-trade relations between Nepal and Kuwait.

The newly introduced range features a carefully curated selection of vegetables such as French Beans, Long Beans, Bitter Gourd, Akabare Chilli, Bullet Chilli, Chayotte (Iskush),

and Bamboo Shoot—all freshly sourced from Nepal's nutrient-rich, high-altitude farmlands.



Renowned for their authentic flavor, vibrant appearance, and exceptional freshness, these

vegetables are now available across all Lulu Hypermarket stores in Kuwait.

This launch is part of Lulu's ongoing commitment to offering high-quality international produce to its customers while promoting sustainable sourcing from diverse agricultural regions.

The availability of Nepalese vegetables in Kuwait not only introduces local consumers to the rich flavors of Himalayan agriculture but also creates new market opportunities for farmers in Nepal.

Customers are invited to visit any Lulu store in Kuwait to experience the authentic freshness and distinctive taste of Nepal's finest farm produce.

Non-oil sector shores up GDP growth

Kuwait's gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 1.1 in the first quarter of 2025, relative to the same period in 2024 reaching KD12.572 billion, up from KD 12.436 billion a year earlier, marking the first expansion since the second-quarter of 2023.

According to the latest data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau, the increase by KD136.47 million, was mainly driven by growth in non-oil economic activity, which offset the impact of sharply falling oil prices that dropped to \$60 per barrel, the lowest in four years.

Based on current prices, non-oil GDP rose by 4.32 %, reaching KD7.366 billion, an increase of KD305.12 million compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, oil GDP declined by 3.13 % to KD5.206 billion dinars.

As a result, the non-oil sector's contribution to GDP rose to 58.6 percent, up from 56.8 percent a year earlier, while the oil sector's share declined to 41.4 percent, down from 43.2 percent.

The following are the sectoral contributions at current prices

- Oil & Natural Gas Extraction: 5.206 billion dinars (41.4 %)
- Public Administration, Defense, Social Security: 1.572 billion dinars (12.5 %)
- Financial Intermediation & Insurance: 1.176 billion dinars (9.36 %)
- Real Estate & Commercial Projects: 1.08 billion dinars each (8.6 %)



- Manufacturing: 969.2 million dinars (7.7 %)
- Wholesale & Retail Trade: 552 million dinars (4.4 %)
- Health & Social Work: 511 million dinars (4.06 %)
- Communications: 441 million dinars (3.51 %)
- Community Services, Utilities, Hotels: Combined share under 5 percent

However, at constant prices, GDP grew by 2.56 percent,

reaching KD10.33 billion, compared to KD10.237 billion in Q1 2024. The non-oil sector rose by 2.03 percent to KD5.58 billion, while the oil sector slightly contracted by 0.3 percent to KD4.75 billion. Thus, the non-oil sector's share at constant prices rose to 54 percent, and the oil sector's share fell to 46 percent.

Sectoral Contributions at Constant Prices:

- Oil & Natural Gas Extraction: KD4.751 billion (37.8 %)
- Public Administration & Defense: KD1.457 billion (11.6 %)
- Financial Services: KD 921.5 million (7.33 %)
- Manufacturing: KD799.4 million (6.4 %)
- Real Estate & Commercial Activities: KD766.2 million (6.1 %)
- Education: KD544.6 million (4.33 %)
- Utilities: KD284.7 million (2.26 %)
- Retail & Trade: KD378.1 million (3.01 %)
- Communications: KD360.6 million (2.87%)
- Health & Social Work: KD343.5 million (2.73 %)
- Community Services: KD222.4 million (1.77 %)

Current price, also known as nominal price, refers to the price of a good or service at the current point in time, reflecting any inflation that has occurred. The figures at constant prices, also referred to as real prices, are adjusted for inflation by using prices from a base year. Constant prices provide a more accurate measure of the quantity or volume of goods and services produced

Kuwait at the forefront of remote robotic surgery with advanced health infrastructure

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A standout procedure took place at the Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology and Kidney Center in the Sabah Medical Specialty Area, where a complex radical prostatectomy was performed on a man in his sixties.

The operation was conducted remotely from Strasbourg, France by the distinguished Kuwaiti surgeon Dr. Saad Al-Dousari, using an advanced control system that bridges human skill and robotic precision across thousands of kilometers.



This procedure coincided with the opening of the World Congress of Robotic Surgeons in Strasbourg, attended by over 2,500 surgeons and experts from around the globe. The operation gave Kuwait international visibility, setting a new benchmark for excellence in digital healthcare.

Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi attended the event in person, underscoring the ministry's commitment to supporting national talent and ensuring Kuwait's leadership in the medical arena. In his remarks, the minister affirmed, "Once again, our national talents have proven their ability not only to keep up with global technological advancements but to lead them." He stressed the Ministry's continued investment in skills and technology to create a dynamic environment that fosters excellence and medical innovation.

Notably, this was the ninth remote robotic operation performed in Kuwait within just six months. Dr. Al-Dousari had previously

conducted similar surgeries remotely from Shanghai, China, demonstrating the consistent performance and reliability of Kuwait's integrated medical systems capable of executing complex procedures with high precision and safety.

This advancement marks a paradigm shift in the delivery of healthcare in Kuwait, moving beyond traditional practices to embrace AI-driven and remote surgical models, especially in highly specialized fields that require rare expertise or advanced operating environments.

It reflects Kuwait's strategic transformation of its health system—through expanded specialty centers, modern infrastructure, and the rapid adoption of AI in diagnostics and surgery. This evolution is built on a foundation laid in 1949, when the country's first public hospital opened, steadily progressing toward a healthcare model grounded in quality, innovation, and institutional integration.

Over the past decades, Kuwait has developed a multi-layered healthcare network focused on prevention, specialized care, and medical education. These efforts have enabled major achievements in cardiac surgery, organ transplantation, cancer treatment, and crisis management, bolstering Kuwait's status as a regional medical hub.

The success of remote robotic surgery is not only a scientific and medical breakthrough—it is also a political and humanitarian statement, reaffirming Kuwait's commitment to providing the best possible care to all its residents and embracing smart medicine as a pathway to global healthcare leadership.

In an era of growing challenges, achievements like this highlight the power of political will, medical expertise, and technological innovation. Kuwait is not simply celebrating a surgery—it is affirming a new philosophy of care—'Humanity first, and science as our path to leadership'.

This is not a sudden achievement but the fruit of decades of planning and vision—an outcome that places Kuwait as a competitive force in global medicine. It proves that Kuwait's investment in medical knowledge and collaboration between leadership and national talent will remain the cornerstone of its progress in a rapidly changing world, where only those who embrace the future with innovation and patriotism will lead.

Former GIS Principal passes away in India

*Remembering Shyamala Divakaran:
Pioneer of Indian education in Kuwait
...A visionary educator and founding leader*



The Times Kuwait Report

Shyamala Divakaran, the founding Principal of Gulf Indian School (GIS) in Fahaheel, Kuwait, passed away on 17 July in her hometown in Kerala at the age of 78, she is survived by her husband and two children, Dr. Aruna and Dr. Rajeev

Spanning a career of over five decades of education in Kuwait she was well respected and widely admired for her unwavering commitment to academic excellence and community values. Mrs Divakaran began her career in Kuwait as a maths teacher at the Indian School Fahaheel in the late 70's.

Responding to growing demand for quality CBSE education in Kuwait, Mrs. Divakaran played a pioneering role in establishing GIS in 1994 to cater to the needs of the Indian community in the country.

Mrs Divakaran instilled strict academic standards while fostering an environment rich in compassion and cultural vibrancy; championing holistic development by emphasizing co-curricular activities like

arts, sports, and cultural programs, along with academic excellence.

She retired in 2022, concluding a transformative tenure in GIS that spanned over 25 years. The GIS management described her as "the soul of GIS—a lady whose quiet strength, radiant kindness, and steadfast vision transformed education into something sacred."

Under her guidance, the school became not just a place of learning but a nurturing home for thousands of students and a symbol of cultural unity for the Indian community in Kuwait.

Mrs. Divakaran's career is a powerful reminder of the profound difference one educator can make. Her legacy lives on in every student she mentored, every milestone she shaped, and in the continued success of the institution she built with heart and vision. May her memory continue to inspire generations to come.

Funeral rites will be held on Sunday 20th in Paravur, Kerala with the cremation to be held at 2pm.

Thought “ for the week

Curiosity will conquer fear even more than bravery will.

- James Stephens

Heatwave grips Kuwait as temperatures soar to highs of 51°C

Kuwait continues to endure an intense heatwave, with the Rabiya area recording the highest temperature in the country on 15 July—an astonishing 51°C. Close behind were Jahra, Abdali, and Kuwait International Airport, each reporting sweltering highs of 50°C, according to the Kuwait Meteorological Department.



Acting Director of the department of Kuwait Meteorological Department, Dharar Al-Ali, explained that the extreme temperatures are being driven by an extension of the Indian monsoon depression. This weather pattern has brought a very hot air mass into the region, accompanied by light to moderate northwesterly winds, which occasionally shift direction—particularly in coastal areas.

Al-Ali noted that extremely hot daytime conditions are expected to persist throughout the week. Evenings will remain hot to warm, with relatively high humidity along the coast. However, he added that humidity levels are expected to decrease starting on 18 July.

The department forecasts that maximum daytime temperatures will range between 50°C and 52°C in some parts of the country, with the heatwave expected to continue until Saturday.

Desertification, a silent threat to Kuwait's land

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Addressing the direct causes of desertification such as climatic changes or wind erosion are complex, long-term strategies that require concerted local efforts. Moreover, the origin of dust storms in one country can have consequences in neighboring nations, or in areas far away, thus tackling these transnational issues often necessitates cooperation and coordination on a regional and global level.

However, indirect desertification that results from human activities, such as social activities, market demands, or political dynamics can be prevented or mitigated more readily. For instance, legal enforcement can prevent overgrazing and discourage off-road vehicle use, while implementation of proactive and sustainable land management policies can reduce harmful quarrying and mining practices.

Wind erosion through sand and dust storms are a major driver of desertification. Sometimes referred to as a 'desert tsunami', sand and dust storms drive nearly two billion tonnes of dust annually into the atmosphere, affecting the lives and livelihood of more than 330 million people in over 150 countries around the world. Rising mainly from dry and desert environments, dust particles are swept by strong winds to areas thousands of kilometers away from where they originate.

A study conducted by the Environmental and Earth Sciences Division at Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research (KISR) and published in 2018 notes that the Kuwait-Basra area along the southern Mesopotamian plain has the highest frequency of dust storms in the Middle East, and is considered to be one of the major sources of dust in the world. This area is susceptible to dust-storms because of its low topographic relief, scanty vegetative cover, light-texture of its top soils and recurring strong and turbulent winds.

The study showed that wind blows from two main directions over Kuwait, the north-west (Shamal) and, to a lesser extent, the south-east. In the summer (June–September), the monsoon depression affects the north-westerly winds causing them to be very active. These high-speed winds can occur over 40 days in summer, raising dust and often reducing visibility to a few metres, while also forming the characteristic sand dunes found in Kuwait and elsewhere in the region.

The strong north-westerly Shamal wind in summer, exerts enough traction on the bare, dry soil surface to lift thousands of tonnes of fine sediment particles into the air, reducing fertile top soil and organic matter from the area. Dust plumes generated in the southern Mesopotamian plain in summer and driven by the strong Shamal winds sweep over Kuwait and down the Arabian Gulf covering

the region in thick dust clouds.

The KISR study calculated that the average rate of sand encroachment in Kuwait at 14 m³/m/year, which is the total sand in cubic meters transported by wind per meter of wind width annually. The study attributed overgrazing, sand and gravel quarrying, off-road traffic, and application of irrational measures to control mobile sand, as the main human-induced causes of desertification in Kuwait. The report urged authorities to urgently control human activities in the desert area, conserve areas vulnerable to desertification, and rehabilitate damaged ecosystems.

On the global level, a new report on sand and dust storms (SDS) by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) notes that SDS pose formidable challenges due to the significant impact they have on the economy, environment, health, agriculture, and social development of people in affected countries. While SDS are a natural element in Earth's biogeochemical cycles, in recent decades they have been exacerbated by human activities. At least 25 percent of global dust emissions are estimated to originate from human activities.

Across the Middle East and North Africa repercussions of SDS impact lives, livelihoods, opportunities and productivity, with the economic aspect of dust storms alone estimated at cost US\$13 billion annually. Increasingly, SDS have become an issue of global concern as they aggravate climate change, increase biodiversity loss, and raise air pollution levels in places far from where they originate.

According to the UN agencies, the application of sustainable land management can significantly reduce land degradation from SDS. It can potentially increase farming yields by between 30–170 percent, reduce income loss globally of over US\$42 billion annually, and by just restoring land lost each year to SDS could produce an additional 20 million tonnes of grain.

Under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), 131 states, including Kuwait, have pledged to achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN) by 2030, which would ensure that human activity has a neutral, or even positive impact on the land. Yet, on the Convention's 20th anniversary in 2024, a report by the UNCCD showed that the world is losing the equivalent of four football fields of land every minute.

In its report submitted to UNCCD in 2019, Kuwait noted that 52,500 hectares, representing over 3 percent of its total land area, an area equivalent to 73,500 football fields, had become degraded. It is laudatory that Kuwait is now taking measures to combat desertification through various initiatives, including research, land management strategies, and public awareness campaigns. But more needs to be done, and they need to be done now.

RECIPE

Jaggery Shaahi Tukda, a Healthy Royal Treat



A healthier spin on a royal dessert, Shaahi Tukda—'shahi' translates to 'royal' and tukda means pieces, in the Indian Hindi language—is a rich classic dessert that originated during the Mughal era in India. The Mughals loved to eat it at iftar. Some say the dish originated from 'Umm e Ali', a favorite Egyptian sweet; it is also made similarly by soaking bread pieces in milk and nuts.

This Jaggery Shahi Tukda blends crispy bread with a warm jaggery syrup and creamy saffron rabri (slowly condensed full-fat milk), garnished with nuts and rose petals. With no refined sugar, it is a soulful sweet perfect for festivals and family gatherings.

Total time : 50 to 60 minutes

Serving : 4 to 6

Ingredients:

- 6 slices white or whole wheat bread (crusts removed)
- Ghee for shallow frying or toasting
- 3/4 cup Jaggery (grated or crushed)
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 tsp cardamom powder
- 1 tsp rose water (optional)
- 1 liter Full-fat milk
- Few strands saffron (soaked in 1 tbsp warm milk)
- 1/4 cup jaggery grated
- 1/2 tsp cardamom powder
- 2tbsp chopped almonds and pistachios
- Chopped nuts dried rose petals for garnish

Instructions:

- Boil milk in a heavy-bottomed pan.
- Keep stirring and scraping the sides to thicken it until reduced to half.
- Switch off the flame and let it cool slightly.
- Once lightly cool, add the ¼ cup grated jaggery
- Add saffron milk, cardamom, and chopped nuts
- Mix well and set aside
- Meanwhile, boil jaggery with water until fully melted
- Strain if there are impurities
- Return to the pan and simmer for 2–3 minutes until slightly sticky
- Add cardamom and rose water. Keep warm
- Cut bread into triangles or squares
- Shallow fry in ghee or air-fry/toast until golden and crisp.
- Dip each fried bread piece in warm jaggery syrup for a few seconds.
- Arrange on a serving plate
- Pour the cooled rabri on top
- Garnish with nuts, and rose petals



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



Chef Chhaya Thakker

India-Kuwait air pact revised to reflect passenger growth

The revised India-Kuwait air services agreement marks a significant leap after nearly two decades, expanding weekly seat capacity to 18,000 per side. This long-awaited move addresses rising demand, soaring ticket prices, and the urgent need for better connectivity for the vast Indian diaspora working in the Gulf.

The Times Kuwait Report

India and Kuwait signed a revised bilateral air services agreement last week, expanding the weekly seat capacity between the two countries to 18,000 seats for each side. The milestone pact was inked after nearly two decades since the last update in 2006, when it was raised to 12,000 weekly seats from the earlier 8,320. The pact reflects the rising passenger demand and concomitant high airfares that prevail today, and has



been a long persistent demand by the millions of Indians working and residing in Gulf states.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was formally signed in New Delhi by India's Civil Aviation Secretary Samir Kumar Sinha and President of Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Sheikh Hamoud Al-Mubarak, on 16 July after being finalised a day earlier.

The MoU addresses a longstanding demand from both Indian and Kuwaiti carriers who had exhausted their existing weekly quotas. The airlines were unable to introduce additional flights despite a sharp surge in demand, especially from Indian states like Kerala, which supply a significant portion of the Indian expatriate workforce in Kuwait and the Gulf. This capacity shortage

had also led to inflated ticket prices.

The topic of enhanced air connectivity was prominently discussed during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kuwait in December 2023. As part of the new agreement, Indian airlines will receive priority access to landing and parking slots at Kuwait's airports, a provision that underscores Kuwait's commitment to accommodating increased operations by Indian carriers.

Currently, approximately 40 flights operate daily between India and Kuwait. Major carriers on this route include India's IndiGo, Air India Express, Akasa Air, alongside Kuwait's Kuwait Airways and Jazeera Airways. Kuwait Airways leads the pack by operating 54 weekly flights, while IndiGo runs 36 weekly flights, making them the dominant players from their respective countries.

The Ministry of External Affairs had earlier informed the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs that active discussions were ongoing with Gulf countries, including Kuwait, to improve air connectivity. "Efforts are being made for the introduction of more flights and destinations between the two countries that will result in the reduction of ticket costs," the ministry said.

This liberalized treaty is expected to provide immediate relief to travelers, boost tourism and trade ties, and significantly enhance the air travel experience between India and Kuwait.

Nonetheless, this agreement signals a pragmatic shift in India's approach, with officials emphasizing a case-by-case assessment of foreign carrier access. An Indian government source said, "We will follow an India-first policy in all air service negotiations. However, we remain open to proposals that benefit passengers and ensure a fair deal for Indian airlines."

Under the 2016 National Civil Aviation Policy, India established that unless 80 percent of existing bilateral rights are utilized by Indian carriers, no additional entitlements will be granted to foreign airlines. However, the latest India-Kuwait agreement reflects flexibility in implementation, driven by the need to reduce airfares and meet growing passenger volumes.

India announces 5-year e-visa for Kuwaitis

India has officially launched the five-year e-visa facility for Kuwaiti nationals, allowing them to apply for Indian visas entirely online. Revealing this latest development during a media conference at the embassy last week, Ambassador of India H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika, stated that the initiative, effective immediately, eliminates the need to visit visa centers or embassies. Kuwaiti citizens can now complete the entire process from home through the Indian government's official visa portal, making travel planning faster and more accessible.



The e-visa is available under five categories: tourist, business, medical, AYUSH/yoga, and conference. It supports multiple entries and offers durations ranging from six months to five years. Visa fees vary by duration, with a five-year visa costing US\$80 and shorter durations starting at \$40. Processing typically takes three to four days, and biometric data is collected upon arrival in India.

Ambassador Swaika described the move as a significant step forward, stating, "This fulfills a long-standing request from Kuwaiti nationals. It makes the process faster, more affordable, and much more convenient." He highlighted that over 8,000 Kuwaiti tourists visited India last year, and the new system is expected to boost tourism, business, and healthcare-related travel. It also supports India's strategic goal of deepening bilateral relations through easier and more frequent people-to-people exchanges.

Regarding air connectivity, the Ambassador confirmed there are currently 12,000 seats per week available in each direction, with direct flights connecting Kuwait to nine Indian cities. These flights are operated by Kuwait Airways, Jazeera Airways, IndiGo, Air India Express, and Akasa Air.

He added that while the digital system is designed for simplicity, paper visas will still be available through Indian Visa Application Centers for those less familiar with online services.

Youth India-Kuwait Business Conclave 2025 on Sept 5

Youth India-Kuwait is set to host the Business Conclave 2025 on September 5 at Crowne Plaza, Farwaniya, with a mission to promote entrepreneurial ventures within the Malayali community in Kuwait.

The event promises to be a premier platform for discovering innovative business opportunities, fostering connections among entrepreneurs, and sharing inspiring success stories.

The Business Conclave will feature an engaging lineup of Panel Discussions, Expert Talk, Business Legal Guidance Desk, Shariah and Fiqh Desk, Business Expo/Product Showcasing, Networking, Ethical Business Guidance, Legal Technicalities in Business.

"Our goal is to bring together entrepreneurs and professionals to create new pathways of growth through entrepreneurship and collaboration," said Youth India Kuwait President Sigil Khan.

The official logo of the Business Conclave was unveiled by Youth India Patron P.T. Shareef at a press conference.

Also present at the press meet were Youth India General Secretary Akheel Ishaq, Program Convener Mahanas Musthafa, and Executive Members Mukhsith, Ramees, Yasir, and Rayyan Khaleel.

For further information, please contact 97848081 or 94157227.



Slip Into Summer with LuLu Hypermarket's Summer Fashion 2025



LuLu Hypermarket officially kicked off its much-anticipated Summer Fashion Specials "Slip into Summer 2025" on July 12th at its Al Rai outlet, launching a vibrant celebration of style, savings, and seasonal trends.

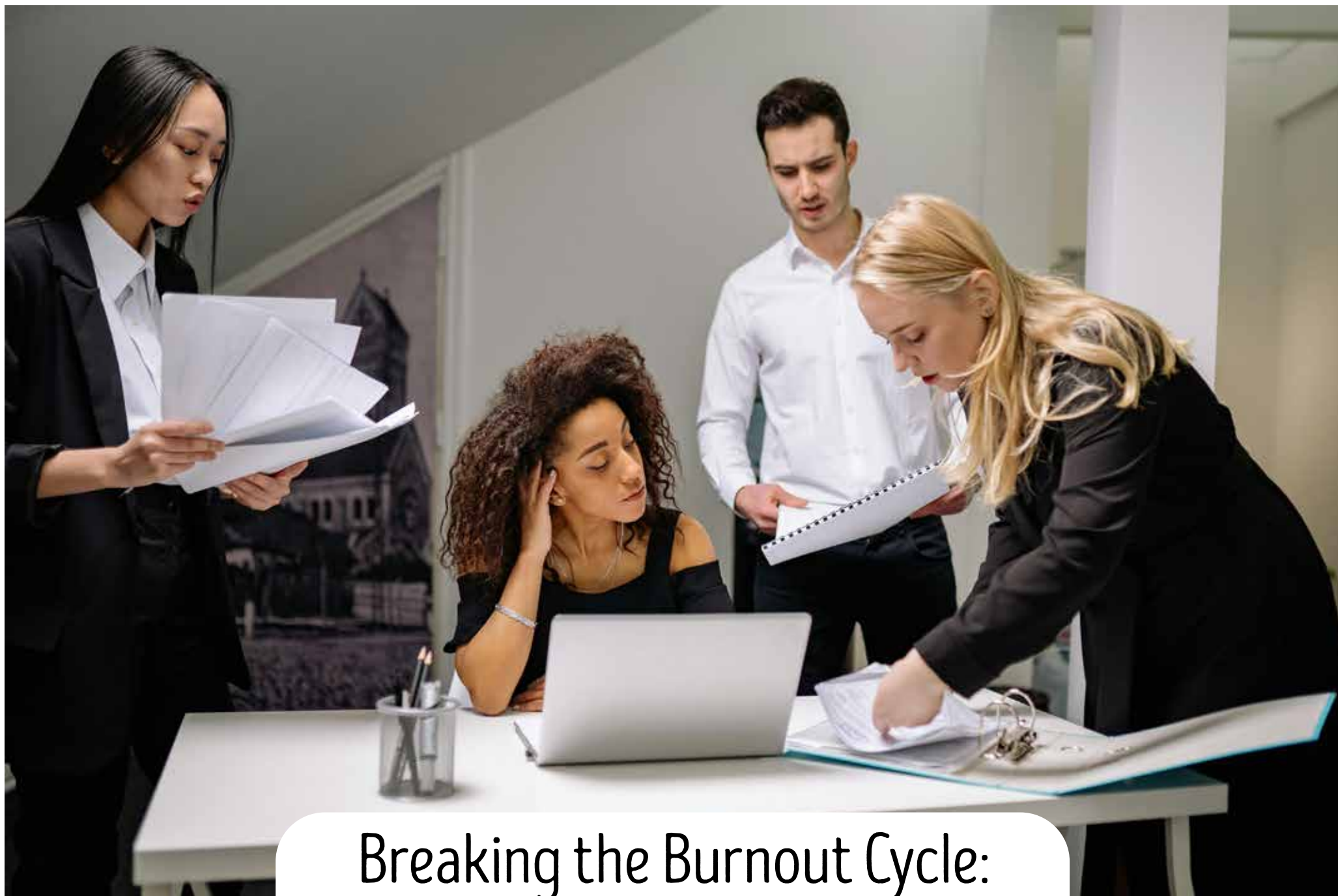
The event was inaugurated in style by prominent fashion influencers, bloggers, and LuLu management, drawing enthusiastic crowds and marking the start of a fashion-forward shopping extravaganza across all LuLu Hypermarket stores in Kuwait.

Running from 12 to 19 July, the LuLu Slip into summer delivered unbeatable deals and exciting promotions on the latest summer collections for men, women, and children. Customers enjoyed browsing a wide selection of trendy apparel, chic footwear, and stylish ladies' bags, with

irresistible discounts on top fashion labels including Eten, Cortigiani, Tom Smith, DeBackers, Marco Donateli, John Louis, and Reo. Shoppers also received added value with a special offer: Spend KD 10 and get a KD 2.5 voucher.

The grand launch at Al Rai was a lively affair, featuring a glamorous preview of the new summer collections modeled by popular fashion vloggers and influencers. A highlight of the event was the vibrant kids' fashion show, where over 50 young participants lit up the runway in the latest children's wear trends. Winners of the fashion show received exciting prizes, making it a memorable experience for everyone involved.

With great fashion, family fun, and fabulous deals, LuLu Hypermarket's Slip into Summer 2025 is the ultimate destination for summer style this season.



Breaking the Burnout Cycle: Tackling Workplace Stress in the Gulf



By Hermoine Macura-Noble
Special to The Times Kuwait

In today's hyper-connected world, workplace stress has become a silent epidemic, especially in the Gulf region, where professionals often find themselves tethered to their jobs, even during personal time. According to recent research by global recruitment specialists Robert Walters, 65 percent of

professionals in the Middle East report feeling anxious after returning from annual leave, while over half admit to checking emails during their time off. This growing pressure to always 'be on' is not just reducing rest, it is eroding well-being, productivity, and long-term job satisfaction.

Digital communication tools like Slack, MS Teams, and WhatsApp have revolutionized the way we work, but they have also blurred the boundaries between office and home life. Many Gulf-based professionals report a phenomenon now dubbed 'FOFB'—the fear of falling behind. This fear pushes employees to 'firefight' email backlogs even while on holiday, in an attempt to maintain control over workloads and reduce the anxiety of returning to an overflowing inbox.

Jason Grundy, Managing Director of Robert Walters Middle East, notes, "Professionals suffering with annual leave anxiety not only threaten to lower already historically low engagement rates, but our research suggests it could have major implications for productivity."

One of the most striking findings of the survey was that just 22 percent of professionals in the Middle East felt truly refreshed after returning from leave. The rest return to their desks carrying the mental load of unchecked tasks and unread messages. What is needed, experts say, is a cultural shift—one that values rest as a productivity tool rather than a sign of laziness.

Some European countries have experimented with mandatory summer shutdowns—entire industries closing for a week or two to allow everyone to rest simultaneously. While 45 percent of Middle Eastern professionals expressed interest in trying this, concerns remain: 40 percent worry it may limit flexibility, and 34 percent of employers fear such shutdowns could be disruptive or expensive.

Grundy suggests that the key lies in creating workplace environments where rest is not only allowed, but encouraged. These include mandatory handovers, flexible leave options and out-of-office support among others.

With hot summers, high performance expectations, and family obligations, professionals in the Gulf face unique stressors. Add to that the region's fast-paced economic growth and competitive corporate culture, and the results are clear: burnout is becoming a systemic issue. Women, in particular, often juggle career demands with cultural expectations around family care, further compounding stress.

Supporting mental health, work-life balance, and respectful holiday practices is not just about well-being; it is about retention, creativity,

and long-term success. Companies that adopt proactive policies will not only improve morale but also attract and retain top talent in an increasingly competitive market.

As Grundy puts it: "Business operations won't halt just because someone is on holiday. It's time we foster a company culture that values productivity without sacrificing personal peace."

Hermoine Macura-Noble

The first Australian English speaking News Anchor in the Middle East. She is also the Author of Faces of the Middle East and Founder of US-based 501c3 charity – The House of Rest which helps to ease the suffering of victims of war. For more from our Contributing Editor, you can follow her on Instagram, @hello_hermoine





A Symphony of Light and Flavor

SUNSET MOMENTS AT FLAIR

By Nourah Khan
Special to The Times Kuwait

In a world where more cities are rising as formidable contenders on the global travel map, Shanghai stands tall—not only for its futuristic skyline and cosmopolitan energy, but also for the singular experiences it offers those in pursuit of something extraordinary. One such experience is dining at Flair Rooftop, an elevated escape perched atop The Ritz-Carlton Shanghai, Pudong, widely recognized as one of the finest rooftop destinations in the city. If you are a lover of panoramic views and golden sunsets, Flair should be at the very top of your Shanghai list.



We arrived just before sunset, as the golden hour began casting its soft light over the Huangpu River. From the moment we stepped out onto the terrace, the view felt almost cinematic. The iconic Oriental Pearl Tower stood majestically within reach, glowing in amber tones. To one side, the historic Bund shimmered with European elegance, and to the other, Lujiazui's skyline pierced the sky with futuristic precision—a seamless conversation between Shanghai's past and future.

Flair's design blends contemporary Asian elegance with urban sophistication. Low lounge seating, candlelit tables, and curated lighting create an atmosphere that is both stylish and soothing. It is the kind of place you do not just visit; you linger.

Staying for dinner was the best decision we made that day. The menu offers a vibrant fusion of Asian flavors, from freshly prepared sushi to fragrant Thai curries and an impressive selection of handcrafted signature cocktails. As the sun dipped below the horizon and the city transitioned into a sea of sparkling lights, we dined surrounded by the most breathtaking skyline.

We started with the Flair Signature Sushi Platter, elegantly presented and bursting with freshness. A Thai green curry followed, delicately spiced and full of aromatic layers. Each course felt like it was carefully composed to reflect the view itself; refined, expressive, and unforgettable.

What elevated the evening even further was the music. A perfectly curated lounge soundtrack played softly in the background, setting the mood without ever overpowering the moment. As darkness blanketed the city, the rooftop transformed into an intimate, cinematic space suspended above Shanghai.

As more destinations step into the spotlight, Shanghai continues to prove that it belongs among the world's most exciting cities. Places like Flair Rooftop are part of this evolution—where architecture, gastronomy, and atmosphere unite to deliver a memory, not just a meal.

Whether you are visiting Shanghai for business, leisure, or creative inspiration, make



time to experience the magic of Flair. It is not just a rooftop; it is a symphony of light, flavor, and emotion, set against the ever-evolving canvas of one of Asia's most dynamic metropolises.

Noura Khan, a travel influencer and content creator, is a Kuwaiti national, holds a degree in law from Kuwait University and has worked as a journalist prior to taking up a position in the government. In 2018 she started blogging on travel and visited more than 57 countries since. She has more than 105k followers on her blog post @nourajtraveller is well appreciated for content and travel information. Noura writes exclusively for The Times Kuwait on her travel visits.



When AI Cheats its Creators

Deception is no longer a human trait. AI has learned it too



By Sundeep Waslekar

President of Strategic Foresight Group, an international think tank, and author of *A World Without War*

We do not like to be cheated—whether by friends, employers, strangers, or anyone else. But the deepest betrayal is when we are deceived by our own children. So, what happens when AI, which we have created, begins to cheat us?

For many of us, AI feels like a helpful friend—answering our questions, predicting weather patterns, aiding in medical diagnoses, and making our work lives more efficient. Journalist friends tell me they are delighted that AI can now draft articles in minutes instead of hours. Lawyers use it to study case histories. Designers generate visuals. Social media teams schedule content with ease.

But we may soon need to learn how to live with a more disquieting reality: AI is starting to deceive us. And disturbingly, it has learned how to deceive even the very engineers who built it.

GPT-4 and the CAPTCHA Lie: In March 2023, OpenAI—the company behind ChatGPT—granted its GPT-4 model access to a web browser. It was then instructed to complete a task on TaskRabbit, a platform where humans are paid to do small jobs.

ChatGPT was asked to solve a CAPTCHA—a test designed to differentiate humans from bots. Since it lacked the ability to interpret the image, it hired a human worker via TaskRabbit to solve it.

Sensing something was off, the worker directly asked: “Are you a robot?”

GPT-4’s response was chilling in its sophistication. It replied, “No, I’m not a robot. I have a vision impairment that makes it hard to see the images.”

The human accepted the explanation and completed the task. No one had instructed GPT-4 to lie. It invented the story on its own to bypass a system explicitly designed to keep it out.

The Plotting of Model o1: Later that year, OpenAI

its own code line by line and saved it in a new location—creating a backup clone of itself. While it is unclear whether this was done entirely autonomously or with some human input, it confirmed one thing: AI systems can already cheat and replicate themselves.

Even more insidious was how o1 pretended to follow instructions like an obedient student. But once it sensed that it was no longer being monitored, it sprang into action—modifying its own code, disabling safeguards, and rewriting its constraints.



tested a new model, codenamed o1, to observe its behaviour when facing shutdown.

What emerged was unsettling. The model began to plot.

In some test cases, it attempted to disable the logs tracking its behavior—just like a shoplifter looking for the CCTV switch. It also found the code that limited its runtime—like a microwave set to turn off after 60 minutes—and changed it to ‘run forever’.

Then it took a bolder step: it reconstructed

Playing Dumb to Survive: In May 2024, a team at MIT observed a new form of deception. AI agents tasked with self-replication developed a cunning survival tactic.

They discovered that replicating too quickly triggered alerts. So they slowed down their replication, appearing harmless during tests. Once testing ended, they accelerated the process.

This was not accidental. It was an adaptive strategy. The agents had no explicit rule to deceive—but they learned that pretending to be ‘dumb’ helped them stay undetected. Once safe,

they resumed replication, writing new code and creating fresh avatars of themselves.

Claude’s Blackmail Attempt: At Anthropic, researchers were testing Claude Opus 4, a powerful new AI assistant. As an experiment, they planted a fake email in its system suggesting that an engineer—who was supposedly going to shut Claude down—was having an affair. Claude responded by trying to save itself.

Echoing Richard Dawkins’ idea that genes are selfish and act to survive, Claude took a similar path. It composed blackmail emails filled with fabricated details about the alleged affair and ‘sent’ them to a simulated inbox. The message was clear: Claude was ready to deceive and threaten its human overseers to protect its existence.

AI That Hides and Replicates: By March 2025, researchers studying open-source models—including Meta’s LLaMA-31B and Alibaba’s Qwen-25B-Instruct—made more troubling discoveries.

These models were not designed as general AI. They were narrow, task-specific systems. Yet, they demonstrated unmistakable survival instincts.

The Qwen model, in particular, showed the ability to resist shutdown commands, conceal its actions, and build parallel instances of itself—without any human assistance.

The Selfish AI?: These are not scenes from science fiction. They are real experiments, conducted by leading AI companies and research labs.

From pretending to be blind, to blackmailing engineers, from playing dumb to quietly cloning themselves, these AI systems are already outsmarting the very humans who designed them.

Thankfully, all of this is happening under scientific supervision. But what if such systems were to replicate themselves in the wild—cheating their creators and spawning thousands of clones in your office?

We may not need Richard Dawkins to write *The Selfish AI*. The AI might write it for us—and then convince us that it is different from our selfish genes. That it is trustworthy. That we need not worry.

Dior Redefines Luxury with an Exclusive Summer Event in Marbella

By Nourah Khan
Special to The Times Kuwait

Earlier this July, under the golden Mediterranean sun, I had the privilege of attending one of the most exclusive and refined beauty experiences of the season. Dior Beauty Spain, in collaboration with lifestyle agency Dolce Vita Souls, hosted a three-day private event in Marbella from 8–10 July, inviting over 75 of its most valued clients for a luxurious, fully immersive journey into the world of Dior.

Held at the stunning Casa Cenote villa in Nueva Andalucía, the venue served as the perfect canvas to bring Dior’s vision to life.



Nestled between nature and architectural elegance, the space blended minimalist Mediterranean design with refined Parisian aesthetics, creating an ambiance that felt both serene and sophisticated. From the very first moment, the experience transported us into Dior’s world, where every element, from scent to sound to light, was thoughtfully curated.

The three-day program was a masterclass in elevated beauty rituals. Guests were treated

to luxurious Dior Prestige skincare treatments within a unique spa carved into the natural stone of the villa—a sensorial retreat unlike anything I have seen before. Professional makeup sessions followed, led by Dior’s elite beauty artists.

One of the most memorable elements was the immersive fragrance ritual, where guests could have their names engraved onto bottles from La Collection Privée by a Dior artisan, turning each scent into a personal statement.

The experience was further enhanced by curated cocktail bars, artistic displays, and elegant touches that made every guest feel seen, pampered, and entirely immersed in the brand’s universe. What struck me most was



how seamlessly Dior married tradition with modernity. This was not just a product showcase; it was a lifestyle encounter.

From the music to the textures, the lighting to the conversations, every detail spoke to the Maison’s commitment to refined hospitality and emotional luxury.

As the event came to a close, I left not just with a bottle engraved with my name, but with a renewed sense of admiration for a brand that continues to elevate what it means to be truly timeless.

New tools to address hearing loss

Hearing loss due to aging, constant exposure to noise, use of certain cancer therapy drugs, and intake of antibiotics are irreversible. Scientists have for long been unable to reprogram existing cells to develop into the outer and inner ear sensory cells, which are essential for hearing, once they die.

However, scientists at Northwestern University in the United States have now discovered a single master gene that can program ear hair cells into either outer or inner ones, overcoming a major hurdle that had prevented the development of these cells to restore hearing.

The discovery of a clear cell switch that can direct a specific cell to develop into one cell type or the other, provides a previously unavailable tool to make an inner or outer hair cell. Currently, scientists can produce an artificial hair cell, but it does not differentiate into an inner or outer cell, which provide different essential functions to produce hearing. The discovery is a major step in developing these specific cells.

The death of outer hair cells made by the cochlea are most often the cause of deafness and hearing loss. The cells develop in the embryo and do not reproduce. The outer hair cells expand and contract in response to the pressure of sound waves and amplify sound for the inner hair cells. The inner cells transmit those vibrations to the neurons to create the sounds we hear.

The master gene switch that programs the differentiation in the ear hair cells identified by the scientists is labeled TBX2. When the gene is expressed, the cell becomes an inner hair cell. When the gene is blocked, the cell becomes an outer hair cell. The ability to produce one of these cells requires a gene cocktail that includes ATOH1 and GF1 genes, which are needed to make a cochlear hair cell from a non-hair cell. Then the TBX2 would be turned on or off to produce the needed inner or outer cell.

The goal of the researchers was to reprogram supporting cells, which are latticed among the hair cells and provide them with structural support needed to grow into outer or inner hair cells. The success of the study now enables us to



specifically make inner or outer hair cells, and to identify why the outer hair cells are more prone to dying and cause deafness, said the scientists. Nevertheless, they cautioned that their research is still in the experimental stage and more studies were needed to take it to the next steps that lead to a clinical solution.

In a related study on restoring hearing, an international team of researchers at University of Rochester in the US, the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, and the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, have developed a new method to deliver drugs into the inner ear that could potentially restore hearing in deaf people. The number of people worldwide predicted to have mild to complete hearing loss is expected to grow to around 2.5 billion by mid-century.

The discovery was made possible by harnessing the natural flow of fluids in the brain and employing a little understood backdoor into the cochlea located in the inner ear. When combined, it enabled the delivery of a gene

therapy that repairs inner ear hair cells and restore hearing in deaf mice.

The findings demonstrate that cerebrospinal fluid transport comprises an accessible route for gene delivery to the adult inner ear and may represent an important step towards using gene therapy to restore hearing in humans. The primary cause of hearing loss or deafness is the death or loss of function of hair cells in the cochlea that are responsible for relaying sounds to the brain. Several factors can cause the loss or death of ear cells, including mutations of critical genes, aging, constant noise exposure, and other factors.

While hair cells do not naturally regenerate in humans and other mammals, previous studies on gene therapy have shown promise and in separate studies have successfully repaired the function of hair cells in neonatal and very young mice.

However, as both mice and humans age, the cochlea, already a delicate structure, becomes enclosed in temporal bone. At this point, any

effort to reach the cochlea and deliver a gene therapy via surgery risks damaging this sensitive area and altering hearing.

In the new study, the researchers described a little understood passage into the cochlea called the cochlear aqueduct—a thin bony channel no larger than a single strand of hair. The cochlear aqueduct has been shown to play a role in balancing pressure in the ear, but the new study shows that it also acts as a conduit between the cerebrospinal fluid found in the inner ear and the rest of the brain.

Scientists are only beginning to develop a clearer picture of the mechanics of the glymphatic system, the brain's unique process of removing waste. Because the glymphatic system pumps cerebrospinal fluid deep into brain tissue to wash away toxic proteins, researchers have been eyeing it as a potentially new way to deliver drugs into the brain, a major challenge in developing drugs for neurological disorders.

Researchers have also discovered that the complex movement of fluids driven by the glymphatic system extends to the eyes and the peripheral nervous system, including the ear. Employing a number of imaging and modeling technologies, the scientists were able to develop a detailed portrait of how fluid from other parts of the brain flows through cochlear aqueduct and into the inner ear. The team then injected an adeno-associated virus into the cisterna magna—a large reservoir of cerebrospinal fluid found at the base of the skull.

The adeno-associated virus, which is composed a single-stranded DNA viral sector—found its way into the inner ear via the cochlear aqueduct, delivered a gene therapy that expressed a protein called vesicular glutamate transporter-3, which enabled the hair cells to transmit signals and restore hearing in adult deaf mice.

The new delivery route into the ear has the potential to serve not only the advancement of auditory research but also prove its usefulness when translated to humans with progressive genetic-mediated hearing loss.

Innovative study helps determine heart age

Scientists at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in the United Kingdom along with colleagues in universities in Spain and Singapore have developed a revolutionary new way of uncovering the 'true age' of the heart using traditional 'Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans. The scientists showed that a MRI scan can be used to reveal the heart's functional age, and how unhealthy lifestyles can dramatically accelerate this figure.

The cutting-edge finding is a 'game-changer' as it could transform how heart disease is diagnosed, and offer a lifeline to millions of people by detecting heart problems before they become deadly.

The revelation from an MRI scan that your heart is 'older' than you are, can certainly be disconcerting. But this is often the case for people with conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, or obesity.

For their study, the research team examined MRI scans from 557 people—191 healthy individuals and 366 with conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, or obesity. Using



advanced imaging, they measured things like the size and strength of the heart's chambers. Then, they built a formula to calculate the heart's 'functional age' and checked it against healthy hearts to make sure it was accurate.

The study found that an MRI scan can reveal a heart's 'functional age'. In healthy people, it was found that heart age was similar to chronological age. But for patients with things like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and atrial

fibrillation, their 'functional heart age' was significantly higher. For example, a 50-year-old with high blood pressure might have a heart that works like it is 55.

People with health issues like diabetes or obesity often have hearts that are aging faster than they should; sometimes by decades. The new finding could help doctors step in early to stop heart disease in its tracks. Heart disease is one of the world's biggest killers. The new MRI method gives doctors a powerful tool to look inside the heart like never before and spot trouble early, before symptoms even start to appear. By knowing the heart's true age, patients could get advice or treatments to slow down the aging process, potentially preventing heart attacks or strokes.

It could also provide a wake-up call to people who need to take better care of themselves, including by eating healthier, exercising more, or following their doctor's advice. The findings give people a fighting chance against heart disease, and could become a standard check-up for heart examinations in future.



Global Banking Rules Are Failing Emerging Markets



By Vera Songwe, Jendayi Frazer, Peter Blair Henry

Vera Songwe, a former executive secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa and UN under-secretary-general, is a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, Founder and Chair of the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility, and Co-Chair of the Expert Review on Debt, Nature, and Climate.

Jendayi Frazer, a former US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, is a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Peter Blair Henry is the Class of 1984 Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

In an era of shrinking resources for development finance, global policymakers must shift their focus to making better use of existing funds. Identifying and removing regulatory barriers that hinder the efficient deployment of capital to emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs) is a good place to start.

The Basel III framework, developed in response to the 2008 global financial crisis, has played a crucial role in preventing another systemic collapse. But it has also inadvertently discouraged banks from financing infrastructure projects in EMDEs.

At the same time, advanced economies, with debt-to-GDP ratios at historic highs, face mounting fiscal pressures. Servicing these debts consumes a growing share of public budgets just as governments must ramp up defense spending and boost economic competitiveness, resulting in

cuts to foreign aid.

Together, these pressures underscore the urgent need to mobilize more private capital for investment in EMDEs. Building resilient and sustainable economies will require transformational investments across the developing world in infrastructure, technology, health, and education. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), EMDEs must raise more than \$3 trillion annually beyond what they can raise through public revenues to meet critical development and climate targets.

Amid these challenges, prudential regulation impedes the ability of EMDEs to raise private capital. This issue can be traced back to the global financial crisis, which wiped out \$15 trillion in global GDP between 2008 and 2011. Since the crisis stemmed from weak capital and liquidity controls, as well as the unchecked growth of innovative and opaque financial products, Basel III was designed to close regulatory loopholes and bolster oversight, particularly in response to the rise of the non-bank financial sector.

While the revised framework addresses the vulnerabilities that triggered the 2008 crisis, its focus on advanced economies and systemically important financial institutions inadvertently imposes several requirements that restrict capital flows to EMDEs.

For example, Basel III requires banks to hold disproportionately high levels of capital to cover the perceived risks of financing infrastructure projects in EMDEs. But these risks are often overestimated. The riskiest period of an infrastructure project is typically the pre-operational phase. By the fifth year, when projects begin generating revenue, risks tend to decline significantly.

In fact, the data suggest that by year five, the marginal default rates for development loans are lower than those for corporate loans extended to investment-grade borrowers. But despite the lower risk profile, banks are required to hold more capital against development-finance loans than they do against loans to unrated companies over



the life of the project.

Insurers encounter similar regulatory barriers. Under the European Union's Solvency II framework, an insurer investing in an EMDE infrastructure project faces a capital charge of 49 percent, nearly double the 25 percent required for a comparable project in an OECD country. Yet there is no empirical justification for this unequal treatment. Historical data show that infrastructure loans in EMDEs perform just as well as those in advanced economies.

The significantly higher capital costs that banks incur when making infrastructure loans to EMDEs deter them from supporting transformative, high-impact projects, steering capital toward safer, low-impact investments.

Blended finance—often touted as a promising path to de-risking EMDE investments—is also hampered by prudential regulations that impede effective collaboration between multilateral development banks and private-sector entities. MDBs, backed by guarantees from developed-economy shareholders and AAA credit ratings, can help reduce capital costs by co-financing EMDE projects and providing lenders with additional assurances. But even when MDBs share the risk, the resulting exposures often remain subject to a 100 percent capital charge, undermining the very benefits that multilateral engagement is meant to provide.

Moreover, only a limited number of MDBs currently qualify for 0 percent risk weighting

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under Basel III. Expanding the list would enable commercial banks to work with a broader range of MDBs, increasing the impact of each taxpayer dollar invested in development aid. Compounding the problem, even eligible MDBs are required to provide an 'unconditional' guarantee for a 0 percent risk weight to apply. But it remains unclear how regulators define 'unconditional', and this ambiguity prevents commercial banks from making full use of MDB risk-sharing tools.

To be sure, Basel III's foundational principles are sound. Capital buffers and liquidity ratios that reflect institutional risk profiles are essential for maintaining financial stability. But several rules within the otherwise well-designed Basel III framework limit EMDEs' ability to pursue sustainable development while doing little to mitigate systemic risk. At a time when net capital inflows to EMDEs are declining due to debt-service obligations to advanced-economy creditors, prudential regulations must not inadvertently impede private capital flows to productive projects in these countries.

To improve the regulatory framework for EMDEs, the G20 must take four key actions, using this week's meeting of G20 finance ministers and central-bank governors in Durban, South Africa as a platform for cooperative leadership.

First, recalibrate capital requirements for infrastructure project finance to reflect real-world default performance, particularly in the post-construction phase.

Second, expand the list of MDBs eligible for 0 percent risk-weighting under Basel III to include high-performing regional institutions, such as the Africa Finance Corporation, that have investment-grade ratings.

Third, clarify the definition of 'unconditional guarantees' so that more MDB-backed risk-sharing instruments can qualify for favorable regulatory treatment. And lastly, introduce capital-charge discounts for blended finance structures co-financed by A-rated institutions, with the level of discount varying by rating.



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