



LOCAL
*India's Growth Story:
Resilient, Reform-Driven
and Ready for the Future* **2**



Promoting Sustainable, Resilient Tourism Furthers Vision 2035

An independent, specialized tourism authority is vital to ensure focused, empowered leadership for holistic development of tourism in Kuwait

The Times Kuwait Report

Tourism is a major driver of economic growth, inclusive development, and environmental sustainability, and in several developing countries it is one of main sources of income, foreign currency earnings, tax revenue and employment. Overall tourism serves as a catalyst for economic and social transformation, as well as helps develop resilience and sustainability in local communities, bringing about shared progress for all.

Considering the overwhelming importance of tourism to socio-economic development of nations—as well as its vulnerability to uncertainties brought on by geopolitical turmoil, economic turbulence, health hazards and climate change repercussions—it is vital to invest in building a more durable tourism sector.



In this regard, governments, policymakers and other stakeholders need to devise and implement strategies and processes that foster a sustainable, adaptable, and crisis-resistant tourism sector capable of withstanding upheavals.

Sustainable and resilient tourism can be an effective strategic tool that governments can wield to generate sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, and quality of life. It enables the formalization of the informal sector, promotes domestic resource mobilization, creates productive employment opportunities, and spurs environmental responsibility and biodiversity conservation.

On the economic side, tourism supports economic diversification, acts as a major source of foreign exchange, stimulates GDP growth, and widens financial inclusion. It promotes public-private partnerships, attracts investment and entrepreneurship, creates jobs that often require limited initial investment, which allows more people to benefit from local economic cycles.

Additionally, promotion of sustainable tourism empowers women, young people, and

those differently abled, as well as forms a source of income and livelihood for local communities and indigenous populations in rural settings. Sustained, resilient tourism also helps eradicate poverty, improves education, and enhances health facilities in local and remote areas. Tourism also helps maintain, celebrate, and preserve cultural heritage, traditions, and indigenous practices.

Kuwait has in recent years emphasized the development of a sustainable and resilient tourism sector as part of the country's economic diversification drive and its Vision 2035 goal of transforming Kuwait into a regional financial, trade, and cultural hub. In line with the efforts to foster sustainable and resilient tourism, the government has been highlighting the country's cultural and heritage destinations for tourists.

Underlining Kuwait's sustainable tourism-oriented approach, Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Dr. Mohammed Al-Jassar recently stated that Kuwait is working on a program to protect and preserve its archeological sites and historical architecture, with the goal of turning them into attractive cultural tourism destinations.

He pointed out that by leveraging innovative techniques and implementing forward-thinking strategies, Kuwait plans to develop its cultural and heritage sites properly, sustainably, and to high international standards. He added that this would enable their registration on the World Heritage List and allow the locations to find their place among global heritage sites, thereby promoting sustainable cultural and tourism returns for the country.

A major potential destination on any Kuwaiti cultural circuit is Failaka Island, home to one of the oldest cultural heritages in the country. The Island traces its history back to the early Islamic period in the 7th-century CE, and even further back to the Hellenistic period in the third century BCE. Newer excavations and the unearthing of older artefacts and building foundations have pushed the date of the Island's occupancy much earlier to the Dilmun civilization, more than 4,000 years ago.

Even more deep-rooted crucial evidence of human activity that date back to the Neolithic (6th millennium BC) and Early Bronze Age (3rd–2nd millennium BC) have been revealed through archaeological excavations in the Al-Sabahiya region of northern Kuwait. International excavation teams working in collaboration with NCCAL, have found extensive evidence of human settlements in the area, including Ubaid-era relics, tumuli burial fields, and cultic structures that suggest a complex society forming a cultural bridge between Mesopotamia and the Arabian Gulf.

In a further boost to the country's sustainable tourism credentials, Kuwait last week hosted

the 52nd meeting of the annual UN Tourism Organization's Regional Commission for the Middle East. The meeting brought together ministers and heads of delegation from the 13 member-states to discuss strategic priorities for regional tourism development.

In a statement on the occasion, Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology and Acting Minister of Information and Culture, Omar Al-Omar, indicated that the meeting aimed to synchronize member state efforts toward sustainable tourism, aligning

with global economic shifts to diversify national income sources, and balance economic growth with resource conservation.

On the sidelines of the meeting, a conference on 'Enhancing Tourism through Artificial Intelligence', highlighted the need to integrate emerging technologies to modernize service delivery, boost efficiency, improve safety, and support environmental sustainability, while fostering innovation across the Middle East tourism landscape.

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India's Growth Story:

Resilient, Reform-Driven and Ready for the Future

Economic growth rests on four pillars — consumption, government expenditure, private investment, and net exports — and in India's case, domestic demand and public capital expenditure are driving the momentum. - Indian economist Dr. Rajat Kathuria

By Reaven D'Souza
Executive Managing Editor

At a time when the global economy faces persistent uncertainty, geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, inflationary pressures, and slowing trade, India has stood out as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies.

In an exclusive interview with The Times Kuwait, noted Indian economist Dr. Rajat Kathuria offered a comprehensive perspective on the foundations of India's resilience and the roadmap for sustained, inclusive growth. Dr. Kathuria was in Kuwait as part of the 'Viksit Bharat 2047 – India-Kuwait Dialogues', organized by the Embassy of India in collaboration with the Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC), where he delivered insights on India's long-term economic transformation strategy.

Pillars of India's Growth: According to Dr. Kathuria, economic growth rests on four pillars: consumption, government expenditure, private investment, and net exports. In India's case, growth has largely been driven by domestic consumption and public investment.

India's vast consumer base provides a powerful demand engine. Even during global slowdowns, domestic consumption has helped stabilize the economy. At the same time, the government has stepped up capital expenditure, particularly in infrastructure. Investments in roads, railways, ports, airports, and metro systems are laying the groundwork for future private-sector participation.

While private investment has moderated in recent years, public capital expenditure is performing the heavy lifting, creating the enabling ecosystem necessary for businesses to expand. As infrastructure improves, Dr. Kathuria expects private investment to follow.

Case for Labor-Intensive Manufacturing: A key theme in Dr. Kathuria's remarks was the urgent need to expand labor-intensive manufacturing. Countries such as Japan, South Korea, and China built their economic transformation on the backbone of manufacturing sectors that absorbed large numbers of workers.

India, with its large pool of relatively low-skilled labor, must replicate this model. Sectors such as textiles, footwear, toys, sports goods, light engineering, electronics assembly, and medical equipment manufacturing present significant opportunities. These industries not only generate employment but also integrate India into global value chains.

India may not yet be considered the 'factory of the world', but Dr. Kathuria believes it has the potential to become one. Rising wages in China, Thailand, and even Vietnam create a competitive window for India. With supportive policies, regulatory reforms, and investment in clusters, India can emerge as a global manufacturing hub.

Balancing Growth and Inclusion: India's official unemployment rate appears modest,



but Dr. Kathuria highlighted the challenge of disguised unemployment, individuals engaged in informal or low-productivity work for survival rather than meaningful employment.

High growth alone is not enough. The government must use tax revenues generated from growth to fund fiscal transfers, invest in health and education, and improve living standards. Growth creates resources;

well-structured free trade agreements (FTAs). While import-competing sectors may face short-term challenges, consumers benefit from lower prices and better quality. Over time, domestic producers are incentivized to become more competitive.

Unlike advanced economies attempting to 'reshore' large-scale manufacturing despite high wages, India's economic structure



“India's economic landscape is deeply heterogeneous. On one end, it produces globally competitive CEOs, world-class scientists, and cutting-edge technology firms. On the other, poverty and informality persist. The task is to ensure that the benefits of growth spread more evenly.”

policy determines how those resources are distributed.

India's economic landscape is deeply heterogeneous. On one end, it produces globally competitive CEOs, world-class scientists, and cutting-edge technology firms. On the other, poverty and informality persist. The task is to ensure that the benefits of growth spread more evenly.

Free Trade and Competitiveness: On trade policy, Dr. Kathuria expressed support for

supports expansion in labor-intensive production. Strategic openness can accelerate this process.

Investment Opportunities for Global Investors: India presents significant opportunities for global investors, particularly in equity and long-gestation sectors. Key growth areas include:

- Data centers and cloud services
- AI development and digital infrastructure

- Electronics and mobile manufacturing
- Computer peripherals and components
- Public-private partnerships in infrastructure
- Ports, airports, metro rail, and EPC projects

India's large market, growing digital ecosystem, and improving infrastructure create substantial absorptive capacity for foreign capital. Sovereign wealth funds and pension funds from Canada, Australia, Japan, and elsewhere have already established strong investment footprints in India.

Dr. Kathuria emphasized that building institutional relationships with the Ministry of Finance, regulators such as SEBI, and investment promotion agencies is essential for sustained foreign participation. Trust and long-term engagement matter as much as returns.

Role of Government: Enable, Do not Operate: A consistent theme was the appropriate role of the state. The government, in Dr. Kathuria's view, should focus on regulation and enabling conditions rather than running commercial enterprises.

Investments in health, education, and soft infrastructure generate positive externalities and are core state functions. Privatization and regulatory oversight, rather than direct production, create more efficient outcomes. Growth, when properly managed, generates fiscal space that can be redirected toward public goods.

Education: Public Good and Commercial Opportunity: Education represents both a public investment and a commercial opportunity. While public institutions create broad societal benefits, private universities and international collaborations are increasingly viable business models. High-quality education, whether philanthropic or profit-driven, strengthens India's human capital base and long-term competitiveness.

Addressing Investor Concerns: Foreign investors typically raise concerns about regulatory complexity, bureaucratic delays, and infrastructure bottlenecks. However, digitization of approvals, regulatory reforms, and large-scale infrastructure investments are gradually addressing these constraints. India's trajectory remains positive. With political will, institutional strengthening, and strategic global engagement, the country is well-positioned to sustain high growth rates.

A Growth Story with Depth: India today is a nation of contrasts, frontier-level innovation coexists with developmental challenges. Yet this diversity is also a source of strength. As Dr. Kathuria concluded that the fundamentals remain strong: a large market, competitive labor costs, growing digital capabilities, and rising global integration. With continued reforms and targeted investment in labor-intensive sectors, India's growth story is not only sustainable it is poised to become transformative.



‘Deera Al Khair’ operetta celebrates Kuwait’s spirit of unity, generosity

The Times Kuwait Report

Under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the national operetta ‘Deera Al Khair’ was performed on the morning of 10 February at the Bayan Palace Theater in an atmosphere rich with national pride and cultural symbolism.

His Highness the Amir was received upon arrival by the Minister of Education, Eng. Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, and the Head of the Voluntary Work Center, Sheikh Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who is also a member of the Permanent Committee for National Celebrations and Occasions.

The ceremony was attended by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, along with senior state officials, reflecting the importance of the occasion and its place within the national cultural calendar.



Proceedings commenced with the Kuwaiti national anthem, setting a solemn and patriotic tone, followed by the presentation of the operetta. The performance brought together groups of male and female students from

various educational stages across Ministry of Education schools, who delivered a series of artistic tableaux combining music, poetry, choreography, and visual storytelling.

Through expressive performances, the

students conveyed deep feelings of love for the homeland, loyalty, and belonging, embodying the spirit of Kuwait as ‘Deera Al Khair’, the land of goodness.

The operetta portrayed Kuwait’s enduring values of generosity, unity, and resilience, highlighting the nation’s history of embracing its people, overcoming challenges across different eras, and continuing its path of development under wise leadership and a cohesive society.

The production served not only as an artistic showcase but also as a message of national identity, reaffirming the role of culture and education in strengthening patriotic awareness among younger generations and celebrating the country’s achievements and humanitarian legacy.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, a commemorative gift was presented to His Highness the Amir in appreciation of his patronage and presence. His Highness then departed the venue amid the same warmth and reception that marked his arrival.



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Kuwait FY2026-27 budget shows 55 percent rise in deficit

The Times Kuwait Report

Finance Minister Dr. Yaqoub Al-Rifai presented the draft budget for the fiscal year 2026-2027 (FY2026-27) on 11 February to the Council of Ministers for approval.

The budget for FY2026-27, which runs from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027, shows expenditures estimated at KD26.1 billion, while projected revenues stand at KD16.3 billion, representing a 54.7 percent increase in budget deficit compared to the current budget that ends on 31 March 2026. The surge in deficit comes on the back of increasing expenditures and conservative oil revenue estimates.

Spending remains heavily weighted toward wages and subsidies, which account for KD19.8

billion, or 76 percent of total expenditures. Capital spending is set at KD3.1 billion, representing 11.8 percent of overall outlays, while the remaining KD3.2 billion, or 12.2 percent, are allocated to other expenses.

The ministry attributed changes in expenditure levels to several key factors, including a KD741.2 million increase in the public treasury's contribution to social security, covering deficits in insurance funds.

Capital expenditures rose by KD826.2 million, with KD318 million directed to major projects at the Ministry of Public Works, including Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, the Umm Al-Hayman station expansion, implementation of the North Kabd station, and the expansion of Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 2.



Additional allocations were made to the Ministry of Health to complete the Kuwait Cancer Center and to the Ministries of Defense and Interior for the purchase of military machinery and equipment. At the same time, fuel subsidies

for operating stations and refined products declined by KD449.2 million, reflecting lower global oil prices.

On the revenue side, oil income is estimated at KD12.8 billion, marking a 10.5 percent drop from the current budget. Non-oil revenues are projected at KD3.5 billion, an increase of 19.6 percent. The oil price assumption used in the budget is a conservative average of US\$57 per barrel, while the estimated break-even price stands at \$90.5 per barrel. The draft budget also provides for the creation of 14,518 jobs.

Finance Minister Dr. Al-Rifai expressed appreciation to ministry staff for their efforts in preparing the state's general budget, describing the projections as based on cautious assumptions in light of oil market conditions.



LuLu Hypermarket Turns Hala February into a Celebration of Pride, Savings, and Culture with 'I Love My Kuwait'

LuLu Hypermarket is set to deliver an unforgettable shopping and cultural experience this Hala February as it celebrates Kuwait's National and Liberation Days with its grand 'I Love My Kuwait' promotion. Running across all LuLu Hypermarket outlets in Kuwait, the campaign brings together massive shopping savings, cultural pride, and family-friendly entertainment, making it one of the most anticipated retail events of the season.



The promotion was officially inaugurated on 12 February at LuLu Hypermarket's Al-Qurain outlet by renowned tech influencer Aziz AL Zaabi & Lifestyle influencer Snafiya alongside the senior management team of LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait. The opening ceremony marked the beginning of weeks filled with exciting offers, festive activities, and cultural showcases designed to honor Kuwait's rich heritage and national spirit.

As part of the 'I Love My Kuwait' promotion, shoppers can

enjoy massive discounts across every major shopping category. Customers will find unbeatable savings on groceries, health and beauty products, fresh and frozen foods, household essentials, and a wide range of electronic items. The promotion also features incredible deals on clothing, footwear, and accessories, ensuring something special for every member of the family.

Tech enthusiasts are in for a major highlight with the Hala Digital Shopping Festival, offering exclusive discounts on mobiles, consumer electronics, IT accessories, and wearable technology. From the latest smartphones to essential gadgets and accessories, the festival is designed to deliver exceptional value for technology lovers.

Adding a strong local touch to the celebrations, LuLu Hypermarket is also running the 'Proudly from Kuwait' campaign. This initiative offers special discounts on fresh local produce and products from Kuwaiti brands, reinforcing LuLu's commitment to supporting local businesses and celebrating homegrown quality.

Beyond shopping, the 'I Love My Kuwait' promotion is enriched with a vibrant lineup of cultural and entertainment activities. Visitors can enjoy traditional cultural performances that showcase Kuwait's heritage & entertainment shows. Children will also take center stage with special Hala Kuwait performances, bringing joy, color, and lively energy to the celebrations.

With its perfect blend of exceptional value, cultural pride, and festive entertainment, LuLu Hypermarket's 'I Love My Kuwait' promotion promises to be a memorable celebration for families and shoppers across Kuwait this Hala February.

Obstructing emergency vehicles could incur fines, jail term

The Ministry of Interior has reminded motorists that giving priority to emergency and government vehicles is not only a legal obligation but also a humanitarian responsibility that can save lives. The Ministry emphasized that failure to comply with traffic rules in such situations can lead to strict penalties, including fines and imprisonment.

Making way refers to allowing emergency vehicles, which includes police patrols, ambulances, firefighting units, civil defense vehicles, and official convoys, to pass safely and without delay. This applies as soon as the vehicles activate their audible sirens and visual warning signals. Obstructing or delaying these vehicles can endanger lives and violate the law. To ensure emergency vehicles can move quickly to the site of an incident, motorists should follow these steps: Immediately reduce your speed upon hearing sirens; Gradually move to the right side of the road to clear a passage; Stop at the roadside if necessary to allow safe and unhindered passage.

The ministry noted that violating these rules is a punishable offense. Offenders may face imprisonment for up to three months, a fine ranging from KD150 to KD300, or either of these penalties. The same penalties also apply to motorists who misuse emergency sirens to follow government vehicles in order to overtake other cars. The Ministry stresses that cooperation with emergency vehicles is vital for saving lives and protecting public safety. Quick response times for police, ambulances, and firefighting units can mean the difference between life and death during critical situations. By following simple rules and making way for emergency vehicles, motorists contribute to a safer, more responsible driving culture and ensure that everyone on the road benefits from enhanced protection.



Tebyan signs MoU with MEPC to strengthen collaboration

Kuwaiti systems company Tebyan announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Middle East Propulsion Company (MEPC) on the sidelines of the Global Defense Exhibition held in Saudi Arabia from 8-12 February. The agreement aims to strengthen cooperation and expand partnership opportunities in the aircraft engine sector and specialized technical services.

Speaking on the occasion, Tebyan Chairman Najib Abdulaziz Al-Fulaij described the agreement as a key strategic step in the company's vision to enhance its presence in the defense and aviation industries. He emphasized the importance of sharing expertise and localizing advanced technologies to benefit the regional economy.

Tebyan CEO Sheikha Badriya Hamad Al-Sabah highlighted that the MoU opens new horizons for technical and engineering



collaboration, strengthens specialized service systems in the aircraft engine sector, and paves the way for joint projects that enhance regional integration and elevate technical readiness.

The Global Defense Exhibition, organized by the Saudi General Authority for Military Industries, showcases the latest global technological advancements across land, sea, air, space, and security domains, providing a premier international platform for forging strategic partnerships and exploring joint cooperation opportunities.

The MoU establishes a framework for strategic collaboration including technical integration, knowledge transfer, advanced technical training programs, and the development of aircraft engine maintenance and support services, enhancing operational capabilities and supporting the sustainable growth objectives of both companies.



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Making the most of the holy month of Ramadan

Ramadan may seem restrictive to many expats, but beyond the daytime fast lies a vibrant season of community, generosity and tradition — from bustling nights in Mubarakia's old souk and the sharing of harees with neighbors, to children celebrating Girgian and families gathering in festive Ramadan tents. By embracing its customs and spirit, the holy month can become a rich and memorable experience for all.

By Claudia Farkas Al Rashoud
Special to The Times Kuwait

Many expats are wary of the advent of Ramadan. It is during this month that eating, drinking, and smoking in public is forbidden and even punished by fines and imprisonment; cafes and restaurants remain closed until after sunset; many shops and businesses have irregular hours and seem to open or close at whim; nighttime traffic is a nightmare; and life in general seems to be turned upside down.

Many Muslims, on the other hand, look forward to the holy month as a festive season marked by family get-togethers and late night socializing, a spirit of community, charity, and spiritual renewal, and a welcome change of pace. While some Ramadan traditions have changed over the years, many of its customs have remained constant. Fasting is widely practiced along with other religious duties such as reading the Holy Quran and attending extra prayers at the mosque. True fasting includes refraining not just from food, drink, and conjugal relations but from all bad habits, thoughts, actions and speech.



Date vendors in the old souk do brisk business in Ramadan.

By learning a little bit about the customs and taking advantage of some of the unique experiences Ramadan has to offer, expatriates can also make the most of this special month. From late night shopping and dining to sampling special foods, sharing favorite dishes, and participating in colorful festivals, Ramadan can be an enjoyable time for all.

Perhaps the best place to experience the traditional atmosphere of Ramadan is the old souk in Mubarakia. Ramadan nights in the outdoor market are all hustle and bustle as shoppers throng the narrow, festively decorated streets.

One of the oldest sections of the market is Souk Tamar, the date market. In Ramadan the shops selling piles of sweet, sticky fruit do a thriving business.

The date is the first food eaten by Muslims when breaking the fast, a tradition that originated with Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Today, physicians point out that the body benefits from the date's high level of natural sugars and vitamins and minerals. The sugars are converted into energy more quickly than any other nutrient and thus help relieve the fatigue felt at the end of the fast.

Friendly vendors are happy to explain about the many date varieties. They are also generous with free samples, allowing you to taste different kinds of dates. Years ago, the date market housed a small dry goods shop owned by a congenial Kuwaiti merchant named Ali Al Ajeel. Over many cups of strong black tea, Ali shared memories of the old days, when there were no supermarkets in Kuwait and Mubarakia market was one of the only places for people to do their shopping.



As the sun sets in Ramadan, Muslims prepare to break the fast. Many look forward to the holy month as a festive season marked by family gatherings, a spirit of community, charity, and spiritual renewal, and a welcome change of pace.

"In the days preceding Ramadan, shoppers would stock up on food supplies for the night time feasts that follow the days of fasting," Ali told me. Cupping his palm and scooping cracked wheat grains from a large burlap sack, he explained it is the main ingredient of harees, a traditional Ramadan dish.

Simple, filling, and delicious, harees is Arabian comfort food. Simmered to a porridge-like consistency in enormous pots, harees has always been a dish meant to be shared, and thus has age-old connotations of hospitality, generosity and community. In Ramadan, up until this day, containers of harees are delivered to family, neighbors and friends. In Ali's family, the contents of a huge pot were sent to families in the neighborhood every Thursday.

If you would like to try this typical Ramadan dish, you can buy it from one of the shops beside the cooperative supermarkets, selling cooked chickpeas, fava beans and other hearty dishes from steaming vats. At just 400 fils per portion, these dishes are a delicious bargain. And by the way, while different versions of harees are popular throughout the region, it is only in Kuwait that it is served sprinkled with powdered sugar and cinnamon.



Ali Al Ajeel passed away more than a decade ago, and his simple shop selling traditional foodstuff was replaced with a French fries stand with a flashy neon sign. But despite dramatic changes in Kuwait, the custom of sharing food during Ramadan that Ali spoke of is still widespread. Should you be passing through a Kuwaiti residential area before sunset, you can often see children or household helpers carrying trays of dishes to neighboring homes. Expats can also join in this popular pastime by sending friends or neighbors a special dish or dessert that need not be traditional Kuwaiti food. American ladies reported that their brownies and peanut butter cookies resulted in requests for the recipes from their Kuwaiti neighbors.

A traditional celebration that takes place on the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth nights of Ramadan is Girgian. Children go door to door singing special Girgian songs and are then



A girl chooses her dress for Girgian from a wide selection of costumes on sale at Mubarakia market.

rewarded with a mixture of sweets and nuts. About a week before the holiday you will see big bags of Girgian candy for sale in all the supermarkets.

In the old days, boys would streak their faces with charcoal and use old oil tins as drums. Girls wore the traditional head covering called bushneg. Cotton flour or burlap rice sacks were used for collecting the sweets. Nowadays the children wear beautiful, ornate outfits often with fancy matching bags. It is worth having sweets and a camera ready when these late-night visitors come to your door.

Another Ramadan delight is a visit to one of the festively-decorated Ramadan tents erected by hotels and restaurants, where huge selections of Arab and international foods are served buffet style. Do not miss the traditional Ramadan sweets, like lgeymat and sub al gafsha, small fried dough balls covered in sweet syrup.

During Ramadan, restaurants and shops remain open until the early hours of the morning, so you might want to indulge in the novelty of shopping or dining after midnight. An unappealing aspect of Ramadan is the horrible traffic, and unfortunately there is really nothing that can be done about that. But do not let this prevent you from getting out and about and enjoying some of the special highlights of this unique month.

Photographs by
Claudia Farkas Al Rashoud



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Ramadan, the holy month during which the noble Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), falls on the ninth month of the Arabic or lunar calendar. Kuwait boasts several beautiful Ramadan traditions.

including exchanging ideas at ghabgas and diwaniyas, distributing sweets to children in traditional attire for Girgiaan, and indulging in traditional Kuwaiti dishes for Iftar and Suhoor.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



Fasting in Ramadan is simply a detoxification to our body. It cleans our digestive system, and flushes out all the toxins. However, the concept of Ramadan and healthy fasting during this month seems to be misunderstood by some people. They tend to binge on food from the minute they start eating until they stop. This is what makes them feel abdominal discomfort, get constipated, and gain weight.

Also, the eating of large quantities of food at one go can cause headache, indigestion, reflux and lack of sleep as well.

How can we get rid of binge eating during Ramadan and follow a healthy eating pattern during this month?

Because we are fasting for more than 12 hours, we need to watch out for the food we consume. Eating slow-digesting foods like fiber, vegetables more than fast-digesting food like juices, white bread, sweets, sugary drinks, can be a good way to start. Fast digesting food makes us feel hungry again after two to three hours of eating. Also, fried foods cause heartburn, indigestion and weight gain.

So why do we tend to gain weight easily during this month, even when our food quantities are still the same as before?

When we are fasting for more than 12 hours, our metabolism slows down. Introducing food after these 12 fasting hours makes us gain weight easily. So imagine when we eat big quantities at one shot. Our body is no longer burning enough calories, our metabolism is very low and we tend to gain a lot of weight!

So, how should we break the fast to avoid all the problems mentioned above?

Start with: Half cup of low-fat yogurt and two dates. Dates contain iron, magnesium, potassium, which is perfect for dehydration. Drink two glasses of water. Do not forget that you were not drinking water for hours, so you need fluids. Have a small plate of *fattouche* or green salad followed by a small bowl of non-creamy soup.

These items contain sufficient essential vitamins and minerals to compensate for the fluid loss and dehydration. Additionally, these food choices take time to digest, which gives us satiety for a longer time. Now that you finished the first food part, go pray, exercise or rest for a bit.

After an hour: Eat a plate of the main meals:

Tachriba, hariss, jerish, steamed rice and lean steak, chicken or fish.

For dessert, you can have a piece of sweet, but let it be twice a week. A better choice is to have a piece of fruit or a fruit salad, rich in fiber and vitamins.

At Suhoor: Do not let your main meal be your suhoor. This meal is usually very late. So the metabolism is even slower than before. Take light food at suhoor, food that does not make you feel thirsty the next day. For example, a small plate of steamed rice and yogurt. Rice retains water in the body, so it will not make you feel thirsty. This gives you energy and makes you feel full for a longer time. Yogurt is refreshing, and the best choice is to have the low-sodium yogurt.

Foods to avoid: Avoid salty food because you are bound to feel thirsty the next day.

Also, avoid juices, these are simple sugars, easily absorbed in the body, and will not make you feel satisfied.

And, avoid tea and coffee at night. These are diuretics that will flush the water out of your body, making you feel more dehydrated. Moreover, their caffeine content will prevent sleeping.

A fruit platter is a good option. It contains minerals which you need to prevent dehydration. A bowl of fowl is also a good option, add fresh tomatoes to it.

Baked potatoes topped with low- fat labne is a great option with cucumbers and fresh lettuce.

And of course do not forget to drink a lot of water to compensate for the fluid loss.

Ramadan Mubarak everyone

Eat like Mira

Create healthy habits, not restrictions

To subscribe to my diet programs,
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Mira is a go-to source for nutrition and wellness and has joined The Times Kuwait team in a new weekly column discussing nutrition and answering queries. You can send in your questions to infotimeskuwait@gmail.com

Ramadan Imsakia 2026/1447 in Kuwait

Day	Ramadan	Date	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhur	Asr	Magrib	Isha
Wednesday	01	February 18	5:03 AM	6:25 AM	12:02 AM	3:14 PM	5:40 PM	7:10 PM
Thursday	02	February 19	5:02 AM	6:24 AM	12:02 AM	3:15 PM	5:40 PM	7:10 PM
Friday	03	February 20	5:01 AM	6:23 AM	12:02 AM	3:15 PM	5:41 PM	7:11 PM
Saturday	04	February 21	5:00 AM	6:22 AM	12:02 AM	3:16 PM	5:42 PM	7:12 PM
Sunday	05	February 22	4:59 AM	6:21 AM	12:02 AM	3:16 PM	5:43 PM	7:13 PM
Monday	06	February 23	4:58 AM	6:20 AM	12:01 AM	3:17 PM	5:43 PM	7:13 PM
Tuesday	07	February 24	4:58 AM	6:19 AM	12:01 AM	3:17 PM	5:44 PM	7:14 PM
Wednesday	08	February 25	4:57 AM	6:18 AM	12:01 AM	3:17 PM	5:45 PM	7:15 PM
Thursday	09	February 26	4:56 AM	6:17 AM	12:01 AM	3:18 PM	5:45 PM	7:15 PM
Friday	10	February 27	4:55 AM	6:16 AM	12:01 AM	3:18 PM	5:46 PM	7:16 PM
Saturday	11	February 28	4:54 AM	6:15 AM	12:01 AM	3:18 PM	5:47 PM	7:17 PM
Sunday	12	March 01	4:53 AM	6:14 AM	12:00 AM	3:19 PM	5:47 PM	7:17 PM
Monday	13	March 02	4:52 AM	6:13 AM	12:00 AM	3:19 PM	5:48 PM	7:18 PM
Tuesday	14	March 03	4:51 AM	6:12 AM	12:00 AM	3:19 PM	5:49 PM	7:19 PM
Wednesday	15	March 04	4:49 AM	6:11 AM	12:00 AM	3:20 PM	5:49 PM	7:19 PM
Thursday	16	March 05	4:48 AM	6:10 AM	12:00 AM	3:20 PM	5:50 PM	7:20 PM
Friday	17	March 06	4:47 AM	6:08 AM	11:59 AM	3:20 PM	5:51 PM	7:21 PM
Saturday	18	March 07	4:46 AM	6:07 AM	11:59 AM	3:20 PM	5:51 PM	7:21 PM
Sunday	19	March 08	4:45 AM	6:06 AM	11:59 AM	3:21 PM	5:52 PM	7:22 PM
Monday	20	March 09	4:44 AM	6:05 AM	11:59 AM	3:21 PM	5:53 PM	7:23 PM
Tuesday	21	March 10	4:43 AM	6:04 AM	11:58 AM	3:21 PM	5:53 PM	7:23 PM
Wednesday	22	March 11	4:42 AM	6:03 AM	11:58 AM	3:21 PM	5:54 PM	7:24 PM
Thursday	23	March 12	4:40 AM	6:02 AM	11:58 AM	3:22 PM	5:54 PM	7:24 PM
Friday	24	March 13	4:39 AM	6:00 AM	11:58 AM	3:22 PM	5:55 PM	7:25 PM
Saturday	25	March 14	4:38 AM	5:59 AM	11:57 AM	3:22 PM	5:56 PM	7:26 PM
Sunday	26	March 15	4:37 AM	5:58 AM	11:57 AM	3:22 PM	5:56 PM	7:26 PM
Monday	27	March 16	4:36 AM	5:57 AM	11:57 AM	3:22 PM	5:57 PM	7:27 PM
Tuesday	28	March 17	4:34 AM	5:56 AM	11:56 AM	3:22 PM	5:58 PM	7:28 PM
Wednesday	29	March 18	4:33 AM	5:55 AM	11:56 AM	3:22 PM	5:58 PM	7:28 PM
Thursday	30	March 19	4:32 AM	5:53 AM	11:56 AM	3:23 PM	5:59 PM	7:29 PM

Ramadan: A season of homecoming, heritage, and timeless elegance

Ramadan is never merely a month — it is a homecoming. A return to faith, to family, to reflection, and to the generosity that brings hearts closer together.

At Indian Heritage, Ramadan has always represented something beyond commerce. It is a time when homes feel warmer, conversations stretch into cherished moments, and the garments we wear become expressions of heritage, artistry, and timeless grace.

As the crescent moon marks the beginning of this blessed season, we extend our sincere wishes to you and your loved ones: Ramadan Kareem. For more than three decades, Indian Heritage has been honored to serve the women of Kuwait and the GCC. What began as a vision to bring the finest Indian textiles — from the master weavers of Banaras and Kanchipuram to the skilled artisans of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Bengal — has grown into something

far deeper than a business. It has become a lasting bond built on trust, tradition, and shared stories.

A relationship built on trust
On quality that never compromises
On understanding the silhouette, modesty, and elegance of the modern Arab woman

We were born to serve Kuwaiti customers, and today we are honored to be embraced by women across the GCC. Over the years, we have grown — from offering traditional Indian attire and fabrics to reimagining Indian craftsmanship for contemporary wardrobes. Yet we have kept our name. Because our identity remains rooted in authenticity, ethical sourcing, and respect for heritage.

Ramadan gently reminds us of what truly endures.

It is a season when values rise above trends, when intention carries greater meaning than



excess, and when the spirit of giving outweighs the desire to receive. To our loyal patrons — many of whom have been part of our journey since the very beginning — and to a new generation discovering our collections, we extend our heartfelt gratitude.

Your trust has guided our path, your feedback has strengthened our craftsmanship,

and your loyalty has inspired us to grow and dream beyond what we once imagined.

As we look ahead, our commitment remains unwavering: to evolve alongside you, to create collections that honor heritage while embracing contemporary elegance, and to continue sourcing with care and responsibility.

Above all, we strive to craft garments and fabrics that carry meaning — pieces that become part of life's cherished moments, from intimate iftar gatherings to joyful Eid celebrations.

This Ramadan, may your homes be filled with peace
May your tables be abundant
May your prayers be answered
And may the spirit of compassion and gratitude guide us all

From our family at Indian Heritage to yours — Ramadan Kareem.

United States-Kuwait ties deep-rooted, strategically vital

The Times Kuwait Report

United States' relationship with Kuwait is not only strong but thriving, deep-rooted, and strategically vital for both nations, said US Charge d'Affaires Steven Butler during a wide-ranging media interaction held last week at the US Embassy. Opening the discussion, Butler emphasized that the partnership between the two countries spans more than six decades and is built on shared interests in security, economic growth, regional stability, and enduring people-to-people ties.

Highlighting Kuwait's role as a key regional partner, the Charge d'Affaires reiterated Washington's unwavering commitment to Kuwait's security and sovereignty. "Kuwait is a trusted ally, and the United States remains fully committed to Kuwait's security and to stability in this region," he noted. He added that Kuwait continues to play a constructive and increasingly visible role in shaping regional peace and security, particularly at a time of heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

Butler also welcomed Kuwait's recent decision to join the Board of Peace for Gaza as a founding member, describing it as an important international initiative aimed at translating diplomatic breakthroughs into lasting peace and prosperity. Defense and security cooperation, he stressed, remains a cornerstone of US-Kuwait relations. The two countries continue to work closely to deter threats, prevent conflict, and ensure long-term regional stability.

Describing Kuwait, a Major Non-NATO Ally of the United States, as a champion of interoperability, Butler explained that joint military exercises, operational coordination, and shared planning forms the backbone of a defense partnership forged over the past 35 years. "No single country in the Gulf can do this alone, and the US can't do it alone either. Collective defense and interoperability are essential," he explained.

While declining to comment on specific defense procurement announcements, Butler confirmed that the United States has already provided billions of dollars' worth of defense support, noting that any new agreements or deals would be announced by the Kuwaiti government when appropriate.

Responding to questions about heightened regional tensions and Iran, the Charge d'Affaires said the United States remains firmly committed to diplomacy while maintaining strong defensive coordination with its regional partners. President Trump, he noted, has consistently urged Iran to come to the table to negotiate a fair and equitable agreement and has been clear that Iran must not obtain a nuclear weapon.

Butler confirmed that indirect talks with Iran were recently held in Muscat, and assured regional partners that the US Embassy remains deeply engaged with Kuwait and Gulf allies on



security-related issues. While declining to discuss operational or security details, he referenced the US response to last year's attack on Doha, saying a similar response could be expected should such a situation arise again.

On maritime security and recent advisories urging ships to avoid Iranian waters, the Charge d'Affaires said such guidance reflects longstanding concerns over the harassment and seizure of commercial vessels in the Gulf. "Protecting secure shipping and freedom of navigation is essential for global commerce and free trade," he said. He added that coordination with Gulf partners is ongoing through US naval operations headquartered in Bahrain, emphasizing that maritime security remains a shared responsibility.

Beyond security, the Charge d'Affaires highlighted the rapid growth of economic ties, with approximately \$5 billion in annual two-way trade between the United States and Kuwait. American companies continue to bring world-class expertise and advanced technology to Kuwait, while Kuwaiti investors play an increasingly important role in the US economy.

From energy giants such as Halliburton and Schlumberger to technology leaders including Microsoft and Google, US firms are deeply embedded in Kuwait's economic transformation, particularly in areas such as data infrastructure and artificial intelligence. "The future is data," he said. "American companies are delivering cutting-edge solutions, and they will always

compete on a transparent, level playing field." Asked about concerns surrounding challenges faced by US companies operating in Kuwait, the Charge d'Affaires said assisting American businesses is a core function of the embassy. "Disputes happen in every country," he said. "Our role is to help promote dialogue and work toward fair solutions when issues arise." He stressed that such matters are handled with confidentiality and form part of the embassy's daily engagement with both American firms and Kuwaiti authorities.

The Charge d'Affaires underscored the importance of people-to-people connections, noting that thousands of Kuwaiti students study in the United States each year. "These connections last for generations," he said, describing education as one of the most enduring pillars of the bilateral relationship. Responding to concerns about longer visa processing times, particularly for students and medical travelers, Butler said enhanced security guidelines, many of which have existed for years, have required additional scrutiny in some cases.

"This administration has put an emphasis on knowing who is coming into the country," he said. He stressed, however, that the vast majority of visa applications are processed quickly, and confirmed that expedited appointments are available for emergency medical cases through the embassy's consular section. He also clarified that the recent pause in immigrant visa processing does not affect non-immigrant visas, including tourist, student, business, and medical visas.

With the upcoming FIFA World Cup generating excitement among football fans across the region, the US Charge d'Affaires also addressed concerns about visa timelines and travel planning for supporters hoping to attend matches in the United States.

He urged fans to apply early and not wait until the last minute, noting that demand for visas is expected to increase significantly as the tournament approaches. Acknowledging the global scale of the event, he confirmed that the US government is allocating additional consular resources worldwide to handle the expected surge in applications linked to the World Cup.

Addressing questions about the appointment of a new US ambassador to Kuwait, the Charge d'Affaires clarified that the previously announced nominee is no longer under consideration. Concluding the discussion, the Charge d'Affaires described US-Kuwait relations as steady, resilient, and constantly active even when progress is not immediately visible.

"There's an old saying: still waters run deep," he said. "That's how I'd describe this relationship." With strong defense cooperation, expanding economic ties, and deep people-to-people connections, he said the goal remains simple: delivering tangible benefits for both Americans and Kuwaitis while advancing peace and stability in the region.

Ramadan in Kuwait

A journey of faith and tradition

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Realigning our priorities

Muslims eagerly anticipate the arrival of Ramadan as a time for family, faith, community, and reflection—elements of life that may sometimes be overlooked amidst our daily obligations. This sacred month offers a chance to realign our priorities and focus on what we hold dear as human beings, particularly emphasizing philanthropy and the numerous opportunities to volunteer and contribute to the community.

Short working hours

For decades, expatriates in Kuwait have cherished Ramadan. Working hours are shortened, creating a relaxed atmosphere where people dedicate more time to worship and experiment with various recipes to please the palates of both young and old family members and invited friends.

This year, there is a particularly joyful and relaxed ambiance as people can finally gather in large numbers without Covid-19 restrictions to celebrate Ramadan festivities. The Grand Mosque has reopened after a three-year hiatus, welcoming

worshippers for the night prayers known as Qi' Yam al-Layl, or the Night of Power, where prayer intensity heightens during the last ten days of Ramadan.

Warmth and hospitality

Families gather for iftar, inviting friends and colleagues, providing an opportunity to connect with many wonderful people who were previously strangers. Warmth and hospitality permeate Kuwait, with gatherings unique to the country offering an excellent opportunity to meet different generations of families and learn about local traditions. People share their past experiences, adding excitement and interest to the atmosphere.

Ramadan fosters a sense of brotherhood. Despite the challenges of the past two years due to the pandemic, Muslims worldwide have made efforts to come together virtually. However, the experience is much richer in person.

Embracing tradition in fine attire

Ramadan is a month when everyone enjoys dressing in their finest traditional or national attire. Women adore their stunning Ramadan



kaftans, adorned with beautiful colors and designs. Shopping malls are bustling throughout the month of Ramadan, filled with enthusiastic late-night shoppers.

In Kuwait and around the world, Ramadan is a time for Muslims to reflect and connect. Each individual embarks on a personal journey during Ramadan, which may include prayer, fasting, charitable giving, and a focus on self-discipline, mindfulness, and their impact on society.

Families and friends gather for iftar and suhoor, often extending invitations to non-Muslim friends to foster understanding of Islam and the Ramadan

spirit. Ramadan serves as an opportunity to bridge gaps between the ummah and broader society.

Deepening personal connections

Ramadan provides a unique opportunity to connect with others on a deeper, more personal level, as one is invited into their homes and meets their families. It is also a time for reflection, spiritual renewal, and focusing on cultivating healthy habits and choices. The emphasis on giving and ensuring kindness in our actions resonates deeply with every family. Children become innovative and creative, such as making an advent Ramadan calendar that records daily acts of kindness, resulting in extra hugs and toys being cleared away without reminders from the parents.

Celebrating diverse traditions

Ramadan not only highlights common bonds but also celebrates the diverse traditions and practices within the Muslim community, showcasing a rich tapestry of pluralism.

As the blessed month of Ramadan draws to a close, people are turning their attention to planning the celebration of Eid Al Fitr.

Vietnam-Kuwait relations mark 50 years of diplomatic partnership

After half a century of friendship, Kuwait-Vietnam relations elevated to strategic level; Vietnamese Ambassador highlights growing ties, economic and cultural milestones with Kuwait

The Times Kuwait Report

Kuwait and Vietnam are marking 50 years of diplomatic relations in 2026, celebrating five decades of mutual trust, cooperation, and growing strategic partnership that reflects the depth of political confidence and expanding shared interests, said Ambassador of Vietnam H.E. Nguyen Duc Thang. He made the remarks while speaking during a reception held by the Vietnamese embassy to commemorate the 'Spring of the Homeland, Lunar New Year 2026'.

Highlighting the historical significance of this anniversary, Ambassador Thang said that the solid foundation of bilateral relations was built on Kuwait's popular and official stance during Vietnam's war years—an era remembered for strong solidarity and widespread public support in Kuwait. He further affirmed that 2026 represents an important milestone in the longstanding friendship between the two nations, emphasizing the qualitative development of ties since Vietnam and Kuwait established diplomatic relations in 1976. He pointed out that this partnership has now been elevated to a strategic level, opening broader avenues for collaboration in economic, educational, and cultural fields.

The ambassador underscored the historic visit of Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh to Kuwait in November 2015, a visit that



led to the formal upgrading of bilateral ties to a strategic partnership. This shift, he said, reflects deep political trust and a shared vision for future cooperation.

Kuwait remains a key trade and investment partner for Vietnam in the Middle East. Bilateral trade reached approximately US\$7 billion in 2025, and Kuwaiti investments in Vietnam, most notably exceeding \$3.5 billion in the Nghi Son Petrochemical Refinery project, stand as a testament to the strength of economic ties between the two countries.

The ambassador also paid tribute to Kuwait's support during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the donation of 600,000 vaccine doses to Vietnam, a gesture he described as

emblematic of deep friendship and solidarity.

Ambassador Thang praised the Kuwaiti partners across various sectors for their ongoing support and their commitment to strengthening cooperation. He stressed that the two countries are entering a new, diverse

and comprehensive phase of relations based on shared political will.

He also shared notable achievements by Vietnam in 2025, including an 8.02 percent GDP growth, positioning the economy at \$530 billion and 32nd globally; foreign trade exceeding \$930 billion, putting Vietnam among the top 15 trading nations; 20 million international tourists welcomed; and recognition by the International Monetary Fund as one of the world's fastest-growing economies.

Elaborating on the 'Spring of the Homeland' celebration, Ambassador Thang explained that the Lunar New Year celebration brought together the Vietnamese community in Kuwait and Kuwaiti friends, highlighting the cultural and human bonds that unite the two peoples. Despite its modest size of around 150 individuals, he lauded the Vietnamese community for its unity, active social participation, and contributions to cultural exchange.



Bharatanatyam dance-drama brings to life acclaimed Kannada play

A landmark cultural event took place on February 6, 2026, at the Boy Scout Theater in Hawally, Kuwait, with the staging of Nagamandala, a dance drama inspired by the acclaimed Kannada play by Girish Karnad. This performance marked the first time the play was reimagined as a Bharatanatyam dance drama in Kuwait, creating a unique fusion of classical Indian dance and regional literature.

The production was directed and choreographed by Vinitha Pratish, artistic director of Srishti Productions and Srishti School of Classical Dance, Kuwait, with assistance from Arya BR. The performers were talented students from Srishti, representing Kuwait and other

countries, whose dedication and artistry vividly brought the story to life on stage. Srishti has been presenting innovative dance dramas for over 20 years, and this performance highlighted their continuing creative evolution.

What set this production apart was its innovative choreography, which fused the precise, expressive language of Bharatanatyam with subtle elements of folk music, creating a rich and textured storytelling experience. The timeless themes of love, identity, and transformation resonated deeply with a diverse audience, demonstrating the universality of Karnad's narrative.

The theatrical experience was further enhanced by a carefully curated musical score that blended classical rhythms with modern fusion instruments, including the bass guitar.

A live orchestra led by Arun Gopinath from Canada, featuring musicians Kiran Gopinath, Easwar Ramakrishnan, Raghunadhan Savitry, Sasi Kottakkal, Dheera Ragesh, and Devna Prasanth, added depth, energy, and emotion to the performance.

Audience members were captivated by the dancers' expressive performances, the striking visual design, and the seamless integration of music and movement.





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Sri Lanka to deepen ties with Kuwait in trade, investment, employment

The Times Kuwait Report

Embassy of Sri Lanka held a reception last week to mark the country's 78th Independence Day. The event was attended by Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Housing Affairs Abdul Latif Al-Mashari along with several members of the diplomatic corps, and other distinguished guests.

In his address to the gathering, Ambassador of Sri Lanka H.E. Lakshitha Ratnayake, stated that Sri Lanka-Kuwait relations, built on a strong foundation of friendship and mutual respect since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1971, are set to expand into new areas of cooperation.

Highlighting areas of future collaboration, Ambassador Ratnayake noted that Sri Lanka is keen to enhance cooperation with Kuwait in employment, trade, investment, and cultural exchange, emphasizing that foreign employment relations between the two nations have witnessed significant growth.

Describing Minister Al-Mashari's participation in the event as a reflection of the deep goodwill and friendship linking Kuwait and Sri Lanka, the ambassador noted that today the Sri Lankan community in Kuwait is the fifth largest foreign community, further reinforcing strong people-to-people ties.

The ambassador also praised the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development,

noting that it has been supporting Sri Lanka for nearly 50 years by financing several strategic development projects, including vital infrastructure, government facilities, and academic institutions.

Reflecting on Sri Lanka's journey since independence, Ambassador Ratnayake said the nation has consistently promoted democracy, social harmony, and international cooperation, maintaining balanced relations with countries worldwide. He emphasized Sri Lanka's strategic location along major global trade routes, which strengthens its role as a bridge for dialogue and international peace efforts.

He noted that Sri Lanka holds a key economic position in South Asia, with Colombo ranked

among the world's top 25 container ports, offering access to markets across South Asia, the Middle East, East Asia, and Western countries.

Ambassador Ratnayake highlighted investment opportunities in tourism, infrastructure, and real estate, noting that the island's diverse natural beauty, Ceylon tea, gemstones, and cuisine attract millions of tourists annually. The ambassador added that Sri Lanka was named 'the most beautiful island in the world for 2025' by Big 7 Travel, and features eight UNESCO World Heritage sites.

With regular direct flights now operating between Kuwait and Sri Lanka via three airlines, he expects a growth in Kuwaiti tourist visits in the coming years, said the Sri Lankan envoy.

KEMS Zajil Telecom and Huawei Set to Power Kuwait's Next Phase of Cloud Transformation

KEMS Zajil Telecom, a leading Digital Solutions Provider in Kuwait, in collaboration with Huawei, is set to introduce a new generation of cloud services designed to support Kuwait's accelerating digital transformation and evolving enterprise needs.

Through KEMS Zajil Telecom's reliable local infrastructure, its deep market expertise, and by leveraging Huawei's advanced technological

hybrid cloud integration, while laying the foundation for advanced capabilities such as AI, big data, and digital convergence. By combining global cloud technology leadership with trusted local delivery and support, the collaboration empowers organizations to modernize with confidence, security, and control.

Commenting on the upcoming launch, Yusuf Ahmed, CEO at KEMS Zajil Telecom, said:

"As organizations in Kuwait accelerate their digital journeys, the need for extreme secure, compliant, and high-performance new cloud environments has never been greater. Our collaboration with Huawei reflects our commitment to delivering next-generation cloud services that combine global innovation with strong local presence, designed specifically for the needs of the Kuwaiti market."

Frank Fu, Enterprise General Manager at Huawei, added:

"Huawei Data Center Stack enables enterprises to unlock the potential of cloud technologies while maintaining control, security, and compliance. Through this collaboration with KEMS Zajil Telecom, we are laying the groundwork for intelligent, sovereign data services that will support business innovation and long-term digital growth in Kuwait."

As data security and compliance continue to be top priorities for organizations across sectors, this joint initiative represents a strategic step toward delivering intelligent Cloud and sovereign data solutions that balance innovation, trust, and operational resilience.

Further details on the official launch and service capabilities will be announced soon. The collaboration between KEMS Zajil Telecom and Huawei marks an important milestone in enabling Kuwait's digital future—and the next phase of cloud adoption in the country



contributions, the anticipated cloud services have been developed and enhanced in accordance with the highest standards, thereby enabling organizations to operate within a secure, flexible, and intelligent cloud environment, specifically designed to support data sovereignty, ensure compliance with regulatory requirements, and run mission-critical workloads across all business operations efficiently and confidently.

The forthcoming services will enable enterprises to benefit from extreme efficiency, high reliability, elastic scalability, and seamless

Promoting Sustainable, Resilient Tourism Furthers Vision 2035

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The Middle East is one of the fastest-growing tourism regions of the world, with tourism helping countries diversify their economies, create jobs and support private-sector growth. Tourism is also a leading driver of equality and opportunity across the region, as it is a leading employer of women and youth, and a pillar of sustainable development, particularly for rural communities and indigenous populations.

The UN Tourism Organization's Regional Commission for the Middle East, headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, fosters sustainable, innovative tourism across its member states. It coordinates regional policies, harmonizes travel protocols, and drives economic growth. The commission focuses on developing unified protocols for safe travel, promoting digital solutions for travelers, and strengthening the tourism sector's contribution to regional GDPs.

Latest figures from the UN Tourism, which publishes the 'World Tourism Barometer' shows that the Middle East recorded three percent growth in 2025, the strongest results relative to 2019, with the region reaching close to the milestone mark of 100 million international visitors in 2025. Other figures from the Tourism Barometer confirm a resilient global tourism sector on an upward trajectory.

International tourist arrivals grew by 4 percent in 2025, with an estimated 1.52 billion international tourist visits recorded globally in 2025, almost 60 million more than in 2024. Total tourism export revenues topped a record US\$2.2 trillion in 2025, with \$1.9 billion in international tourism receipts and \$0.3 trillion from passenger transport, with many destinations recording a higher increase in receipts than in arrivals.

Continued consumer demand, enhanced air connectivity, and growing outbound travel from emerging markets, is expected to raise global travel in 2026 by 3 to 4 percent compared to 2025. However, this projection is conditional on sustained recovery in Asia and the Pacific, favorable global economic conditions, and reduction in geopolitical conflicts.

Developing a unique sustainable and resilient tourism model positions Kuwait to attract this potential increase in international visits. Sustainable tourism also supports the government's economic diversification plan, drives infrastructure development, provides gainful employment opportunities for youth, and encourages domestic and international investments. It also fosters environmental sustainability, develops socio-cultural exchanges, and helps promote global peace.

However, for the holistic development of tourism, Kuwait needs an effective, independent, dedicated or specialized tourism authority, mandated to develop and implement integrated and comprehensive strategies and policies. The authority could streamline services, promote Kuwait as an attractive destination for international travelers, and attract foreign investments, as well as regularly evaluate and update services and policies to keep them in line with international norms and trends.

More than being a division under the Ministry of Information, or providing a digital portal of tourism services, only an independent authority can provide the focused and empowered leadership needed to transform the tourism sector in Kuwait into a sustainable and resilient industry capable of driving economic and social progress in alignment with Vision 2035.

German trade delegation explores potential for further collaboration

Growing German interest in Kuwaiti market signals stronger investment ties; business delegation explores strategic partnerships in the country.

The Times Kuwait Report

A high-level German business delegation arrived in the country last week to explore opportunities for cooperation, deepen bilateral partnerships, and expand trade and investment ties between the two countries. Underlining the strong economic relations between Germany and Kuwait, the delegation included representatives from 14 leading German companies across multiple sectors, as well as officials from the German government's Export Credit Guarantees program.

In his remarks on the occasion, Ambassador of Germany H.E. Hans-Christian von Reibnitz said the visit provides German companies with a valuable opportunity to gain first-hand insight into the Kuwaiti market and explore avenues for cooperation with local counterparts across various industries, and reflected the growing interest within the German business community in Kuwait's market potential.

The ambassador explained that the initiative was the result of joint efforts between the German Emirati Joint Council for Industry and Commerce in Dubai, the German Business Council in Kuwait, and the German Embassy. He also praised the support extended by the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority in facilitating the visit's program,



stressing that this coordinated model is already yielding tangible results.

He highlighted that trade relations between the two countries rest on solid foundations. German exports to Kuwait reached approximately 1.13 billion euros in 2023, primarily comprising machinery, vehicles, and chemical products. German companies are also active in Kuwait in sectors including infrastructure, energy, logistics, and healthcare, contributing to the implementation and development of key national projects.

For his part, Florian Walter, Kuwait representative in the German Emirati Joint

Council, said the delegation reflected the council's growing engagement in the Kuwaiti market and its recognition of Kuwait as a pivotal strategic partner in the region.

He added that the delegation held productive meetings with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the KDIPA, and the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. The meetings yielded positive outcomes and strengthened communication between the two business communities.

Noting that the current volume of trade remains below aspirations, he underscored the need for intensified efforts to boost trade flows

and expand mutual investments. He pointed out that while trade serves as a gateway to economic rapprochement, investment, particularly from the private sector, represents the most important stage in consolidating long-term partnerships.

He also pointed out that Kuwaiti investments in Germany are well established and significant, whether through the Kuwait Investment Authority or public and private sector investors, particularly in the automotive industry, including major brands and supplier networks within the broader industrial mid-market sector.



Ambassador expresses appreciation for Kuwait's support of Cuba

The Times Kuwait Report

Ambassador of Cuba H.E. Alan Perez Torres, affirmed his country's deep appreciation for Kuwait's unwavering support of the Cuban people. He commended both the people and government of Kuwait, for rejecting the blockade and sanctions imposed on Cuba, and for its consistent adherence to the principles of international law and the right of peoples to self-determination.

In a statement during a meeting with the local media at his residence, Ambassador Torres said that the Cuban people are subjected to the



longest and harshest economic sanctions regime in modern history. For over 65 years, they have suffered a comprehensive economic blockade and unilateral coercive sanctions aimed at crippling the economy and sowing despair and frustration among the citizens, in an attempt to incite social unrest that would lead to the overthrow of the revolutionary government.

He added that these measures did not stop there, but recently witnessed a dangerous escalation in the form of an energy blockade, through the imposition of tariffs and sanctions on countries that export fuel to Cuba, whether directly or indirectly. He explained that this extreme measure was justified by a series of false claims and defamatory accusations, including the claim that Cuba poses an 'unusual and

extraordinary threat' to US national security, a claim he described as absurd and unbelievable.

He pointed out that the international community is aware of the falsity of these claims, noting that the truth is often ignored when it comes to imposing sanctions on Cuba, despite the widespread rejection of these policies in international forums.

The ambassador affirmed that the latest blockade is clearly aimed at creating a widespread shortage in the country, which could lead to a large-scale humanitarian crisis, with the goal of pushing the Cuban people into the streets and destabilizing the country. However, he stressed that these policies do not take into account the courage and resilience of the Cuban people, emphasizing that they are a people who do not accept threats and are prepared to defend their independence and sovereignty to the end.

He explained that the Cuban government has taken a series of measures to mitigate the negative effects of the sanctions, including regulating working hours, reducing public transportation services, and rationing fuel sales, along with other measures aimed at managing the crisis with minimal damage.

In a related context, the Cuban ambassador affirmed, based on the declaration issued by the Cuban revolutionary government on 30 January 2016, Cuba's continued historical readiness to engage in serious and responsible dialogue with the United States government, based on respect for international law, sovereign equality, mutual respect, mutual benefit, and non-interference in the internal affairs of states.

The Cuban ambassador concluded by emphasizing that what his country is experiencing constitutes an unjust oil embargo based on false and misleading pretenses. He considered this policy not only an economic crime but also a deliberate attempt to inflict suffering and starvation on the Cuban people. In this context, he reiterated his deep gratitude to the State of Kuwait, which has historically rejected the embargo policy and has always stood by Cuba in defending justice and the rights of peoples.



French Business Council holds seminar focused on digital security

The Times Kuwait Report

French Business Council in Kuwait (FBCK) began a new economic seminar series titled 'FBCK TALKS', opening with a high-level session last week dedicated to cybersecurity and digital resilience. The inaugural event brought together leading business executives, experts, and decision-makers from both the public and private sectors.

The seminar was hosted at the residence of the Ambassador of France H.E. Olivier Gauvin, who underscored in his welcoming remarks the strategic importance of cybersecurity in an increasingly interconnected digital world. "Cybersecurity is no longer merely a technical issue; it has become a strategic priority for governments, companies, and societies," said the ambassador, adding that, "strengthening digital resilience is a fundamental element in protecting our economies, institutions, and citizens."

The "FBCK TALKS" series aims to provide an open platform for dialogue and specialized discussion on strategic economic,

technological, and institutional issues. The format is designed to be interactive, encouraging the exchange of expertise and practical insights, enabling participants to formulate actionable recommendations.

For his part, Olivier Escloze, board member of FBCK, said the initiative aligns with Kuwait's ongoing efforts to enhance innovation, diversification, and international cooperation. "Following the success of the French Business Diwaniya held in January, we are launching 'FBCK TALKS' to bring together experts from various sectors. The council intends to organize monthly events that connect French and Kuwaiti companies and further strengthen bilateral partnerships," he noted.

The session featured prominent speakers who delivered integrated strategic and operational perspectives on cybersecurity challenges. Discussions provided participants with deeper insight into the evolving threat landscape and practical mechanisms for building more resilient and robust digital systems amid rapid digital transformation.



Saud Al-Nasser Institute hosts cultural event for diplomatic community

The Times Kuwait Report

Saud Al-Nasser Diplomatic Institute, in partnership with the Warba Bank, hosted members of the accredited diplomatic corps and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff in a cultural event celebrating Quraish Day, one of Kuwait's most cherished heritage traditions. The event blended the festive spirit of national holidays with local cultural heritage, showcasing the intersection of diplomacy and Kuwaiti identity.

Speaking at the event, Assistant Foreign

Minister for the Institute, Ambassador Nasser Al-Subaih, highlighted the importance of embedding Kuwait's cultural identity within diplomatic work. He emphasized that national partnerships between government, private sector, and civil society enrich official events and reinforce the human and societal dimension of diplomacy.

The celebration featured contributions from persons with disabilities, who presented handicrafts reflecting Kuwait's traditional arts, alongside Kuwaiti artisans and historians showcasing historical manuscripts, cultural

artifacts, and craftwork.

The event highlighted the nation's rich heritage and the institute's commitment to community inclusion and cultural preservation.

For his part, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador of Japan H.E. Mukai Kenichiro, Dr. Zubidullo Zubidzoda, praised the annual initiative as a well-established tradition reflecting Kuwait's institutional approach to diplomacy.

He emphasized that such events provide diplomats a platform to exchange views on regional and global issues, enhance

coordination, and learn from Kuwait's experience in mediation, humanitarian work, and development.

Ambassador Zubidzoda noted the Institute's pivotal role in training young diplomats through specialized programs and workshops that sharpen professional skills, aligning with the fast-paced evolution of international relations. He also commended the organization and high standard of participation, expressing hope that these initiatives will continue to strengthen friendship and understanding between nations.

Japanese Embassy organizes Wagyu promotion seminar

Embassy of Japan held a seminar to promote the Japanese prime beef, Wagyu, at the Sakura Japanese Restaurant in Crowne Plaza Hotel. In his remarks on the occasion, Ambassador of Japan H.E. Mukai Kenichiro revealed that following extensive and successful negotiations between the Japanese and Kuwaiti authorities, both sides have reached an agreement permitting the import of halal Wagyu from Japan to Kuwait. He added that this milestone paves the way for food suppliers in Kuwait to finally bring this exquisite delicacy to the local market.

The seminar was attended by leading restaurant and hotel operators, food importers and culinary chefs. The program featured a live demonstration on the proper handling, cooking, and serving of A5 Wagyu—the highest grade of Japanese beef. In addition, representatives from Wagyu exporting companies in Japan shared distinctive characteristics of premium Wagyu beef brands, Omi Beef and Kurohara Beef. The event concluded with a tasting session, where attendees enjoyed a variety of Wagyu dishes, including Roast Beef, Wagyu Sando (beef cutlet sandwich), and Wagyu Steak.

Wagyu is renowned as the pinnacle of artisan beef, produced in limited quantities under strict Japanese standards. Its unparalleled flavor and exquisite tenderness, enhanced by rich marbling, create a dining experience unlike any other. Globally, this delicacy secured its place on the menus of gourmet chefs, fine-dining establishments, and discerning home kitchens. And now it can finally be enjoyed by Kuwait's fine culinary community.

The ambassador explained that this achievement is the fruit of the extended history of deep friendship, partnership, and various levels of interactions between Japan and Kuwait, with intensive high-level bilateral visits in 2025 boosting it.

These visits were culminated in the meeting held between the Japanese Prime Minister ISHIBA and His Highness Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, in New York in September 2025, where both sides welcomed the agreement that facilitates the importation of Wagyu from Japan to Kuwait.



Ambassador MUKAI noted that throughout his tenure in Kuwait, and in all his interactions here, he has come to admire the discerning nature of the people when it comes to food. Kuwaitis truly embody the spirit of gourmets, constantly in pursuit of the finest flavors, and their endorsement of a dish serves as a clear testament to its exceptional quality and taste.

The ambassador expressed his delight at this milestone, emphasizing that it will undoubtedly elevate trade relations to an entirely new level. He further conveyed his hope that the introduction of fine Wagyu would mark only the beginning, and that he looks forward to fostering even deeper and broader cooperation, alongside enriched cultural exchange between the two friendly nations.

Art exhibition reveals human face of Ukrainian struggle

The Times Kuwait Report

The European Union Delegation to the State of Kuwait, in cooperation with the Embassy of Ukraine, hosted a joint exhibition titled "Brave to be Strong: Voices of Resilience" at the EU Residence in Bida'a on 12 February 2026. The event brought together diplomats, officials, and community members to reflect on the human impact of the war in Ukraine through art and photography.

The exhibition featured photographs by Eduard Kryzhanivskiy, official photographer of Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, alongside poster artworks created by Ukrainian artists during the ongoing conflict. The works depicted themes of loss, displacement, civic resilience, daily life under threat, and the enduring strength of Ukrainian society, offering a personal and emotional perspective beyond battlefield narratives.

EU Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Anne Koistinen said the exhibition aimed to highlight the human stories behind the conflict and praised the resilience and unity of the Ukrainian people. She reaffirmed the European Union's continued humanitarian, financial, and military support for Ukraine, including assistance to its energy sector and cultural institutions, and emphasized the importance of international solidarity and

adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter. She also drew parallels between Ukraine's experience and Kuwait's own history of invasion, noting the strong national unity shown by both nations.

Ukrainian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Maksym Subkh described the exhibition as a tribute to Ukraine's resilience on the eve of the fourth anniversary of the full-scale invasion. He highlighted Ukraine's ongoing struggle to defend its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and democratic values, while noting the severe humanitarian crisis caused by the war, particularly the damage to civilian infrastructure and energy systems during winter. He expressed gratitude for Kuwait's humanitarian support, including the provision of electricity generators, and called for continued international cooperation.

Guests observed a moment of silence in memory of the victims. Photographer Eduard Kryzhanivskiy said his images were intended to tell the stories of ordinary Ukrainians—civilians, rescuers, volunteers, and defenders—who have shown extraordinary courage. Overall, the exhibition underscored the power of art and storytelling in preserving dignity, cultural identity, and hope amid conflict, while reinforcing messages of solidarity between Ukraine, the European Union, Kuwait, and the wider international community.

Bharat Mela 2026 transforms Green Island into canvas of Indian culture

A celebration without borders, Bharat Mela 2026 unites cultures on Kuwait's shores; colors, rhythm and heritage enthralls thousands



The Times Kuwait Report

Embassy of India in collaboration with the Touristic Enterprise Company (TEC), organized a day-long festival on 13 February titled, 'Bharat Mela 2026', transforming the scenic waterfront of Green Island into a kaleidoscope of colors, music, and celebration.

The event, which attracted a gathering of tens of thousands of visitors, including members of the Indian diaspora, diplomats, Kuwaiti nationals and residents from across the world, brought together cultures, communities, and traditions in a shared celebration of heritage.

The festival, one of the largest cultural events held in Kuwait this year, was inaugurated by Ambassador-Designate of India H.E. Paramita Tripathi, who lit the ceremonial traditional lamp, symbolizing knowledge and unity, as the powerful rhythms of Kerala's 'Panchavadyam' percussion ensemble echoed across the seafloor.

In her address, the Indian envoy emphasized the importance of cultural dialogue in strengthening the deep-rooted friendship between India and Kuwait. She praised the Indian community's longstanding contributions to Kuwait's social and economic



landscape, noting that people-to-people connections remain the strongest pillar of bilateral relations.

Bharat Mela offered visitors an authentic culinary journey across India's vast regional landscape. Aromatic northern delicacies, rich southern specialties, beloved street foods and festive traditional dishes delighted crowds, while stalls serving classic Indian sweets added a celebratory sweetness to the experience. More than 30 vibrant stalls lined the venue, creating a bustling marketplace that blended gastronomy with cultural discovery.

The cultural program stood at the heart of the celebration, featuring 57 performances by over 700 artists representing India's remarkable



diversity. Performers dressed in traditional attire presented classical and folk dances, contemporary musical acts, performance yoga demonstrations and martial arts displays.

Highlights included captivating performances by the Dawoodi Bohra community's 'Burhani Band', the thunderous Panchavadyam ensemble, energetic Punjabi dhol drumming, and spontaneous flash mobs that drew enthusiastic audience participation. Artists ranging in age from four to over sixty years reflected the intergenerational spirit of cultural preservation and celebration.

Beyond the stage, visitors explored interactive exhibits showcasing Indian textiles, handicrafts and tourism destinations. Guests

experienced traditional attire, henna artistry, bangle and bindi adornment, and cultural awareness initiatives such as the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' an environmental campaign that symbolizes planting a sapling in the name of one's mother.

A dedicated children's play zone ensured that families enjoyed a wholesome and inclusive atmosphere, while dynamic emcees and cultural coordinators sustained the festival's lively momentum throughout the day. Held from noon until sunset with free public entry, Bharat Mela transformed the coastal venue into an open-air cultural village where the sights, sounds and flavors of India blended seamlessly with Kuwait's welcoming spirit.

More than a festival, Bharat Mela 2026 emerged as a powerful symbol of cultural diplomacy, offering Kuwaiti society a vivid window into India's living traditions while reinforcing bonds of friendship and mutual respect between the two nations.

The Embassy of India extended heartfelt appreciation to sponsors, performers, volunteers and visitors whose collective enthusiasm turned the event into a resounding success, a celebration not only of heritage, but of unity, diversity and shared human connection.

Jazeera Airways announces record profit for FY 2025

Announcing its financial results for financial year (FY) 2025 last week, Jazeera Airways said the profit recorded was the highest over its 20 years of operations. The company stated that net profit reached a record KD21.8 million, representing a 113.7 percent increase year-on-year, reflecting disciplined execution, sustained demand, and improved operating efficiency.

Operating revenue increased 4.6 percent to KD218.1 million, supported by steady network performance and passenger growth. Group operating profit rose 50.7 percent to KD26.0 million relative to FY2024, underscoring the effectiveness of cost discipline and operational optimization initiatives.

Passenger traffic exceeded five million passengers during the year, marking a 2.2 percent increase, with a healthy load factor of 77.6 percent, reflecting balanced capacity deployment and resilient demand across the network.

Reflecting the company's strong financial position and confidence in its outlook, the Board of Directors has recommended the distribution of a dividend of 85 fils per share, subject to shareholders approval.

Chairman, Jazeera Airways, Marwan Boodai said: "Jazeera Airways outstanding performance

in 2025, our 20th anniversary year, reflects the strength of Jazeera Airways' business model, the discipline of our execution, and the commitment of our people.

Delivering our highest-ever profit while operating in a complex and dynamic environment underscores the resilience of the airline and the effectiveness of our long-term strategy. As we proudly look ahead, we remain focused on sustainable growth, operational excellence, and delivering consistent value to our shareholders.

A statement issued by the airline on the occasion noted that Jazeera Airways delivered a robust operational performance in 2025, driven by disciplined execution, selective network expansion, and a sustained focus on safety, reliability, and efficiency. With 37,351 aircraft movements during the year, the airline retained its position as the most active carrier at Kuwait International Airport for the fourth consecutive year. Despite ongoing geopolitical uncertainty and periodic regional airspace closures, operations remained stable and resilient, supported by strong operational oversight and proactive disruption management.

Network expansion was executed selectively, with new destinations including Abha, Abu



Dhabi, Al Ain, Budapest, Damascus, Sarajevo, Sochi, and Yerevan, strengthening connectivity across key regional and international markets.

Operational capability was further enhanced with the entry into service of Jazeera Airways' first A320neo aircraft equipped with Explisat TiSeat 2X seats, delivering up to 1.2 metric tonnes of weight reduction per aircraft, lowering fuel burn and CO₂ emissions.

During the year, Jazeera Airways was awarded a national non-scheduled (charter) air carrier tender by Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA), authorizing domestic and international charter operations from Saudi Arabia. In parallel, continued

investment in digital and passenger-centric innovations further strengthened the end-to-end travel experience.

Overall, 2025 marked a year of operational maturity, with the airline successfully balancing growth with resilience while reinforcing the foundations for long-term expansion.

Looking ahead, Jazeera Airways is well positioned to build on its strong financial and operational momentum. Supported by a resilient operating platform, disciplined cost management, and a clear growth strategy, the airline will continue to selectively expand its network, enhance connectivity, and invest in products and digital capabilities that deliver value to customers.

Fleet optimization, including a full transition to a 180-seat configuration and delivery of 3 out of its 26 new aircrafts arriving in 2026, will further strengthen unit economics, while planned upgrades to Jazeera Terminal 5 will support growing passenger demand.

With a sustained focus on safety, efficiency, and operational excellence, Jazeera Airways remains confident in its ability to navigate external uncertainties while creating sustainable long-term value for shareholders and stakeholders.





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