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marked by shared values,  
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# Northern Economic Zone Vital to Realizing Vision 2035

## The Times Kuwait Report

Plans to develop a new urban conglomerate in northern Kuwait, to ease the country's persistent housing woes and meet needs of a growing population, traces back over four decades to the mid-1980s. But this concept of constructing a large residential city in Al-Subiya area, to the north of Kuwait City, with a bridge across Kuwait Bay and a new port, was shelved for over two decades due to then prevailing geopolitical tensions, economic constraints, and political priorities.

It was only in 2004 that plans for Al-Subiya residential area were revived, with Kuwait Municipality reimagining the originally mooted plan into a more expansive and integrated project, renamed as Madinat Al Hareer (Silk City). The new plan, spread over an area of 250 square kilometers, included not only the residential city of Al-Subiya but also the development of an industrial zone, health, educational and



recreational centers, as well as developing Boubyan Island as a nature reserve.

However, the municipality's plans floundered over specific details and differences with the

private sector, and, despite transfer of the project in 2006 to the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) and the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD), it still failed to take-off. In 2012, the government decided to directly intervene, establishing the Al-Subiya and Boubyan Development Agency (ABDA) to restructure the plan and develop legal frameworks for its viability. ABDA was also entrusted with developing Mubarak al-Kabeer Port on Boubyan Island.

Despite the government's structural changes and centralized decision-making process, this plan too failed to materialize. It was only in 2017, following the conceptualizing of Kuwait's Vision 2035, that plans for the Silk City gained stronger traction. Significant impetus for the project came in 2019, with the then Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah taking charge of the project and presenting it as a Northern Economic Zone (NEZ) to Parliament.

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# Japan Kuwait relations marked by shared values, mutual trust

*Year 2026 will see deeper cooperation in energy, water, clean technology, AI, and culture. Japan is committed to supporting Kuwait Vision 2035 while expanding educational, economic, and people-to-people exchanges - Ambassador Kenichiro Mukai*

## The Times Kuwait Report

The strength of Japan-Kuwait relations are underlined by high profile visits, strategic discussions, and strategic cooperation, as well as shared values and mutual trust. Underlining the robustness of bilateral ties, Ambassador of Japan H.E. Kenichiro Mukai expressed confidence that 2026 will bring further progress in Japanese-Kuwaiti relations, with both countries aiming to deepen cooperation in established sectors such as energy and water, while leveraging advanced Japanese technologies to support Kuwait Vision 2035.

On the economic front, Ambassador Mukai revealed that between 10 and 15 Japanese companies are currently operating in Kuwait across various sectors. While fierce global competition has affected export performance, he said it has also driven Japanese firms to rethink strategies and reinforce their presence in overseas markets.

Collaboration is also expanding into clean energy, decarbonization, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and advanced materials, said the envoy. On 21 January, a workshop titled 'The Road to Decarbonization', was held in Kuwait in collaboration with Mitsubishi Research Institute, Mitsubishi Corporation, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

Addressing education, the ambassador described academic exchange between Kuwait and Japan as below expectations. Only one Kuwaiti student is currently studying in Japan, while the total number in previous years did not exceed 26.

He added that Japan is working to expand scholarship programs and open new avenues for higher education cooperation. He noted that Japanese universities hold advanced global rankings and increasingly offer programs in English, enhancing their appeal to Kuwaiti students.

Culturally, he confirmed the continuation of Japanese language programs at Kuwait University, taught by Japanese instructors, citing growing local interest in Japanese language and culture and the potential to expand these programs. Japan is also promoting cultural outreach across the Arab world through the Arabic-language Instagram



platform @japan.arabic\_culture.

In the food sector, exports of Japanese Wagyu beef to Kuwait have begun, with promotional events planned over the coming months. Japanese products such as matcha are also gaining popularity in Kuwait's market. Meanwhile, cultural engagements are set to continue with an exhibition of traditional Yakishime pottery beginning in April, which will introduce Kuwaiti audiences to a distinctive Japanese ceramic art form.

The Kuwait Pavilion at the Osaka-Kansai Expo also drew significant attention, promoting Kuwaiti culture in Japan. From September to October 2026, the 20th Asian Games (Aichi-Nagoya) will welcome Kuwaiti athletes and supporters, further strengthening people-to-

people ties. In consular matters, Ambassador Mukai explained that Japan's citizenship laws are among the strictest worldwide, with reinstatement procedures often taking several years. Visa fees, he added, may be adjusted to align with international standards while remaining relatively low compared to other countries.

He pointed out that the year 2025 marked a significant step forward in Japan-Kuwait ties, with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah visiting Japan in May and meeting with the Japanese Emperor, the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister.

During the visit, Sheikh Sabah Khalid also attended the Osaka Expo and held high-level discussions that saw both countries elevate

their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and signing agreements in key sectors including power and water.

Further momentum followed in September during the Japan-GCC Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Kuwait, which advanced cooperation under the strategic framework. High-level exchanges, including visits by Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike with startup delegations, strengthened business and technology ties.

In November, former Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah was awarded the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun by the Japanese Emperor in recognition of his role in enhancing bilateral relations. The Kuwait Pavilion at the Osaka-Kansai Expo also attracted wide attention, promoting Kuwaiti culture in Japan.

On regional issues, the ambassador reaffirmed Japan's firm commitment to supporting the Palestinian people. Since 1993, Japan has provided about US\$2.6 billion in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Palestine, addressing urgent needs, early recovery and broader rebuilding efforts.

Expanding on increasing global competition in the automotive sector, Ambassador Mukai said, the growing presence of Chinese cars on regional roads has become an undeniable reality, reshaping the global automotive landscape and pushing major industrial nations into an open and intensified race for innovation and advanced technology.

The ambassador noted that competition across Middle Eastern and international markets has reached unprecedented levels. Despite these pressures, Japan continues to hold a leading position, supported by product quality, strong global brands and a long-standing industrial legacy.

He highlighted a major strategic shift toward electric vehicles, noting that some newer models can travel hundreds of kilometers on a single charge—a clear sign of the accelerating global transition toward clean energy.

Returning to Japanese Kuwaiti ties, Ambassador Mukai said that building on the progress of 2025, Japan and Kuwait are working to elevate cooperation at governmental, private-sector and grassroots levels in 2026, while Japan continues to maintain its active humanitarian and diplomatic engagement in the region.

## KOC to seek external capital to fund long-term oil growth

Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) is reportedly drawing up plans for a major midstream expansion that would open a pipeline project worth an estimated KD2.2 billion, around US\$7 billion, to international investors. This initiative marks a strategic shift from Kuwait's earlier policy of state-funded oil infrastructure projects toward broader participation by foreign capital. The move reflects a wider regional trend as Gulf producers seek to finance long-term energy growth amid fiscal pressures.

The initiative aims to strengthen oil pipeline infrastructure linking upstream production with export and processing hubs, while easing the financial burden on the national budget.

Kuwait has traditionally relied predominantly on public funding to develop oil infrastructure. The proposed structure of the new pipeline deal would allow foreign investors to participate, enabling Kuwait to accelerate critical energy investments without significantly increasing state spending.

The pipeline project is central to Kuwait's broader strategy to enhance its oil sector, with the country planning to invest around

KD1.2 billion (\$4 bn) in exploration by 2030, focusing on new reserves and improved recovery rates from existing wells. These efforts form part of Kuwait's ambition to raise its sustainable crude production capacity toward 4 million barrels per day later



this decade, even as regional peers compete for foreign capital and export markets.

Expanding pipeline capacity is viewed as essential for Kuwait to fully monetize its hydrocarbon resources and avoid pipeline transport bottlenecks as production grows. Much of the Middle East's remaining low-cost oil potential lies in conventional onshore and shallow offshore fields, including those already supported by existing Kuwaiti infrastructure.

Details on the ownership structure, expected returns and project timeline have yet to be disclosed, and a final investment decision has not been announced. Nevertheless, Kuwaiti officials have signaled that attracting foreign capital is becoming increasingly important as national oil companies balance ambitious expansion plans with constraints on public finances.

If realized, the pipeline project would rank among Kuwait's largest energy infrastructure programs in recent years and underscores a broader Gulf trend of leveraging external financing to support future oil output growth.



## Over 17 percent of real estate units in Kuwait remain unoccupied

Latest figures from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) indicate that the number of vacant real estate units in Kuwait at the end of 2025 reached 139,800, accounting for 17.6 percent of the total units assigned automated numbers and registered with the Authority.

The total real estate stock stands at 804,200 units. Apartments account for the largest share at 358,300 units, representing 44.5 percent of the total. The figures also include 179,200 houses, 9,807 annexes, 164,500 shops, 5,731 marginal units and 85,500 traditional units.

Statistics show that, by the end of 2025, vacant properties included 55,300 residential apartments, 1,448 annexes, 37,902 shops, 4,098 marginal units and 27,730 other traditional

units. The figures also covered unoccupied buildings, including 5,455 houses, 42 apartment buildings, 2,821 marginal buildings and 8,409 traditional buildings, in addition to 775 properties still under construction.

Of the apartments, 271,600 are allocated for housing while 10,971 are used for business activities. Units allocated strictly for housing total 435,300, compared with 136,900 designated for work and 36,200 combining both residential and commercial use. PACI data indicates there are 227,700 buildings across the country, of which 146,900 are residential. A further 13,700 buildings are designated for work purposes, while 40,257 are allocated for both residential and work use.

Geographically, Al-Ahmadi Governorate



recorded the highest number of real estate units at 52,200, followed by Al-Jahra with 45,800, Al-Farwaniya with 35,600, Hawalli with 34,200, the Capital with 33,500, and

Mubarak Al-Kabeer with 26,100 units. In terms of houses, Al-Ahmadi also ranked first with 35,500 homes, followed by Al-Jahra with 31,600, Al-Farwaniya with 29,000, the Capital with 27,200, Hawalli with 26,200, and Mubarak Al-Kabeer with 22,900.

Infrastructure and facilities statistics from PACI recorded 71 palaces nationwide, including 29 in the Capital Governorate. Additionally, there are 156,000 villas, 102 hotels, 1,144 schools, 103 hospitals, 114 clinics, 28 colleges and 22 institutes in the country. The data also lists 1,594 mosques, 100 clubs, 177 parks, 374 cooperative societies, 1,411 government buildings, 5,073 commercial buildings, 1,208 factories, 6,951 farms, 8,256 livestock pens and 1,018 stables.

## Kuwait, NATO hold first round of political, security dialogue

Kuwait and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) held the first round of their political and security dialogue at NATO headquarters in Brussels on 28 January.

Kuwait's side was headed by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, while NATO was represented by NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Southern



Neighborhood, Javier Colomina.

A media statement issued on the occasion by Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted that the talks reviewed agenda items and the close relations between Kuwait and NATO, including ways to boost cooperation in political, military and security fields.

Both sides also discussed continued coordination through the NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Centre

in Kuwait, which serves the ICI partner countries—Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, the two reviewed the latest regional and international developments.

During his visit to Brussels, Sheikh Jarrah also met with NATO Deputy Secretary General Radmila Sekerinska, where they discussed Kuwait-NATO cooperation and key regional and international issues.

## Al Muzaini Exchange Opens New Branch at Rumaithiya Co-operative Society



Al Muzaini Exchange Company, Kuwait's leading provider of money exchange and remittance services has opened a new branch at Rumaithiya Co-operative Society. The branch was officially inaugurated on Tuesday, 13 January 2026 in the presence of senior management, department heads, and team members.

The opening of this branch comes as part of the company's ongoing effort to expand its service network and provide customers with easier access to its financial services. The Rumaithiya Co-op branch offers money transfers, foreign currency exchange, bill payments, and other essential services with convenience, security, and competitive pricing.

During the inauguration, the General Manager Mr. Hugh Fernandes highlighted the company's continued commitment to customer accessibility, stating: "The opening the Rumaithiya Co-op branch reflects our focus on reaching customers across Kuwait and ensuring they receive a smooth and reliable financial service experience. We take great pride in strengthening our leading position in the local market and always place focus in ensuring that we provide the best financial services experience to our customers in order to meet all their money transfer needs. We always want to stay true to our mission; to always be near to our customers and to add to their convenience and the opening of our new branch is another step in that direction"

In addition to its branch network, Al Muzaini continues to enhance its digital presence through the Al Muzaini mobile application, which enables customers complete secure transfers at any time, including services such as Western Union, Visa Direct and Foreign Currency Delivery. With the Rumaithiya.

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# Indian Embassy celebrates 77th Republic Day

*The Indian Embassy's Republic Day reception in Kuwait highlighted India's democratic values, economic rise and global ambitions, while underscoring deep-rooted India-Kuwait ties and a shared commitment to expanding strategic cooperation across sectors.*



By Shouq AlMulla  
Special to The Times Kuwait

The Embassy of India marked the country's 77th Republic Day with a flag-hoisting ceremony and community gathering at the embassy premises, attended by Indian nationals, friends of India, and representatives from community associations. The event was led by Ambassador of India H.E. Paramita Tripathi, India's first female ambassador to Kuwait, an appointment widely viewed as reflecting India's growing commitment to women's leadership and empowerment.

During the ceremony, Ambassador Tripathi read excerpts from the President of India's address delivered on the eve of Republic Day, noting India's continued progress across multiple sectors and its long-term vision towards 'Viksit Bharat 2047', a roadmap aiming to transform India into a fully developed nation by its centenary of independence in 2047.

"This is my first Republic Day in Kuwait and I am honored to unfurl the tricolor amongst all of you," Ambassador Tripathi said, thanking the community for the warmth with which she has



been received since assuming office.

In her remarks, the ambassador emphasized the strength of India-Kuwait relations and praised the Government of Kuwait for its support to the more than one million Indian nationals residing in the country. Kuwait remains one of the largest destinations for Indian professionals and skilled workers in the Gulf, with contributions spanning engineering, medicine, academia, oil and energy, finance, domestic services, and other sectors vital to Kuwait's economy and society.

The ambassador reiterated that the welfare

of Indian nationals remains a top priority for the embassy. She outlined ongoing services including 24/7 helplines, dedicated consular and labour wings, outsourced facilitation centres, and monthly Open House meetings to address community needs and challenges. She also acknowledged the role of Indian associations and volunteers, many of whom support philanthropic initiatives both in Kuwait and rural India, such as sponsoring education and improving schooling infrastructure.

The embassy encouraged community

participation in upcoming cultural and public events, including the Bharat Mela on 13 February at The Green Island, International Day of Yoga on 21 June, and a blood donation campaign on 14 June marking World Blood Donors' Day.

Ambassador Tripathi's appointment in Kuwait has drawn attention not only due to her portfolio and senior career, but also as part of India's broader push to elevate women in leadership and foreign policy roles. Her presence in Kuwait adds new visibility to India's emphasis on women's empowerment, an area that both India and Kuwait have increasingly promoted in recent years.

India and Kuwait share decades of long ties rooted in trade, energy, people-to-people linkages, and cultural exchange. The large Indian community continues to serve as a bridge between both nations, with cooperation expanding in various new areas.

Closing her remarks, Ambassador Tripathi reminded community members that, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, the Indian diaspora are "the true ambassadors of India" abroad. She wished all attendees health, prosperity, and a happy Republic Day.

## Indian Ambassador lauds historic ties with Kuwait



### The Times Kuwait Report

Ambassador of India H.E. Paramita Tripathi stressed the deep-rooted friendly relations between Indian and Kuwait that have stood the test of time, and added that the bilateral partnership has kept growing over the course of time particularly in the economic, trade and humanitarian areas.

The Indian ambassador's remarks came during a reception hosted by the Indian Embassy at the Regency Hotel Kuwait to celebrate the 77th Republic Day of India. Joining in the celebrations as the chief guest was Kuwait's Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Subaih Abdul Aziz Abdul Muhsen Al-Mukhaizeem, along with Assistant Foreign Minister for Asia Affairs Sameeh Jowhar Hayat and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Al-Sabah, as well as other senior Kuwaiti officials.

Ambassador Tripathi thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-

Ahmad Al-Sabah for their firm support to the progress of the bilateral relations.

The constant support to cooperation in diverse areas signal a shared desire to open new horizons for the decades-long relationship which is traditionally based on trade and people-to-people exchanges, said the Indian diplomat.

Thanking the Kuwaiti government for ensuring the welfare of the large Indian community in the country, the ambassador noted that Indians make up the largest expat community in Kuwait, currently totalling more than a million people, and constituting a vital bridge between both nations. Elaborating on India's Republic Day, she said it marks the entry into force of the Indian Constitution on 26 January 1950, which materialized the country's transition to a democracy ensuring fundamental rights, social justice, and democracy.

The ambassador highlighted India's rapid economic rise, noting that the country is among the fastest-growing major economies, with annual GDP growth above six percent. India is currently the world's fourth-largest economy and is on track to become the third largest by 2030, with a projected GDP exceeding \$7 trillion. She said India aims to achieve the vision of 'Viksit

Bharat' (a developed nation) by 2047.

The Indian envoy pointed to India's strengths across sectors, including being the world's largest vaccine and milk producer, the second-largest producer of steel and rice, and home to the world's largest digital payment system. India also has the third-largest startup ecosystem, aviation market and metro rail network, along with the fourth-largest railway network.

Highlighting technological and infrastructure milestones, she noted the development of digital public infrastructure, deployment of a domestic 5G stack, expansion of nationwide connectivity, construction of the world's highest rail bridge and India's recent lunar mission achievements. She added that the country is preparing actively for the era of artificial intelligence.

She noted that India remains one of Kuwait's top trading partners, with bilateral trade exceeding \$10 billion in the last financial year. Kuwait is a key energy supplier to India, providing crude oil and LPG. Indian public and private sector companies, including TCIL, LIC, Tata Group, Larsen & Toubro, Megha Engineering, Kalpataru Projects International, Shapoorji Pallonji Group and WIPRO, have a strong presence in Kuwait, while Kuwaiti investors such

as Alghanim and Agility are expanding in India. She also highlighted investment opportunities in renewables, infrastructure and India's GIFT City.

On the diplomatic front, the ambassador explained that India's foreign policy continues to be guided by the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family), alongside democracy, pluralism and unity in diversity. She described India's global approach as one of strategic autonomy and multi-alignment, with an increasingly proactive international role demonstrated through its G20 and BRICS presidencies and advocacy for the Global South. India, she noted, remains committed to sustainable development, climate action, counter-terrorism and humanitarian assistance.

Ambassador Tripathi concluded by recalling the historic visit to Kuwait by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December 2024, during which the two countries elevated their relations to a strategic partnership, which added momentum to the centuries-old ties and widened the scope of cooperation in various fields. She pledged to do her utmost to further strengthen the strategic partnership with Kuwait, so as to serve the common interests of both nations.



# Kuwait to host Swiss-Kuwaiti Business Days in February

*New platform aims to strengthen economic ties on 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations*

## The Times Kuwait Report

Kuwait will host the first-ever Swiss-Kuwaiti Business Days 3rd and 4th February welcoming a delegation of Swiss companies to an event designed to showcase and expand the economic partnership between the two nations. The initiative coincides with the celebration of 60 years of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Switzerland.

Ambassador of Switzerland H.E. Tiziano Balmelli, described the event as a reflection of the vitality and resilience of bilateral economic relations. He emphasized that while official diplomatic ties were established in 1966, commercial, social, and cultural connections between the two nations date back much further.

Ambassador Balmelli highlighted the long-standing reputation of Swiss companies in Kuwait for quality, reliability, and commitment, while noting Kuwait's openness to innovation and international trade, underpinned by strong financial foundations. He added that the participating companies embody the shared ambition to explore new opportunities and deepen



Swiss Ambassador to Kuwait  
H.E. Tiziano Balmelli



Patrick Tran, President of the Swiss-Kuwaiti Business Platform



Faisal Al Mutawa, President of the Kuwait Chapter of SKBP

collaboration in both markets.

For his part, President of the Swiss-Kuwaiti Business Platform (SKBP), Patrick Tran, said the concept of 'Business Days' stem

from a belief that the future of business lies in building bridges rather than borders. He stressed that the event is about forging sustainable partnerships, fostering innovation, and translating dialogue into tangible economic opportunities, all while prioritizing human relationships.

President of the Kuwait Chapter of SKBP, Faisal Al Mutawa, added that the event reflects the maturity of Swiss-Kuwaiti relations, particularly in economic cooperation. He noted that the two nations have collaborated for generations across business, education, healthcare, and investment sectors, building strong foundations for long-term growth and innovation.

The Swiss-Kuwaiti Business Days 2026 will provide a platform for entrepreneurs, investors, and decision-makers from both countries to exchange ideas, explore synergies, and identify new avenues for partnership, reinforcing the shared belief that successful collaboration is rooted in trust, transparency, and a long-term vision. The event will take place in Kuwait City, attracting broad participation from representatives of both public and private sectors.

## Jazeera Airways Milan service helps consolidate Kuwait, Italy ties



By Shouq AlMulla  
Special to The Times Kuwait

Italy and Kuwait marked a new milestone in aviation and bilateral relations last week with the announcement of a direct Jazeera Airways route connecting Kuwait International Airport (KWI) to Milan Bergamo Airport (BGY), the first non-stop service linking the two destinations.

The route, scheduled to launch on 20 May, expands the Kuwaiti carrier's European network and is expected to bolster trade, tourism, and cultural exchange between the two countries.

The announcement was made at Jazeera Airways headquarters in Kuwait in the presence of Ambassador of Italy H.E. Lorenzo Morini, Jazeera Airways Chief Executive Officer Barathan Pasupathi, and representatives from

Milan Bergamo Airport.

In his remarks on the occasion, Ambassador Morini welcomed the launch, terming the new flight as a bridge that will reinforce bilateral ties and support growing exchange between younger generations in both societies. He highlighted the Lombardy region as a major center for commerce, heritage, and innovation, while encouraging Italian travelers to discover Kuwait's hospitality, cultural landscape, and emerging economy.

For his part, Mr. Pasupathi said the new service will provide travelers from Kuwait with greater access to Northern Italy and onward European destinations.

"This is a key step in expanding Jazeera Airways' European network and giving travelers from Kuwait more choice and value," he said, noting that the route would support travel for

trade, leisure, and community purposes.

Milan Bergamo Airport, one of Italy's busiest aviation gateways, offers strategic access to the broader Lombardy region, including Milan, Bergamo, and popular tourism destinations such as Lake Como, Lake Garda, and the Italian Alps, as well as multi-city itineraries across Northern Europe. The service will operate three times a week starting in May.

Representing Milan Bergamo Airport, Amelia Corti, Managing Director of SACBO, described the launch as a landmark moment, making Bergamo the first Italian airport to welcome Jazeera Airways. She added that the route will facilitate two-way tourism and create new opportunities for business and cultural engagement between Italy and Kuwait.

The launch event also featured participation from a variety of Italian companies and

brands active in Kuwait, reflecting the broader economic and cultural dimension of the route. Guests were introduced to Italian automotive, culinary, and lifestyle products showcased by partners including Maserati, Illy Coffee, and other artisanal producers.

Vigonovo by Italian Chef Marco Fiorot prepared traditional Italian dishes for attendees, while La Maison Du Fromage provided specialty cheese tastings and giveaways.

A competition was held during the event in which several attendees won complimentary tickets to Milan Bergamo as part of the promotional launch.

The new route marks another step in Jazeera Airways' continued international expansion, reinforcing Kuwait's connectivity to Europe and supporting rising demand for leisure, cultural, and commercial travel between both markets



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# Ambassador hails 'warm and enduring Australia-Kuwait ties

*Kuwait is the largest middle eastern investor in Australia with 13\$ billion worth investments*



## The Times Kuwait Report

Ambassador of Australia H.E. Melissa Kelly underscored the longstanding and robust relationship between Australia and Kuwait, describing it as warm and enduring.

Speaking at a ceremony marking the 125th anniversary of Australia Day, Ambassador Kelly highlighted the collaborative spirit of Kuwaiti institutions, the significant contributions of the Australian community in Kuwait, and the broad scope of bilateral cooperation spanning trade, investment, education, and humanitarian efforts.

The event was attended by Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas, Ambassador Nawaf Al-Ahmad, senior government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, and the Australian community in Kuwait.

Ambassador Kelly expressed her appreciation

for Kuwait's leadership and the cordial reception Australians receive in the country. She emphasized that the bilateral partnership spans nearly a century of humanitarian relations and 50 years of official diplomatic ties, which were celebrated in 2024.

She noted that bilateral relations have seen significant development in several areas, including food security, investment, education, trade cooperation, and the close ties between the peoples of both nations. She also highlighted the role of Australian universities and educational institutions in bringing global education standards to Kuwait.

The ambassador went on to point out that around 1,000 Australians who live in Kuwait, contribute significantly across business, education, and the wider Kuwaiti society. Their presence reflects Australian values of fairness,

transparency, humility, and diligence.

Australian engineers and professionals, she said, support energy sector efficiency and environmental sustainability, while Australian companies are involved in notable food and urban development projects in the country. She stressed the importance of Australia standing alongside countries with shared values and vision, foremost among them Kuwait, to address regional and global challenges.

On the sidelines of the event, the ambassador confirmed that cooperation between Australia and Kuwait is "progressing excellently" and expressed eagerness to continue strengthening friendship and collaboration. She noted that Kuwait remains the largest Middle Eastern investor in Australia, reflecting the strong economic trust between the two nations. She also highlighted the growing presence of

Australian food products on Kuwaiti tables, especially meat, wheat, and vegetables, amid continued growth in agricultural trade.

Regarding investment figures, Ambassador Kelly explained that estimating the total is challenging due to conservative Australian methodologies, but current estimates indicate around \$13 billion, with discussions in Kuwait suggesting the actual figure could be significantly higher.

On livestock shipments, she said supplies continue through the winter, with a seasonal ban in the summer. Australian meat is available locally through the 'Al-Mawashi' company, alongside increasing quantities of high-quality chilled Australian meat. She added that bilateral trade exceeds half a billion dollars, though figures can fluctuate due to the nature of commodity trade.

## Northern Economic Zone Vital to Realizing Vision 2035

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Aside from the Silk City as a central, large-scale urban development, the overarching NEZ plan, encompassing an area of nearly 1,700 sq km, included the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port on Boubyan Island, the islands of Warba, Failaka, Miskan and Awha as major tourism, logistics, and investment hubs, and the Al-Abdali Economic Zone (AEZ) as a smart and sustainable industrial development. The opening of the Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway in 2019 initiated the launch of NEZ. However, political opposition to the project arose from parliament, with lawmakers voicing concerns over the project's extraterritorial and extrajudicial aspects, and its perceived sidelining of Kuwait's private sector in favor of foreign entities. In addition to the persistent executive-legislative tussle in parliament, institutional infighting, bureaucratic hurdles, and funding mechanism combined to scupper the plan, with its priority relegated for another four years.

Coincidentally, as plans for Silk City and Vision 2035 were being formulated, China began pushing ahead with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that aimed to expand trade and growth opportunities across Asia, Africa, and Europe. Recognizing the synergy between Kuwait's 2035 Vision to transform into a financial and trade hub, and the BRI's emphasis on developing trade and logistics networks, Kuwait entered into strategic ties with China, and became the first country in the region to sign on to the BRI initiative.

In September 2023, His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, then the Crown Prince, made a historic visit to China, during which several memorandum of understandings on development and investment were signed between the two nations. Following his assumption as ruler of Kuwait in December 2023, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Sabah emphasized that economic and social

development, along with equitable justice, transparency and good governance were vital to Kuwait's sustainable growth and to the prosperity of its people.

Since taking office in May 2024, the government headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah has, in alignment with the directives of His Highness the Amir, made reforms and sustainable growth a key plank in its development agenda. As part of this future-oriented strategy, the government held a meeting last June with representatives of all concerned entities on rejuvenating the NEZ.

The discussions centered around encouraging participation of the private sector in the project, designing a flexible legislative framework and competitive incentive structures, as well as developing sustainable industrial, commercial, and tourism sectors in the zone. During the talks, officials stressed the need to preserve Kuwaiti sovereignty over developments in NEZ, while creating an investor-friendly environment and a competitive economic zone guided by its own legal framework and governed by independent institutions.

Last December, the government made good on its commitments to reviving NEZ, with the signing of an engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract with China Communications construction company Ltd., for developing the first phase of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port on Bubiyan Island. Speaking on the occasion, His Highness the Prime Minister stressed that the signing highlighted the government's resolve to translate amiri directives into tangible development achievements. He indicated that the Port was a vital step in realizing NEZ and to achieving Vision 2035.

The cumulative impact of the government's wide-ranging reforms and structural transformations since 2024 are reflected in

recent positive rankings by global rating agencies. Last November, Kuwait's sovereign credit rating was upgraded to 'AA- with a stable outlook' by Standard & Poor's (S&P). The agency highlighted major infrastructure projects, including work on NEZ, the new airport terminal, residential cities, and an economic zone, as evidence of Kuwait's long-term economic transformation.

The agency added that Kuwait's reform agenda has also accelerated significantly, with a coordinated program covering economic, financial, legislative and structural areas. The



reforms, aimed at developing a flexible and sustainable economic model aligned with Vision 2035, have reinforced the country's fiscal framework, enhanced liquidity management, and created a more predictable environment for long-term financial planning, said the agency.

The government also launched a Performance Management System to promote accountability, strengthen governance, improve service quality, and enhance transparency across ministries and state agencies, in a bid to counter administrative inefficiencies and reinforce integrity. The government's sweeping reforms roadmap,

development agenda, and good governance initiatives are expected to be transformative to the economy.

The measures are expected to stimulate economic diversification, boost investor confidence, foster more foreign investment inflows, enhance competitiveness of Kuwait's development projects internationally, create quality job opportunities, develop national capabilities, and strengthen regional trade and economic integration, as well as enable the country to respond effectively to fast-evolving global challenges.

Vision 2035 emerged in 2017 from the growing realization that the rentier model of an oil-based economy was increasingly becoming untenable, and that Kuwait needed to develop new pathways for growth, employment, and revenue generation. Reviving the NEZ is seen as crucial to catalyze Kuwait's Vision 2035 and realize a sustainable future for Kuwait.

Opening of the Al-Jaber Causeway linking Subiya area across Kuwait Bay in 2019, was not only a remarkable feat of engineering, it also underlined that under the right leadership and drive, Kuwait could be jostled from its development lethargy and achieve timely results. With work on the causeway taking six years for completion, and first phase of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port slated for handover in 2028, it is evident that, rather than a piece-meal approach, a plan involving work on all units of NEZ concurrently is needed to realize Vision 2035 within its timeframe.

The country's new economic diversification trajectory, its revamped identity as a reform-oriented, development-enabling, investor-friendly environment, and its future as a trade, cultural, and financial hub that ensures sustained and sustainable growth and employment opportunities, will ultimately hinge on the government successfully implementing the Northern Economic Zone in its entirety.



# French Embassy highlights role of Kuwaiti women in energy, finance



By Shouq Al-Mulla  
Special to The Times Kuwait

The Embassy of France hosted a high-level discussion titled 'Inspiring Stories, Powerful Voices: Women Shaping Energy and Finance', bringing together leading personalities from Kuwait's energy and financial sectors for an evening dedicated to women's leadership and participation in strategic industries.

Held at the French Residence, the session convened executives, entrepreneurs, and diplomatic partners committed to advancing gender inclusion and broadening pathways for women in this important sector. The discussion highlighted recent progress in Kuwait while acknowledging that barriers to leadership and decision-making still shape women's experiences in fields traditionally dominated by men.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador of France H.E. Olivier Gauvin, underscored the importance of platforms that recognize women as essential contributors to strategic and economic advancement. He noted that the

trajectories of Kuwait's women leaders serve as powerful examples for younger generations and thanked both women participants and male allies who support equal access to professional opportunity and representation.

The session was the second in a continuing series launched by the embassy, following an earlier roundtable in November dedicated to combating violence against women. The format aims to foster dialogue, exchange expertise, and expand cooperation on gender-related issues, with additional engagements expected in the coming period.

The initiative forms part of France's broader commitment to a feminist foreign policy, officially adopted in 2019, making it one of the earliest countries to formalize gender equality as a priority across diplomatic, development, and multilateral engagements. France later launched its International Strategy for a Feminist Foreign Policy 2025-2030 to operationalize that commitment.

The strategy seeks to defend rights and freedoms, expand women's participation in decision-making, address gender inequalities and violence, mobilize financing for equality,

and embed a feminist methodology across state institutions. It aligns with international frameworks including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Through its Support Fund for Feminist Organizations, more than 1,400 civil society groups in 75 countries have received assistance since 2020.

The event featured contributions from prominent Kuwaiti figures including Sara Akbar, Chairperson and CEO of Oilserv Kuwait Joint Venture and a pioneer in Kuwait's energy sector recognized internationally for her role in extinguishing Kuwait's oil well fires following the 1991 Iraqi invasion; Shayma Amin, Team Leader for Project Assurance at the Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) and former officer at the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Vienna; Shaima Bin Hussain, Founder and CEO of She Invest for Economic and Management Consultancy; and Dalal Al Rayes, Founder and CEO of Spare, an emerging open-banking financial technology platform.

The discussion also reflected a growing alignment between France and Kuwait on women's empowerment. In Kuwait, women's participation has become an increasingly visible component of national development priorities. Under New Kuwait Vision 2035, efforts to diversify the economy and strengthen human capital have been accompanied by initiatives that encourage women's entry into the workforce, entrepreneurship, and leadership roles, particularly in finance, technology, and the private sector, areas that continue to shape Kuwait's future economy.

Ultimately, the gathering underscored a shared understanding that sustainable progress requires not only sound policy and institutional support but also environments in which women can participate fully, access opportunities, and contribute to strategic decision-making across sectors. Empowering women and making space for their voices—ensuring that they are not only present in the economy, but also heard, valued, and able to prosper in all fields—is essential for innovation, competitiveness, and long-term national development.

## Consumer spending dips, loans rise as banks close 2025 on mixed note



Official data for 2025 show that the total value of transactions through ATM cards, points of sale (POS), and online platforms inside and outside Kuwait reached KD45.96 billion, down from KD47.79 billion in 2024, marking a decline of 3.83 percent.

The point-of-sale transactions recorded growth, rising 2.4 percent, around KD471 million, going from KD18.9 billion to KD19.37 billion primarily driven by consumer spending on essential goods. Meanwhile, ATM withdrawals fell sharply by 9.8 percent, or KD989 million, dropping from KD10.08 billion in 2024 to KD9.1 billion in 2025.

Online transactions followed with a decline of 6.9 percent, falling by KD.311 billion from KD18.80 billion in 2024 to KD17.49 billion last year. Total transactions through the 'Wamdi' service reached KD8.7 billion by the end of 2025. On a brighter note for banks, despite slower consumer spending, lending surged,

with banks injecting KD6.57 billion of new liquidity into various sectors during 2025, marking a growth of 11.4 percent compared to 2024. The total outstanding loan balance at year-end reached KD63.74 billion up from KD57.19 billion in the previous year.

The real estate sector witnessed steady growth, with new loans amounting to KD562 million, a 5.43 percent increase, raising the sector's total loan balance from KD10.3 billion to KD10.9 billion. Meanwhile, personal loans rose by 3.6 percent, or KD712 million, from KD19.32 billion to KD20.03 billion.

Detailed figures show the housing loans totaled KD17.28 billion, up 4.41 percent from KD16.55 billion; consumer loans amounted to KD2.08 billion, a slight increase of 0.24 percent and securities balances surged by nearly 27 percent, increasing KD1.03 billion to KD4.8 billion, compared to KD3.7 billion in 2024.

## Kuwait records rise in population, with surge in expat numbers

Latest population figures from the Central Statistical Bureau reveal that Kuwait's total population rose by 5 percent in 2025, reaching 5.23 million and marking an annual increase of 249,540 people. The growth was largely driven by a surge in the numbers among the expatriate community.

While the overall population expanded, the number of Kuwaiti citizens declined slightly, falling by around 5,040 to 1.562 million by the end of 2025, compared with 1.567 million a year earlier. In contrast, the non-Kuwaiti population grew by 7.4 percent, adding 254,580 residents to reach 3.674 million, up from 3.419 million at the end of 2024.

The Indian community remained the largest expatriate group, rising by 5.08 percent to approximately 1.059 million, an increase of 51,210 compared with the previous year. The Egyptian community ranked second, growing by 1.5 percent, with an additional 9,893 residents, bringing their total to about 667,173, compared with 657,280 at the end of 2024. Bangladeshi nationals ranked third, recording one of the fastest growth rates at 10.68 percent, adding 31,290 people to reach 324,100.

The total workforce in Kuwait reached 3.21 million by the end of 2025, including 462,538 Kuwaiti citizens and 2.749 million expatriates. Employment in the government sector stood at 525,522, comprising 395,112 citizens and 130,410 residents. Meanwhile, the private sector employed around 1.825 million people, including 66,416 citizens and 1.758 million expatriates. The domestic worker sector



accounted for approximately 859,127 residents.

Births in Kuwait rose by 5.5 percent in 2025, increasing by 2,585 newborns to reach 49,433, compared with 46,848 in 2024. Kuwaiti births rose by 2.4 percent to 33,016, while non-Kuwaiti births increased by 12.38 percent to 16,417.

At the same time, deaths rose by 12.5 percent, totaling 7,857 in 2025, compared with 6,984 the previous year. Kuwaiti deaths increased by 13.4 percent to 4,283 and non-Kuwaiti deaths rose by 11.4 percent to 3,574.

The figures highlight Kuwait's continued demographic shift, with population growth driven largely by expatriates, alongside a steadily expanding labor force and rising birth rates, even as mortality figures edged higher.



# Nepali expats receive guidance on rights and services

By Raj Malla  
Special to The Times Kuwait

**E**mbassy of Nepal organized a labor awareness program for Nepali workers at the Costa Del Sol Hotel on 29 January, to educate them about Kuwait labor laws, legal provisions, rights, and available support services.

In his address to the gathering, Ambassador of Nepal H.E. Ghanashyam Lamsal emphasized the importance of accurate information in safeguarding the welfare of workers, and noted that the embassy has been prioritizing the welfare and security of Nepali workers by providing simple, fast, and effective services.

An open interactive session was conducted with worker representatives and members of various organizations. During the discussion, participants shared their concerns and suggestions, and the embassy expressed its



commitment to address and implement them as far as possible. Information was also shared on employment opportunities in Kuwait, protection of labor rights, and safe foreign employment.

Deputy Chief of Mission and Counsellor Sujani Rana delivered a presentation on



passport services, document attestation, travel permits, labor-related services, financial literacy, and safe use of social media. For his part, Labor Attaché Janardan Gautam briefed participants on the Social Security Fund, telemedicine services, and facilities available through the Nepali Foreign Employment Board.

The program was attended by more than 100 participants, including representatives from the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) Kuwait, Federation of Nepali Journalists Kuwait, political sister organizations, various Nepali community organizations, local journalists, and political party affiliates.



## Government tightens oversight on debt collection, funds misappropriation

**A**s part of government efforts to strengthen the mechanisms for recovering misappropriated funds, Minister of Justice and Chairman of the Public Funds Cases Follow-up Committee, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, has directed ministries, government agencies and public bodies to submit a comprehensive inventory of misappropriated public funds within their respective entities.

In an official request, Al-Sumait called for detailed data covering three key areas.

First, entities must state the total value of the funds involved, the amounts recovered and those still outstanding, in addition to clarifying the precautionary measures taken—whether civil, criminal or administrative.

Second, they must indicate whether

appeals were filed against decisions to close cases, along with the outcomes of those appeals. Third, they are required to provide details on cases pending outside the country and the actions taken in that regard. According to the approved reporting form, ministries and agencies are not required to include cases that have been definitively adjudicated, nor civil, administrative or commercial cases.

Al-Sumait stressed that all submissions must be supported by follow-up procedures and relevant documentation for each case. He set March 15 as the deadline for submissions, enabling the committee to prepare its first report of the year for presentation to the Cabinet during the first week of April, followed by a second report in the first week of October.

Meanwhile, informed sources said the Ministry of Finance, as part of its efforts to collect public debts and prevent accumulation of debts in future, is urging government bodies to accelerate the collection and settlement of outstanding debts. The move aims to reinforce financial discipline, improve the efficiency of reducing fiscal imbalances and ensure stronger protection of public funds

## Kuwait's Culinary Scene in Focus at MENA's 50 Best Restaurants 2026



**A**s the Middle East and North Africa's (MENA) culinary community prepares for the announcement of MENA's 50 Best Restaurants 2026 in Abu Dhabi on 3 February attention is also turning to the region's evolving dining capitals, including Kuwait, whose food scene continues to gain momentum and regional recognition.

The annual awards, organised under the globally recognised 'World's 50 Best Restaurants' platform, are among the most influential benchmarks of culinary excellence in the region, celebrating restaurants that demonstrate creativity, consistency, and cultural relevance.

The MENA's 50 Best Restaurants list is determined by an independent voting academy of chefs, restaurateurs, food critics, and industry experts from across the region. Each year, the rankings provide insight into shifting culinary trends and emerging dining destinations.

As anticipation builds toward the 3 February unveiling, industry observers note growing expectations around broader regional representation, including from Gulf markets such as Kuwait, where homegrown concepts, chef-led restaurants, and contemporary interpretations of local cuisine are increasingly shaping the dining landscape.

In recent years, Kuwait has seen a steady rise in innovative dining concepts that blend international techniques with local flavors and hospitality traditions. From refined casual dining to chef-driven specialty restaurants, the country's food sector continues to mature, driven by a young entrepreneurial community

and an increasingly discerning dining audience.

While the MENA's 50 Best Restaurants platform primarily celebrates the region as a whole, its influence has helped elevate conversations around culinary standards, sustainability, and storytelling—themes that are becoming increasingly relevant within Kuwait's hospitality industry.

The decision to host the announcement of winners in Abu Dhabi reinforces the UAE capital's growing role as a regional culinary hub. For neighboring markets such as Kuwait, the event serves as a key reference point, offering insights into regional trends and opportunities for collaboration, visibility, and culinary exchange. The awards programme is expected to be accompanied by chef collaborations, industry discussions, and special recognitions highlighting sustainability, emerging talent, and long-term contributions to gastronomy—areas of increasing focus for hospitality leaders across the GCC.

More than a ranking, MENA's 50 Best Restaurants has become a platform that shapes regional culinary narratives. As the 2026 edition approaches, Kuwait's hospitality sector is watching closely—not only for the list itself, but for the broader signals it sends about where the region's food culture is heading.

With innovation, cultural expression, and regional collaboration continuing to define the industry, the awards function is expected to resonate well beyond Abu Dhabi, reinforcing the shared culinary ambitions of the Middle East and North Africa, including Kuwait's growing presence within that story.

## GAC warns of fraudulent emails, spurious websites

**G**eneral Administration of Customs (GAC) has issued an urgent warning to citizens and residents about fraudulent emails and suspicious websites impersonating the Authority. The alert stressed the importance of not clicking on unknown or suspicious links and not sharing personal or banking information with any unofficial entity.

They clarified that electronic customs transactions can only be completed through two official channels: the Sahel platform and the official website of the General Administration

of Customs. The authority explained that scam messages often contain alarming phrases such as: "Your shipment is being held by customs due to missing required documents. Please access the link immediately to avoid confiscation of the parcel."

These messages typically include fake links designed to steal sensitive information.

Customs urged the public to remain vigilant, report receipt of any such fraudulent emails to the authorities, and rely solely on official platforms to avoid falling victim to cyber fraud.



# Kazakhstan positions itself as key food supplier to Kuwait

*Kazakhstan and Kuwait are turning food security into a pillar of partnership, as a new meat supply agreement and major processing project signal rising Gulf demand for Kazakh agricultural exports and deeper strategic trade cooperation.*

## The Times Kuwait Report

Kazakhstan and Kuwait are strengthening bilateral trade and economic ties, with growing emphasis on cooperation in the agro-industrial sector and food security.

During a working visit to Kuwait, the Kazakh company Eurasia Agro Semey signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with ALMARAI National Co. of Kuwait to develop collaboration in the supply of meat products to the Kuwaiti market. The agreement is linked to the launch of a large-scale meat processing project in Kazakhstan, with production scheduled to begin in September 2026.

Eurasia Agro Semey is establishing a modern meat processing complex focused on export-oriented production that complies with international quality and safety standards.

The facility will have the capacity to process up to 1,000 head of small livestock and 100 head of cattle and horses per day, in addition to producing five tons of canned meat and three tons of processed meat products daily.

The memorandum was facilitated through the efforts of the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Kuwait, which continues to promote trade relations, support Kazakh producers, and expand market access in Gulf countries.

The agreement reflects growing interest in Kazakh agricultural products and aligns



with both nations' priorities in economic diversification and food security.

Kazakhstan's agro-industrial sector has shown consistent expansion in recent years. Over the past decade, gross agricultural output has increased more than 2.5 times, reaching KZT 8.3 trillion (approximately \$16.6 billion).

The country aims to double this figure by 2030, as part of a long-term strategy to boost agricultural productivity and export capacity.

Rising global demand for high-quality and environmentally sustainable food products further strengthens Kazakhstan's position in international markets. National brands such as Qazaq Organic Food are increasingly viewed as



competitive suppliers.

According to international forecasts, global consumption of red meat is projected to reach 233 million tons over the next decade. In this context, Kazakhstan is emerging as a promising supplier to markets in the Middle East, including

Kuwait. The project and related agreements highlight the steady development of Kazakh-Kuwaiti trade relations, expanding agricultural exports, strengthening business partnerships, and creating a solid foundation for long-term, mutually beneficial cooperation.

## ALSAYER renews partnership with Kuwait Paralympic Committee



Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Est. Co. W.L.L. officially held a signing ceremony to announce the renewal of its strategic partnership with the Kuwait Paralympic Committee.

The event underscores ALSAYER's ongoing commitment to supporting two Kuwaiti para-athletes Faisal Al-Rajehi and Faisal Surour on their journey toward international sporting excellence.

The ceremony was attended by Faisal Bader Al Sayer, Chairman of ALSAYER Group, and Mansour Al-Sarheed, Chairman of the Kuwait Paralympic Committee, alongside senior management members from ALSAYER.

According to Faisal Bader Al Sayer, "At ALSAYER, we believe that movement is a human right. Our continued association with the Kuwait Paralympic Committee is a testament to our belief in the power of determination.

"We are proud to support Faisal Al-Rajehi and Faisal Surour as they embody the Toyota's valued of 'Start Your Impossible' as a role model, aiming for greatness and to inspire next generation of athletes," he said.

Expressing his appreciation for the continued collaboration Mansour Al-Sarheed said, "The support from ALSAYER and Toyota is vital for our athletes' preparation for the global stage. This partnership empowers our champions to focus on their performance and represent Kuwait with pride."

This partnership is a key pillar of the Global Team Toyota Athletes (GTTA) initiative, a worldwide movement launched by Toyota Motor Corporation. By aligning with the

"Start Your Impossible" philosophy, ALSAYER aims to challenge the boundaries of human achievement.

The renewal of this agreement represents a shared vision to:

- Promote Inclusivity: Elevating the profile of para-sports within the region.
- Drive Excellence: Providing the necessary resources for athletes to compete at the highest international levels.
- National Pride: Encouraging athletes to aim for the podium at global competitions, bringing honor and recognition to the State of Kuwait.

Since the inception of this partnership in 2019, the association between ALSAYER and the Kuwait Paralympic Committee has yielded immense success, marking a remarkable chapter for para-sports in the country.

ALSAYER acknowledges the pivotal role of the Committee in this journey; their tireless efforts in developing world-class infrastructure, specialized conditioning programs, and elite coaching have been fundamental to the athletes' growth.

By providing a professional environment that fosters talent and resilience, the Committee has enabled Kuwaiti para-athletes to excel on the global stage.

ALSAYER is proud to build upon this legacy of excellence, supporting the Committee's mission to ensure that the nation's champions have every resource necessary to achieve their full potential and bring home international honors.

## DGCA awards ground services at KIA exclusively to Kuwait Airways

Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced that Kuwait Airways has been appointed as the exclusive ground services provider for all airlines operating through Kuwait International Airport.

Stating this during a meeting with state media on 31 January, DGCA Chairman Sheikh Hamoud Mubarak Al-Hamoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said that the move aims to support the national carrier in providing these services to all local, Arab, and international airlines. He described it as a crucial move to improve services for passengers, enhance operational efficiency, and develop and train national personnel in the field of air transport.



Sheikh Hamoud emphasized that the DGCA's vision for the next 20 years is based on four main pillars, with the first pillar focusing on developing and modernizing the infrastructure of Kuwait International Airport to improve operational efficiency and enhance passenger services.

He added that the second pillar involves training and developing national personnel in the fields of air transport and civil aviation, while the third pillar focuses on increasing non-oil revenues and strengthening financial resources. He added that the fourth pillar includes knowledge transfer and leveraging global expertise in airport operations, air

navigation, and aviation safety.

He commended Kuwait Airways and its operational sectors for their pioneering initiative in providing ground handling services to all civil aviation companies operating at Kuwait International Airport, effective immediately. He wished them success in this endeavor, which has now become a reality.

Sheikh Hamoud expressed his deep gratitude to the political leadership, represented by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, for their significant support of infrastructure development projects in Kuwait's civil aviation sector and the improvement of services at Kuwait International Airport.

He also expressed his appreciation for the diligent follow-up and continuous support of the Minister of Defense, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Sabah, which contributed to the success of the civil aviation projects. He thanked all government entities that supported this project, particularly the Ministry of Interior, the Public Authority of Manpower, and the General Administration of Customs, for their vital role in providing all necessary facilities to the national carrier. He further commended the officials and all employees of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation for their efforts in ensuring the success of this operation.

He also thanked National Aviation Services (NAS), which has provided ground handling services at Kuwait International Airport for 22 years alongside Kuwait Airways, wishing the company continued success in its current and future projects.



## India-EU Free Trade Agreement

# A testament to foresight, resilience and economic statecraft

By S A H Rizvi  
Chief of Bureau, New Delhi  
The Times Kuwait

**E**minent Indian jurist and Supreme Court advocate Aman Sinha has described the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) as a pivotal strategic milestone for India. It grants unparalleled access to one of the world's largest and most affluent consumer markets while bolstering the nation's long-term economic resilience and growth architecture.

Concluded on Wednesday, 27 January 2026—after nearly two decades of negotiations (relaunched with fresh momentum in 2022)—the landmark pact, widely hailed as the “mother of all deals,” transforms global trade uncertainties into concrete opportunities.

Sinha emphasized that the agreement significantly boosts Indian exports, attracts higher foreign investment, creates jobs, and empowers Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), reinforcing India's emergence as a confident, mature, and proactive force in international trade.

“By prioritizing sustained engagement with reliable, stable partners like the EU and negotiating with a clear focus on India's enduring national interests, the government converted external pressures into strategic leverage.”

He highlighted the profound strategic importance of the timing and context: “In an era of volatile global commerce, marked by sudden policy reversals, escalating protectionism, and disruptions from major economies, India faced a stark choice: passively absorb the turbulence or actively reshape the landscape to its advantage. India decisively chose the latter, demonstrating remarkable foresight and adaptability.”



Sinha credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership as instrumental. Rather than resorting to reactive or defensive measures like short-term retaliation, India pursued a broader, forward-looking economic vision.

“By prioritizing sustained engagement with reliable, stable partners like the EU and negotiating with a clear focus on India's enduring national interests, the government converted external pressures into strategic leverage,” he added. “This disciplined form of economic statecraft turns trade headwinds into durable advantages, positioning India more securely in a fragmented global order.”

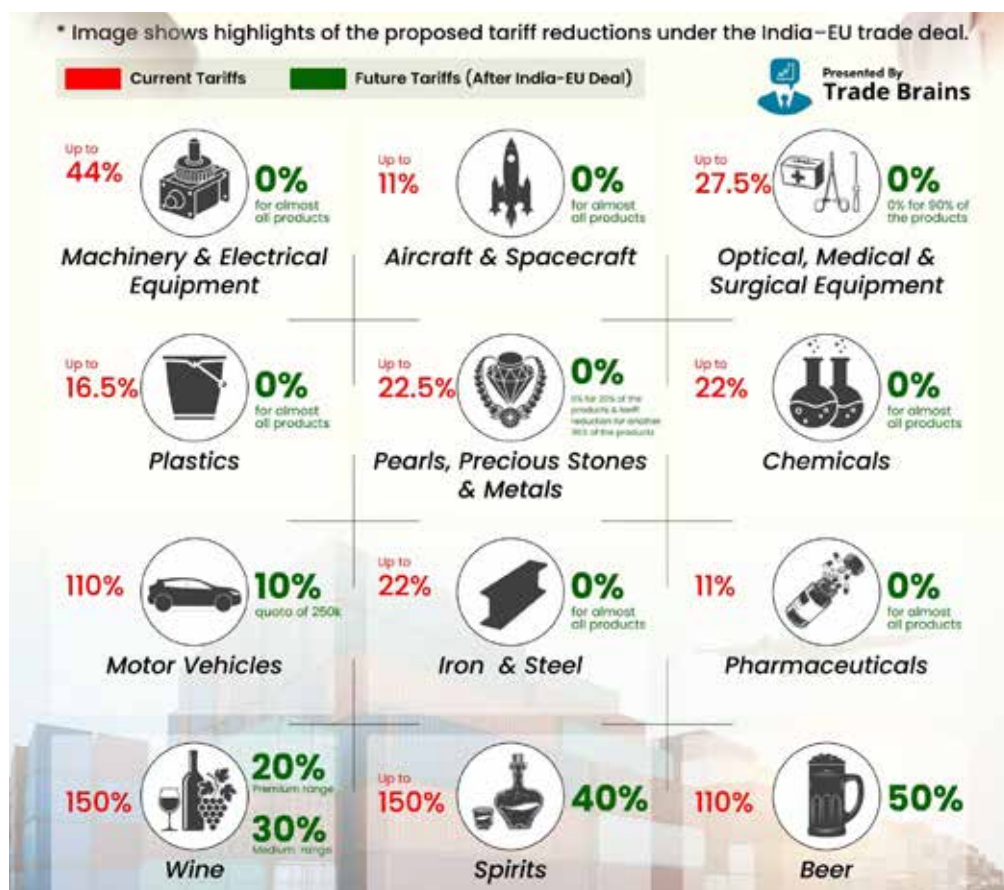
For nearly 20 years, India-EU trade talks languished amid regulatory complexities, differing priorities, and periodic political hesitations. Progress remained elusive until decisive political direction injected fresh impetus.

Under the present leadership, negotiations were conducted with patience, persistence, and strategic clarity—recognizing that truly sustainable agreements require careful construction, not hasty concessions. The result is no diluted compromise, but a meticulously calibrated framework that decisively opens markets while safeguarding domestic sensitivities.

Key provisions include duty-free or reduced-tariff access for over 99 percent of India's exports by value (covering vital labor-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, footwear, gems and jewellery, tea, coffee, spices, marine products, and more), phased implementations where necessary, and protections for vulnerable areas. This balanced structure promises enhanced competitiveness, inclusive growth, and deeper integration into global value chains.

In essence, Sinha said, the India-EU FTA exemplifies visionary economic diplomacy: it not only counters immediate challenges but lays a robust foundation for India's ambitious journey toward becoming a developed economy by 2047. By forging deeper ties with the EU—a bloc embodying stability, innovation, and vast consumer demand—India secures diversified pathways to prosperity in an unpredictable world.

This agreement is more than a trade deal; it is a testament to strategic judgement, resilience, and the transformative power of purposeful global engagement, the apex court lawyer concluded.



## India streamlines passport services, digitalizes processes

**T**he Indian government is updating its passport processes, steadily moving toward a faster, cleaner and more digital system aimed at reducing delays and confusion for applicants and enhancing security measures.

From online forms to document verification, several practical updates are reshaping the passport process this year. Whether applying for the first time or renewing an existing passport, understanding these changes early can help applicants avoid common mistakes and complete the process without unnecessary stress.

Passport rules in 2026 have officially been revised, directly affecting millions of Indians, especially first-time applicants or those with changes in name, marital status, or address. These processes may face tighter verification steps, including police checks, and as such, early applications are warranted ahead of any planned international travel.

The updated guidelines are designed to speed up processing, strengthen security measures and minimize application errors. As a result, key aspects of the system, including documentation, verification procedures, and timelines, now function differently.

A major focus this year is enhanced digital processing. Online

application systems feature smarter form-validation tools that instantly flag missing details or inconsistencies, reducing the chances of rejection or repeated corrections. In addition, appointment availability is now updated in real time, enabling applicants to secure suitable dates without last-minute rushes.



Stricter document verification is another key feature of the 2026 rules. Many authorities now prioritize digital or authenticated documents over physical copies, using government-linked databases to cross-check identity and address proofs.

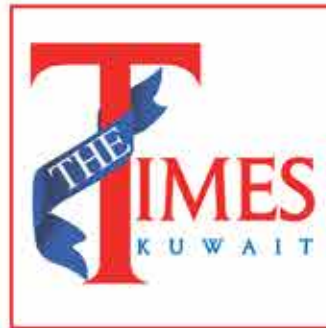
This reduces the risk of fraud but requires applicants to ensure all submitted details, such as names and dates, match official records exactly.

Passport verification records and other proof documents stored in government digital systems can be accessed and shared online, reducing dependency on physical paperwork and speeding up processing times.

For Indians in Kuwait and other Gulf countries, additional online tools and services are making common tasks easier. For example, parents can now obtain certified digital copies of their children's passports through official government portals without visiting offices in person.

Overall, the passport process in 2026 emphasizes digital convenience, accuracy, and security. Applicants are advised to prepare their documents carefully and to use the official online portals and digital storage options provided by government authorities to ensure a smooth and efficient experience.





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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Building a Middle-Power World Order

**Anne-Marie Slaughter**

*A former director of policy planning in the US State Department, is CEO of the think tank New America, Professor Emerita of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University, and the author of *Renewal: From Crisis to Transformation in Our Lives, Work, and Politics**

**R**upture—an instance of breaking or bursting suddenly or completely—is a strong word. Yet it is the term that Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney used at Davos last week when he warned of a “rupture in the world order, the end of a pleasant fiction and the beginning of a harsh reality, where geopolitics... is submitted to no limits, no constraints.”

But Carney’s speech was not a despairing one, because he made a second major point. “[O]ther countries, especially intermediate powers like Canada, are not powerless,” he observed. “They have the capacity to build a new order that encompasses our values, such as respect for human rights, sustainable development, solidarity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the various states.”

What should that order look like? In what now seems like another century (though it was only 16 months ago), United Nations member states concluded ‘Pact for the Future’, and in preparation for its signing, UN Secretary-General António Guterres convened high-level commissions and boards (including one on which I served) to identify the elements of ‘effective multilateralism’.

Effective multilateralism refers to cooperation among multiple countries that can get things done: stopping war; enforcing peace; protecting people from manmade and natural disasters and caring for them in the aftermath; and establishing regional or global rules on subjects ranging from digital technology and nuclear weapons to protecting some of the world’s most beautiful and significant places.

Our report titled ‘A Breakthrough for People and Planet’, laid out ten principles—drawn from extensive consultations and observations of multilateral arrangements that already work well—to help re-orient the current international system towards ‘more distributed, networked



“To be effective, multilateralism should be ‘people-centered’, focused on delivering tangible results not for states but for the ‘peoples’ of the world, as stated in the preamble of the UN Charter.”

decision-making for our collective well-being’.

The world’s middle powers can use these arrangements as a blueprint. To be effective, multilateralism should be ‘people-centered’, focused on delivering tangible results not for states but for the ‘peoples’ of the world, as stated in the preamble of the UN Charter. Multilateral institutions’ impact should be measured from the viewpoint of the people they are designed to help. They should be ‘representative’, reflecting the interests of all stakeholders and, critically, ‘allowing representative majorities to make and implement decisions in the face of minority opposition where necessary to deliver on issues of global concern’.

In other words, multilateral government by consensus—implying the potential for a veto—does not work. Majorities can be weighted in various ways, but these must include a diverse range of states—big and small, from different regions or parts of subregions, rich and poor, allied and non-allied to great powers. That is

what true representation looks like.

Effective multilateralism is also ‘transparent, equitable, and networked’. The first is easy to champion, but hard to achieve, because it may require revealing things that can hurt you. Nonetheless, the legitimacy conferred by transparency has a power of its own. As Carney proclaimed, “the power of the less powerful starts with honesty.”

‘Equity’ in this context means recognizing common but differentiated responsibilities when it comes to rich and poor countries, often former imperial powers and their former colonies. And ‘networked’ means recognizing the need for collaboration among state and non-state actors to achieve common goals. Since networks are horizontal, they can counter the often-stultifying hierarchy of formal international organizations and facilitate coalitions of the willing.

The groupings that succeed are also resourced, mission-focused, and flexible. They need adequate and timely funds to achieve

their tasks; they need to know precisely what those tasks are and how to know if they have succeeded or failed; and they need to be able to adapt to changing circumstances. Such flexibility allows for pilot projects and an exploration of new approaches, even at the risk, perhaps even the likelihood, of failure.

Multilateral groups that have money, a clear mission, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances still require two final elements for success. They must be accountable, subject to ‘common, enforceable rules that cannot be broken with impunity by any actor’. And multilateral actors should be future-oriented, responding to current shocks and crises in ways that serve future generations, giving young people a stake in their work.

These principles can serve as a guide for reforming current institutions or creating new ones. In the UN, for example, middle powers can come together and act through the General Assembly, bypassing the Security Council. That may require radical action, taking it upon themselves (through majority or super-majority votes) to develop practices that de facto amend the UN Charter. The world’s middle powers could work to strengthen the many trans-governmental networks that have emerged in recent decades—from the Financial Stability Board to the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement. Of course, to do so, they will most likely need to work around the United States and other members who will not play by the rules.

The G7 offers yet another model. It started when France and Germany invited the United Kingdom, Italy, the United States, and Japan to an informal summit in the summer of 1975. Canada joined the next year, as well as the European Community. Russia formally joined in 1997, creating the G8, which became the G7 again after Russia’s invasion and occupation of Crimea. By the late 2000s, the G7 was also meeting in various formations with other countries, and those groupings evolved into the G20.

In the current context, Carney could invite France, the UK, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the EU to meet with South Korea, Australia, Brazil, Nigeria, South Africa, Mexico, Indonesia, and a few other countries in Ottawa, forming the core of a new M20 (middle powers). This group could then expand to include others in a middle-power coalition of the willing, which would vote as a reform bloc within other institutions. The first step would be to require members to commit to the principles outlined above. It is time to turn speeches into political will.



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EXCLUSIVE TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

# How Developing Countries Can Make the Most of AI



**Shamika Sirimanne, Taffere Tesfachew**

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Since the 2008 global financial crisis, industrial policy has crept back into respectable economic discourse, after decades of being derided as misguided interventionism, particularly for developing countries. But its renaissance is being led by the advanced economies that once rejected it, with the push into AI and renewable energy hastening the shift.

For developing countries, this revival presents new opportunities, provided that they can manage three major constraints: a weak enabling environment (a lack of infrastructure and other necessary inputs), limited autonomy in policy-making, and fiscal constraints. Industrial policy is often understood in terms of subsidies and tax breaks, but for many developing economies, far more than these instruments must be put in place. Without reliable digital connectivity, dependable power supplies, trusted data-protection regimes, and a skilled workforce, ambitions for AI-led growth will amount to little more than rhetoric.

Developing countries' policy options are also constrained, because World Trade Organization (WTO) rules limit the use of instruments—export-contingent subsidies,

cannot summon vast subsidy packages or bankroll multi-billion-dollar technology programs. And while technology parks and incubators have multiplied across Africa and Asia, few have delivered meaningful results. As UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) observes, such zones succeed only when anchored in established supply chains. Without that grounding, they risk becoming costly white elephants; impressive on paper, but inert in practice.

For developing countries, the sensible approach to AI is to deploy the sophisticated frontier models that are already available. Unburdened by legacy infrastructure, developing countries can leapfrog directly into emerging technologies, as many did when they skipped over landlines and went straight to mobile telephony. Deploying AI costs a fraction of what it takes to build it. Anyone can use tools like ChatGPT without erecting data centers or assembling elite engineering teams.

Such targeted applications can be transformative. In health care, AI-assisted diagnostics can rationalize the use of scarce clinical capacity. In education, digital platforms can compensate for chronic shortages of teachers. In agriculture, predictive analytics can support farmers navigating climate volatility. These uses may not dazzle those on the technological cutting edge, but they can deliver real-world returns where they matter most.

They also represent industrial policy at its most effective—meaning pragmatic, experimental, and oriented around domestic realities. As Dani Rodrik argues, “success lies not in following a fixed blueprint, but in identifying sectors where public action can unlock hidden potential.”

To be sure, even a modest innovation agenda requires funding, and domestic venture capital remains scarce in many developing economies, where private wealth tends to migrate abroad. But governments can build institutions to crowd in more private capital, such as through blended finance, sovereign innovation funds, targeted guarantees, and regional technology hubs. Donors, too, can (and should) scale up support. According to the OECD, the information and communications technology sector receives barely two percent of total aid-for-trade disbursements, far short of what is needed to build digital capabilities.

Governments in developing countries also must use digital technologies to increase efficiency, especially in revenue collection, in order to create sorely needed fiscal space. UNCTAD's work on customs digitalization, notably through the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), offers a useful illustration. In Angola, one of Africa's largest oil-dependent economies, the move to digitalized customs procedures produced striking fiscal gains, with revenues rising 44 percent in one year and 13 percent the next as analog bottlenecks were dismantled.

In Iraq, the returns were even larger. Once its principal border points were digitized, customs receipts soared more than 120 percent in a year. And in Bangladesh, one of Asia's fastest-growing manufacturing economies, incremental digital reforms helped deliver average annual revenue growth of around 11 percent over several years, as compliance improved and leakages were stopped.

While international cooperation remains essential, global trade rules also must evolve to be more accommodating of digital and green industrialization strategies. The WTO's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights



(TRIPS) provisions might have made sense for the era in which they were designed, but they now hinder access to critical technologies. Patent regimes should enable broader diffusion, as compulsory licensing once did for life-saving medicines.

Collaboration among developing countries

is also important, because no single country can afford the scale of investment required for AI or clean tech. Shared platforms such as CERN (for research in physics) show how pooled expertise can spread costs, share risks, and unlock mutual benefits. A more promising approach lies in collective innovation. For much of the Global South—which shares similar disease burdens and climate exposures, benefits from abundant data, and draws on comparatively low-cost technical talent—innovating together is not only cost-effective but strategically prudent in an increasingly multipolar world.

The return of industrial policy marks a major shift in global economic thinking, but for developing countries, it is a mixed blessing. The path to industrialization is now steeper, narrower, and constrained by more demanding technological and regulatory standards. Yet the challenge is far from insurmountable. By investing in foundational capabilities, targeting high-impact applications of AI, mobilizing innovative financing, and using the policy space that already exists, countries can still accelerate their development. Success will depend not on the imitation of rich-country models, but on pragmatic adaptation to local realities.

“

In health care, AI-assisted diagnostics can rationalize use of scarce clinical capacity. In education, digital platforms can overcome chronic teacher shortages. In agriculture, predictive analytics can support farmers navigating climate volatility.

”

local-content rules, and technology-transfer requirements—that once underpinned industrialization success stories, namely in East Asia. At the same time, major economies continue to march to their own drummer, with the United States, the European Union, and China deploying industrial policy at scale, often bending or breaking the very rules that others are expected to observe. The asymmetry is obvious: of more than 2,500 industrial-policy measures introduced globally in 2023, these three economies accounted for almost half.

Finally, fiscal limits are biting hard. In many developing economies, up to 80 percent of public spending goes to wages and debt service, leaving little for the long-term investments that industrialization requires. Unlike the US or the EU, poorer countries



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## RECIPE

## Hot Pot Mexican Rice



**H**ot Pot Mexican Rice is the perfect side dish to any Mexican food. This fluffy and flavorful rice is made with only a few simple ingredients. Arroz rojo, which means 'red rice' in Spanish, is the most requested side dish in Mexican cuisine and is perfect for filling burritos and tacos.

Arroz rojo can be infused with the flavors of tomato and vegetable broth, and further uplifted with the addition of leftover ground beef or chicken mixed in, and can be served as an entire meal in a bowl.

**Total time:** 30 minutes

**Serving:** 4 to 5 people

**Ingredients:**

- 2 cup 80 percent cooked, long-grain rice or red rice
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1/2 cup tomato puree
- 1/3 cup water
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 2 tbsp tomato ketchup
- 1 tsp hot chili sauce
- 1 cup chopped green capsicum, green beans, carrots, green pea, fresh corn
- 1/2 cup small paneer(cottage cheese) cubes
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1/2 tsp chili flakes or oregano
- 1/4 tsp black pepper powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- Salt to taste
- Chopped cilantro or spring onion optional

**Instructions:**

- Heat olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion, ginger/garlic paste and cook until the raw onion/garlic smell fades.
- Add tomato puree, tomato paste and cook until the water is absorbed
- Add vegetables, tomato ketchup, hot chili sauce, salt, chili powder, black pepper powder, cumin powder, and water
- Toss in the paneer cubes and cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring occasionally
- Set aside some of this vegetable broth to serve with the rice.
- Add the rice to the remaining vegetable broth, mix gently
- Cook over medium flame for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring occasionally
- Serve hot garnished with cilantro/spring onions.



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



Chef Chhaya Thakker

**Thought** “Choose to make a difference  
for the instead of choosing to be  
week indifferent today.

- Caroline Naoroji

## Perimenopause and the Right Nutrition

.....  
**Ask Mira:** Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy  
.....



**P**erimenopause is a natural stage in a woman's life that usually starts in the late 40s. It is the time when hormones, especially estrogen and progesterone, begin to fluctuate. These changes can affect how women in this stage of life experience feelings, their moods and sleep patterns, their digestion, weight, and even their energy levels.

One of the most common concerns during perimenopause is weight gain, especially around the belly. This happens because metabolism slows down and insulin sensitivity may change. Instead of eating less, focus on eating smarter. The good news is that the right nutrition can make the perimenopause phase much easier to manage.

**Below are a few suggestions on how to go about ensuring the right nutrition:**

Prioritize balanced meals that include protein, healthy fats, and fiber. Protein is especially important, it helps preserve muscle mass, supports metabolism, and keeps you full for longer. Include foods like eggs, fish, chicken, legumes, yogurt, and nuts daily.

Hormonal changes can also affect blood sugar levels, leading to energy crashes and cravings. Choosing complex carbohydrates such as oats, whole grains, vegetables, and fruits helps keep blood sugar stable and reduces mood swings and fatigue.

Avoid excessive refined sugar and ultra-processed foods, as they can worsen symptoms like irritability and bloating.

Calcium and vitamin D become crucial during perimenopause to protect bone health, as estrogen levels decline. Include dairy products, fortified plant milks, leafy greens, sesame seeds, and almonds. Regular sunlight exposure and, if needed, supplementation can help

maintain healthy vitamin D levels.

Many women experience hot flashes, poor sleep, and anxiety during this phase. Magnesium-rich foods like dark chocolate, seeds, nuts, and leafy greens may support relaxation and sleep quality. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fatty fish, walnuts, and flaxseeds, help reduce inflammation and support brain and heart health.

Finally, do not underestimate the power of hydration and lifestyle habits. Drinking enough water helps reduce bloating and fatigue. Regular movement, stress management, and good sleep work hand in hand with nutrition.

Perimenopause is not something to 'fight'. With the right food choices and self-care, it can be a powerful time to reconnect with your body and support it with kindness and nourishment.

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



# New drug could lower BP in patients with resistant hypertension

Figures from the World Health Organization show that an estimated 1.4 billion adults aged 30–79 years worldwide had hypertension in 2024. Although this represents 33 percent of the global population in this age range, two thirds of them live in low- and middle-income countries where adequate and timely treatments are often not available or affordable.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is when the pressure in your blood vessels is too high (140/90 mmHg or higher). It is common but left uncontrolled or untreated blood pressure increases the risk of stroke, heart attack and heart failure. It can be serious if not treated. People with high blood pressure may not feel symptoms, more than 600 million adults with hypertension are unaware that they have the condition. The only way to ascertain hypertension is to get blood pressure checked.

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing through your arteries. Doctors record it as two numbers: systolic (the first number) and diastolic (the second number), in millimeters of mercury, or mm Hg. Hypertension is diagnosed if, when measured on two different days, the systolic blood pressure readings on both days is  $\geq 140$  mmHg and/or the diastolic blood pressure readings on both days is  $\geq 90$  mmHg.

A healthy blood pressure is usually below 120/80 mm Hg, while 130/80 mm Hg or above is considered high.

In many patients, high blood pressure can be lowered through lifestyle changes such as eating a healthy, low-salt diet, losing weight, being physically active, ensuring adequate sleep, and quitting tobacco. If you have persistent high blood pressure, your doctor may recommend



one or more medicines depending on other health conditions you may have. However, there are cases where drugs fail to bring down the high blood pressure, raising the risk of serious health complications.

A new large clinical trial, the results of which were published in August last year, suggest that a new drug developed by global biopharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca, could offer an alternative for people with resistant hypertension—high blood pressure that stays elevated despite standard therapy.

Resistant hypertension is often caused by excess aldosterone, a hormone that maintains salt and water balance in the body. The new drug belongs to an innovative class of drugs

called aldosterone synthase inhibitors, which works by lowering aldosterone and preventing fluid buildup.

For the 12-week Phase III trial, researchers enrolled nearly 800 patients with resistant or uncontrolled high blood pressure, with an average pressure of 149/87 mm Hg. Compared with participants given a placebo, those taking 1 or 2 milligrams of the new drug alongside their current medications saw an average drop of about 9–10 mm Hg in systolic pressure. A small number of patients in a substudy also saw a drop of about 15 mm Hg in systolic pressure averaged over 24 hours, with no major side effects.

By the end of the trial patients taking 1 or 2 milligrams of the new drug saw a greater drop

in their systolic pressure measured while seated than those on placebo. Existing blood pressure drugs are known to cause side effects such as breast tenderness and reduced sexual function in men, or menstrual irregularities in women. The new drug did not produce these problems while still effectively lowering blood pressure.

About 40 percent of patients on the drug reached healthy systolic levels below 130 mm Hg, compared with 19 percent on placebo. And this was consistent across men and women of different ages as well as patients taking either two blood pressure medications or three or more. The trial also included an eight-week withdrawal phase. Patients who stopped using the innovative drug saw a 1.4 mm Hg rise in systolic pressure on average, while those who continued treatment had an additional 3.7 mm Hg drop.

The study showed that even at week 12, blood pressure in the drug using group was still coming down, unlike any other blood pressure drug class in use today. Adherence to blood pressure medications is often poor, so this kind of sustained effect is amazing. Experts believe that the observed reductions could reduce the long-term risk of heart attack, stroke and heart failure.

Though the drug's developer plans to seek US regulatory approval by late 2025, experts say that more research is needed to see if the new drug could be used as a first- or second-line therapy and provide the same heart protection as current drugs. But irrespective of whether the drug wins approval or not, doctors note that people with hypertension will still need to combine the drugs with lifestyle changes and regular monitoring to sustainably reduce cardiovascular risk.

## Vitamin C helps physically improve skin renewal, thickness

Scientists at the University of Otago in New Zealand have identified a direct connection between how much vitamin C people intake and how well their skin produces collagen and renews itself. The research found that vitamin C levels in the skin closely mirror levels in the blood (plasma). Increasing intake through vitamin C rich foods was shown to raise both blood and skin concentrations.

For the study the researchers followed 24 healthy adults in New Zealand and Germany. Participants who raised their plasma vitamin C levels by eating two vitamin C rich fruits showed a clear increase in vitamin C within their skin. This increase was associated with thicker skin (collagen production) and greater renewal of the outer skin layer.

The strong correlation between plasma vitamin C levels and those in the skin were found to be compelling, with this relationship being more marked than in any other organ investigated. The research team also found that vitamin C circulating in the bloodstream reaches every layer of the skin and supports healthier skin function. The study is the first to demonstrate that vitamin C in the blood circulation penetrates all layers of the skin and is associated with improved skin function. The findings reinforce the idea that skin health begins internally—with nutrients delivered naturally through the bloodstream—rather than through creams and oils applied externally.

Collagen is a protein that provides structural



support to the extracellular space of connective tissues. Due to its rigidity and resistance to stretching, it is the perfect matrix for skin, tendons, bones, and ligaments. Vitamin C is essential for collagen production, which is why it is commonly added to skincare products. However, vitamin C dissolves easily in water and does not absorb well through the outer skin.

But, as the new study made clear, skin cells are highly efficient at absorbing vitamin C from the blood, with uptake into the outer epidermal layer appearing to be a priority.

For their study, the researchers divided their

tests into two phases; the first phase examined the relationship between plasma and skin vitamin C levels using healthy skin tissue from patients undergoing elective surgical procedures at hospitals, who had agreed to participate in the study. The second phase involved a controlled dietary intervention carried out in New Zealand and Germany, with each location including 12 healthy participants.

Participants were provided with two vitamin C rich fruits that provided the equivalent of 250 micrograms of vitamin C daily, for a period of eight weeks. The team then collected skin

samples before and after the intervention, with separate analyses allowing them to look at the skin basal layers in New Zealand and the outer dermal skin layer and skin function tests in Germany.

German participants were recruited and tested by the SGS Institute Fresenius in Hamburg, which has the technical capability to collect samples from the outer dermal skin layer. The institute evaluated skin regeneration using ultrasound measurements of skin thickness, elasticity UV protection and epidermal cell renewal to assess overall skin function.

One of the most significant findings was the significant increase in the skin thickness levels of participants, reflecting collagen production and an upsurge in the regeneration of their epidermal cells, in other words skin renewal. Fruits with high vitamin C content include kiwifruit and other fresh fruits and vegetables such as citrus, berries, capsicums and broccoli.

The study showed that increasing dietary vitamin C intake will result in effective vitamin C uptake into all compartments of the skin. Maintaining steady vitamin C levels in the blood is essential, since the body does not store the vitamin long term. Healthy individuals can reach optimal plasma levels with about 250mg of vitamin C per day, which keeps the plasma levels optimal. But since the body does not store the vitamin, doctors recommend at least five servings of fruit every day with at least one serving being a vitamin C rich fruit or vegetable.





# Knowing When a Nation is an Empire


**Carla Norrlöf**

Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto.

Little is known about the new framework that US President Donald Trump announced after talks with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte in Davos this month. While it has alleviated fears of an imminent showdown over Greenland, it has not settled the underlying dispute. Everyone still must ask: When Denmark or Greenland says no, does the United States have to listen?

This question goes to the heart of what empire is, and what it is not. The US is not an empire in Greenland yet. But this latest crisis makes the tripwire visible. Historically, empires often crossed saltwater before crossing the red line of jurisdiction, with the decisive shift coming when influence hardened into direct rule. Empire therefore represents a shift in authority, when an outside power can impose outcomes without the need for local consent.

The issue is not whether the US has leverage in the Arctic, but whether it is trying to convert its leverage into authority. Trump has sent clear imperialist signals by talking about acquiring the island and suggesting that force is not categorically off the table. But whether these signals will become a policy that makes Greenland's consent optional remains to be seen.

True, some use the word empire more loosely, usually to describe any pattern of domination or coerced alignment. By that definition, the push to acquire Greenland or control its mineral resources already qualifies. But while this language can capture real abuses, it also blurs the distinction between empire and hegemony, which refers to an outside power's ability to pressure and persuade without displacing local authority. Empire begins


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when the local governing authority's refusal no longer has any effect—when the right to make key decisions migrates from the local sovereign to the overseas power.

The US has not yet crossed that line. There has been no transfer of sovereignty, and there is no US civil administration on the island. While the US does enjoy substantial latitude through basing rights, those are the result of consensual arrangements. The 1951 US-Denmark Defense of Greenland Agreement—the legal basis for the Pituffik Space Base, for example—grants the US exclusive jurisdiction inside specific defense areas, without transferring Danish sovereignty.

These terms were widely understood for decades. But now, there is a question about whether the Trump administration will try to treat a limited provision as a blank check, expanding the basing perimeter on its own terms and reducing Danish and Greenlandic consent to a one-time formality. Recent rhetoric has tested this boundary. In 2019, Trump's talk of purchasing Greenland was easy to dismiss as theater. But when plans to acquire Greenland re-emerged in early January 2026, Trump suggested that military force "is always an option." He then used his speech in Davos to walk back that statement, only to tell the New York Post, on January 24, that

the US would still gain sovereignty over areas in Greenland where American bases are located.

If he meant that literally—as a transfer of territorial authority, not merely expanded access—it would mark a decisive move from influence to rule. But if 'sovereignty' is his shorthand for access, the ambiguity still matters, because it tests whether Danish or Greenlandic consent becomes an ongoing constraint.

Moreover, a future deal struck under duress does not resolve the legitimacy problem, but rather proves it. If Denmark or Greenland believes that military coercion is a credible alternative to signing a new agreement, consent is no longer doing the work that distinguishes allied basing from imperialism. The consequences of such coercion could be far-reaching. Trump's successful use of it in Greenland could set a precedent for disregarding consent without formal annexation, encouraging similar policies elsewhere, including over strategically vital chokepoints such as the Panama Canal and possibly entire countries such as Canada.

What would crossing the line look like in practice? The first indicator would be a unilateral expansion of US basing authority through security perimeters that grow beyond agreed size. These would be enforced by US personnel, justified by

US threat assessments, and maintained without any meaningful Danish or Greenlandic ability to reverse them. The second marker would be deals in minerals, ports, or infrastructure where local law remains nominally in place, but enforcement shifts to mechanisms controlled by the US. The shift would be most obvious if disputes are routed away from Greenlandic or Danish courts into forums where the US has the upper hand.

The third indicator would be if the US manages to constrain Greenlandic investment, resource contracts, or partnerships with third parties, implying that the island can no longer act meaningfully without US assent. This could be achieved through a variety of mechanisms, from formal veto points and security screening powers to de facto penalties that make refusing US authority prohibitively costly.

In each case, the signal is the same. Consent ceases to function, because there has been a change in who licenses activity, who polices boundaries, who adjudicates disputes, and who can halt projects. Local governance no longer matters, because it can be either bypassed or overridden.

For now, the best label for US behavior is hegemony. America has strategic reasons to care about Greenland—Arctic transit routes, undersea infrastructure, early-warning systems, the geography of northern deterrence—and these could certainly explain the administration's fixation on the island, even if they do not justify US rule. But domestic politics in Greenland and Denmark still matter, and NATO cohesion remains crucial. Redefining authority over allied territory would jeopardize the alliance's foundations, and the US does still need to worry about legal and reputational costs, since it relies on consent for basing and security cooperation.

America may not be a formal empire yet, but it has edged closer to the line. As long as Greenland's consent matters, it has not crossed it. That will happen if and when saying no stops having an effect.

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