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Promoting Literacy in the Digital Era



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Despite great progress being made in improving literacy worldwide over the past five decades, more than 750 million adults still cannot read and write, two thirds of them women, and 250 million children fail to acquire basic literacy skills. The illiteracy figures could be higher, as a narrow definition of literacy, which recognizes anyone who has the ability to read and write as literate, is sometimes used in statistics provided by states to feign progress in education.

However, education is a much broader process than just learning to read, write, and use numbers. Literacy is now recognized as a continuum of gaining knowledge throughout life, and integrating this knowledge into one's values, actions, and behaviors to foster personal growth. Additionally, the rapid digital technological transformations happening globally has made it imperative to frequently reskill and upskill to meet the demands of a dynamic marketplace.

Accordingly, our understanding of literacy



has become more encompassing. For instance, when computers and the internet became mainstream in the 1980s and 90s, the labor-market need was for digital literacy. Today, with artificial intelligence (AI) proliferating into every aspect of our lives and the digital sphere, the

demand is for AI literacy, with digital literacy being seen as a necessary prerequisite for gaining AI literacy.

AI literacy is a set of competencies that include the knowledge and ability to engage effectively with AI systems and tools, adapt

to AI-integrated jobs and work environments, and become informed participants. Literacy in the digital era is also central to fostering critical thinking, discerning credible information, navigating complex information environments, and understanding the ethical and societal dimensions of AI so as to use it responsibly.

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) now defines literacy in the digital era as the set of skills that equip people to access, understand, use, critically evaluate, create, communicate and engage with digital content safely and ethically. The theme for this year's International Literacy Day, on 8 September, 'Promoting Literacy in the Digital Era', highlights the primacy of literacy, and growingly, that of AI literacy.

Literacy in the digital era is key to empowering individuals, improving lives, expanding capabilities, reducing poverty and inequality, enhancing overall health, and increasing job opportunities. In particular, digitally empowered women generate a social ripple effect that positively impacts their immediate families, as well as the wider community.

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Youth, Values, and Wellbeing: The Heart of Kuwait Vision 2035

Kuwait Vision 2035 envisions more than infrastructure. It centers on people. The article highlights that wellbeing, rooted in national values and driven by youth, is the true engine of transformation. Embedding behaviour change into daily life can make Kuwait a regional leader in sustainable human development.



By Sarah Al Sabah
Special to The Times Kuwait

In every national transformation journey, bricks and mortar alone do not build the future. People do. Kuwait Vision 2035, 'New Kuwait', calls for a thriving and sustainable society where human capital is at the center. Infrastructure and policy reforms matter, but they are not enough. What will ultimately shape success are our behaviors, our choices, and our values.

Wellbeing is more than physical health or stress management. It is a national asset. A society that prioritizes balance and resilience is more productive. It spends less on healthcare and builds stronger foundations for innovation. Nations that embed wellbeing into culture, position themselves as competitive and future-ready.

Kuwait's youth make up more than half of the population. They are not just participants in the national vision. They are its leaders. Youth brings creativity, ambition, and energy. At the same time, they carry forward the values that



Public parks and active lifestyles as pathways to healthier, sustainable communities.

wellbeing a shared responsibility. Together, these steps strengthen both individuals and the nation.

A wellbeing culture strengthens the pillars of

Vision 2035.

- Creative Human Capital: Youth who are healthy and guided by values are more creative, adaptable, and ready to lead.

- Sustainable Living Environment: Eco-friendly behaviors, such as reducing waste and conserving water, improve both wellbeing and environmental health.

- Effective Government: By integrating wellbeing into policies, institutions model care, accountability, and values-based leadership.

Government programs are essential. For transformation and long-term change, cultural adoption is required. Kuwait once shifted from pearl diving to the oil economy. Today, we can achieve another shift: from reactive healthcare to proactive wellbeing.

Here, values play a central role. Leaders can emphasize balance and care. Educators can encourage healthier habits. Media and influencers can make wellbeing aspirational and accessible. The message is clear. Wellbeing is not a luxury. The wellbeing of our society is a shared responsibility and a national duty.

Vision 2035 is more than a blueprint. It is a call to redefine how we live, work, and connect. With youth and values at the heart of wellbeing, we can shift the discourse around sustainable human development. New Kuwait can use its human development pillar as an example of sustainable society transformation.



Kuwaiti youth leading community initiatives, embodying behaviour change and values-centered wellbeing.



National values of solidarity and respect shine through intergenerational unity.

define Kuwait: solidarity, respect, balance, and perseverance.

Empowering youth to promote wellbeing is a values-driven investment in the future. Young Kuwaitis can lead community campaigns. They can create digital health platforms. They can design school and university initiatives. In doing so, they weave wellbeing into daily life. When anchored in values, these behaviors ripple across generations.

Behavioral science shows the power of small, consistent actions. Walking instead of driving. Managing screen time. Practicing mindfulness. These simple habits, when adopted widely, transform culture.

Policies can reinforce these choices. More public parks encourage active lifestyles. Nutritious food in schools builds healthy routines. Workplace wellness programs and mental health awareness campaigns make



Empowering youth through tech, building the creative human capital of New Kuwait.

The decade ahead calls for intentional steps toward better health, mental fortitude, and communities that thrive together. Vision 2035 charts our course. The collective work of moving forward rests with us, rooted in what we value most and propelled by the vision of our young people.

Editor's Note: Sarah Al Sabah is Head of Development Planning Follow-Up at Kuwait's Ministry of Information and a core member of its Strategy Committee (2026–2030). She leads initiatives on future-ready media, youth empowerment, and sustainable transformation in alignment with Vision 2035. In this op-ed, she explores how wellbeing, values, and youth-led behavioral change are essential to realizing the New Kuwait.

Women reflect diversity and diverse perspectives

Head of Chancery at the Ghanaian Embassy, Neematu Ziblim Adam

The Times Kuwait Report

Women play an impactful role in all aspects of life, it is no different in diplomacy. Although women are only beginning to increase their presence on the global diplomatic arena, nevertheless they have been an influential force in guiding discussion on many international policies and processes.

the Ghanaian Embassy, Neematu Ziblim Adam, on the challenges women in diplomacy face, and on the impact they bring to bear in discussion at international fora.

What inspired you to pursue a career in diplomacy

As a young woman, I admired people working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was so prestigious and they carried themselves with decorum. I also enjoyed the fact that career diplomats worked closely with the office of the president and offered advice on our country's relations with the rest of the world. In addition, the tactfulness needed in negotiations and arriving at a solution amicably is something I loved to do even before I joined the Foreign Service.

What challenges have you faced as a woman in diplomacy, and how did you overcome them?

It has been difficult handling both my career and family. Especially when children are in their teenage years. It disrupts their school and also you are usually out when they need you most. It has not been easy, but I try to manage the situation with the assistance of family members and domestic assistance.

How do you think gender influences diplomatic styles or approaches?

It is either positive or negative, in some cases, you encounter your male

counterparts who find it difficult to relate with women. Again, there are instances where the situation at hand demands the attention of a woman. In these, women's contributions are highly valued.

Diplomacy should reflect diversity and responsiveness. It should bring a whole lot of perspectives in handling issues globally.

Can you share a moment when you felt you made a meaningful impact through your diplomatic work?

I have made several meaningful impacts in the course of my work. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, I played a critical role in the evaluation of Ghanaians abroad back home.

What advice would you give to young women aspiring to join the foreign service?

I will personally encourage more women to go into diplomacy. It provides unlimited benefits for your country and your home. It gives you a global perspective on issues and provides several ways to handle an issue at hand. The experience is immeasurable.

However, you need to be a team player. In the world of diplomacy, you cannot work alone. You have to carry everyone along and work as colleagues, and not as bosses and subordinates.

How would you describe your tenure/experience in Kuwait so far



I have spent a year and a half in Kuwait and I must admit that I like it. It is calm, there is no rush or aggression in anything. Again, information abounds, and several English literature is available to make reporting and analysis much easier.

I will personally encourage more women to go into diplomacy. It provides unlimited benefits for your country and your home. It gives you a world perspective of issues and provides several ways to handle an issue at hand. The experience is immeasurable.

This week, in our series on 'Honoring Women Reshaping World Diplomacy', we spoke with the Head of Chancery at



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From Kuwait to the Bard: Hamad Al Jenaie's Modern Theater Alchemy

He is a theatre director with the rare ability to transform a traditional stage play into a true work of art. But what does it take to bridge the gap between Shakespearean language and today's Kuwaiti audiences? Ivana Kralova meets Hamad Al Jenaie.

Ivana Kralova
Special to The Times Kuwait

Darkness. Thunder. Smoke. An actor with long, black claws glides through the audience. Cut. The scene transforms: a vibrant tree, a white swing, dancers draped in glowing cloaks representing fairies. The crowd is captivated, soaking in the magical atmosphere of a 400-year-old classic—William Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'—brought to life through the visionary direction of Hamad Al Jenaie.

The 36-year-old Kuwaiti theatre director, actor and producer greets me with a warm smile, a spark of excitement in his eyes and a cup of tea in his hand. Educated in both Kuwait and the United Kingdom, Hamad Al Jenaie is well known for his bold, unique and visionary approach to theatre.

His work has earned him numerous awards and recognitions, including the Adam Darius Award for Excellence in Performance, the Alison Shan Price MBE International Award for Drama, and the prestigious Dame Judi Dench Shakespeare Award. Among his many achievements is the acclaimed production, *Looking for Sheherazade*, written by Fawaz Al Adwani, which represented Kuwait at the Edinburgh International Festival. But most importantly Al Jenaie brought the local theatre scene to the level of world-class artistry.

So what first sparked his love for theatre and the timeless classics of Shakespeare?

"In 1997, my aunt, who was an artist herself, took me as a child to Shamiya theatre to see an European touring company's production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. I had never heard or seen anything like that. I was just a child and I didn't understand it, but I was mesmerised by the power of the way the story was told," he recalls.

"It struck me. There was something particular about Shakespeare. And on my birthday, I received a gift from my parents: the complete works of William Shakespeare and that book grabbed my attention completely."

While sipping his tea, Al Jenaie explains that a key figure in his career was his mentor, Alison Shan Price MBE, who taught him the foundations of theatre and drama. "We did a couple of artistic projects, a few shows, and even went to the Edinburgh International Festival. But then came a turning point; she introduced me to a drama directors showcase. One day, she called and asked if I would be interested in directing a piece. I said, 'All right' and we decided to do that. The video was sent to the Youth Shakespeare Festival, and it was very well received, and I am truly thankful for that." He smiles while remembering the turning point in his career.

One of his most memorable achievements was becoming the first Kuwaiti to receive the Dame Judi Dench Shakespeare Award, which honored his work in theatre over the past many years, in particular for his unique production of *Hamlet* in 2019.

"I think at that time, I had reached a stage in my life where I truly knew that I wanted to be a director and how I wanted to see and shape the play. We were like a family working on this production. We started with a very dark tone, and we kept asking ourselves how it could connect with the audience. That really caught



people's attention, especially because this version of *Hamlet* was set in a contemporary mental asylum," he pauses, reflecting. "Kuwait loved its modern version of Shakespeare. It had a great impact and it meant a lot to me, and I am very thankful to Dame Judi Dench and also to the British Embassy for all of it."

When I ask him how the award impacted him, he answers with modesty in his voice: "It felt like a chance for Kuwait to show that we are capable of staging classical stories and theatre, and also of engaging our actors, future producers, and directors. It was an opportunity to say: we're here and we're ready to present this kind of work."

It is clear that theatre, for him, is more than just a passion. "The theatre is a world full of imaginations; and it is a temple of truth. It is a place where we as actors can truly be ourselves, where we confess through our characters, and sometimes ourselves," he says.

What sets Al Jenaie apart is his genuine connection with the casts. He says: "We are like a family, we discuss everything together. Rehearsals often begin with open conversations and I encourage actors to set into their roles through dialogue. As a director, you have to make the actors feel as comfortable as possible. We don't believe in the idea of 'Oh, I'm better than someone else'. No, no. Every scene matters - even the smallest one - and we always

try to make each moment memorable."

He believes that directing is a balance of skills, intuition, and calm presence. "You have to be very capable," he says with a smile, "but you should never show it. It should feel effortless; like a performance in itself, the performance of a great leader."

He sees the role of the director as someone who supports and guides; someone who helps others grow by seeing the big picture and understanding what each moment needs. He also compares directing to organising an event, bringing people, ideas, and design all together into one unified experience, from casting to staging to the emotional rhythm of the scene.

He says: "I enjoy the structure behind how production comes together. I've studied psychology as well, to better understand characters and to help actors fully step into their roles." But there is one essential quality Al Jenaie emphasises: "Patience. The more patient you are, the better result."

The director, with his mysterious and charismatic allure, is undoubtedly both a strong leader and a dedicated team player. But when I ask him where his ideas for adaptations come from, Al Jenaie pauses for a moment, then smiles and says: "Honestly, many of them come from my dreams. It's like you read a text, you sit with it, and then in deep sleep something returns. A feeling, a scene, a setting. One night,

it came back to me almost like a haunting. I had to get up and write the whole concept down."

When it comes to discussing his latest production, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, his eyes widen with enthusiasm and he says: "It is kind of humanistic, beautiful story - almost like a fairy tale and the audience enjoys that kind of beauty, and also the image of hope that lives within the play. And we are also very blessed with a great audience in Kuwait. I believe we have the theatre in our blood."

For Al Jenaie, understanding the character is the heart of every rehearsal process. As a



theatre maker, he believes that every play has a core—something he can both visualise and deeply understand. He also says that studying the details before rehearsals, looking into the character's background and psychology, can be the difference between a great performance and outstanding one.

"Every small detail matters. What is the character's knowledge? What do they represent? What is the message they carry to the audience? That is the kind of understanding we try to reach," says the director.

What advice would he give to young colleagues aspiring to follow a similar path? He shares words of encouragement: "Keep going, don't give up, and always hold on to your vision. Dream big and stay focused on your goal and in'sha Allah, you will move forward and what you are working for will become yours."

Behind every great director is a story of talent, resilience, faith and relentless pursuit of dreams, and Hamad Al Jenaie certainly embodies all of these qualities. He is a director who connects deeply with emotions, challenges his audience, and uses his psychology to bring characters to life in a way that feels honest and human.

He is an artist who asks questions, draws inspiration from his dreams, and gives audiences more than just a play—he offers an experience. An experience that awakes all five senses, stirs emotions, and lingers in the mind after the final scene. He brings Shakespearean classics into today's world with a sensitivity and relevance, offering not just entertainment but insight, and an unforgettable artistic journey.

Ivana Kralova is a Czech-born, Kuwait-based features writer and London School of Journalism postgraduate. She covers human-interest, arts and lifestyle across Kuwait, with a focus on profiles and behind-the-scenes reporting. Her work highlights the country's creative community and everyday stories.

Photographs by **Nour Al Kafrway**.

Community service to deter reckless driving

The message is clear: reckless driving will no longer be met with a closed cell, but with an open invitation to serve, learn, and repair. As Kuwait embarks on this experiment, its streets may soon reflect not just stricter rules, but a deeper sense of shared responsibility. The success of the law will depend on whether violators embrace the chance to rebuild — not just what they damaged, but also their place in society.

A far-reaching ministerial decision signed by First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef and published on 31 August in the official gazette, sets out 46 forms of community service that can replace jail time for traffic offenses.

Four months after the Ministry of Interior introduced stringent new traffic laws to curb traffic violations and reduce traffic accidents on Kuwait's roads, the decision by Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef last Sunday marks a bold shift in how the country will deal with violators of the traffic laws, in particular on reckless drivers.

Instead of sending violators directly to prison, judges will now have the power to assign them community service and rehabilitation programs designed to change behavior, protect society, and build a culture of responsibility. At its heart is a simple idea: those who endanger lives on the road should give back to society and repair the harm they cause.

The new law envisions a wide range of community services. Offenders may find themselves cleaning beaches, planting trees, or removing waste from public places. Others could be assigned to help organize cemeteries and funerals, maintain sidewalks and road signs, or



assist in civil defense work.

Religious and social institutions are also expected to benefit with some violators being tasked to cleaning mosques, arranging Qur'ans, supporting school libraries, or helping with student awareness campaigns. Others could be mandated to work at social development centers, distribute aid through cooperative societies, or contribute to charitable and humanitarian projects. Some may even be asked to serve at gas stations. But the plan goes beyond physical work. Many offenders will be required to attend awareness and rehabilitation programs, including lectures, workshops, or counseling sessions in medical, psychological, social, or religious fields.

These sessions are meant to tackle

the root causes of reckless driving—negligence, impulsiveness, or a lack of understanding of the dangers posed by their behavior. By facing the consequences of their actions and learning safer habits, violators are expected to return to the road with a changed mindset.

Another cornerstone of the decision is accountability. Those who cause damage through traffic

offenses will be obligated to repair it—whether that means restoring property to its original state, fixing what was broken, or paying financial compensation when repairs are impossible. This principle reinforces a message often forgotten in traffic accidents: violations are not abstract crimes but acts that harm people, property, and the community.

While the system emphasizes reform, it also sets strict conditions. Agencies hosting community service must report on each offender's compliance. Offenders who shirk their duties risk being sent back to court to serve their original sentence in prison.

In effect, the law offers a choice: contribute positively to society or serve jail time. Sixteen government ministries and agencies, including Health, Education, Public Works, and Social Affairs, will take part in this initiative. Their cooperation ensures that the efforts of traffic offenders

are focused where they are most needed—from cleaning public parks and supporting hospitals to raising awareness among expatriate workers or organizing training in crafts and trades.

By weaving traffic reform into the fabric of society, the law turns punishment into a tool for development. Officials stressed that the aim is not simply to punish, but to transform. Traffic violations have long been one of Kuwait's most pressing public safety challenges, costing lives, resources, and social trust.

With this new approach, the authorities hope to cultivate responsibility and respect for the law, while easing the burden on the prison-system. However, the success of the new reforms will depend on whether violators embrace the chance to rebuild — not just what they damaged, but also their place in society.

Demand for office space on the rise

A new report on real estate demand shows that total demand for office space in Kuwait reached 8.75 million square meters in 2025, with the public sector accounting for 47 percent and the private sector for 53 percent. Private sector demand stood at 4.64 million square meters in 2025, accounting for 53 percent of total demand, while public sector demand stood at 47 percent.

The report, prepared by Aayan Real Estate Company, pointed out that growing economic activity is expected to drive higher employment, and consequently, increase demand for office space over the near-term. Private sector demand alone is expected to climb to 4.91 million square meters by 2027. The analysis of demand and availability by area, showed that Kuwait City dominates the market, holding 75 percent of total available office space, generating an estimated KD125 million in annual rental income for real estate companies and investors.



Within Kuwait City, more than 270 properties are available for lease across East, Qibla, and Mirqab, totaling 1.56 million square meters. The private sector owns over 300 office properties in the capital, of which 275 are leasable while the rest are occupied by their owners.

Total available office space across Kuwait has reached 2.09 million square meters, with Hawalli holding 16 percent (328,160 sqm) and Farwaniya 5 percent (101,680 sqm).

Occupancy is projected to climb to 82 percent by 2027, though concerns remain about the government's plans to relocate public sector entities to government-owned properties. This move by the government could also impact private sector demand over the near-term, said the report. Elaborating on affordability, the report revealed that rental prices for luxury offices range between KD6 to KD14.5 per square meter (sqm) with premium locations limited to landmarks such as Al Hamra Tower, KIPCO Tower, Al Raya, Capital Tower, Al Salhiya, Al Tijaria, Injazat, Mazaya, and Business City Tower. Mid-range offices lease for KD5.5 to KD12.5 dinars per sqm, with rates expected to remain firm through 2026–2027 as landlords push to boost occupancy.

The report added that office demand is met by three types of properties, with 49 percent being met by commercial properties available on the market, 11 percent from properties controlled by a single entity, and 40 percent from other property types. It also noted thousands of office units exist within industrial zones such as Shuwaikh, the Free Zone, Al-Rai, Al-Dajeej, Ardhiya, Subhan, and Sulaibiya.

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Diplomatic Corps hosts farewell ceremony for Iraqi Ambassador

His Excellency Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan to Kuwait, highlighted the significance of honoring Ambassador H.E. Al-Manhal Al-Safi's five years of service in Kuwait, expressing sadness at bidding farewell to a dear colleague and praising his dedication and positive impact on bilateral relations.

The Times Kuwait Report

Ambassador of Tajikistan and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps H.E. Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda hosted a farewell ceremony for outgoing Iraqi Ambassador H.E. Al-Manhal Al-Safi at the St. Regis Hotel last week.

The event was attended by ambassadors, representatives of accredited diplomatic missions, and representing Kuwait was Fahad Al-Riyahi from the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Zubaydzoda noted that the gathering followed the resumption of diplomatic activities after the summer break and highlighted the significance of

honoring Ambassador Al-Safi's five years of service in Kuwait.

Ambassador Zubaydzoda expressed sadness at bidding farewell to his dear colleague and friend, noting that Ambassador Al-Safi's tenure in Kuwait was marked by dedication and a positive impact on bilateral relations. He praised his insightful leadership, which helped bridge differences, facilitated numerous high-level visits, and opened broader horizons for cooperation.

He noted that Ambassador Al-Safi played a pivotal role in revitalizing joint technical committees, particularly those on border demarcation, security, missing persons, and archives, while also advancing negotiations on new memoranda of understanding and

enhancing discussions on outstanding political issues. On the security front, the Tajik ambassador noted that Ambassador Al-Safi strengthened military and security cooperation, especially in border protection and expertise exchange, and made tangible progress in extradition and asset recovery cases.

Economically, Al-Safi promoted investment, established new partnerships, and facilitated business operations, reflected in increased bilateral trade and eased entry for Iraqi citizens into Kuwait. He also welcomed over 17,000 visitors for the 26th Gulf Cup, overcoming earlier restrictions, and oversaw the issuance of tens of thousands of religious visas annually to Kuwaiti citizens. Culturally, his efforts enriched people-to-people ties

through active participation in Kuwaiti society and organizing cultural, artistic, and sporting exchanges that deepened fraternal bonds between both nations.

For his part, Ambassador Al-Safi expressed gratitude to the Kuwaiti government and people, calling for continued cooperation and strong brotherly ties. He highlighted achievements during his service, including expanding trade exchange, boosting bilateral relations, and working to resolve outstanding issues through governmental and public cooperation. He stressed that Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations will remain strong, striving for security and stability, while commending ambassadors, diplomats, and Kuwaiti society for supporting his mission.



LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Lulu Daily Fresh' in Hawally – Bringing freshness closer to you

LuLu Hypermarket -- a leading retail brand in the Middle East, offering a wide range of fresh produce, groceries, daily essentials, and household products with a focus on quality, convenience, and customer satisfaction -- is set to redefine convenience and freshness with the grand opening of Lulu Daily Fresh, a brand-new store opened on 3rd September, 2025 at Al Bahar Center, Tunis Street, Hawally.

This marks one of the first Lulu Daily Fresh stores in Kuwait and represents the 17th Lulu outlet in the country, further strengthening the brand's footprint.

The store was inaugurated by prominent dignitaries: Mr. Fahad Abdul Rahman Al-Bahar - Vice Chairman and Executive Managing

Director, Abdurahman Muhamed Al-Bahar of Partner Company WLL; Adel Ali Al - Bahar in the presence of Yusuf Ali M.A - Chairman and Managing Director of LuLu Group International ; K.S. Sreejith - Lulu Kuwait Director; Sakeer Hussain - Lulu Kuwait Regional Director, along with other senior officials of Lulu Kuwait.

Spanning 4,700 square feet, Lulu Daily Fresh promises a vibrant shopping experience, featuring a wide selection of fresh produce, groceries, daily essentials, chilled items, and dairy products, catering to the everyday needs of families residing in and around Hawally.

The store also offers a convenient multi-store parking facility for 300 vehicles, ensuring a smooth and accessible shopping experience. To celebrate the grand opening, customers can enjoy exclusive inaugural offers from 3rd to 6th September 2025, making it the perfect opportunity to explore the store and enjoy unbeatable deals.

LuLu Hypermarket continues to expand its presence in Kuwait with the following upcoming projects to bring quality shopping closer to communities.

- Lot Store – Walkmall, Salmiya
- Lulu Hypermarket – Jaber Mall, Jaber Al Ahmed
- Lulu Fresh Market – Sabah Al Salem
- Lulu Express – Hessah Al Mubarak
- Lulu Hypermarket – Al Mutlaa City

With this new store, Lulu Daily Fresh reaffirms its commitment to offering freshness, variety, and convenience while continuing to strengthen its position as one of Kuwait's leading retail brands.



Traffic violations continue despite strict new laws

In its latest weekly report on traffic statistics the General Traffic Department (GTD) noted that a total of 1,189 traffic accidents were reported between 23–29 August, with 158 resulting in injuries or fatalities and 1,031 causing only material damage.

During the same period, the security authorities issued 31,718 traffic citations across the country, arrested 65 juveniles driving without licenses, impounded nine vehicles, and placed 35 violators in precautionary detention for serious offenses.

The Capital Governorate Traffic Department recorded the highest number of traffic violations at 6,400, followed by Farwaniya with 6,130 violations, Ahmadi (4,942), and Jahra (4,875). Other departments recording violations included Highway (3,973), Hawalli 2,323, Mubarak Al-Kabeer (1,820), Special Tasks 968, Security Control (251), and Operations (36).

The ongoing traffic campaigns also resulted in the seizure of 3 stolen vehicles and 86 vehicles wanted by the judiciary. Authorities arrested 49 individuals with active warrants, 2 absconding expatriates, and 171 expatriates for expired residency permits. Additionally, 4 people were referred to the General Department for Drug Control, three of whom were found carrying narcotics.

A security source highlighted mobile phone use as a major factor in distracted driving. Officers are also monitoring seat belt violations through AI-powered cameras to enhance road safety. Drivers were urged to wear seat belts, avoid speeding, maintain safe distances, and ensure children sit in the back seats to prevent accidents.

Kuwaiti Youth and Social Transformations in the Digital Environment



By Sheikha Suhaila Al-Sabah
Managing Editor

In an era where the pace of change is accelerating and the influence of global cultures is multiplying due to digital media and social media, Kuwaiti cultural identity has become a strategic necessity for youth. Young people represent the nation's present and future, and their cultural identity is the compass that guides them in a world of constant transformation.

It gives them confidence and belonging and establishes a deep understanding of their roots. As Kuwaiti youth are exposed to successive waves of diverse cultures through digital platforms, the protective role of cultural identity emerges as a solid wall that protects them from assimilation into other cultures and allows them the opportunity to interact positively with global developments without relinquishing their cultural identity. Identity is not merely inherited customs or traditions; rather, it is an integrated system of values, principles, and knowledge that shapes an individual's personality, enhances their sense of belonging to society and nation, and empowers them to face challenges with confidence and pride.

Kuwait's wise political leadership plays a pivotal role in empowering youth by providing a national environment that promotes the values of belonging and good citizenship, drawing inspiration from national models that have enriched Kuwaiti culture. This vision is embodied in initiatives that focus on opening direct channels of communication between youth and decision-makers, listening to their aspirations, and encouraging their initiatives, in addition to strengthening national identity and instilling responsible citizenship. These efforts have contributed to the formulation of strategic priorities that include strengthening the rule of law, the role of civil society institutions, and the development of volunteer initiatives, in addition to supporting education, health,



“ Kuwait's wise political leadership plays a pivotal role in empowering youth by providing a national environment that promotes the values of belonging and good citizenship, drawing inspiration from national models that have enriched Kuwaiti culture. ”

housing, small businesses, and economic development.

This reflects a comprehensive vision for achieving a balanced and sustainable society. The family plays a fundamental role in instilling fundamental values and principles in Kuwaiti youth. It is the foundation from which cultural and social awareness emerges. Parents are responsible for introducing their children to their cultural heritage and encouraging them to read and engage in intellectual and creative activities.

Educational institutions also play a complementary role by incorporating content into curricula that promotes pride in Kuwaiti history and instills a sense of national identity. Meanwhile, media outlets, both traditional and digital, play a pivotal role in spreading awareness and expanding youth's cultural horizons by providing meaningful, multi-dimensional content that connects traditional

values with the demands of the digital age. With rapid developmental transformations, the value economy is emerging as a strategic tool for achieving sustainable development based on societal values and ethics. This is evident in two main axes: the first relates to corporate and institutional social responsibility, and the second revolves around supporting value-based youth entrepreneurship.

Data indicates that corporate investments in social responsibility have reached huge sums in the millions, distributed across education, health, the environment, and support for vulnerable groups, reflecting a sustainable societal commitment. National legislation and policies also encourage the integration of these responsibilities into corporate strategies to ensure transparency and good governance. The youth landscape is witnessing increasing support for entrepreneurship, with a focus on projects that reflect the values of Kuwaiti

society and are linked to innovation and creativity. Studies have shown that the majority of young people view the national environment as supportive of entrepreneurial projects, enhancing their ability to transform ideas into viable projects and making the value economy a tool for embodying the spirit of initiative and creativity.

Academic institutions play a prominent role in stimulating innovation through competitions and practical initiatives that allow young people to test their ideas within a framework of societal values and principles. This contributes to developing their leadership and entrepreneurial skills and preparing them to face future challenges with awareness and creativity. Entrepreneurship and the value economy are based on authentic Islamic values, such as generosity, altruism, and justice, which are reflected in corporate social responsibility initiatives and youth entrepreneurial projects.

These values not only enhance social cohesion but also create new economic and social opportunities, support environmentally and economically sustainable development, and position Kuwait as a regional and international leader in the field of the value economy.

Civil society plays a pivotal role in promoting cultural identity by organizing cultural events and activities that enable youth to engage with their heritage. Public and national libraries also play a key role as important knowledge sources, while publishing houses provide content that enriches thought and enhances cultural and historical awareness. Young people also have a responsibility to preserve their Kuwaiti identity and develop their skills. Investing in developing their cultural and intellectual capabilities ensures a promising future for society.

Young people who are aware of their identity and culture are capable of building a cohesive society that confidently faces the challenges of the digital age and draws creativity from their cultural authenticity to offer innovative and sustainable solutions.

Amidst digital and social transformations, Kuwaiti youth today stand at a crossroads, armed with a solid cultural identity and supported by a clear national vision that seeks to empower them to build a future that combines authenticity and modernity, balancing identity preservation with openness to the world. This reflects a comprehensive vision for a sustainable developmental future and a cohesive society.



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Ethiopia stands out as one of the most attractive destinations for Kuwaiti investors in Africa

- *Ethiopia has the potential to become a strategic partner in supporting Kuwait's food security agenda.*
- *Ethiopia to host climate summit from Sept 8 to 10 2025*
- *Addis Ababa positioned as the epicentre of Africa's climate diplomacy*
- *Ethiopia follows a unique calendar system with 13 months, twelve of 30 days and a short month of five or six days making it about seven to eight years behind the Gregorian calendar.*

By Reaven D'Souza
Executive Managing Editor

In a recent exclusive interview with The Times Kuwait, Ambassador of Ethiopia H.E. Dr. Saeed Mohammed Jibril spoke in depth about Ethiopia's centrality to unity and multilateralism on the African continent, and its growing influence and leadership in promoting African issues on international and regional fora.

He spoke about Africa increasingly becoming a hub for investment and innovation, and Kuwait's engagement not only as a gesture of solidarity but also a strategic move to diversify its partnerships and secure long-term interests in areas like agriculture, renewable energy, and logistics.

He also elaborated on Ethiopia's upcoming hosting of the Second African Climate Summit, and its credentials as a pioneer in large-scale greening projects, such as the Green Legacy Initiative, which aims to plant 50 billion seedlings over the coming years to build a climate resilient future for the country.



Ethiopia's expected outcomes from ACS2 are closely aligned with its national climate strategy, which is anchored in the 10-Year Development Plan and the long-term vision of achieving a climate-resilient green economy with net-zero emissions by 2050. Central to this strategy are large-scale reforestation efforts through the Green Legacy Initiative, the expansion of clean and renewable energy projects, and the promotion of sustainable urbanization and food systems transformation.

How do you view Kuwait's role in developing the African continent? What are your most important investment opportunities and your message to Kuwaiti investors? Can we say that Ethiopia can contribute to Kuwait's food security?

Kuwait plays a growing and strategic role in supporting Africa's development, both through bilateral engagement and via institutions such as the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). For decades, Kuwait has been an active development partner across the continent, financing critical infrastructure projects in energy, agriculture, transport, and water. This long-standing commitment is driven by a recognition of Africa's vast economic potential, its young population, and its

importance as a partner in global food and energy frameworks. As Africa increasingly becomes a hub for investment and innovation, Kuwait's engagement is not only a gesture of solidarity but also a strategic move to diversify its partnerships and secure long-term interests in areas like agriculture, renewable energy, and logistics.

Ethiopia stands out as one of the most attractive destinations for Kuwaiti investors in Africa. With its population of over 120 million, rapid urbanization, and ongoing economic reforms, Ethiopia offers significant opportunities across multiple sectors. The most prominent areas for investment include agriculture

and agro-processing, renewable energy, manufacturing, real estate, and logistics. Ethiopia's fertile land, abundant water resources, and favorable climate make it particularly suitable for large-scale agricultural ventures. Moreover, Ethiopia's participation in regional integration projects, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), provides investors access to a much larger market beyond its borders. With government initiatives focused on improving infrastructure and easing investment procedures, Kuwait's private sector has a unique opportunity to tap into Ethiopia's fast-growing economy.

Ethiopia has the potential to become a strategic partner in supporting Kuwait's food security agenda. Given Kuwait's limited agricultural capacity and its reliance on imports, ensuring a stable and sustainable food supply remains a pressing challenge. Ethiopia, by contrast, is endowed with vast fertile land, favorable agro-ecological conditions, and an experienced agricultural workforce. Kuwaiti investment in Ethiopia's agricultural sector covering crops, livestock, and horticulture could create dependable supply chains that directly serve Kuwait's domestic market. This partnership would not only safeguard Kuwait against global market fluctuations but also drive Ethiopia's economic growth through enhanced infrastructure, technology sharing, and employment opportunities.

My message to Kuwaiti investors is clear: Ethiopia is a country of opportunity, resilience, and long-term growth potential. With its strategic location connecting

Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, Ethiopia is not just an investment destination but also a gateway to wider markets. Kuwait's capital, expertise, and development partnerships, when matched with Ethiopia's resources and ambition, can create mutually beneficial outcomes that contribute both to Africa's transformation and Kuwait's food and economic security. Now is the right time for Kuwaiti investors to deepen their presence in Ethiopia and to be part of the continent's remarkable growth story.

How would you assess Ethiopia's role and representation at the Second African Climate Summit?

As the host country, Ethiopia plays a central and highly prominent role in the Second African Climate Summit (ACS2), which is being convened by the African Union Commission (AUC) in our capital Addis Ababa from 8-10 September. The hosting of ACS2, positions Ethiopia not only as a venue provider but as a key leader and symbol in

Africa's climate action journey.

Ethiopia plays a central role by providing the diplomatic and political platform of Addis Ababa, which serves as the diplomatic hub of Africa and a symbol of continental unity and multilateralism. It highlights its own climate achievements, notably the Green Legacy Initiative, as a model of indigenous African solutions that promote climate resilience, food security, and sustainable development through large-scale tree planting.

Ethiopia also showcases practical technology and innovative approaches to climate change mitigation, aligning with the summit's themes of green growth, adaptation, and climate finance reform. In close collaboration with the African Union, it contributes to shaping the agenda and program of the summit, including official national statements, high-level panels, and innovation showcases.

Moreover, Ethiopia will leverage the event to drive a new climate narrative for Africa—one that emphasizes practical, African-led solutions rather than framing the continent solely as a victim of climate change. To ensure inclusivity and broad ownership, it also engages media, civil society, youth, and marginalized groups in the preparatory phases of the summit. Additionally, Ethiopia's hosting of the concurrent UNFCCC second Climate Week right before ACS2 enhances its influence in setting the tone for the continent's climate discourse and global positioning heading into COP30.

Overall, Ethiopia's role and representation at ACS2 are not merely logistical but strategic and symbolic as a champion of Africa-led, home-grown climate solutions, a convening power for pan-African climate action, and a leading voice in the push for climate justice and financing reforms on the global stage

What are the key outcomes expected at the summit that align with Ethiopia's national climate agenda?

Ethiopia's expected outcomes from ACS2 are closely aligned with its national climate strategy, which is anchored in the 10-Year Development Plan and the long-term vision of achieving a climate-resilient green economy with net-zero emissions by 2050. Central to this strategy are large-scale reforestation efforts through the Green Legacy Initiative, the expansion of clean and renewable energy projects, and the promotion of sustainable urbanization and food systems transformation.

By hosting ACS2 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia seeks to move the continental conversation from ambition to concrete action, positioning the summit as a platform for advancing practical solutions, strengthening partnerships, and mobilizing climate finance. This approach not only reinforces Ethiopia's own accelerated green transition and resilience agenda but also underscores its commitment to shaping Africa's collective response to the global climate crisis.

How is Ethiopia positioning itself as a leader in climate diplomacy on the continent?

By co-hosting the ACS2 with the African Union, Ethiopia is positioning Addis Ababa as the epicentre of Africa's climate diplomacy. The country's leadership is marked by a combination of political commitment,



regional collaboration, ambitious climate targets, and active engagement in global forums. Ethiopia plays a central role in shaping unified African positions through the African Union and the Conference of African Heads of State on Climate Change (CAHOSCC). Its ambition is reflected in its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), pledging to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 64 percent by 2030 compared to business-as-usual and to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 under its Long-Term Low Emission and Climate Resilient Development Strategy.

Domestically, initiatives such as the Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) strategy and the Green Legacy reforestation program illustrate its commitment to sustainable growth, while major renewable energy projects, including the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), showcase its focus on energy security and green development.

In the context of ACS2, Ethiopia is amplifying its diplomatic role by highlighting African climate leadership, advancing renewable energy solutions, and pushing for climate finance reforms aligned with Africa's development realities. The summit serves as a platform to engage diverse stakeholders—including youth, indigenous communities, and civil society—in shaping inclusive climate policies.

By doing so, Ethiopia seeks to unify Africa's voice ahead of global negotiations such as COP30 and shift the continent's focus from ambition to investment and implementation of African-led solutions. This leadership underscores Ethiopia's broader vision of aligning regional climate action with its national agenda of green growth and resilience while advocating globally for equity and justice in climate finance and governance.

How does the African Climate Summit contribute to amplifying Africa's unified voice ahead of COP summits?

ACS2 plays a pivotal role in amplifying Africa's unified voice ahead of COP summits by providing a platform for leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders to consolidate and articulate a collective continental position. The summit seeks to

unify Africa's voice to influence global climate negotiations at COP30 and beyond by framing shared priorities on finance, adaptation, mitigation, and green development, with an emphasis on Africa-led solutions. It pushes for reforms in global climate finance systems to better reflect Africa's realities, particularly in areas such as renewable energy access, adaptation, and resilience, thereby positioning Africa as a strong negotiating bloc with clear demands.

ACS2 also strengthens Africa's leadership by advancing coordinated messaging rooted in justice, equity, and fairness, in line with the African Union's 2025 theme of climate justice and reparations. By fostering collaboration among member states, regional bodies, youth, indigenous communities, and civil society, the summit consolidates African unity and ensures the continent speaks with one voice in international forums. Furthermore, it catalyzes partnerships and South-South cooperation, enhancing Africa's global engagement with resilience and innovation at the forefront.

Crucially, by taking place shortly before COP30, ACS2 equips African negotiators with coherent, consensus-driven positions, replacing fragmented voices with one powerful bloc that carries greater diplomatic weight. Beyond rhetoric, the summit also focuses on actionable solutions and mobilizes the political and financial support necessary for African nations to effectively implement their Nationally Determined Contributions.

sustainability. Implementation is supported by climate finance mechanisms, institutional coordination through the CRGE Facility, and the integration of resilience measures into national development plans, ensuring both technical and financial backing.

Overall, this holistic strategy transforms climate risks into opportunities for sustainable development, leveraging natural resources for clean energy, strengthening adaptation capacities, and embedding resilience across economic planning to safeguard long-term growth in a rapidly changing climate.

The Green Legacy Initiative has drawn global attention—could you share some recent milestones or achievements? Major recent milestones?

The Green Legacy Initiative has become a landmark project, earning significant international recognition for Ethiopia's commitment to environmental sustainability and climate resilience. Since its inception in 2019, the initiative has achieved remarkable milestones that underscore Ethiopia's leadership in large-scale reforestation and climate action.

Ethiopia has long faced severe environmental challenges, including widespread land degradation, deforestation, and recurring droughts. These challenges have severely threatened the livelihoods of a large portion of the population, which is heavily reliant on agriculture. Climate change impacts, including increased frequency of extreme weather events, have further exacerbated these vulnerabilities, causing loss of life and property.

In response, the Ethiopian government launched the Green Legacy Initiative (GLI), a nationwide effort personally championed by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali. The initiative aims to mobilize the entire nation in a massive tree-planting campaign to combat desertification, improve water security, and enhance climate resilience. Through this effort, Ethiopia seeks to position itself as a global leader in sustainable development.

A key milestone was achieved on 31 July, during a high-profile, one-day national tree-planting campaign. In just 12 hours, 714 million seedlings were planted. Approximately 27 million citizens participated, including government officials, community groups, diplomats, and refugees. The broader campaign aims to plant around 8 billion seedlings during the rainy season, supported by over 8.4 billion seedlings prepared nationwide.

This massive mobilization has created over 767,000 green jobs, with a focus on women and youth, and led to the establishment of more than 120,000 nurseries across Ethiopia. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has emphasized the initiative's moral significance, framing it as a responsibility to both present and future generations. If Ethiopia continues to meet its annual planting targets, it could reach 48 billion trees, coming close to its ambitious 50 billion-tree goal, positioning the country as a global leader in reforestation.

Beyond environmental restoration, the Green Legacy Initiative has contributed to socio-economic development by promoting green jobs, sustainable agriculture, and climate resilience. Forest cover in Ethiopia has increased from 17.2 percent in 2019 to approximately 23.6 percent in 2023, reflecting substantial progress toward reversing land degradation. The initiative has also fostered regional cooperation, with Ethiopia donating saplings to neighboring countries such as Djibouti and South Sudan under its 'Green Brotherhood' vision.

How has the initiative impacted local communities in terms of employment, water conservation, and food security?

Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative has brought notable benefits to local communities by creating jobs, conserving water, and enhancing food security. The initiative has generated extensive employment opportunities, particularly for youth and women, with millions engaged in nursery management, seedling production, distribution, and tree planting.

Tens of thousands of young people have secured livelihoods by nurturing seedlings, preparing planting sites, and ensuring their distribution. At the same time, reforestation efforts have improved water conservation by restoring degraded lands, enhancing soil moisture retention, reducing erosion, and supporting the recharge of groundwater and protection of watershed areas critical for agriculture and community water supplies.

In addition, the introduction of fruit-bearing trees such as mangoes, avocados, papayas, and coffee has diversified agricultural production, strengthened food availability, and boosted soil fertility through agroforestry practices. These efforts not only support food self-sufficiency but also generate household income and export revenues, making the initiative a cornerstone of sustainable rural development.

What are some of the challenges faced during implementation, and how is the government addressing them?

The Ethiopian Green Legacy Initiative faces several implementation challenges, which the government is actively addressing through various measures. These include ensuring the availability of quality seedlings in sufficient numbers remains a major obstacle, as poor-quality seedlings and the selection of unsuitable tree species often reduce survival rates. Environmental and technical constraints such as shallow soils, water scarcity, and untimely planting further compromise success, particularly in degraded and drought-prone areas.

Weak institutional coordination and the absence of clear legal frameworks for land tenure and forest management also create delays and inefficiencies in execution. In addition, limited and unstable funding poses a significant challenge, as long-term financing and adequate resource allocation are critical to ensure proper post-planting care and sustainable management of the initiative.

To mitigate and overcome these challenges the government has undertaken several critical measures, including institutionalizing the initiative and turning it into a nationwide movement rooted in the collective mindset. Environmental stewardship is now framed as a shared moral responsibility across all sectors of society, fostering stronger commitment and participation. Central to this effort is enhanced inter-sectoral collaboration, where government institutions, communities, the private sector, and civil society work together to improve implementation and maximize impact.

At the same time, tree planting is being integrated with soil and water conservation programs to boost seedling survival and promote sustainable land and watershed management. Capacity building and community empowerment are also prioritized, with local institutions, youth, women's groups, and associations actively engaged in managing and maintaining plantations beyond planting seasons, ensuring long-term sustainability.

Complementing these efforts, the government is strengthening the legal and policy framework through clearer guidelines, benefit-sharing mechanisms, and land tenure security, thereby improving governance while creating incentives for sustainable forest management.

Overall, Ethiopia's approach resolves to tackle these challenges by fostering a culture of environmental responsibility, coordinating multi-sectoral efforts, inclusivity in participation, and reinforcing institutional and financial frameworks to ensure the Green Legacy Initiative's long-term success and resilience.

Has the international community contributed technically or financially to the Green Legacy Initiative?

The international community has indeed contributed both technically and financially to the Ethiopian Green Legacy Initiative (GLI). Norway has provided long-standing support for Ethiopia's forest conservation since 2011, including collaboration on community afforestation and forest preservation



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projects. The bilateral agreement between Norway and Ethiopia on environmental protection complements the GLI's progress, reflecting significant international technical cooperation.

Additionally, financial aid and cooperation have been fostered through various mechanisms, including efforts to mobilize international resources alongside Ethiopia's own budget contributions. For example, a special fund for the initiative has been established in Ethiopia to attract international financing and ensure sustainability, which allows more investment from development partners, civil society, and private sectors.

The initiative also benefits from co-financing from international organizations such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which supports scaling up best practices of the Green Legacy Initiative with multi-million-dollar grants. The European Union Delegation to Ethiopia has also participated in GLI tree planting activities, reflecting EU participation in technical support.

Furthermore, countries like Nigeria have contributed seedlings and seeds, symbolizing regional cooperation in support of the initiative. These efforts underline strong international cooperation supporting Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative both technically and financially. Overall, the GLI enjoys a blend of international technical assistance, financial support, and partnership engagements that enhance its impact on climate resilience and sustainable development in Ethiopia.

As Ethiopia prepares to welcome the year 2018 in the Ethiopian Calendar (EC), what key message would you like to share with Ethiopians abroad?

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Turkish Embassy hosts reception to mark Victory Day

The Times Kuwait Report

The Embassy of Turkey hosted a reception at the Marina Hotel on 31 August to mark the country's Victory Day on 30 August. Attending the event was Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishaal Al-Sabah, alongside the guest of honor, Brigadier General Barak Abdul Mohsen Al-Farhan, Commander of the 94th Mechanized Brigade of the Kuwaiti Army.

The reception was also attended by high-

ranking Kuwaiti officials, members of the diplomatic corps, military attachés, cultural envoys, and representatives from companies and NGOs. In her welcoming remarks, Ambassador of Turkey H.E. Tuba Nur Sonmez highlighted Ankara's significant advancements and outstanding capabilities in defense and military sectors, emphasizing the strategic importance of the Turkish Armed Forces as a force for regional stability and peace.

The ambassador further emphasized the strengthening of bilateral military cooperation

between Turkey and Kuwait, referencing the agreement signed on a Government-to-Government (G2G) level during the official visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Turkey in May last year.

Following her speech, a video presentation showcased Turkey's latest defense products and scenes from military exercises of the Turkish Armed Forces. Ambassador Sonmez then read a message from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on the occasion of Victory Day.

In his speech delivered on the occasion, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah offered congratulations and best wishes to Turkey, expressing pride in the dedication and sacrifices of the Turkish Armed Forces in safeguarding sovereignty and contributing to peace and stability.

He reaffirmed Kuwait's appreciation for the friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries, particularly in the defense sector, and expressed readiness to further strengthen these ties in the future.



Kuwait maintains AA- rating, as external balance remains firm

Global credit rating agency, Fitch Ratings, in its latest assessment of Kuwait's credit-worthiness maintained the country's sovereign credit rating at 'AA-' with a stable outlook. Announcing this positive credit outlook, the Central Bank of Kuwait said in a press release last week that the rating reflects Kuwait's exceptionally strong domestic financial position and solid external balance.

However, in its outlook report on Kuwait, Fitch noted that the country remains constrained by structural challenges, including heavy dependence on the oil sector and the large size of the public sector, which could pose long-term financial pressures.

The agency warned that while the passage of a law permitting the issuance of public debt has improved the flexibility of public finance frameworks, future expectations remain dependent on implementing tangible reforms to reduce reliance on oil revenues.

On external balances, Kuwait continues to rank as the strongest among all countries assessed by the agency. Net sovereign foreign assets are projected to rise to about 608 percent of GDP in 2025, up from 576 percent in 2024.

Regarding fiscal reforms, the agency highlighted the government's ongoing efforts, particularly the prioritization of spending rationalization. It also emphasized the approval of the Public Debt Liquidity Law, which enables the issuance of debt instruments for the first time since the expiration of the previous Public Debt Law in 2017.

The new law provides for liquidity of KD30 billion (around \$100 billion) over fifty years. This measure is expected to ease pressure on the General Reserve Fund, strengthen local capital markets, establish a benchmark yield

curve, and support development projects.

The agency said it expects Kuwait's budget position to weaken in fiscal year 2025/26 due to higher public spending, largely driven by capital projects, alongside a decline in oil revenues from lower global prices. However, the recent OPEC decision to lift production restrictions in Q2 2025 is expected to partially offset revenue losses.

The agency also projects that the government will resume borrowing during 2025/26, with about 70 percent of the deficit financed through debt issuance and the remainder covered by General Reserve Fund assets. On public debt, the resumption of borrowing, combined with wider deficits and lower oil prices, is expected to push the debt-to-GDP ratio from 2.9 percent in 2024/25 to around 12 percent by 2027. Despite this increase, Kuwait's debt levels are projected to remain far below the 52.4 percent average for countries with a similar rating.

Regarding GDP and inflation, the agency expects real GDP growth to rebound to 1.7 percent in 2025 after two consecutive years of contraction caused by OPEC oil production cuts. Annual inflation is projected to remain below 3 percent during 2025-2027.

The agency noted that the impact of the Middle East conflict and shipping disruptions in the Red Sea on Kuwait remains limited. However, reliance on oil continues to weigh on the sovereign rating, and budget outcomes remain highly sensitive to fluctuations in oil prices and production levels.

On governance, the agency stated that Kuwait has achieved an adequate score on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria, receiving a rating of '5' for political stability, rights, rule of law, institutional and regulatory quality, and anti-corruption.

MoInfo, Google to collaborate in training on tourism governance

In a bid to further develop the country's tourism sector and boost the efficiency of national personnel working in the sector, the Ministry of Information (MoInfo), in collaboration with the Ministry of Communication and Technology Affairs, and multinational technology firm Google, launched the first ever specialized training program on tourism governance strategies and policies.

Spearheaded by Minister of Information, Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, the program will leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to highlight the tourism industry, and to develop mechanisms for building national tourism strategies that enable Kuwait to adopt modern policies based on sustainable tourism growth.

The program is part of a series of training



programs the ministry plans to launch shortly, involving all workers in both public and private tourism institutions, with the focus on advancing the efficiency of human resources in this field and developing their skills in digital marketing, strengthening sustainable practices, and improving customer experience.

Ethiopia stands out as one of the most attractive destinations for Kuwaiti investors in Africa

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

The New Year is a time of joy, gatherings, and new beginnings, reflecting Ethiopia's rich cultural heritage and resilience. The key message to share with Ethiopians abroad is one of unity, hope, and collective commitment to the country's development and prosperity.

The Ethiopian New Year symbolizes renewal and fresh beginnings. It is a time for Ethiopians everywhere to reconnect with their rich cultural heritage and contribute positively to the growth and peace of their homeland, whether through community support, preserving traditions, or being ambassadors of Ethiopia's progress globally. This period also invites Ethiopians abroad to reflect on Ethiopia's resilience and the opportunities ahead, encouraging them to play an active role in fostering national development, peace, and unity, while celebrating their unique identity within the global community.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all Ethiopians on the occasion of the New Year 2018. This special day marks not only the start of a new calendar year but also a time of renewal, optimism, and unity for the Ethiopian people. As the nation steps into 2018, I wish for peace, prosperity, and continued progress for Ethiopia and its people. May the New Year bring joy to every household and strength to pursue new opportunities and aspirations Happy New Year 2018.

How do you personally celebrate Enkutatash, and what makes this year's celebration unique?

The Ethiopian New Year, Enkutatash, is widely celebrated with unique cultural traditions such as family gatherings, sharing meals, exchanging flowers (especially yellow daisies), and singing traditional songs.

As Ethiopia enters 2018 EC this year's Enkutatash is special because it comes during a period of renewed hope and national resilience. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is scheduled to be officially inaugurated in September 2025, specifically around September 9th, just days before the Enkutatash.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced the inauguration date and has invited leaders from African continent including the Nile riparian countries to attend the ceremony, emphasizing the dam as a symbol of regional cooperation and mutual benefit. The GERD, which began construction in 2011 and completed around 98.66 percent by mid-2025 with six turbines operational, is the largest hydroelectric power plant in Africa, with a planned capacity of over 5,000 MW.

It was funded entirely by domestic resources, symbolizing Ethiopian self-reliance and national pride. The dam is expected to address Ethiopia's energy shortages and contribute significantly to economic development. The inauguration marks a historic milestone showcasing Ethiopia's engineering, determination, and unity, promising to greatly boost the country's power generation capabilities. Enkutatash 2018 embodies a spirit of joy, cultural pride, and hope for a prosperous year ahead, both within Ethiopia and among the Ethiopian diaspora.

Bring back being a decent person

Contrary to popular belief, you do owe it to people



By Samira Jafar
Special to The Times Kuwait

I think we can all agree that the world seems very crazy right now. More aptly, it was always crazy, but everything from political events and humanitarian crises to the prevalence of social media has brought people's malice to the forefront of many interactions. Now, we do not necessarily assume everyone is a 'good person', or at least I cannot. This is because their actions do not reflect that, and the only way I can know a person is through what they do and speak.

I get it: life is tough. It is easy to get consumed by the day-to-day, especially when we are overworked and stressed and feel an intrinsic desire to 'put ourselves first'. But people have been using this as an excuse to be a 'not-so-nice' person. Were we always this way? Or does the anonymity of social media and prevalence of consumerism and numbness of world events overshadow our empathy? That is an interesting topic to explore, but for now I will cover the three ways in which we should bring back being a decent person.

Care about the world around you: People's rights are being taken away as we speak. A genocide has been perpetuated against Palestinians in Gaza for the past two years. There is a humanitarian crisis in the Congo. Due to the civil war in Sudan, its population has been starved since April 2023. The cause of all of these issues—colonialism, racism, Islamophobia—would not exist without the foundation of these ideologies, which is that some people are 'less than' and that empathy is selective.

I can give you all an example of this. A food creator from New York City made a video where she went to an Israeli restaurant to try 'Israeli' food. Obviously, her followers were upset, but instead of listening to their reasoning, this creator chastised them by labeling herself as 'obviously pro-Palestinian'. Then, she begrudgingly went to a Palestinian restaurant,



a damn-here-you-go attempt to appease those who were upset with her. "My channel is not political, you guys," she said. The Palestinian cafe owner told her his life story and fed her for free.

This is a clear example of selective empathy for a few reasons. Experiencing internet criticism is not nearly as bad as experiencing genocide, and yet she wanted the world to see her, to consider her, to know that she is obviously a Good Person.

But how can we know whether or not you are? The only way we can judge anyone is by their outward actions and words, and so when you are silent about genocide and supportive of an oppressor, we can only deduce what kind of a person you are from that. Furthermore, the expectation that people feel sorry for you when you have done nothing to show that you care about them is a wild one to have.

There is no such thing as a situation that does not affect you, especially when you profit from rage-bait views on videos you made to provoke people. But approaching the situation with this kind of mindset shows you have the capacity to care, you just do not point it towards situations that require the exertion of empathy.

You alone will not save the world from its mistakes, but you can start by being the change you wish to see. By donating, by being kind to a stranger, by reaching out to someone you know who is going through a hard time. When we have a self-absorbed personal ideology, our capacity for sympathy is limited, even towards ourselves. We perpetuate a cycle of individualism in a society that thrives under collaboration and collectivism.

relationships that matter to me.

Stop hating people: Just because it happens online does not mean it is not hurtful. Just because you are talking behind someone's back does not make it okay. I do not understand why modern culture is so hateful of anyone who expresses themselves or puts themselves out there. These will be the same people who complain about monotony and criticize people for being 'basic'. It is not normal to hate someone you do not know or even to hate someone you do know whose actions are not really offensive for any meaningful reason.

I get hated on via my Instagram DMs, and it is not that it bothers me, but more so that some of the comments are witty and the energy and cleverness put towards me could be better used inwards. You could be a writer like I am if you cared about yourself more than you care about me. That can also be said for all the Substack 'critiques' that are just thinly veiled jealousy against successful authors. What do you mean that you cannot stand Ocean Vuong because he cried in an interview and you cannot believe (for some reason) that his Vietnamese mother would be in Oprah's book club?

I think critiques can be more valuable and substantial than simply saying "this person sucks." Do they really suck, or does something about them trigger you because you identify it as lacking within yourself? With Ocean Vuong, for example, you could hate him because you do not have the same courage to be vulnerable, either when speaking to people or putting your own writing out there. You can dislike his writing without hating him as a person. But hate has become so normalized and marketed in this day and age, which is a shame because most of what is being peddled to us is vain and empty. Rather, what is it that you wish to say about yourself that is being hidden in these attacks on others?

I do not know if the world will get more empathetic anytime soon or if we have fully succumbed to our human nature, searching for easy prey. Whatever it is, it could be the reason why people have stopped hanging around you. Just some food for thought.

Samira Jafar is a poet and writer who reflects on life, culture, and becoming yourself. She teaches English at Kuwait University and is the author of two books: "Young" (2024) and "Bloom" (2025). In addition, Samira has a Substack blog where she writes weekly about strength and identity. The main message behind her writing is to be powerful and authentic, using words to express your true self. Follow her on Instagram @samirawritesstuff

'Chasing the Wrong Things', debut book launch at Royale Hayat Hospital

In a ceremony held at the Al-Joury Hall of Royale Hayat Hospital, Chairman of Royale Hayat Hospital, P.K. Handa officially released the debut book of the hospital's Chief Financial Officer and Director of



Human Capital, Shibu Thomas Mathew.

Titled 'Chasing the Wrong Things: A Journey Back to What Really Matters', the book launch marked a significant milestone in Shibu Mathew's journey as a corporate leader and storyteller.

'Chasing the Wrong Things...' offers a soul-search guide for professionals and individuals navigating the pressures of modern life. Through emotive storytelling and spiritual insights, the book encourages readers to slow down, reconnect with their core values, and embrace a life of clarity and purpose.

"Chasing the Wrong Things' is not just a book, it is a mirror to our ambitions and a compass to what truly matters in life," said Mr. Handa during the launch. "We are proud to see one of the RHH family



members contribute such meaningful work to the world," he added.

Published by White Falcon Publishers, and now available globally, the book has garnered attention for its powerful

reflections on burnout, perfectionism, and the pursuit of external validation. It invites readers to let go of performance-driven living and rediscover the joy of simplicity, stillness, and spiritual alignment.

Food service industry grows by over 8 percent annually

A new study on Kuwait's food service sector by market data and strategic research firm Scotts International, reveals that Kuwait is rapidly strengthening its position as a leading food and hospitality hub in the region, fueled by world-class restaurants, elevated service standards, and consumers willing to spend on dining experiences.

Restaurant bloggers have played a decisive role in shaping Kuwait's vibrant culinary landscape. What began as a hobby has evolved into a professional digital media sector, where high-quality

reviews and social media exposure directly influence consumer choices, brand reputation, and restaurant revenues. Studies confirm that customers in Kuwait increasingly rely on bloggers' evaluations, compelling restaurants to raise standards to avoid reputational and financial setbacks.

The study finds that Kuwait's food service market, which generated nearly KD1 billion in 2024, is expected to grow to KD1.5 billion over the next five years, supported by an annual growth rate of 8.4 percent. For its part, leading market



research and consulting firm, Verified Markets Research, estimates that Kuwait's broader food and beverage industry,

including restaurants, cafés, and cloud kitchens, could expand to over KD11.5 billion by 2032, driven by 10 percent annual growth and rising tourism revenues.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) noted that the tourism sector in the country is on track to nearly double in just four years, growing from KD160 million in 2021 to around KD350 million by the end of 2025. These projections highlight the strategic importance of food, hospitality, and tourism sectors in Kuwait's broader economic diversification goals.



LuLu Onam Ivide Yanu 2025: A colorful celebration of tradition and togetherness

The vibrant spirit of Kerala came alive at Lulu Hypermarket, Al Rai Outlet, as the much-awaited LuLu Onam Ivide Yanu 2025 celebrations unfolded in grand style. The event was marked by full fun, entertainment, cultural performances, and festive shopping experiences, bringing together the Indian community and shoppers from across Kuwait.



The celebrations began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by Lulu Kuwait's top management, symbolizing prosperity, unity, and joy.

The shoppers were treated to a wide range of exclusive Onam offers, covering everything from Indian vegetables, groceries, and household essentials to home appliances, electronics, and a vibrant collection of ethnic wear for men, women, and kids. A special

highlight was the more than 10 varieties of payasam made available at attractive prices, alongside the grand 25-dish Onam Sadhya, the traditional Kerala feast that delighted visitors.

The festive spirit was further enriched through a series of competitions - Pookkalam Contest: More than 15 teams participated with stunning floral arrangements. The first-place winner received a KD 150 gift voucher, the second-place winner walked away with KD 125, and the third-place winner got KD 100, while all participants received consolation prizes. Payasamela Contest: Sweet creativity was rewarded with the winners receiving KD 100, KD 75, and KD 50 gift vouchers. Onam Group Song Competition: With over 15 teams taking part, the melodious performances lit up the atmosphere. Winners received KD 100, KD 75, and KD 50 gift vouchers respectively.

The celebrations featured Chendamelam, Pulikali, and Maveli's grand appearance, captivating the audience and spreading cheer as he roamed around the store, greeting visitors. Traditional art forms including Thiruvathira, Kai Kottu Kali, and Kerala classical dances brought authentic flavors of Kerala's cultural richness to Kuwait.

Adding grandeur to the occasion, Lulu's top management personally handed over prizes to the winners, while the event sponsors, Eastern (Spices) and RKG (Ghee), lent their support to make the festivities even more special. The LuLu Onam Ivideyanu 2025 celebration beautifully blended shopping, tradition, and community spirit, creating unforgettable memories for families and friends.

Once again, Lulu Hypermarket proved to be more than just a shopping destination – it became a cultural hub that brought Kerala's most cherished festival to life in Kuwait.



New Sabriya City to ease Kuwait's housing crisis

Chinese state-owned enterprise, Metallurgical Corporation of China Ltd. (MCC), which specializes in metallurgical construction, housing construction, infrastructure, and resource development presented last week a comprehensive vision for the establishment of the greenfield Sabriya City, as well as two additional cities to house workers at Sabriya and South Jahra.

The company made the presentation at a meeting of the Ministerial Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding between Kuwait and China. Sabriya City project is being closely followed by the leadership of both countries and is considered a cornerstone of Kuwait Vision 2035.

The plan calls for the construction of 52,000 housing units with full services and advanced infrastructure, including roads, water, electricity, and sewage, making it one of the largest housing initiatives in Kuwait's history.

The vision also includes a power plant with a production capacity of 3–5 gigawatts, at a cost of KD1.5 billion and a water treatment plant estimated at KD400 million to secure sustainable resources. In addition to this, the MCC has proposed two workers' cities at a combined cost of KD700 million, fully financed by the company.

MCC estimates the total investment for Sabriya City at over KD6.5 billion (US\$22 billion), under the Engineering, Procurement, Construction and Financing (EPCF) model, where the Chinese



company bears the full financial burden of the project, relieving the state of direct costs, while committing to project completion within six to seven years.

The Sabriya project would span an area of 80 square kilometers, expandable to 110 square kilometers, with designated commercial and investment zones, as well as a marina. The company plans to conduct engineering and feasibility studies, supported by an independent economic model designed to attract private investment.

Observers stress that the success of the project depends on swift decision-making by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare and other relevant bodies. Delays in final agreements, they warn, could jeopardize a rare opportunity to benefit from a comprehensive investment offer that could significantly ease Kuwait's housing crisis.

Hundreds of forged academic certificates uncovered

Ministry of Education remains committed to safeguarding the credibility of academic qualifications in order to protect the education system from irregular practices while promoting transparency, integrity, and fairness. In this regard, the Private Education Sector at the ministry has referred several suspicious academic certificates to the Public Prosecution after verifying their authenticity in line with regulations.

A new educational report from the Equivalency Administration at the Education Ministry revealed that between 2000 and 2025, a total of 889 invalid academic certificates from certain Arab countries were uncovered. This equates to an average of 36 invalid certificates detected annually, most at the intermediate and secondary levels, which are immediately referred to the relevant authorities once confirmed invalid.

Media reports indicate that a recent case of academic forgery involved a citizen who submitted a forged certificate, allegedly covering three secondary grades. After verification with a Gulf state, which purportedly issued the certificates, the documents were found to be false, and legal action was taken. Other individuals were also referred on similar charges after official correspondence confirmed their certificates were invalid.



Procedures in such cases involve referral to the Public Prosecution, followed by coordination with the Ministry of Higher Education and the Civil Service Bureau for administrative and legal action, especially if the violator works in a government post.

On a related note, Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, has formed a committee to investigate and verify high school certificates issued by Arab countries. The panel will ensure authenticity, refer invalid certificates to judicial authorities, and recommend disciplinary action where violations are proven. It has broad powers to request documents, coordinate with relevant bodies, and seek expert assistance to strengthen oversight and preserve the credibility of academic certification.

Tajikistan's Independence, a Story of Resilient Growth, Strategic Transformation



By H.E. Zubaydzoda Zubaydullo

Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan,
Dean of the Diplomatic Corps

The 34th anniversary of Tajikistan's independence on 9 September, offers a compelling narrative of transformation from post-Soviet fragility to a nation of increasing strategic importance in Central Asia. This analysis celebrates the remarkable journey of political consolidation, economic modernization, and institution-building that has defined Tajikistan's evolution since 1991. Beyond mere statistical achievements, Tajikistan's story represents a testament to national resilience and strategic vision in a complex geopolitical landscape. The country has not only recovered from civil conflict but has established itself as an emerging actor with growing regional influence through energy diplomacy and economic partnerships. This examination highlights the achievements while maintaining analytical balance regarding the challenges that remain on Tajikistan's path to sustainable development.

Macroeconomic Performance: Tajikistan's economic trajectory since independence represents one of the most impressive turnaround stories in the post-Soviet space. The economy has demonstrated exceptional growth dynamics, with GDP expansion reaching 8.4 percent in 2024 and maintaining a robust 8.1 percent in the second quarter of 2025. This performance exceeds many regional counterparts and reflects the effectiveness of economic policies implemented over the past decade. The International Monetary Fund projects continued strong growth of 7 percent in 2025, with sustainable growth rates of 6 percent and 5 percent expected in 2026 and 2027 respectively.

Energy Leadership: Tajikistan's energy sector transformation represents one of its most notable success stories, leveraging natural advantages to create strategic opportunities. The country has successfully capitalized on its immense hydropower potential, which represents approximately 3,000 billion kWh of annual capacity, positioning Tajikistan as the eighth-largest holder of hydropower potential globally. This strategic focus has

transformed energy from a domestic challenge into a tool of regional diplomacy and economic advancement.

The flagship Rogun Hydroelectric Power Plant, currently under construction, symbolizes Tajikistan's ambitious vision. With six turbines planned for a total capacity of 3,600 MW and anticipated annual generation of 17 TWh, Rogun represents one of Eurasia's largest hydro projects. Already operational since 2018-2019, Rogun generated 1.22 billion kWh in 2024, representing 5.5 percent of Tajikistan's electricity output, with full commissioning expected by 2029. The Nurek Dam continues to be a fundamental pillar of energy security, supplying approximately 70 percent of the nation's electricity.

Complementing its hydropower leadership, Tajikistan is making significant strides in solar energy diversification. The country is set to significantly expand its solar infrastructure in 2025, with plans to develop solar electric power stations (SEPS) in all districts and cities. The 200 MW Sughd solar plant, slated to



begin construction in 2025, exemplifies this commitment to large-scale solar development. Tajikistan is also boosting its domestic solar panel production with international investment, aiming to have the first phase of a new manufacturing plant operational in 2025.

Tajikistan's energy strategy has evolved from domestic focus to regional leadership. Agreements with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan aim to export approximately 70 percent of generated power at competitive rates (~US 3.4¢ per kWh), reflecting growing regional energy cooperation. The execution of CASA-1000, a \$1.16 billion infrastructure initiative, will enable the export of surplus electricity from Tajikistan (and Kyrgyzstan) to Afghanistan and Pakistan, positioning Tajikistan as a key energy player in South-Central Asia.

Trade and Economic Partnerships: Tajikistan's integration into global markets has

accelerated dramatically, with foreign trade reaching \$3.91 billion in just the first five months of 2025. While trade patterns show the common developing economy characteristic of importing value-added goods and exporting raw materials, the diversification of partnerships and growing trade volumes reflect increasing economic engagement with the global economy.

Tajikistan has cultivated balanced economic relationships across multiple regions. China stands as Tajikistan's largest trading partner with a bilateral trade volume of \$964.1 million in the first five months of 2025. Russia follows as the second-largest partner (\$899.5 million), with Kazakhstan (\$481.4 million) and Uzbekistan (\$274.3 million) representing important regional markets. Notably, Tajikistan maintains positive trade balances with several countries including the Netherlands (\$228.7 million surplus) and Turkey (\$186.7 million total trade). The composition of Tajikistan's exports reflects both traditional strengths and emerging capabilities. Unrefined gold and unprocessed

poverty, reducing import concentration from 83 percent to 58 percent, elevating industrial output and service complexity, and expanding the middle class to 50 percent by 2030.

Tajikistan's development strategy has attracted substantial international support and collaboration. The European Union, German Federal Foreign Ministry (via KfW and the PATRI Foundation), World Bank, Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), and Pamir Energy have supported critical infrastructure projects. As Tajikistan's Minister of Energy and Water Resources, Daler Juma, states: "This project demonstrates what is possible when local leadership aligns with international cooperation to achieve transformative impact".

Environmental Leadership: Tajikistan has emerged as an unexpected leader in sustainable energy. The Sebzor Hydropower Plant became the first globally certified project under the Hydropower Sustainability Standard, achieving Gold Certification in March 2023; cementing its leadership in environmental, social, and governance development. This certification demonstrates Tajikistan's commitment to meeting international environmental standards while pursuing development goals.

In conclusion, over 34 years, Tajikistan has engineered one of the most notable post-conflict transformations globally, evolving from fragility to a trajectory of growing governance consolidation and economic resilience. The evidence presents a compelling picture of sustained progress: macroeconomic stability with consistent 6 to 8 percent growth, evolving energy independence through strategic hydropower development, as well as expanding regional integration through energy exports and trade partnerships.

The foundations for future success are firmly established: major energy infrastructure like Rogun HPP nearing completion; growing regional demand for Tajikistan's electricity exports; a comprehensive development strategy (NDS-2030) with clear targets; and increasing international partnership and investment. As Tajikistan looks toward the next decade, its journey from independence to emerging regional actor offers valuable lessons in post-conflict recovery, strategic resource management, and sustainable development.

Tajikistan's 34-year independence story ultimately reflects a nation leveraging its natural advantages, building strategic partnerships, and pursuing inclusive development with growing confidence and capability. The country stands well-positioned to achieve its ambitious 2030 goals and continue its remarkable transformation in the decades ahead.

Strategic Vision and International Collaboration: The National Development Strategy (NDS-2030) outlines a comprehensive transformative agenda anchored in three main pillars: prevention, industrialization, and innovation. This strategy embodies Tajikistan's ambitious yet achievable vision for structural economic transformation and inclusive development. The quantitative targets include sustaining 7-8 percent annual economic growth, tripling national GDP, multiplying GDP per capita by over 2.5, halving poverty and eradicating extreme

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Using AI Without Losing Our Minds



Ngaire Woods

Dean of the Blavatnik
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University of Oxford.

The recent launches of Gemini Deep Think and GPT-5 have highlighted the rapid evolution of large language models (LLMs). With 67 percent of organizations worldwide now using LLMs, you have probably experimented with them, too. Perhaps you were impressed, or less so, in the case of the new ChatGPT. But you may also have noticed that you are more easily distracted, your memory is not as reliable, and tasks that once felt effortless now seem harder to manage.

It is not your imagination. While AI-powered tools can dazzle with their speed and fluency, relying on them too heavily can stupefy us, making us slower, duller, and less able to think for ourselves. Four trends highlighted by ongoing research stand out.

Digital distraction is reducing our ability to focus and concentrate. Over the last two decades, smartphones and other devices have increasingly undermined our ability to sustain attention, make decisions, and complete tasks, distracting us with constant notifications and luring us into endless scrolling. The urge to check our phones, reinforced by the small reward the brain registers with every message or update, is as addictive as it is debilitating. Studies show that these interruptions, combined with the instant gratification of scrolling, make it harder to focus on demanding, long-term tasks.

Ever easier-to-access information causes memory erosion, which means less capacity to retain and organize information when making decisions. Researchers began looking at the 'Google Effect', some time ago, highlighting the adverse impact on memory of growing reliance on smartphones. By contrast, earlier generations had to memorize telephone numbers, poetry, and even the periodic table.

Declining ability to reason well and construct a good argument is the most recent effect



of AI as more people delegate their thinking to ChatGPT, Gemini, or DeepSeek. Studies show that this 'cognitive offloading', impedes our ability to think clearly, recognize logical connections, and spot flawed arguments. It is the mental equivalent of outsourcing your exercise routine—you may conserve energy in the short term, but over time, your own strength diminishes.

In the pre-LLM era, researchers had to search the internet, or, earlier, the library, and carefully evaluate each new source. Was it useful? How did it compare to other sources? Could ideas be combined or tested against one another? The research process trained the mind to remember, apply, analyze, and synthesize. Without that work, those abilities inevitably weaken.

No longer scrutinizing, debating, and challenging ideas leads to duller minds. 'Cognitive friction' is vital for sharpening brainpower. The sycophancy of LLMs, which are trained to be pleasing and rely on user approval, dulls our thinking. There is also a dark side to sycophancy such as when AI models agree with incorrect self-diagnoses or make harmful suggestions.

Alarming, a recent study shows that the more users insist on falsehoods, the more

mainstream models echo them. OpenAI is now working to curb sycophancy by (in the words of ChatGPT itself) "encouraging honesty, constructive disagreement, and independent thinking instead of automatic praise or deference." The problem is that friction makes users uncomfortable, even though that tension is precisely what drives personal growth.

Tech companies, workplaces, educational institutions, and individuals must take up the challenge of ensuring that AI strengthens human capacity. For me, sitting in a university, the challenge is immediate. In 2023, one-third of US college students reported using ChatGPT for coursework; by 2024, another survey found that 86 percent of students across 16 countries relied on AI in their studies.

With an AI-powered device always within reach, the question we must have a convincing answer to is: why struggle to remember things, reason, or piece together an argument when a LLM will do it for you? The answer is that if you do not train your brain to remember, to reason, and to welcome 'cognitive friction', the result will be an erosion of the capacity for learning, reasoning, creativity, metacognition, and critical thinking. Some solutions have a long history. Perhaps it is time to bring back memorization as a form of brain training. As a simple exercise, you

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A survey in 2024 showed 86 percent of students across 16 countries relied on AI in their studies. Tech companies, workplaces, educational institutions, and individuals must take up the challenge of ensuring AI strengthens human capacity.

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can try to teach your favorite LLM something you just learned: explaining new material to someone else, even an AI assistant, helps knowledge stick. The ancient Greeks recognized that real learning came not from entertaining, impressing, or catering to students, but from challenging them to question their beliefs. The Socratic method—asking "What do you mean by that? What evidence supports that? Have you considered another perspective?"—forced students to test their assumptions and sharpen their arguments.

Reducing distraction can include creating spaces, classes, and time without constant recourse to devices. In the United Kingdom, roughly 90 percent of schools have banned smartphones during lessons. Universities and workplaces could create more device-free spaces for reading, reflection, and debate. By embracing problem-based learning and simulations, they can help students and colleagues tackle complex, open-ended problems using and honing judgment and creativity.

The choice we face is whether to surrender our minds to AI or to treat LLMs as sparring partners that enable us to sharpen our cognitive abilities. The data revolution has entered a new phase; only by training our minds can we keep up.

Promoting Literacy in the Digital Era

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In what is seen as a major move to modernize Kuwait's education system, last July, Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei approved the comprehensive reform of school curricula for grades one through nine. The initiative, to be implemented in the 2025-2026 academic year, is seen as a pivotal step toward aligning Kuwait's academic content with the rapid global advancements in AI, and introducing digital teaching methodologies in classrooms.

The ministry of education has affirmed its commitment to fostering a generation equipped to navigate and tackle future challenges effectively. The transformative curriculum reforms aim to modernize Kuwait's educational content, promote innovation, and address long-standing gaps. Additionally, the ministry plans to integrate AI into the Grade 10 curriculum from this year, in alignment with education policies that see the critical need for AI skills to meet the demands of a labor market in a rapidly evolving digital world.

The education reforms and curriculum upgrades are also in line with the country's 2035 vision of New Kuwait that aims to equip future generations with crucial digital skills, and to position Kuwait as a regional front-runner in advanced education. The Kuwait National Development Plan (KNDP)—the framework designed to realize Vision 2035—is segmented into several five year stages, each of which focuses on a key overarching theme of the vision.

So far there have been two development plans; the first plan was for the period from 2010 to 2015 and concentrated on legislative activities. The second, which ended in 2020, focused on infrastructure. The ongoing KNDP-3, for the period 2021-2025, emphasizes private sector engagement, and equipping people with the knowledge, skills and incentives for future growth. The fourth and fifth KNDPs are set to focus on knowledge economy (2026-2030), and on transition to a smart Kuwait (2031-2035).

A key element in the human capital component of KNDP is reforming the educational system to equip young individuals to be more effective, competitive, innovative, and productive members of the workforce, whose returns are positively reflected economically, socially, and culturally on the nation. While the reforms have been broadly welcomed, experts insist that success hinges on effective implementation, stakeholder engagement, clear assessment strategies, and ethical guidelines being incorporated alongside reform roll outs.

Also, considering that teachers are pivotal to the successful implementation of AI policies in classrooms, it is critical that they be empowered with appropriate training in AI components that enhance their teaching skills and enable them to better monitor and assess the learning and performance of students. Policy-makers also need to ensure that teachers are adequately incentivized to learn about AI, and provided with the time and support needed to experiment with

AI teaching methodologies in their classroom.

Not only teachers, but decision-makers, principals, and the general public should be provided with opportunities to develop AI digital competencies, including understanding how to use AI responsibly and ethically. Knowing when to use, and equally, when not to use, these AI tools is a competency that should ideally begin in early childhood. Policy-makers should also develop ethical guidelines, and assess and revise them constantly due to the rapidly evolving nature of AI technologies.

The education ministry's forward-thinking educational strategies and efforts, including the comprehensive reform initiative, introduction of the AI curriculum, and eventually incorporating AI in the entire learning process, are expected to develop crucial skills such as problem-solving, creative-thinking, and innovation, along with media and data literacy that are vital to building the foundation for students to efficiently meet the demands of future labor markets.

Recent initiatives by the government to push through digital transformation of public sector entities, and integrate AI to improve operational and administrative efficiency, and enhance services to the public, the importance of AI literacy is only set to increase. Preparing for this transformation will require the services of a generation of AI-empowered youth. Emphasizing the growing demand for skilled young professionals in AI systems, the Civil Service Commission announced the creation of

24,000 new positions, with a significant portion in tech and AI fields,

International partnerships also play a pivotal role in boosting the country's digital transformation plans. In March this year, Kuwait and global digital technology giant Microsoft entered into a strategic partnership agreement to help accelerate digital transformation efforts in Kuwait. The collaboration with Microsoft and other international digital tech companies could further enhance training programs focused on equipping teachers with new-age skills, and ensure that students are educated in an environment that reflects latest global standards.

Along with expanding AI training in higher education and professions, it is vital to empower all citizens in digital competencies so as to achieve the vision of an inclusive, knowledge-based economy. In this move towards a digital, smart Kuwait it is equally important to incorporate necessary ethical guidelines that address privacy concerns, including digital surveillance, biases, and environmental impacts. Implementing effective policies and interventions that promote literacy as a common good and a human right, is key to preparing Kuwait for tomorrow's world.

The United Nations recognizes literacy in the digital era as a foundation for people to acquire broader knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and behaviors that foster a culture of respect for equality, and helps build more peaceful, inclusive, equitable and sustainable societies.

Mind Matters

Understanding Mental Health



Dr. Neethu Mariam Chacko MD
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You are at a family gathering when your relative suddenly clutches his chest in pain. Within seconds, someone dials an ambulance, another rushes for water, and others gather to comfort him. Everyone knows what to do, because we are all taught that first aid saves lives.

A teenager at the same gathering quietly withdraws, avoiding food and conversation. Later, she whispers to a friend, "I don't want to live anymore." What happens then? Often nothing, other than silence, awkward glances, quick change of subject, or perhaps even a harsh comment like "Don't say such nonsense". The silence or the awkward glances are not just uncomfortable, but dangerous too.

Stigma keeps people suffering from mental health in the dark, many hide their struggles in fear of being judged. Employees fear discrimination at the workplace if their mental health issues are known to others. Some pretend to be fine while quietly crumbling inside. Many of us are not aware about mental health issues, with a person suffering depression often being labeled as weak, or an individual experiencing anxiety seen as being overreactive.

Mental health disorders need to be considered as an ailment of the brain, which



causes disturbances in thinking, behavior, energy or emotions, that makes it difficult for the individual to meet the ordinary demands of life. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in four people worldwide will face a mental health condition in their lifetime.

Mental health issues are often viewed as invisible even though their impact on people's life can be serious. There is an urgent need to reconsider our thinking on mental problems and address it like we do in any other physical emergencies. It is essential to provide immediate and appropriate help at every stage in a mental health crisis. It really matters to know more about mental health.

Why mental health matters: It has been seen that many people wait for months or years before seeking psychiatric help. But we should be aware that early support can bring about marked changes in the outcome of the mental health condition. When communities normalize the conversations about mental health, people feel more safe to open up. They will not tend to hide their struggles from families, friends or colleagues.

Moreover often, when our dear ones

approach us to seek help in their mental health struggles, most of us lack the knowledge of how to respond. So how do you begin to lend support to someone in a mental health crisis?

You do not need to fix everything, but your presence and care can make a difference in their lives. Some of the warning signs that you should notice in your loved ones are,

- Withdrawal from the family, friends or daily activities
- Persistent changes in mood and energy levels
- Constant anxiety or worries
- Drastic disturbances in sleep, food intake
- Losing interest in work, school, daily life
- Talking about hopelessness, helplessness or death
- Neglecting personal hygiene or personal responsibilities
- Aggressive or risky behaviors that are unlike them
- Decline in work or school performance

Recognizing the warning signs of mental health struggles early on and responding

with calm and compassion is needed. A small message or visit that makes them feel that they are being taken care of matters a lot. Ask them gently "You don't seem yourself. Do you want to talk?" This gentle coaxing could sprout hope in them. Also, give them space to express their feelings without judging them.

Though this initial response does not replace doctors or therapists, it ensures that someone in distress is not left alone or silenced. When we normalize conversations about mental health, people feel safer asking for help. It empowers them to take care of the mind just as they do it to the body.

If they find it difficult to express their feelings, let them know that you are there till they are ready. Reassure them that they are not alone. Stay calm while listening to them, though it might be distressing to see your loved ones in struggles. Mental health conditions like depression or anxiety are not flaws of the person, they are medical conditions. Reassure them and offer them support to seek help when they are ready.

There may be times when your family member, friend or colleagues needs urgent help. If your loved ones are having thoughts or ideas of harming themselves or others, it needs medical attention. Stay with them and guide them to seek immediate help.

Raising awareness about mental health is not just about reducing stigma but also about saving lives. When communities understand that mental health is as vital as physical health, more people feel encouraged to seek help early and to support those in need.

Everyone should know how to respond in a mental health crisis. This includes staying calm, listening with empathy, ensuring immediate safety, and connecting the person to professional help without any delay. Awareness gives us the knowledge, and crisis response gives us the tools to stand by those who are struggling. Together, these steps create a society where no one has to face mental health challenges alone.

Vision correction technique could replace invasive surgeries

Millions of people around the world are afflicted with vision disorders, including refractive errors such as near-sightedness (myopia), far-sightedness (hyperopia), and blurry sightedness (astigmatism), that can lead to eye conditions ranging from blurriness to blindness.

Many of the common eye concerns can be addressed by corrective lenses (eye-glasses or contact lenses). But not everyone wants to wear prescription glasses or contact lenses, and many people now opt to undergo corrective eye surgery (refractive surgery).

Human corneas are dome-shaped, clear structures that sit at the front of the eye, bending (refracting) light signals from surroundings and focusing it onto the retina, from where it is sent to the brain which interprets it as an image. Corneas are responsible for nearly two-thirds of the refractive power of the eye.

But if the cornea is either too long, too short, or misshapen, the light signal is not refracted (bent) properly onto the retina, resulting in a blurry image. Anatomical variation in cornea shape, birth defects, trauma, and various pathologies can alter the shape, structural stability, and transparency of the cornea, thus affecting vision.

Surgical interventions to treat myopia, hyperopia, and astigmatism include laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis (LASIK) and photorefractive keratectomy (PRK). In LASIK or PRK procedures, specialized lasers reshape the cornea by removing precise sections of the eye tissue, and realigning the cornea so light signals focus onto the retina.

LASIK and PRK are both common procedures and are considered safe, but despite their popularity, these procedures are expensive and permanently lower the biomechanical strength of the cornea. Researchers at Occidental College in the United States, now say they have found a way to remodel the cornea chemically, rather than use a laser, and refocus light on the retina, through a process known as electromechanical reshaping (EMR).

In the body, the shapes of many collagen-containing tissues, including corneas, are held in place by attractions of oppositely charged components. These tissues contain a lot of water, so applying an electric potential to them lowers the tissue's pH, making it more acidic. By altering the pH, the rigid attractions within the tissue are loosened and make the shape malleable. When the original pH is restored, the



tissue is locked into the new shape.

Previously, the researchers used EMR to reshape cartilage-rich rabbit ears, as well as alter scars and skin in pigs. But one collagen-rich tissue that they were eager to explore was the cornea. For their work, the team constructed specialized, platinum 'contact lenses' that provided a template for the corrected shape of the cornea, and then placed each over a rabbit eyeball in a saline solution meant to mimic natural tears. The platinum lens acted as an electrode to generate a precise pH change when the researchers applied

a small electric potential to the lens.

After about a minute, which is around the same amount of time LASIK takes, the cornea's curvature conformed to the shape of the platinum lens. Compared to LASIK, the new procedure involves fewer steps, uses less expensive equipment and needs no incisions on the cornea. They repeated this setup on 12 separate rabbit eyeballs, 10 of which were treated as if they had myopia. In all the 'myopic' eyeballs, the treatment dialed in the targeted focusing power of the eye, which would correspond to improved vision.

The cells in the eyeball survived the treatment, as the researchers carefully controlled the pH gradient. Additionally, in other experiments, the team demonstrated that their technique might be able to reverse some chemical-caused cloudiness to the cornea—a condition that is currently only treatable through a complete corneal transplant. Though this initial work is promising, the researchers admitted that there is still a long road between what they have achieved now and reaching clinical trials on humans. But they emphasized that their technique has the potential to become widely applicable, vastly cheaper, and even reversible.



Is India a 'Tariff King'? Not Really



By Mohan Kumar

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There is a widespread but fallacious perception that India's tariffs are inordinately high. There are subjective factors when it comes to a country like livability, public courtesy, or even how foreigners are welcomed. But tariffs are quantifiable and there should really be no place for subjectivity. So, let us consider the facts in the case.

Before we do that, however, it might be useful for the average reader to know as to what function tariffs perform in a low-income developing country like India, as opposed to say, a high-income developed country like the United States of America. Traditionally, low-income developing countries use tariffs for two reasons: one, to protect their domestic industry and two, to gain revenue from it. Protection of domestic industry is an accepted argument by economists all over the world, especially if the industry is an infant one and the country needs to develop an industrial base. Then, there is the revenue gaining function, which is illustrative of a country's duties on alcohol or luxury motorcycles, for instance.

India's tariffs, which were high in the 1980s, were brought down significantly since the 1991 reforms were initiated and during the negotiations related to the Uruguay Round, which led to the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Since then, the secular trend in India has been one of gradual reduction of the applicable tariffs year after year.

From a technical point of view, there are two kinds of tariffs that countries have. One is applied



tariffs, which as the name indicates is the actual tariff (normally ad valorem) imposed at the border when a foreign good enters a country.

The other one is bound tariffs, which is the maximum tariff that a country can impose on a foreign good from a legal obligation arising from its most-favored-nation (MFN) commitments to the WTO. It goes without saying that the tariff war initiated by the US is in violation of its commitments under the WTO agreements. But then, the WTO itself has been moribund for a while. It is also worth noting that tariffs cannot be the same for all countries. It is a truism that low-income developing countries will have higher tariffs (for reasons mentioned above) compared to G7 countries.

So, where does India figure in all of this? When India is judged on tariffs, there are two parameters which are used. One is simple average tariffs, and the other is trade-weighted tariffs. If you use the former metric, India's tariff does seem high (15.98 percent). But this is in many ways academic because for most of the goods that come into the Indian market, it is the trade-weighted applied tariff that matters. And

the trade-weighted tariff that India maintains is a very respectable 4.6 percent. This level of tariff gives the lie to claims that India is somehow a tariff king. Simple averages distort the picture since they treat all products alike regardless of the trade volumes. So, why is there such a big difference between India's simple average tariff and its trade-weighted tariff?

India does maintain relatively high tariffs in agriculture and automobiles. In both these cases, the main purpose of the tariffs is to protect domestic industry. Agriculture in India is sui generis and like no other major country in the world. Around 50 percent of India's mammoth population directly or indirectly depends on agriculture. Besides, agriculture in India is not mechanized and land holdings are so small that farming is about survival and not about commerce. Asking India to open its farm sector to imports is akin to asking it to commit suicide, which no elected government in India would agree to. This demand is especially egregious since Western farmers are beneficiaries of direct and indirect subsidies.

Given all of this, India does maintain relatively

high tariffs for agriculture products, average rates of around 33 percent on meat, dairy, fruits, and cereals. But this is not surprising if you consider the fact that the European Union's average rate is 37.5 percent on dairy products going up to 205 percent, and up to 261 percent on fruits and vegetables.

Compare this with Japan whose rate is 61.3 percent on dairy products, going up to 298 percent, and up to 258 percent on cereals, and 160 percent on meat and vegetables. Or South Korea, whose average is 54 percent on agricultural goods with 800 percent on vegetables, and 300 percent on fruits. Who is the tariff king in agriculture, you might ask? As for automobiles, this sector creates mass employment and is crucial for that reason.

Even India's simple average tariff level at 15.98 percent is in line with global norms for developing economies. Bangladesh (14.1 percent), Argentina (13.4 percent), and Türkiye (16.2 percent), which are all countries with comparable or higher GDP per capita, and maintain similar or higher tariffs.

On the US claim that their exports of non-agricultural products face tariff barriers in India, it is worth noting that US exporters often face equal or lower tariffs in India compared to many Asian peers. In electronics and technology for instance, India has 0 percent tariff on most IT hardware, semiconductors, computers, and associated parts, with average tariffs of 10.9 percent on electronics and 8.3 percent on computing machinery.

In comparison, Vietnam has a tariff of 8.5 percent on electronic equipment, going up to 35 percent. China has a tariff rate of 5.4 percent going up to 20 percent on electronics, and up to 25 percent on computing machinery. And Indonesia has a tariff rate of 6.3 percent on electronic equipment, going up to 20 percent, and up to 30 percent on computing machinery.

It is true that India maintains justifiable tariff protection for its agricultural, dairy, and auto markets for valid reasons. But its trade-weighted applied tariff in other sectors does not justify it being called a "tariff king" by any account.



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