



**LOCAL**  
*Kuwait Premier highlights country's economic turnaround at WGS-2026* **3**



**LOCAL**  
*Expats account for over three-quarter of workforce* **5**



**FOOD**  
*Two Kuwait Restaurants Shine on MENA's 50 Best List* **9**

## Bridging Differences, Respecting Diversity, Building Global Fraternity

### The Times Kuwait Report

The importance of international fraternity in advancing solutions to the convergence of global crises over the past few years has never been more acute. Overcoming geopolitical rivalries and social differences, and finding space to build solidarity, compassion, and respect for the cultural and religious diversity among people, is vital if the world is to progress as a peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable community.

Last October, during the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres presented a report titled 'Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace'.



The National Unity Law of 2012 criminalizes acts or statements that instigate hatred, sedition or discrimination among segments of Kuwaiti society based on their tribes, religions, gender, or race. Violations of this law by individuals are punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment, a heavy fine of KD10,000 to KD100,000 or both.

The report pointed out that increasingly fragmented societies, limited economic opportunities, persistent inequalities and shrinking civic space have heightened tensions and instability.

The report noted that in 2023, the world recorded the highest number of armed conflicts since 1946, with 9 of the 10 countries with the lowest human development indicators in 2023 being in a state of conflict. By the end of 2024, more than 123 million people were displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence,

human rights violations, and extreme weather events, with conflicts claiming the lives of more than 50,000 civilians amid rising violence and institutional failures.

The document underlined that the evolving nature of conflicts reflected deepening geopolitical divides that constrain collective problem-solving and erode compliance with the Charter of the United Nations. It also makes overall progress in implementation of the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) fragile and unequal. In particular, this has stalled progress in realizing SDG 16, which calls for promoting peaceful, equitable societies, and building effective, inclusive institutions.

The report emphasized the need for Member States to remain committed to the 'Pact for the Future'—the agreement that world leaders adopted at the UN 'Summit of the Future' in September 2024. Among others, the Pact calls for building a more peaceful, inclusive, effective and multilateral global system to tackle the interconnected challenges of the 21st century.

The UN report urged Members to promote and support intercultural and interreligious dialogue, with the aim of addressing the root causes of conflict, eradicating religious discrimination, and countering racism in all its manifestations. Observing that boosting social cohesion helps build peaceful societies, the document called for respecting diversity and human rights, as well as developing educational initiatives to fight discrimination, in cooperation with civil society, academia, and public agencies.

Social scientists point out that at the basic level the development of a pluralistic society requires the existence of effective interreligious, intercultural platforms to build mutual understanding, acceptance, and tolerance among people. These platforms help promote cooperative, constructive, and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions and beliefs, at both the individual and institutional levels.

To its credit, Kuwait has since the early 18th century been a multi-cultural society with a cosmopolitan outlook, as evidenced by its history of regional maritime links and a bustling port that attracted traders from across the seas. Discovery of oil in the late 1930s further entrenched international exposure, with people from around the world seeking work in the country. Kuwait has over the decades remained committed to its pluralistic religious, cultural approach, promoting moderation, peaceful co-existence, and social cohesiveness.

Kuwait's support for a multicultural, multireligious society is grounded in the country's constitution, which declares freedom of belief to be 'absolute' and provides for state protection of the freedom to practice all religions in accordance with established customs and provided it does not conflict with public policy or morals. The constitution also grants all individuals equality before the law, regardless of their religion.

Furthermore, the National Unity Law of 2012 criminalizes acts or statements that instigate

hatred, sedition or discrimination among segments of Kuwaiti society based on their tribes, religions, gender, or race. Violations of this law by individuals are punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment, a heavy fine of KD10,000 to KD100,000 or both.

Today, expatriates from over a 100 countries constitute more than 70 percent of Kuwait's population, and represent a vibrant multicultural society that lives together in harmony. The country's role in fostering an

inclusive environment that supports religious beliefs and respects diversity and differences is particularly significant given that in many parts of the world erecting religious and racial silos are increasingly becoming the norm, with peaceful coexistence the exception.

Interreligious and intercultural platforms are crucial for building bridges of trust, breaking down stereotypes, and promoting mutual understanding among diverse communities.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

**TASTE LEADER  
QUALITY LEADER**

Sole distributor in Kuwait  
**Al-Othman & Al-Bisher Trd. Co. W.L.L.**  
P.O. Box: 22984 Safat 13090 Kuwait  
Tel: 22284335 | 22284336 | 22284337  
22284338 | 22284339  
Email: sales@obtc.kwt.com  
www.obtc.kwt.com  
@obtc\_kwt

# Swiss President describes visit as historic, eyes stronger ties



By Shouq AlMulla  
Special to The Times Kuwait

President of the Swiss Confederation Guy Parmelin, paid a historic official visit to Kuwait, coinciding with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and Kuwait. The visit reflected the depth of bilateral ties and the shared commitment to advancing cooperation within established diplomatic, economic, and scientific frameworks.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received President Parmelin at Bayan Palace on the occasion of his official visit, in the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. President Parmelin also met with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at his residence at Bayan Palace, in the presence of Sheikh Dr. Basel Hamoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah, advisor at the Diwan of the Prime Minister and head of the Honorary Mission accompanying the state guest, as well as Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs, Ambassador Sadeq Marafi.

As part of his official program, President Parmelin and the accompanying delegation visited the Peace Palace Museum, where they were received by the museum's Director General, Sheikhha Mona Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. During the tour, the president reviewed

the museum's collections and historical documents highlighting key aspects of Kuwait's history and civilization, including the Museum of Kuwait Through Its Rulers, the History of the Peace Palace Museum, and the Museum of Civilizations that once inhabited Kuwait.

The official visit concluded with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Kuwait Danish Dairy Company (KDD) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH Zurich), held at the Swiss Embassy. The signing ceremony was held in the presence of Ambassador Marafi, and former Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water, Dr. Khaled Al-Fadhel.

The Memorandum of Understanding aims to strengthen cooperation in research, innovation, and knowledge transfer by linking the industrial sector with advanced academic expertise, supporting the development of innovative ideas and joint initiatives with practical applications. The agreement reflects the shared emphasis of both countries on research and development as a foundation for sustainable growth.

In remarks on the sidelines of the signing, President Parmelin described his visit as the first by a Swiss President to Kuwait, underscoring its historical importance given its timing with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations. He noted that his meetings with His Highness the Amir, the Crown Prince, and the Prime Minister were positive and constructive, reflecting the mutual desire to further develop bilateral relations, particularly in economic and scientific fields.

President Parmelin highlighted the availability of well-established legal and regulatory frameworks supporting Swiss-Kuwaiti cooperation, including the Free Trade Agreement between the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Free Trade Association,



as well as agreements on investment protection and the avoidance of double taxation. He noted that these frameworks provide a solid basis for engagement, with the private sector playing a central role in utilizing existing mechanisms.

He further noted that the Swiss-Kuwaiti Business Day held in Kuwait serves as a platform for enhancing dialogue between companies in

both countries, alongside the participation of Swiss firms seeking to expand their presence in the Kuwaiti market. He also referenced the continued growth of Swiss business activity in Kuwait and the potential for reciprocal participation in economic events held in Switzerland.

President Parmelin emphasized that personal and human connections remain a core pillar of Swiss-Kuwaiti relations, noting that business leaders, researchers, and professionals are key contributors to this long-standing partnership. He added that linking economic activity with scientific research, as reflected in the Memorandum of Understanding with ETH Zurich, supports practical cooperation within established institutional frameworks.

For his part, Swiss Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Tiziano Balmelli said the Embassy was honored to host the signing ceremony during the Swiss President's visit, marking six decades of diplomatic relations between the two countries. He noted that the event reflects the maturity of bilateral relations and the shared commitment to maintaining constructive engagement across economic, scientific, and institutional domains.

The visit reaffirmed the enduring friendship between Switzerland and Kuwait, highlighting a relationship characterized by stability, mutual respect, and continuity. As both countries mark 60 years of diplomatic relations, the emphasis remains on building upon existing foundations and maintaining dialogue that supports long-term cooperation and shared interests.

## Lulu Hypermarket represented at Flag Day event for Hala February festivities



Lulu Kuwait Director Mr. Sreejith Joined the Flag Day celebration held on 1st February at the Mubarak Al Kabeer Governorate, as part of the Hala February festivities.

The event was held under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Bader Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah, Governor of Mubarak Al Kabeer Governorate, marking the spirit of national pride and unity during Kuwait's festive season.



## IWG delegation visits Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Arabia

A delegation from the International Women's Group (IWG) visited the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Arabia, the Catholic church located in the Ahmadi area, as part of an organized excursion last week.

IWG became the first group to visit the Basilica following the visit of Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin to Kuwait in January, during which he elevated Ahmadi Church to the status of a Minor Basilica.

During the IWG visit, the parish priest, Rev. Fr. Darel Priwon Fernandes, shared the history and significance of the church



with the group and presented a symbolic gift.

For her part, President of IWG Marika Kochlamazashvili, expressed her sincere gratitude for the warm hospitality and for organizing such an informative and meaningful visit.



# Kuwait Premier highlights country's economic turnaround at WGS-2026

*"Kuwait has moved from vision to implementation," His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah declared at the World Government Summit 2026 in Dubai, highlighting sweeping reforms aimed at strengthening financial stability, diversifying the economy, and expanding private-sector participation, while reaffirming the country's commitment to sustainable growth, digital transformation, and global cooperation.*

## The Times Kuwait Report

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, affirmed that Kuwait has moved from vision to implementation, launching fundamental reforms to strengthen financial stability, diversify the economy, and expand private-sector participation.

The premier made the remarks while delivering Kuwait's address at the World Government Summit 2026 (WGS-2026) in Dubai last week. His Highness described the summit as a leading global platform and a 'laboratory of ideas' that connects ambitions of governments with the aspirations of their peoples.

The Prime Minister said the past year marked a decisive phase in Kuwait driven by clear political will, bold decisions, and rapid execution, producing three key lessons: boldness in decision-making, speed in achievement, and genuine partnership.

Sheikh Ahmed outlined major steps taken to ensure sustainable public finances, including the Finance and Liquidity Law regulating public debt management and forthcoming legislation governing the issuance of government bonds in line with Islamic Sharia principles. These reforms strengthened international confidence, reflected in S&P Global Ratings upgrading Kuwait's sovereign rating from A+ to AA- with a stable outlook.

Kuwait also returned to global debt markets with a \$11.25 billion sovereign bond issuance, became a full member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and recorded its highest development spending rate in five years. He explained that the financial tools serve a broader objective; building a diversified



and sustainable economy anchored in private-sector partnership.

Additionally, he highlighted Kuwait's progress toward establishing an integrated transport and logistics system, through, among others, signing the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port contract as Kuwait's maritime trade gateway; opening the new airport control tower and third runway; continued work on the new passenger terminal, set to open in 2027; and signing

the railway study and design contract to advance the Kuwait-Riyadh rail link. He added that together these projects form a strategic sea-air-land network supporting diversification and long-term growth. In energy and technology, the Prime Minister cited a decade-long partnership with GE Vernova and the establishment of a regional technology center to build national expertise. He also announced major opportunities for global firms in the oil and gas sector, including the Shaheen Peregrine oil export pipeline network and the Al-Seif offshore oil development project, while preserving state sovereignty.

On governance and services, Sheikh Ahmed said Kuwait expanded its digital transformation, with the 'Sahl' app surpassing 25 million transactions, migration of the Ministry of Finance's systems to the cloud, and integrated smart-government initiatives. Health, housing, and education sectors also saw qualitative improvements, reinforcing the focus on human development as the core of reform.

More than 50 legislative amendments were introduced over the past year, alongside the launch of the Kuwait Visa platform, updated residency regulations, tourism development, and broader governance reforms.

Recalling Kuwait's experience with occupation and war, the Prime Minister stressed that peace is a prerequisite for development and reaffirmed Kuwait's role as a voice for dialogue, sovereignty, bridge-building, and humanitarian action through a balanced and moderate foreign policy.

"The future does not wait for the hesitant," he said, emphasizing Kuwait's commitment to shaping its future through reform, transparency, and global cooperation.

سياتي هايبر ماركيت city HYPER MARKET

افتتاح عروض القرين  
QURAIN OPENING OFFERS



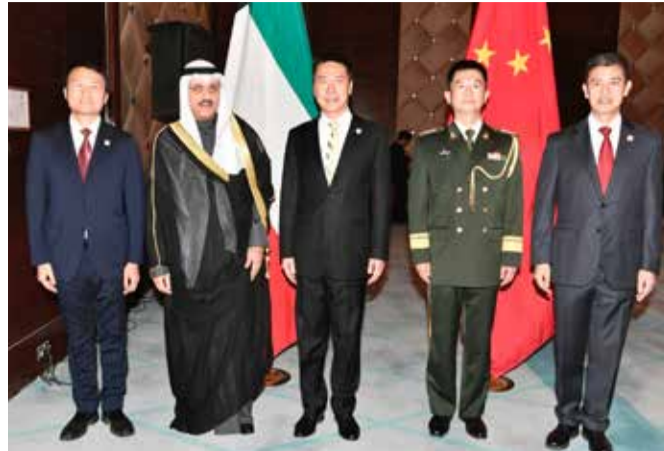
صارتا أقرب  
NOW OPEN

أسواق القرين (الحي مول - شارع ١)  
ASWAQ AL-QURAIN (AG MALL - 1st Street)

سهل الوصول إلينا! We're easy to get to!

<p>0.720 KD 0.475 KD Vimto Fruit Cordial No Artificial Colours 650ml</p>	<p>1.430 KD 0.890 KD Ferrero Nutella Hazelnut Spread 400gm Jar</p>	<p>1.600 KD 0.990 KD Nada Long Life Milk Full Cream Vitamin D 4x1Ltr</p>
<p>0.425 KD 0.375 KD Foster Clark's Custard Powder 450gm</p>	<p>0.780 KD 0.490 KD Quaker White Oats 500gm (Tin)</p>	<p>1.650 KD 0.975 KD Sadia Tender Chicken Breast 1Kg</p>
<p>2.970 KD 1.990 KD Tang Orange/Mango 2Kg</p>	<p>1.420 KD 0.990 KD Al Alali Skipjack Tuna in Sunflower Oil 3x170gm</p>	<p>1.440 KD 1.090 KD Dalal Corn Oil 2Ltr</p>

<p>1.215 KD 0.840 KD Sadia Whole Chicken 1200gm</p>	<p>1.590 KD 0.990 KD Pure Foods Fine Sugar 5Kg</p>	<p>1.190 KD 0.790 KD City Tissues 8x150's</p>
---	--	---



# Chinese Embassy celebrates 55 years of diplomatic relations with Kuwait

## The Times Kuwait Report

**E**mbassy of China celebrated the 55th anniversary of diplomatic relations with Kuwait, at a reception held alongside the launch of the Chinese New Year and Spring Festival celebrations. The event was attended by Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs, Ambassador Sameeh Johar Haya, members of the diplomatic corps, and senior officials.

In his address to the gathering, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of China H.E. Yang Xin, described bilateral relations with Kuwait as entering a new phase of accelerated development across economic, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. He cited the long-standing work of the Chinese medical team in Kuwait, cultural exchanges through Al-Arabi magazine, and the recent opening of the first Chinese Cultural Center in the Gulf region as examples of growing bilateral ties.

He further elaborated by saying that "Kuwait was the first country in the Gulf to establish diplomatic relations with China. It was also the first Gulf country to sign the Belt and Road Initiative and to support President Xi Jinping's Global Initiatives in the region. I believe that in the coming years, relations between Kuwait and China will continue to grow closer and stronger as

we advance major joint projects, including Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port and other upcoming projects.

For his part Ambassador Hayat said that bilateral relations are advancing steadily across all fields, particularly in the implementation of major development projects. This momentum followed the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China, during which seven agreements were signed. We are now seeing those agreements translated into action, beginning with work on Mubarak Port and the signing this month of the North Kabd wastewater treatment project, to be followed by additional initiatives.

Kuwaiti-Chinese relations started with a key milestone visit in February 1965, when the late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, then Minister of Finance, Oil, Trade, and Industry, visited China, laying the foundation for early economic and political cooperation, paving the way for the establishment of formal diplomatic relations on 22 March 1971, making Kuwait the first Gulf Arab state to forge ties with China. The relationship was further strengthened in 1990, when China supported Kuwait's sovereignty and endorsed United Nations Security Council resolutions following the Iraqi invasion.

Economic ties remain central to bilateral relations. Kuwait

is currently China's fifth-largest supplier of crude oil, while China has been Kuwait's largest trading partner for eight consecutive years. Bilateral trade has grown from US\$22 million in the early years to \$18.58 billion in 2025. Kuwait was also the first Middle Eastern country to sign a cooperation document under China's Belt and Road Initiative in 2014. Relations were elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the 2018 state visit of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China.

In September 2023, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, then Crown Prince, visited China and signed seven memoranda of understanding covering infrastructure, renewable energy, and environmental governance. The visit of the Vice President of China Han Zheng to Kuwait in November 2025 marked further progress in strategic coordination and joint development projects.

Looking ahead, Kuwait will participate at the highest levels in the upcoming Arab-China and GCC-China summits in June, and aims to host the third Arab-GCC-China Summit in 2030. Officials emphasized that the partnership is built on mutual respect, shared interests, and practical cooperation that continues to evolve, supporting regional stability and sustainable development.

## CONDOLENCES

The Owners,  
Management and Staff of



**Al-Rashed International  
Shipping Co. K.S.C.C**

Extend their Heartfelt  
condolences to

**Mr. Saju Thomas**

Assistant Manager Business Development  
and his Family

On the sudden demise of his Father

**T.M.Thomas**

who passed away in  
Thavattackal House, Elanthoor  
Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India

on 02<sup>nd</sup> February 2026.

**May his soul Rest in Peace**

## UAE-Kuwait Economic Forum underlines deep-rooted ties

*Marwa Al-Jaidan described the forum as a strategic platform to strengthen public-private sector partnerships and explore promising opportunities in sectors including industry, energy, advanced technology, logistics, and tourism.*



**A**cting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Marwa Al-Jaidan, said continued investment inflows into the Gulf region demonstrate the world's confidence in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries as a stable and integrated economic bloc capable of navigating challenges while maintaining cooperation and joint development.

Speaking at the opening of the UAE-Kuwait Economic Forum held as part of the "UAE and Kuwait... Brothers Forever" week, Al-Jaidan stressed that GCC nations share firm economic principles rooted in integration, a unified Gulf market, and long-term strategic interests—factors that create broader opportunities for partnership and investment.

She noted that holding the forum at this time

reflects the steady progress of Kuwaiti-Emirati relations and the commitment of the leadership of both countries to expanding cooperation in ways that serve mutual interests and support sustainable development. Al-Jaidan described the forum as a strategic platform to strengthen public-private sector partnerships and explore promising opportunities in sectors including industry, energy, advanced technology, logistics, and tourism. Such cooperation, she said, would drive economic growth and deepen integration between the two economies.

She emphasized that Kuwait-UAE ties are long-standing and deeply rooted across economic, trade, investment, and cultural fields, representing a model of Gulf cooperation built on unity and shared purpose.

# Exhibition highlights British culture, businesses, society

**British Ambassador H.E. Qudsi Rashid said the 'Britain in Kuwait' exhibition, held during the 13th British Week at Asimah Mall, showcases British culture, business, and brands while underscoring more than 250 years of historic ties and growing investment partnerships between the United Kingdom and Kuwait.**

## The Times Kuwait Report

British Ambassador H.E. Qudsi Rashid, affirmed that the 'Britain in Kuwait' exhibition provides a unique opportunity to showcase British culture, business sectors, and society, alongside British brands present in the Kuwaiti market, reflecting the depth of historical ties between the two friendly countries.

Speaking to media personnel on the sidelines of the 13th British Week in Kuwait, held last week at the Asimah Mall, the ambassador noted that the exhibition does not merely highlight shared heritage and enduring relations, it also shines a light on current areas of cooperation and promising opportunities for future collaboration.

He added that Kuwaitis know Britain well, and Britain, in turn, knows Kuwait and its people, making the event a celebration of a mutual relationship built on trust and cooperation.

The event, which was held in the presence and patronage of His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, was attended by several royal family members, government officials, citizens, and heads of diplomatic missions,

The ambassador praised the patronage of Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, describing



him as an inspiring and supportive figure, and expressed pride in his sponsorship of the event, noting that it played a significant role in its success. He emphasized that investment partnerships between the two countries form a key pillar for strengthening bilateral relations, adding that Kuwaiti investors have a deep understanding of the British market and have successfully introduced numerous UK brands to Kuwait, particularly in the food and beverage, automotive, and banking sectors.

Chairman of the British Week Organizing Committee, Ahmed Ismail Behbehani, stressed that Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad's patronage reflects the depth and history of Kuwaiti-British



relations, and his consistent support for events that strengthen the historic bonds between the two countries. Behbehani highlighted that Kuwaiti-British relations are a unique model of partnerships built on a solid foundation of historical friendship dating back more than 250 years, when mail routes were redirected through Kuwait by the British East India Company.

These ties were further cemented with the signing of the 1899 Anglo-Kuwaiti Agreement by the late Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, which confirmed Kuwait's independent decision-making and kept the country away from major international conflicts.

He noted that these relations have continued



to evolve over the decades, encompassing political, economic, military, and cultural fields. Behbehani also pointed to the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to the United Kingdom in January 2025 as a landmark moment that reaffirmed the strength of strategic relations and highlighted the special ties between the ruling families of both nations.

He concluded by emphasizing that the 13th British Week in Kuwait carries particular significance as it coincides with Kuwait's celebrations of the 65th Independence Day and the 35th Liberation Day, making it a particularly meaningful occasion for all participants.



## Expats account for over three-quarter of workforce

Kuwait's labor market continued its expansion in 2025, growing 8.9 percent with the addition of 262,960 workers, reaching a total workforce of 3.212 million, including 885,000 domestic workers, compared to 2.94 million at the end of 2024, according to the Public Authority for Civil Information.

Excluding the domestic sector, the workforce reached approximately 2.353 million, marking an annual increase of 139,500 workers (6.3%). Of this, 2.24 million are males (69.7%) and 972,010 are female workers, while the domestic sector accounted for 761,152 workers (25.2% of the total).

Kuwaiti nationals comprised 21 percent of the labor market, increasing from 449,588 to 493,400 workers across 17 sectors, while non-Kuwaitis make up the remaining 2.7 million (79%). About 80 percent of Kuwaiti workers are employed in the government sector, totaling 395,300, compared to 67,200 in the private sector.

Around one million Kuwaiti citizens remain outside the labor force, including 515,200 under 15 years and 490,000 elderly.

In the public sector, the workforce includes 525,500 employees, with 75.1 percent Kuwaiti (395,110) and 24.8 percent expatriates (130,400). The private sector accounted for 1.825 million employees (56.8 percent of total workforce), with 3.63 percent Kuwaitis and 96.36 percent expatriates.

In the public sector, Kuwaiti workers are concentrated in public administration, defense, social security, and real estate, rental, and business services. A breakup of public sector employment shows 385,100 Kuwaitis in administration, social security, and defense, while 33,500 work in real estate and rental, 11,500 in wholesale trade, and 10,700 in finance. Other sectors include health (1,311), education (1,357), transport and communications (524), and hospitality (1,723). In the private sector, they are notably present in wholesale trade, real estate, and financial intermediation. Regarding education, 55.57 percent of the total workforce is literate (1.785 million). Workers with intermediate certificates or equivalent form 16.3 percent, diplomas 8.75 percent, and university degrees 9 percent. Among Kuwaiti employees, 35.7 percent hold university degrees, totaling 165,144 graduates, while 6,357 hold master's degrees and 5,026 doctorates. Among non-Kuwaitis, 123,180 hold university degrees, 4,569 master's, and 1,714 doctorates.

The employment figures reflect a steady growth in Kuwait's labor market, with increasing participation from both nationals and expatriates, particularly in sectors critical to public administration, business services, and essential services.

# Japan-Kuwait relations enter new phase with expanded food trade



## The Times Kuwait Report

**E**mbassy of Japan hosted a reception last week to mark the country's National Day. The event was attended among others by Kuwait's Acting Deputy Foreign Minister, Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani along with a large gathering of members of the diplomatic corps and other distinguished guests.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador of Japan H.E. Kenichiro Mukai lauded the robust relations between Japan and Kuwait in various fields. In particular, he highlighted the rapidly expanding partnership with Kuwait, which he said marked a milestone recently with the

export from Japan of the country's premium Wagyu beef to Kuwait.

Elaborating on the export of the world-renowned beef product, Ambassador Mukai said that the agreement which was reached in 2025 has now materialized, bringing the prime Japanese delicacy to Kuwaiti consumers. "Many of my Kuwaiti friends used to ask when they could taste Wagyu in Kuwait; today, it is finally available," said the ambassador while inviting guests to experience Japanese cuisine, including Wagyu and other traditional washoku dishes.

Ambassador Mukai noted that 2025 marked a major leap in bilateral ties, highlighted by the visit of Kuwait's Crown Prince His

Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to Japan, during which relations were elevated to a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership'. During his visit, His Highness the Crown Prince held meetings with Japanese Emperor Naruhito and Japan's Crown Prince, strengthening ties between the Japanese Imperial Family and Kuwait's leadership.

Looking ahead, Mukai said 2026 will see expanded cooperation not only through official visits but also in culture, sports, energy, clean power, water technologies, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and advanced technologies, aligning with Kuwait Vision 2035. He encouraged greater Kuwaiti investment in Japan to deepen collaboration

in these future-oriented sectors.

On the cultural side, the ambassador highlighted the global popularity of matcha green tea, thanking a Kuwaiti partner for showcasing Japanese teas at the event, and introduced 'Tenmusu'—shrimp tempura rice balls from Nagoya, which will host the Asian Games later this year. He also pointed to the upcoming Yokohama Green Expo 2027, expressing hope for strong Kuwaiti participation.

The National Day celebration featured traditional kimono displays symbolizing Japanese aesthetics, alongside Grand Seiko timepieces, reflecting Japan's blend of heritage and precision craftsmanship.

## Kuwait calls for stronger Arab-Indian cooperation amid global challenges

**T**he importance of deepening Arab-India cooperation is no longer an option but a necessity amid rising global challenges. In light of this, Kuwait affirms its readiness to work with India and Arab countries to activate the Arab-India Cooperation Forum and transform its outcomes into practical and implementable programs.

The remarks were made by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the League of Arab States, Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi, at the meeting of the Arab-Indian Cooperation Forum, hosted by New Delhi on 31 January.

The Kuwaiti representative conveyed the greetings of Kuwait, its leadership, government, and people, and expressed appreciation for the invitation from India to hold this important meeting. He also extended warmest congratulations on the occasion of 77th Republic Day to the leadership and people of India. Ambassador Al-Mutairi also thanked the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and its Secretary-General for their continuous efforts in supporting the framework of the Arab-India Forum since its inception.

The Kuwaiti official noted that the New Delhi meeting is an opportunity to assess what has been achieved so far, and to build upon what was agreed at the first ministerial meeting in Bahrain and the Manama Declaration of 2016, as well as subsequent technical and political discussions.

Referring to the text of the Manama Declaration, Ambassador Al-Mutairi emphasized the importance of joint cooperation in the areas of political coordination and consultation, including the stability of the Arab region and South Asia, peacekeeping efforts, combating terrorism, Security Council reform, and cooperation in economic and cultural fields, as well as in issues of food security, energy, education, and technological development.

"Our meeting today is a confirmation of our collective conviction in the forum's ability to move to more effective stages in terms of practical projects and institutional follow-up in all sectors. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of establishing a regular schedule for its meetings, given its crucial role in advancing joint work between the two sides," Al-Mutairi stated. The Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the League of Arab States recalled the close historical relations between the two friendly countries, noting that Kuwait has long served as a bridge for cultural and civilizational exchange between India and the countries in the region. This year marks the 65th anniversary of the establishment of Kuwait-India diplomatic relations.

He referred to the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kuwait in December 2024, which led to a qualitative leap in relations. During the visit, Prime Minister Modi was awarded Kuwait's highest honor, The Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer, by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the two countries announced the elevation of relations to the level of strategic partnership, a step that confirms the shared political will to enhance cooperation to other areas.

Al-Mutairi highlighted the importance of trade exchange between the

two sides, noting that the volume of trade between the two countries exceeded US\$10 billion in 2024-2025, and affirmed the existence of significant opportunities to expand mutual investment, especially Indian investments in Kuwait, and the growing cooperation in the technology, artificial intelligence, and technical training sectors.

Al-Mutairi stressed the importance of support and coordination with friendly countries regarding pressing issues, especially in light of the critical circumstances affecting the Arab region and the world, in order to find diplomatic solutions based on the principle of dialogue. Kuwait reiterated its support for all efforts aimed at consolidating stability and achieving a comprehensive political settlement that ends conflicts and crises and restores security and stability in the Arab region.



Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the League of Arab States Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi addresses his statement

Al-Mutairi emphasized the importance of cooperation between India and the Arab world. "The experiences and challenges the world has faced have demonstrated the importance of cooperation between countries in stabilizing supply chains, especially those related to food security. In this context, we are committed to strengthening cooperation in this field to serve our common interests," he said.

He added that India has long been a primary source of food for both Kuwait and the region, and expressed Kuwait's pride in being a key partner of India in meeting its energy needs, affirming Kuwait's interest in developing cooperation in modern technologies in this sector. Al-Mutairi also commended the positive role of the Indian community in Kuwait and the role it plays as an important contributor in various fields and a partner in economic and social development.

"The Arab-India Forum is an effective platform that embodies what our people aspire to in supporting everything that strengthens the bonds of cooperation, consolidates constructive partnerships, and achieves common interests," he concluded.



## Cash transactions at exchange companies capped at KD1000 per day

**C**entral Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has reduced the maximum amount of cash that exchange companies may accept from customers to KD1,000 per day per customer, down from the previous limit of KD3,000.

The decision, which comes into force from 2 February, applies to cash used for foreign transfers as well as currency buying and selling transactions. The move is said to be part of the CBK's efforts to curb risks associated with cash-based transactions, particularly those linked to money transfers and foreign exchange dealings. The step also comes within the bank's precautionary supervisory measures aimed at strengthening controls against money laundering and terrorist financing.

Under the new directive, exchange companies are prohibited from accepting cash payments exceeding KD 1,000, or its equivalent in foreign currency, from a customer within a single day to settle transaction values. However, there is no ceiling on the total value of transfers or currency transactions themselves. The restriction applies only to the cash portion of the payment. Any amount exceeding KD 1,000 must be settled through bank account deductions or other approved banking payment methods permitted by the Central Bank. The measure reinforces the regulator's push toward more transparent and traceable financial transactions while reducing reliance on large cash payments.

# Cuba woos Kuwaiti tourists with history, culture, charm

*The Embassy of Cuba hosted a tourism conference in Kuwait to promote the island nation as a prime travel destination, with Ambassador H.E. Eny Pérez Torres highlighting Cuba's rich history, vibrant culture, UNESCO-listed cities, pristine beaches, and expanding hospitality infrastructure, while expressing hopes to boost the number of Kuwaiti visitors in the years ahead.*

## The Times Kuwait Report

The Embassy of Cuba organized a Cuban tourism conference last week, in the presence of ambassadors from Latin American countries and a large gathering of representatives from travel and tourism offices in Kuwait. The conference aimed to introduce the island's main tourist attractions and promote tourists from Kuwait to Cuba.

Addressing the gathering, Ambassador of Cuba H.E. Eny Pérez Torres, said Cuba is a tourist destination rich in history, culture, and natural beauty, with visitors able to discover fascinating stories in every corner of the country.

He pointed out that several Cuban cities, such as Old Havana—designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site—as well as Trinidad and Cienfuegos, are distinguished by their well-preserved historic centers, which offer insight into life in old Cuba, and reflect the influence of neoclassical and baroque architecture that defines the country's unique character.

He added that Cuban culture is vibrant and dynamic, the result of a rich fusion of



African, Spanish, and Caribbean influences, emphasizing that music and dance represent the soul of the island, with infectious rhythms such as son, rumba, and mambo present in streets, bars, and cafés. Visitors can also enjoy live performances, learn salsa dancing with local instructors, and visit iconic jazz clubs that have hosted legendary musicians.

The ambassador noted that the Cuban

people are the country's greatest treasure, thanks to their warmth and hospitality, which make every visitor feel at home. He also highlighted Cuban cuisine, rich in flavors, the beautiful beaches with crystal-clear waters, and the international fame of Cuban tobacco, which allows tourists to visit tobacco fields and learn firsthand about the entire process of producing the world-renowned Cuban cigars.

The ambassador went on to indicate that Cuba has high-quality hotel infrastructure capable of welcoming Kuwaiti tourists, revealing that around 70 Kuwaiti citizens visited Cuba last year. He expressed his aspiration to increase this number in the coming years by strengthening tourism cooperation and enhancing the promotion of Cuba as a tourist destination in Kuwait.



## City Hypermarket expands to Al Qurain new location with Grand Opening

City Hypermarket, Kuwait's fastest-growing locally-owned supermarket chain, officially opened its newest location in Aswaaq Al Qurain, on February 4.

The new store was launched by the Founder Adel Alghanim, Deputy CEO Nasser Alghanim, and Marzouq Alghanim, delivering on the brand promise of "Value, all the time" with a spacious, redesigned store and competitive Ramadan promotions for families across Kuwait.

The opening was also attended by members of the press, the mall owners and landlord, amongst a festive celebration with the general



public. The new Qurain store features refreshed and redesigned layouts that deliver a more elevated and spacious shopping environment for customers. To celebrate the opening, City Hypermarket launched competitive deals across fresh produce, supermarket food items, and household essentials all designed to make Ramadan shopping more cost-effective and convenient for families across Kuwait.

The opening celebrations also featured a cultural Kuwaiti performance, family activities and free giveaways for all to enjoy. Deputy CEO Nasser Adel Alghanim expressed pride in the opening, stating, "We are proud to open our first

store in Mubarak Al Kabeer Governorate to serve the Al Qurain community at such an important shopping period.

"As a Kuwaiti company, this opening reflects our commitment to bringing our 'Value, all the time' promise closer to more families across Kuwait, helping them prepare for Ramadan with stronger value and greater convenience."

In addition, City Hypermarket highlighted its specially curated household range for the season, developed with locally inspired designs that reflect Kuwaiti and Arabic culture and heritage. The range features three dedicated collections: Alanoud, Andalous, and Fajer from its exclusive Into Home Arabesque brand, as well as carrying the beautifully designed WABA range.

It also provides everything needed to prepare for the season such as kitchen needs, serving and dining sets, glassware, cookware and more.

Renowned for its large-format stores and one-stop-shop convenience, City Hypermarket has built its reputation as one of the best locally owned hypermarkets in Kuwait.

The brand's commitment to value-driven pricing and customer-centric service has driven consistent growth and increasing market share across the country in the last few years.

The Qurain opening marked another milestone in the company's growth trajectory, with another store opening planned for 2026 in Eqaila as the brand continues to expand its footprint across Kuwait.

The Qurain location welcomed its first customers on February 4 and is now serving the community for 24 hours a day with the same commitment to value and service that has made City Hypermarket a trusted name across the country.

## MOI, IOM train frontline officers to strengthen fight against human trafficking

The Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the IOM Kuwait partnered to conduct training for frontline police officers on combating human trafficking, in line with directives from the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, to enhance staff capabilities.

This workshop, focused on identification, legal frameworks, and victim protection, aims to strengthen national efforts against human trafficking. Director of the Training Department at the Ministry of Interior, Brigadier General Salem Ashour, reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to playing an active role as a member of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and to strengthening cooperation in humanitarian efforts, particularly in combating human trafficking and protecting victims.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of a training course organized jointly by the Ministry of Interior and the United Nations Migration Agency (IOM) in Kuwait, Brigadier General Ashour said the workshop reflects the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, to enhance the training of military personnel and develop the capabilities of Ministry of Interior staff across sectors.

This is achieved through participation in courses and workshops addressing issues of international concern, especially those with humanitarian dimensions.

He explained that such workshops help raise awareness and knowledge, improve the quality of performance, and strengthen coordination between relevant military



and civilian entities. He also expressed appreciation to the IOM for its productive cooperation in organizing the training, noting that it forms part of the ongoing partnership with the Ministry of Interior, represented by the General Directorate of Training.

Meanwhile, the head of the IOM mission in Kuwait, Mazen Abu Al-Hassan, stated that the three-day workshop, which concluded recently, brought together around 29 participants from various Ministry of Interior departments.

The sessions addressed the concept of human trafficking, indicators for identifying victims, mechanisms for assistance, and ways to enhance coordination among concerned authorities.

He stressed that combating human trafficking remains a priority for Kuwait, with the involvement of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior and other relevant bodies, while the IOM continues to support national efforts through the expertise of its local and international specialists.



# Khufu's in Egypt Tops MENA's 50 Best Restaurants List

- *Khufu's in Giza, Egypt, is named The Best Restaurant in the Middle East & North Africa 2026*
- *The list includes 16 new entries and winners from 14 different cities across the MENA region, from Dubai and Marrakech to Giza, Casablanca, Doha and Amman*
- *Reif Kushiyaki Cairo wins the Highest Climber Award, rising 27 spots to No.20*
- *Beihouse in Beirut is the recipient of the Highest New Entry Award, after debuting on the list at No.5*
- *Sara Aqel of Dara Dining by Sara Aqel is honoured with MENA's Best Female Chef Award.*
- *Omar and Wassim Orfali, Executive Pastry Chef and Development Pastry Chef at Orfali Bros, take home MENA's Best Pastry Chef Award.*
- *Salam Dakkak, Chef and Founder of Sufret Maryam and Bait Maryam, wins the Sevenrooms Icon Award*
- *Himanshu Saini of Trècind Studio is voted by his peers as the winner of the Chefs' Choice Award*
- *Farmers in Morocco wins the Sustainable Restaurant Award.*

## The Times Kuwait Report

The Middle East and North Africa's (MENA) culinary spotlight turned to Abu Dhabi last week as the fifth edition of Middle East & North Africa's 50 Best Restaurants was unveiled at a gala ceremony held at Emirates Palace Mandarin Oriental. Hosted in partnership with the Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi), the event brought together leading chefs, restaurateurs and industry figures from across the region.

Restaurants from 14 cities across the Middle East and North Africa featured on the prestigious list, with Khufu's in Egypt crowned No.1 restaurant in the region for 2026, marking the first time an Egyptian restaurant has claimed the top position.

Located in the shadow of the Pyramids of Giza, Khufu's has earned acclaim for its refined interpretation of Egyptian culinary traditions, drawing inspiration from the flavors of the Nile Valley while presenting them through a contemporary lens. The restaurant's rise to the top is attributed to its thoughtful storytelling, meticulous sourcing of ingredients and its ability to balance elegance with authenticity.

The restaurant's setting, combined with its modern Egyptian gastronomic identity, has resonated strongly with both regional and international diners, positioning Egypt firmly on the global culinary map.

Dubai-based restaurants dominated the upper ranks, with Kinoya placing second, followed by Trècind Studio at No.3 and Orfali Bros at No.4. Orfali Bros had previously held the No.1 position for three consecutive years. Beirut's Beihouse completed the top five, reaffirming Lebanon's enduring influence on the region's dining landscape.

A spokesperson for Middle East & North Africa's 50 Best Restaurants said the 2026 list



reflects the growing diversity and creativity of the region's food scene. "We are thrilled to recognise Khufu's as the No.1 restaurant in the Middle East and North Africa for 2026. Its culinary philosophy, deeply rooted in Egyptian culture yet executed with contemporary finesse, represents the very best of what the region has to offer," the spokesperson said.

The United Arab Emirates once again led the rankings with 25 restaurants on the list. Dubai featured prominently with Sufret Maryam (No.7), Jun's (No.8), Manão (No.9), Moonrise (No.10) and Kokoro (No.15). Abu Dhabi's growing culinary profile was reflected through entries such as

Marmellata Bakery (No.16), Niri (No.38), 3 Fils Abu Dhabi (No.42), a new entrant, and LPM Abu Dhabi (No.47). Egypt celebrated a landmark year beyond its top ranking, with several restaurants featured, including Reif Kushiyaki Cairo (No.20), Kazoku (No.25), Zooba Zamalek (No.32) and Sachi Cairo (No.37), underscoring Cairo's rising culinary stature.

Saudi Arabia continued its upward trajectory, led by Kuuru (No.6), which was also named The Best Restaurant in Saudi Arabia 2026. Marble (No.12) and Myazu (No.45) further reinforced the Kingdom's growing presence. Lebanon's culinary resilience was highlighted through

Beihouse (No.5), Em Sherif (No.13) and Buco (No.39). Morocco delivered another strong showing, with La Grande Table Marocaine (No.19) also receiving the Art of Hospitality Award 2026. Marrakech was further represented by Le Petit Cornichon (No.21), Sesamo (No.24), +61 (No.31) and Farmers (No.49), which won the Sustainable Restaurant Award.

Jordan's capital Amman featured prominently with Shams El Balad (No.26), Alee (No.28) and Dara Dining by Sara Aqel (No.30), reflecting the city's emerging culinary identity. The list also included notable entries from Kuwait, Bahrain, Tunisia and Qatar, with Cantina (No.18) and Matbakhi (No.50) representing Kuwait City, alongside Lyra (No.48) in Manama, Le Golfe (No.46) in La Marsa and Idam (No.44) in Doha.

Several special awards were presented alongside the rankings. Beihouse received the Highest New Entry Award, while Reif Kushiyaki Cairo earned the Highest Climber Award, rising 27 places. Sara Aqel was named MENA's Best Female Chef, Wassim and Omar Orfali received Best Pastry Chef, and Salam Dakkak was honoured with the SevenRooms Icon Award.

Himanshu Saini of Trècind Studio won the Chefs' Choice Award, while Farmers in Marrakech received the Sustainable Restaurant Award for its commitment to ethical sourcing and environmental responsibility.

Additional accolades announced ahead of the ceremony included the Champions of Change Award for Muna Haddad, the Art of Hospitality Award for La Grande Table Marocaine, and the One To Watch Award for Middle Child in Dubai.

The rankings are determined by the Middle East & North Africa's 50 Best Restaurants Academy, comprising 250 industry experts from 19 countries. Academy members vote independently, with strict criteria ensuring transparency and regional diversity. Sponsors have no influence over the voting process.





# Two Kuwait Restaurants Shine on MENA's 50 Best List

*Cantina and Matbakhi place Kuwait firmly on the region's culinary map*

Kuwait's evolving dining scene has received significant regional recognition with two homegrown restaurants, Cantina and Matbakhi, earning spots on the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) region's 50 Best Restaurants list. The achievement highlights the country's growing influence in shaping contemporary and heritage-driven gastronomy across the region.



Placed at an impressive No. 18, Cantina stands as Kuwait's highest-ranked restaurant on the list. Located in Shuwaikh Industrial area, the restaurant is known for its refined yet approachable take on Italian and

Mediterranean cuisine. Cantina has built a loyal following for its emphasis on quality ingredients, handmade pasta, and carefully executed classics, all delivered in a warm, understated setting.

The restaurant's success reflects a broader trend within Kuwait's dining culture—one that embraces international techniques while maintaining a strong sense of identity and consistency. Cantina's ranking cements its position as a benchmark for modern dining in the country and a destination that resonates well beyond local borders.

Making its debut on the list at No. 50, Matbakhi represents a different but equally important facet of Kuwait's culinary landscape. Known for its authentic Middle Eastern and Levantine home-style cooking, Matbakhi has earned acclaim for preserving traditional flavors and presenting them with sincerity and depth.

Often praised for dishes rooted in regional heritage, Matbakhi's inclusion underscores the growing appreciation for restaurants that champion cultural authenticity alongside culinary excellence. Its recognition signals that deeply rooted, comfort-driven cuisine has a rightful place on the region's most prestigious food rankings.

The presence of both Cantina and Matbakhi on the MENA 50 Best Restaurants list reflects the diversity, maturity, and ambition of Kuwait's hospitality sector. From contemporary international dining to heritage-inspired kitchens, Kuwait continues to demonstrate that its food culture is dynamic, confident, and increasingly influential on the regional stage. Both restaurants reflect Kuwait's evolving food scene, blending international techniques with local tastes and earning wider regional recognition.

As regional and global attention turns more closely toward the Gulf's dining destinations, Kuwait's dual recognition this year stands as a milestone and a promising sign of what lies ahead.

Middle East North Africa's  
**50 BEST RESTAURANTS**  
2026

Ranking	Restaurant	City/Town
1	Khufu's	Giza
2	Kinoya	Dubai
3	Trèsind Studio	Dubai
4	Orfali Bros	Dubai
5	Beihouse	Beirut
6	Kuuru	Jeddah
7	Sufret Maryam	Dubai
8	Jun's	Dubai
9	Manão	Dubai
10	Moonrise	Dubai
11	Table 3	Casablanca
12	Marble	Riyadh
13	Em Sherif	Beirut
14	11 Woodfire	Dubai
15	Kokoro	Dubai
16	Marmellata Bakery	Abu Dhabi
17	3 Fils Dubai	Dubai
18	Cantina	Kuwait City
19	La Grande Table Marocaine	Marrakech
20	Reif Kushiya	Cairo
21	Le Petit Cornichon	Marrakech
22	FZN	Dubai
23	TakaHisa	Dubai
24	Sesamo	Marrakech
25	Kazoku	Cairo
26	Shams El Balad	Amman
27	LPM Dubai	Dubai
28	Alee	Amman
29	Three Bros	Dubai
30	Dara Dining by Sara Aqel	Amman
31	+61	Marrakech
32	Zooba (Zamalek)	Cairo
33	Gaia	Dubai
34	Zuma	Dubai
35	Mimi Kakushi	Dubai
36	Row on 45	Dubai
37	Sachi Cairo	Cairo
38	Niri	Abu Dhabi
39	Buco	Beirut
40	Chez Wam	Dubai
41	Boca	Dubai
42	3 Fils Abu Dhabi	Abu Dhabi
43	Girl and the Goose	Dubai
44	Idam	Doha
45	Myazu	Riyadh
46	Le Golfe	La Marsa
47	LPM Abu Dhabi	Abu Dhabi
48	Lyra	Manama
49	Farmers	Marrakech
50	Matbakhi	Kuwait City





## Hungary opens new gateway to Kuwait's F&B sector

### The Times Kuwait Report

**H**ungary is moving to strengthen its economic footprint in Kuwait by positioning its Food and Beverage (F&B) industry as a new pillar of bilateral trade cooperation.

Hungarian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. András Szabó said the first-ever promotional event for Hungarian food and beverage products in Kuwait marks an important step toward expanding commercial partnerships between the two countries — particularly in the food industry, where demand for high-quality products continues to grow in the Kuwaiti market.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, which brought together specialized Hungarian companies and Kuwaiti business leaders in direct meetings, Ambassador Szabó said the initiative followed careful assessment of the Kuwaiti market's strong potential.

He highlighted Kuwait's status as a regional hub for fine dining and premium



food consumption, noting Hungary's ambition to become an active contributor to this dynamic landscape. The event was organized in cooperation with the Hungarian Agricultural Marketing Center, a government body responsible for promoting Hungarian agricultural and food products abroad.

Ambassador Szabó noted that the limited presence of Hungarian products in Kuwaiti markets was a key motivation behind launching the initiative — the first of its kind between the two countries in this sector. A total of 12



Hungarian companies participated, leading to the signing of five memoranda of understanding between Kuwaiti and Hungarian firms. The agreements cover a diverse range of products, including mineral water, biscuits, baby food, chocolate drinks, sauces, as well as health foods and vitamin supplements targeted at families.

The ambassador expressed pride in the strong turnout and the engagement of local partners, voicing hope that the business-to-business (B2B) meetings will translate into tangible and sustainable trade agreements

that boost the presence of Hungarian products in Kuwait. Szabó emphasized that Hungary's role is not limited to exporting processed food products. The country is also keen to support local production in Kuwait through the transfer of food technologies and expertise.

He pointed to potential cooperation in dairy processing, the establishment of vertical farms for vegetable production using Hungarian seeds, and collaboration in the livestock sector, including livestock imports and the future export of day-old chicks. Hungarian food technology, he said, could play a supportive role in strengthening Kuwait's food self-sufficiency over the medium and long term.

### Direct Flights a 'Vital Bridge'

In a related context, Szabó stressed the importance of launching direct flights between Kuwait and Hungary, describing them as a "vital bridge" linking trade, investment, tourism, and education. He expressed hope that this goal can be achieved in the coming years, further deepening ties between the two nations.

## Photo exhibition highlights Kuwaiti-French relations



### The Times Kuwait Report

**O**n the occasion of the 65th anniversary of diplomatic relations between France and Kuwait, the Embassy of France, in cooperation with the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL), organized a photo exhibition on Kuwaiti-French relations at the Kuwait National Library last week.

The exhibition, which is part of the 31st Al-Qurain Cultural Festival activities, draws from its exhibits from the personal collection of Researcher Essa Dashti, BEM. The images present a visual narrative that traces the depth and evolution of Kuwaiti-French relations through key historical and cultural moments.

In his opening remarks on the occasion, Secretary-General of NCCAL, Dr. Mohammed Al-Jassar, stated that Kuwaiti-French relations represent a distinguished model of historical friendship and cooperation that extends beyond politics. He expressed pride in the long-standing partnership between NCCAL, the French Institute, and the French Center for Archaeology and Social Sciences in the Arabian Peninsula (CEFREPA), which has been hosted in Kuwait for nearly a

decade, reaffirming NCCAL's commitment to further strengthening cultural cooperation with France. Dr. Al-Jassar also noted that the exhibition features contemporary images of France captured by Kuwaiti photographer Ali Al-Arbash, presented through high-quality photographs taken entirely using mobile devices.

For his part, Ambassador of France H.E. Olivier Gauvin described the exhibition as more than a display of photographs, calling it a collection of living memories that tell the story of an exceptional relationship shaped by history and strengthened by trust. He noted that each image captures key historic moments, carrying both a memory of the past and a promise for the future.

Ambassador Gauvin highlighted the historic visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to France on 14 July 2025, on the occasion of Bastille Day, as one of the most significant milestones in the partnership. He also emphasized that Kuwaiti-French relations remain strong and forward-looking, supported by cooperation across political, defense, educational, cultural, and economic fields.

He further underscored that the relationship was firmly solidified when France played

a significant role in supporting Kuwait's sovereignty and liberation, noting that the bond between the two nations is rooted in shared values and mutual respect.

During the event, Ambassador Gauvin officially donated a collection of books to the Kuwait National Library's newly established Diplomatic Library. The donation includes works on French history and diplomacy, notably a volume on General Charles de Gaulle, a pivotal figure in French history and an influential personality in the early foundations of Kuwaiti-French relations. The ambassador personally signed the book with a handwritten dedication



highlighting the friendship and the enduring ties between the two peoples.

Researcher Dashti explained that the exhibition runs for three days and features 30 selected photographs from his private archive of approximately 1,000 images, documenting key moments of cultural and diplomatic exchange between Kuwait and France.

He highlighted the importance of the newly established Diplomatic Library section at the Kuwait National Library, an initiative by Director General of the National Library of Kuwait Siham Al-Azmi, as part of broader efforts to preserve diplomatic history and promote cultural and intellectual exchange. Dashti also announced that his forthcoming official book on Kuwaiti-French relations will be published next week in both Arabic and English.

On the sidelines of the opening, attendees planted the Kuwaiti-French Friendship Tree, marking the third friendship tree in the garden of the Kuwait National Library, following the Kuwaiti-British Partnership Tree and the Kuwaiti-Canadian Friendship Tree—symbolizing deep roots and continued, fruitful cooperation between Kuwait and its international partners.

# Food delegation visit signals new momentum in US-Kuwaiti ties

*USDA delegation brings a taste of America to Kuwait, strengthens bilateral agri-food cooperation; boosts partnerships and market links*

## The Times Kuwait Report

A delegation from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) along with a group of US food exporters visited Kuwait last week marking a new milestone in bilateral trade cooperation. The visit brought together American food exporters, Kuwaiti food importers, restaurateurs, and government representatives, highlighting the growing momentum in US-Kuwait food and agriculture partnerships.

The delegation, which had earlier participated in the Gulfood 2026 exhibition—the world's largest annual food and beverage trade show held in Dubai—met with members of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, underscoring the importance of institutional collaboration in expanding commercial ties. The program also included a curated presentation of US food products, offering attendees a firsthand look at the quality, innovation, and diversity that characterize American agricultural exports.

Speaking at the event, Chargé d'Affaires (CDA) at the US Embassy, Steve Butler described the evening as a first-of-its-kind initiative. "For the first time, we are bringing



a taste of Gulfood to Kuwait," he said, noting that Kuwait's vibrant and sophisticated food scene aligns naturally with the high standards of US food exporters. He emphasized that the gathering reflected not only commercial opportunity, but also the strength of the broader US-Kuwait relationship.

CDA Butler expressed appreciation to the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service for organizing the visit and facilitating dialogue between US exporters and Kuwaiti stakeholders. He highlighted Kuwait as a valuable and important

partner for American food producers, adding that such engagements create space to exchange ideas, explore partnerships, and address regulatory and logistical considerations that can further strengthen bilateral trade.

"These connections are built on decades of partnership, trust, and mutual respect," he said, pointing to expanding commercial ties and people-to-people exchanges as key pillars of future cooperation between the two countries.

Kuwait's reputation for culinary excellence, openness to international flavors, and strong

import market, position it as a natural partner in this expanding global food network. The US delegation's visit reinforced the shared potential for a fruitful, long-term partnership, one that combines Kuwait's dynamic food culture with the United States' high-quality, reliable, and innovative food offerings.

As both countries look ahead, initiatives like this visit serve as a reminder that food is not only a trade commodity, but also a powerful connector—strengthening economic ties, cultural exchange, and mutual growth.

## LuLu Exchange Kuwait celebrates 14 years of trust, service excellence and connection

LuLu Exchange Kuwait, one of the nation's most trusted currency exchange and cross-border payments companies, marked a significant milestone today, celebrating its 14th anniversary and more than a decade of service dedicated to connecting people, families and economies.

The celebration took place on February 6, 2026 at the Alrai Branch, bringing together customers, partners, staff and well-wishers who have been part of the journey since the company's inception in 2012, when it began operations with its first branch in Fahaheel.

Over the past fourteen years, LuLu Exchange has grown into a trusted financial partner for thousands of expatriates and Kuwaiti nationals alike. It has been more than just a money transfer service for many expats. LuLu Exchange has been a lifeline to home, enabling them to support families, celebrate milestones and stay emotionally connected across borders. For the people of Kuwait, LuLu Exchange has stood as a reliable institution that reflects the country's openness, hospitality and commitment to inclusive growth.

Kuwait's diverse population and welcoming spirit has influenced LuLu Exchange's success. The company has consistently aligned itself with the nation's values with transparent, secure and customer centric financial services while adapting to the evolving needs of a multicultural community. LuLu Exchange always anchored its focus on making financial services simpler, faster and more accessible for everyone.



Speaking on the occasion, Rajesh Rangray, General Manager, LuLu Exchange Kuwait, highlighted that the anniversary is a celebration of years and relationships built on trust. "Every transaction carries a story of hard work, responsibility and love for family back home. We are proud to be part of those stories. A customer who leaves smiling and comes back smiling again with confidence is the true measure of our service," he noted.

The anniversary celebration at the Alrai branch was a moment of reflection and gratitude towards customers who placed their confidence in the brand, employees who upheld service excellence and Kuwait itself for being a land of opportunity and coexistence.

LuLu Exchange reaffirmed its commitment to continue serving communities as it steps to the 15th year of success with integrity, innovation, and empathy; strengthening the financial bridges that bring people closer, no matter how far apart they may be.



## ALSAYER honored by Toyota Motor Corporation

Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Est. Co. W.L.L (ALSAYER) has been honored with the prestigious 70th Year Award from Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC), an elite recognition awarded to only six Toyota dealers worldwide.

Signed by TMC Chairman Akio Toyoda and featuring the legendary phoenix symbolizing resilience and victory, the award celebrates seven decades of ALSAYER's commitment to excellence, innovation, and market leadership, reflecting the enduring partnership between ALSAYER and Toyota. Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer, CEO of ALSAYER Group, described the award as a "moment of immense pride" for the organization, emphasizing that the achievement is dedicated to the company's customers, whose trust and loyalty have been central to ALSAYER's success since 1954, when it became the world's second-ever Toyota dealer. Over the decades, ALSAYER has pioneered Kuwait's automotive sector, blending innovation with a "Customer First" philosophy.

The award highlights ALSAYER's global significance, underpinned by decades of market leadership, operational excellence, and brand stewardship. The Group's success is rooted in the philosophy of Kaizen (continuous improvement), enabling landmark achievements such as the launch of the Lexus brand in 1989, the opening of the world's largest Lexus showroom in Kuwait in 2010, and the globally first 360-degree customer care program, "No. 1 by Far." ALSAYER has also won the TMC Customer Service Excellence Award 16 consecutive years, and recently implemented the AutoStore robotics parts warehouse system, a first for any Toyota dealer worldwide.

Entering its eighth decade, ALSAYER continues to drive Kuwait's automotive market through innovation, technological leadership, and customer-centric solutions. The Group remains dedicated to pioneering new standards in mobility and service, ensuring that its partnership with Toyota continues to foster growth, excellence, and a benchmark for the global automotive industry.



# Generosity, tradition in action as Azayez Farm welcomes diplomatic corps

*A taste of Kuwait: 30 years of celebrating Kuwaiti hospitality, culture*



**By Shouq Al-Mulla**  
**Special to the Times Kuwait**

For more than three decades, Azayez Farm in Al Abdali area of northern Kuwait has stood as a living symbol of Kuwaiti hospitality and culture. This year, Azayez farm once again opened its doors for its annual diplomatic gathering, welcoming members of diplomatic corps accredited to Kuwait in the presence of Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The annual event is hosted by former Governor of the Capital Governorate, Sheikh Ali Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and has become a well-established February tradition reflecting the authentic spirit of Kuwaiti society. Each year, the gathering brings diplomats and their families together in a warm, informal setting that encourages cultural exchange and genuine connection beyond official protocol.

Azayez gatherings follow a distinctive structure, with dedicated days traditionally held for the ruling family, the Kuwaiti public, and the diplomatic corps. This long-standing tradition now spanning more than 30 years offers diplomats a rare opportunity to experience Kuwaiti culture in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

This year's event saw the participation of several newly appointed ambassadors and diplomats, many of whom were introduced to



Kuwaiti customs for the first time.

Guests explored the natural beauty of the Abdali area, which is particularly admired in February for its pleasant weather and tranquil landscape, making it an ideal setting for

social interaction and cultural discovery. The gathering also featured a traditional folkloric music performance and a generous luncheon held in honor of the diplomatic corps, creating a friendly atmosphere that reflected Kuwait's

deeply rooted values of generosity and hospitality.

Held annually in February, the Azayez Farm gathering coincides with Kuwait's National and Liberation Day celebrations, reinforcing national values inherited from past generations. Hospitality remains at the heart of Kuwaiti identity; an ethos clearly reflected in the spirit and organization of the event.

Commenting on the occasion, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan to the State of Kuwait H.E. Dr. Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda, praised the initiative saying that "This is truly a remarkable day. Through such gatherings, diplomats have the opportunity to witness the greatness of the Kuwaiti people and the beauty of their culture."

"We are grateful for this annual invitation, which allows us to experience Kuwaiti society up close, beyond protocol and formality. We extend our sincere thanks to Sheikh Ali Jaber Al Sabah for bringing the diplomatic corps together every year in this special place, and we wish the State of Kuwait, its leadership, and people continued prosperity," he added.

As the annual gathering continues to grow, Azayez Farm remains a powerful example of how tradition, hospitality, and cultural diplomacy intersect, presenting Kuwait not only as a host nation, but as a society deeply rooted in generosity, coexistence, and meaningful engagement with the world.



EXCLUSIVE TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Europe Cannot Avoid an AI Reckoning



**Soňa Muzikářová**

A former economist at the European Central Bank, former diplomat at the OECD, and a former senior adviser to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, is a non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council.



“Europe cannot change course overnight. A single cutting-edge data center can easily cost more than €1 billion and consume more power than a midsize European city, and a state-of-the-art fab now requires more than €20 billion.”

When it comes to AI, Europe's biggest challenge is not the sudden arrival of foreign frontier models or the proliferation of American and Chinese platforms across its markets. It is that the broader political economy of AI relies on precisely those domains where Europe is handicapped—industrial build-out capacity, compute (data centers and chips), and a genuinely unified single market that would allow for strategic scaling.

These deficiencies can no longer be ignored, because the goal of US policy is shifting from 'managing China' to 'outpacing everyone' globally. Alongside an export-control regime, the latest 25 percent tariff on selected advanced AI chips under the Trump administration aims to pull more investment in high-end semiconductor production back onshore, making US domestic fabrication more competitive and accelerating the development of its own AI infrastructure.

The tariff is one expression of a broader AI strategy that has been taking shape for years and that discards three longstanding assumptions: that the United States would privilege market efficiency over industrial policy; that China would import compute capacity rather than build it; and that Europe could regulate the industry without building sovereign capabilities of its own.

The US has moved well beyond the belief that markets will optimize supply chains. It is layering export controls on top of subsidies, tax incentives, and procurement policies to reshape where chips are designed, fabricated, and deployed. At the same time, China has been rolling out domestic 'AI accelerators' (new chips), expanding fabrication capacity, and tying AI infrastructure to its overseas lending and economic diplomacy. Europe, by contrast, has treated AI mainly as an afterthought, refining legal definitions while continuing to rely on foreign cloud capacity, chips, and models.

Having entered the AI era over-regulated and under-industrialized, Europe imports the vast majority of its advanced semiconductors, pays materially higher industrial electricity prices than the US, and still relies on American cloud providers for the bulk of its compute. If this dangerous dependence was not obvious before, it has become harder to ignore amid explicit US threats to assert control over sovereign territory belonging to a longstanding European ally.

Europe finds itself squeezed between an aggressive revisionist power (Russia) that is already probing its defenses and a US administration that is prepared to weaponize its industrial, infrastructural, and trade ties with the continent. If the US were to leverage access to AI and advanced compute coercively, the effects could be immediate: European defense networks, intelligence systems, hospitals, financial markets, and industrial firms could face sudden restrictions on critical cloud services, with few domestic alternatives. In this scenario, the Kremlin would have an opportunity to escalate its hybrid war against Europe, knowing that the continent is digitally exposed and politically constrained.

Given such risks, Europe must move beyond its focus on regulatory excellence,

risk classifications, and compliance systems. Unless it makes serious strides toward building the physical and financial infrastructure that a domestic European AI industry will need, these preoccupations will be more of a liability than an asset. Specifically, European policymakers must support the creation of vast compute clusters, ensure cheap, reliable electricity, and commit to sustained capital expenditures in strategic sectors.

The bad news is that Europe cannot change course overnight. A single cutting-edge data center can easily cost more than €1 billion (\$1.2 billion) and consume more power than a midsize European city, and a state-of-the-art fab (chip production facility) now requires more than €20 billion in upfront capital expenditures. Yet Europe's energy prices are already elevated, its venture capital markets are shallow, its cloud infrastructure is dominated by foreign providers, and its semiconductor goals remain largely aspirational. One recent analysis estimates that roughly €3 trillion in investment will be needed over the next five years to upgrade Europe's AI industry.

The good news is that Europe is not starting from scratch. It controls several crucial choke-point technologies. For example, the Dutch company ASML holds a monopoly over extreme ultraviolet lithography, with its machines underpinning TSMC and Samsung's most advanced production lines. Similarly, German and Dutch suppliers such as Zeiss (optics) and Trumpf (high-power lasers) occupy important strategic niches in the AI production chain. Together, these domestic nodes give the European Union the means to anchor parts of the global AI hardware stack in Europe.

After compute, capital is Europe's scarcest input in the AI race. But unlike compute, it can migrate quickly in response to policy signals and incentives. Although Europe lags in overall technology and AI funding—US AI companies attracted roughly \$47 billion in 2024, compared to about \$11 billion for European firms—it produced more high-tech startups than the US between 2019 and 2024 (albeit with a deal value of only \$62 billion in 2024, compared to \$209 billion in the US).

Moreover, AI-specific funding has already grown from a low base, with European firms raising nearly €3 billion across 137 deals

in 2024, about 35 percent more than the previous year. Venture-capital investments in European defense and security technologies have climbed to record levels, reflecting a

## Bridging Differences, Respecting Diversity, Building Global Fraternity

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Support for these platforms can be built through local grassroots groups, private and public enterprises, government and international entities, all working together and welcoming diversity with the aim of fostering social cohesion. As a strategic practice, inter-religious and -cultural platforms help facilitate discussions, combat intolerance, hate speech and discrimination, and enhance social harmony. They create spaces for promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and open channels of communication among faiths and beliefs in a spirit of sincere acceptance and empathy, without forcing specific paradigm or one's beliefs on others.

In mid-January Kuwait further burnished its image as a pluralistic society, welcoming the Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who arrived in the country in what he described as both a pastoral and diplomatic visit. In a meeting with local media on the occasion, Cardinal Parolin emphasized the pastoral importance of his visit, noting that it coincided with the historic elevation of the Church of Our Lady of Arabia, in Ahmadi to the rank of Minor Basilica, a moment he described as of great significance for the Catholic faithful.

Pointing out that freedom of worship is a measure of a society's maturity and confidence, Cardinal Parolin said that Kuwait's experience of religious coexistence shows that protecting religious life can coexist with social harmony, benefiting society by strengthening trust, stability, and responsibility. He noted that in Kuwait, commitment to social cohesion and respect for others is not merely a policy, it is a culture expressed in the daily life of people that deserves wider recognition.

He also emphasized the essential role of

reassessment of the continent's strategic industries. This momentum partly reflects a gradual shift in private-capital allocation toward Europe, as investors respond to US policy uncertainty and seek longer-term exposure to Europe's strategic infrastructure and industrial assets.

The EU must start playing hard ball, too. That means leveraging Europe's market power by conditioning market access, procurement, and regulatory approvals on concrete local commitments—local packaging, data-center build-out, assembly, or research and development—much as the US has done under the CHIPS and Science Act with TSMC in Arizona. Europe must also mobilize long-term capital through public guarantees and blended finance, so that pension funds, insurers, and sovereign vehicles can underwrite fabs and compute clusters (investments that venture capital will hardly touch).

Finally, Europe must treat energy, compute, and data-center deployment as a single planning challenge, rather than as three separate issues. Prices, permitting, and infrastructure all must be aligned so that fabs and compute clusters have predictable power, off-take agreements, and siting. Fortunately, ensuring such consistency is well within Europe's institutional reach.

The lesson from recent US policy changes is not that Europe should deregulate, but that regulation without hardware, compute, and capital leaves it dangerously exposed in an increasingly dog-eat-dog world. Europe can still catch the train, but only if it starts building the capacity that makes regulation meaningful.

interfaith dialogue in fostering peace and stability, noting that such dialogue must be practical rather than theoretical. Saying that practical dialogue involves building relationships, erasing misunderstandings, and working together on what serves human dignity, he cited education, family life, care for the poor, and rejection of violence in God's name as shared values.

On the diplomatic front, the cardinal underlined the Vatican's deep appreciation for the longstanding relationship with Kuwait, describing it as one rooted in mutual respect, sincere dialogue, and a shared commitment to peace and human dignity. Noting that the Vatican highly values its relationship with Kuwait, he added that it occupies a distinctive place in the Holy See's engagement with the region. Lauding Kuwait's humanitarian efforts, he said this shared concern for human dignity provided a firm base for deeper collaboration between the two sides.

Reaffirming the Vatican's long-standing investment in interfaith dialogue across the Middle East, the Holy See's representative welcomed all serious efforts aimed at promoting mutual understanding and a culture of peace. He added, "This is particularly meaningful in a region where conflicts have too often exploited religious identity for political ends."

As a vital element in the cultural diplomacy of nations, interfaith and intercultural dialogue bridges differences and fosters an environment of moderation and mutual understanding between faiths and communities. Supporting the development of pluralistic communities enriches diversity, inclusivity, and empathy, safeguarding our common humanity and shared values. This is a goal that both individuals and institutions need to actively promote and pursue for a prosperous and peaceful world.

# Jewelry Trends for Women in the Gulf

## Celebrating Timeless Craftsmanship, Design Excellence



**By Hermoine Macura-Noble**  
*Special to The Times Kuwait*

Jewelry in the Gulf has long been a powerful symbol of heritage, femininity, and prestige. Today, it is also a statement of individuality and modern elegance. As women across the region redefine luxury on their own terms, jewelry trends for 2025-2026 reveal a thoughtful balance between tradition and contemporary design, where craftsmanship, storytelling, and personal expression take center stage.

At the heart of this evolution is a renewed reverence for artisanal mastery. Gulf women are increasingly investing in pieces that transcend fleeting trends—jewelry designed to be worn, cherished, and eventually passed down. As Suzy Menkes, internationally respected fashion critic, has observed, "Luxury is no longer about excess; it is about authenticity, heritage, and the



skill of the maker." This shift aligns seamlessly with the region's deep cultural appreciation for fine craftsmanship.

Gold remains an enduring cornerstone of Gulf jewelry, but its presentation has evolved. Rather than purely ornate designs, women are gravitating toward refined silhouettes—bold cuffs, sculptural necklaces, and statement earrings that feel contemporary yet timeless. Polki jewelry, with its uncut diamonds and heritage settings, continues to experience



a revival, particularly among women who appreciate tradition reimagined through a modern lens.

One of the most striking trends shaping the region is the growing love for colored gemstones. Emeralds, sapphires, tourmalines, kunzites, and morganites are increasingly sought after for their emotional depth and individuality. Jewelry stylist and fashion authority Rachel Zoe notes, "Color is confidence; it allows women to express personality and

power without saying a word." In the Gulf, where color holds cultural and aesthetic significance, gemstones offer both symbolism and visual impact.

This philosophy is beautifully captured in Hazoorilal Legacy's 'The Legacy Collection 2025-2026', a refined celebration of craftsmanship and design innovation. Featuring an exquisite curation of gold, polki, diamonds, and handpicked natural gemstones, the collection embodies elegance with an edge; timeless yet



unmistakably modern. Each stone is selected for its unique character, from the deep allure of emeralds and tourmalines to the soft radiance of kunzites, morganites, and sapphires.

Armaan Narang, Director of Hazoorilal Legacy, describes the collection as "a testament to our unwavering dedication to design mastery and exceptional craftsmanship. Every piece is a journey from imagination to form, shaped with precision, grace, and the enduring values that define Hazoorilal Legacy." As the brand's annual flagship showcase, the collection reflects a continual pursuit of refinement in fine jewelry-making.

Alongside Indian heritage brands, iconic Gulf brands are also shaping the region's jewelry narrative. Mouawad, the legendary Middle Eastern jeweler, is renowned for its ultra-luxurious diamond creations and record-breaking designs. The brand's emphasis on bold femininity and exceptional gemstones resonates strongly with Gulf women who appreciate grandeur paired with meticulous craftsmanship.

Meanwhile, Damas, one of the region's most influential jewelry houses, continues to redefine everyday luxury. Known for blending Arabic design sensibilities with contemporary aesthetics, Damas caters to a new generation of women seeking versatile pieces that move effortlessly from day to evening – without compromising on heritage or quality.

Ultimately, the Gulf jewelry landscape is moving toward meaningful luxury. As Natalie King, former Fashion Director of Matches Fashion, aptly states, "The modern woman values jewelry that feels personal, enduring, and emotionally resonant." In a region where legacy, artistry, and beauty are deeply intertwined, today's jewelry trends are not just about adornment; they are about identity, craftsmanship, and timeless elegance.

### Hermoine Macura-Noble

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



# Read Today's News Today...

For latest news updates...

**[www.timeskuwait.com](http://www.timeskuwait.com)**



Just the right amount of news

**Credible**  
**Insightful**  
**Accurate**  
**The right news**  
**Right in time**



# Scientists develop innovative tool to advance microbiome research

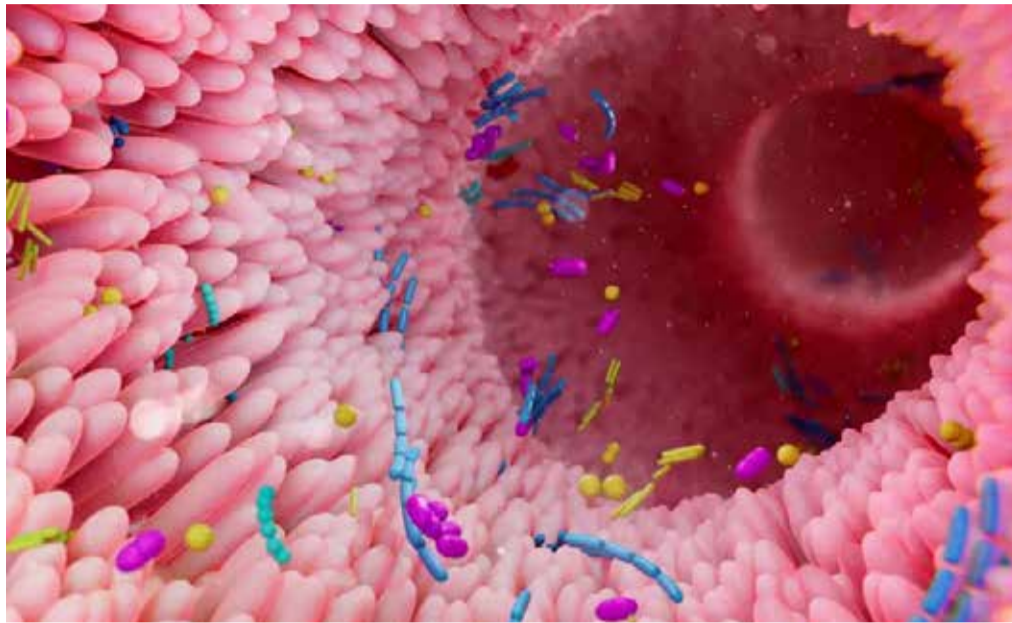
**M**icrobiome refers to the collective community of microorganisms (such as fungi, bacteria and viruses) that inhabit a specific environment, such as the human body. In humans, the term is used to describe the microorganisms that populate a particular region of the body, such as the skin, the oral or nasal cavities, or the gastrointestinal tract.

These groups of microorganisms are dynamic and change in response to a host of environmental factors, such as exercise, diet, medication and other exposures. The core microbiome in humans, which is formed in the first years of life, modifies significantly over time through exposure to changes in the environment they inhabit. For instance, the gut microbiome is impacted by the diet or medications we intake.

Differences in the microbiome can lead to different health effects from environmental exposures, and may also help determine individual susceptibility to certain illnesses. Environmental exposures can also disrupt a person's microbiome in ways that could increase the likelihood of developing health conditions, including among others, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular and neurological diseases.

Research has yielded tremendous insight into the links between the microbiome, environmental exposures, and human health. Despite ample knowledge on the microbiome, gained over the years through, among others, modern DNA sequencing, scientists are still trying to figure out the mediating role of microbes in human health and how they are related to one another within an environment.

Uncovering how microbes are related to each other and the environment they live in begins with choosing the right marker genes, which are the signposts in DNA that trace the microbes evolutionary history. For many years, scientists



relied on the same small set of traditional marker genes to identify microbe relationships, but with the growth of metagenomics, this method is no longer viable.

Metagenomics analyzes the structure and function of entire nucleotide sequences, isolated from all the microbes in a bulk sample. This often necessitates the analysis of millions of genomes at a time, which may often be incomplete or uneven in quality, making it harder to use a fixed set of marker genes and expect accurate evolutionary results. To solve this issue, researchers at Arizona State University (ASU) developed a pair of powerful tools that make exploring the influence of microbiome on health easier, more accurate and far more scalable.

The first tool focuses on improving genetic markers—a DNA sequence with a known physical location on a chromosome, which

can help link an inherited disease with the responsible gene. The second tool, describes an open-source software library known as scikit-bio that helps build detailed and accurate microbiome evolutionary trees, considered essential for understanding how microbes evolve and influence the environment they inhabit.

ASU researchers developed TMarSel (short for Tree-based Marker Selection). Instead of choosing genes manually TMarSel automatically searches through thousands of possible gene families and selects the combination that builds the most reliable evolutionary tree. The program evaluates each gene for how common it is, how informative it is and how much it contributes to a stable, meaningful picture of microbial relationships.

The result is a flexible, data-driven way to build microbial trees that work well even for

large and diverse groups of organisms, and importantly, even when many genomes are only partly complete. New datasets are not only extremely large and very sparse but they also often include thousands of interconnected features. Standard data-analysis programs are not built for this level of fragmentation and complexity. To overcome this, the research team developed scikit-bio, a vast, open-source software library that gives scientists the tools they need to analyze huge biological datasets that are unlike any other kind of data. Scikit-bio offers more than 500 functions for tasks such as comparing microbial communities, calculating their diversity, and compositional data. It also aids in analyzing DNA, RNA and protein sequences, building and modifying phylogenetic trees, and preparing data for machine learning.

Better evolutionary trees improve disease tracking and allow scientists to follow how harmful microbes evolve overtime and influence the environment they inhabit, including how microbial communities respond to pollution or climate shifts.

In humans, accurate microbial identification helps strengthen studies of the gut microbiome and its role in human health. The open-source software tools are now accessible to everyone, helping to strengthen microbiome research, advance disease tracking, environmental monitoring, and precision medicine, as well as further accelerate microbiome research.

As DNA sequencing continues to become faster and cheaper, scientists are expected to uncover even more of the microbial universe, leading to an exponential growth in biological datasets. Tools like scikit-bio and TMarSel could make in-depth research into these large biological data sets more reliable and reproducible, and ensure that it can be transformed into real scientific insight.

## Chocolate ingredient found to help slow aging

**M**any plant compounds in foods can influence how genes operate by turning them on or off. These compounds, known as alkaloids, can interact with cellular systems that regulate gene activity and contribute to long-term health. A new study now shows that a natural chemical in dark chocolate may play a role in slowing certain signs of biological aging.

Researchers at King's College London have identified the chemical theobromine as a possible positive contributor in slowing biological aging. Theobromine is the principal alkaloid in certain plants such as Theobroma cacao (the cacao bean) from which cocoa and chocolate are derived. Theobromine also occurs in the body as a product of caffeine metabolism in the liver, resulting in 12 percent theobromine.

Although theobromine is widely known for being toxic to dogs, it has been connected to possible health benefits in humans, including a reduced risk of heart disease. Despite this, it has received relatively limited scientific attention until now. For their study the researchers analyzed how much theobromine was present in the blood of participants involved in the study and compared those levels with biological

aging markers measured in blood samples.

Rather than chronological age, which measures the number of years a person has lived, biological age reflects how well a person's body is functioning, based on a measure of DNA methylation—the biological process by which methyl groups are added to segments of the DNA molecule, changing the activity of the DNA segment without changing the sequence. In the human body, DNA methylation is essential for normal development and is associated with a number of key processes, including the formation of cancer cells and in aging.

The research team examined data from European health studies, including 509 people from TwinsUK—a study of identical and non-identical twins in the UK—and 1,160 from KORA—a German research platform for population-based surveys and subsequent follow-up studies in the fields of epidemiology, health economics, and health care research. The analysis found that individuals with higher amounts of theobromine in their bloodstream tended to have a biological age that appeared younger than their chronological age.

While it does not suggest that people should eat more chocolate, the research helps



our understanding of how everyday foods may hold clues to healthier, longer lives. The researchers also investigated whether other cocoa or coffee metabolites showed similar age-related benefits, but the results suggested that theobromine was the only compound with this specific association.

To estimate biological age, the researchers used two approaches. One method used DNA methylation to examine DNA changes that reflect the pace of aging. The second measured telomere length—the size of the protective

structures at the ends of chromosomes. Telomeres naturally shorten with age and are linked to age-related health risks.

The next important question for the research team is what lies behind this association and to further explore the interactions between dietary metabolites and our epigenome. Experts say that this approach could lead us to important discoveries towards aging, as well as in many common and rare diseases. The team is now examining whether theobromine's effect occurs on its own or if it works alongside other well-known components of dark chocolate such as polyphenols, which are recognized for their positive effects on health.

The study identifies not only another molecular mechanism through which naturally occurring compounds in cocoa may support health, but also highlight the value of population-level analyses in aging and genetics. Although the findings are encouraging, the researchers caution that increasing dark chocolate consumption is not automatically beneficial. Chocolate also contains sugar, fat and other ingredients, and more work is needed to fully understand how theobromine interacts with the body and how it may influence aging.



# Democracy Dies in Broad Daylight



Carla Norrlöf

Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto.

'Democracy Dies in Darkness' became the motto of the Washington Post in 2017, four years after Jeff Bezos, the Amazon founder and one of the world's richest men, purchased the newspaper. Today, however, Bezos, who has throttled the Post's opinion page and now slashed the newspaper's staff, seems determined to demonstrate that a free press, an essential component of democracy, can be killed off in broad daylight.

Democracy is dying in America because those in positions of power—starting with President Donald Trump but including media and tech owners like Oracle's Larry Ellison, who is doing to CBS News what Bezos has been doing to the Post—have learned how to make facts harmless. What began as a disinformation campaign has matured into a systematic project aimed not at controlling what people think, but at dismantling the structures that turn facts into consequences.

For years, the crisis in journalism was described largely in terms of partiality, polarization, and declining trust. Those problems are real, and they have provided cover for treating the mainstream media's supposed 'liberal bias' as a justification for weakening professional standards. But there is now a deeper crisis: those who were previously pursuing this institutional weakening no longer need to bother winning an argument with the press. Instead, they have diminished the press's ability to impose accountability at all.

After Trump's first election in 2016, many commentators argued that universities, newsrooms, and cultural institutions had lost touch with the public, and that this mattered



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

politically. But building credible alternatives to such institutions takes years and requires money, talent, distribution channels, and trust.

So, rather than trying to outcompete the established players in the marketplace of ideas, why not reduce their ability to set agendas, validate facts, and trigger consequences? Why not decrease journalistic institutions' capacity to pursue deep investigations, and discredit their authority when they do? Original reporting can still circulate, but it simply will not matter.

This strategy does not require banning or censoring, because silence is not the goal. The objective is not to monopolize media on paper, but to monopolize its effects. Whereas Joseph Goebbels needed censorship and terror to enforce the Nazis' single official reality, this is not classical fascism. The strategy unfolding in the US relies on different means: stripping disfavored stories of reach, credibility, and consequence until one narrative dominates without the state having to outlaw the rest. The mechanism at work is not control of speech, but immunity to facts.

Investigative journalism is expensive. It requires time, legal backing, editorial depth, and reporters who can spend months on a single story. When major newsrooms are hollowed out through layoffs and cost-cutting, as the Washington Post's just-announced 30 percent staff reduction illustrates, they lose the ability to be consequential.

Single scoops are easily dismissed or waited out. Repeated, rigorously documented reporting over time is harder to ignore. Downsizing a newsroom lowers the pressure that serious reporting can bring to bear.

Another part of the strategy concerns public media, where the target is not just investigative capacity but services that cut across state borders, demographics, and ideology. Defunding National Public Radio (NPR) and the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), as Trump has done, is not merely about cultural grievance. The point is to apply structural pressure, eroding the shared facts on which democratic argument depends.

But distribution is perhaps the most underappreciated front. For more than a decade, Twitter functioned as the central circulatory system for American public discourse. Journalists, academics, public officials, business leaders, and engaged citizens all argued in the same place. Reporting and research could travel quickly, face criticism and correction, and translate directly, and sometimes immediately, into agenda-setting pressure. Then Elon Musk bought the platform, gutted its staff, and renamed it X. Soon enough, it stopped functioning as a shared civic distribution system for verified information. It now prioritizes engagement over verification, weakens credibility cues, and makes reach less predictable.

Today, fewer journalists and academics bother

to post on X, and even when they do, verified information no longer translates reliably into agenda-setting or yields any consequence at all. The results are far-reaching, because when the infrastructure for elite information exchange no longer reliably rewards accuracy or sustained explanation, the entire accountability system starts to crumble. And the same dynamic extends beyond platforms into ownership. When a major newsroom sits inside a conglomerate that is navigating mergers, regulatory scrutiny, and political exposure, independence can narrow without the need for an explicit instruction from the top. That is why it matters that Skydance—headed by David Ellison, Larry Ellison's son—took over Paramount, which controls CBS. Direct censorship is not required when everyone can see which stories will cost the parent company money or jeopardize its deals.

Under such conditions, self-censorship becomes rational. It is implicit in the stories that never run, the investigations that are dropped because they might invite lawsuits or regulatory retaliation, and kid-glove coverage of politicians or corporate figures who could make the parent company's life difficult. Once editors understand that certain fights have become corporate liabilities, risk avoidance becomes the new normal.

Taken together, these moves form a system. Journalism and facts still exist, but the chain that once ran from reporting to shared reality to institutional response begins to break apart. Accurate reporting no longer compels action, because facts can be published, verified, and still fail to trigger a response. When information loses its force, impunity follows.

Disinformation once aimed to make people believe false things. The new objective is to make the powerful immune to truths that previously would have harmed their interests or forced them to change their behavior. We are witnessing a systemic attack on American institutions and the American public's ability to hold power to account. Democracy does not die only when speech is banned. It also dies when truthful speech ceases to matter.



**Al Muzaini Exchange** **المزيني للصيرفة**  
SINCE 1942



TRANSFER MONEY TO INDIA  
WITHIN MINUTES\*



Quickly Transfer to  
any Bank in India



Order & receive Indian  
Rupees to your doorstep



Easily pay various Bills in India  
with BBPS via Al Muzaini App

 muzainiexchange
  al muzaini exchange co.





18 888 18

www.muzaini.com