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Peace, Inclusivity, Equity, Vital to Social Justice

Social justice is not just an ideal to strive for, but an actionable commitment to ensure fair, inclusive and sustainable societies, based on the principle of peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations.

The Times Kuwait Report

Significant advancements achieved over the past many decades in several dimensions of human development have made the world healthier, wealthier, more knowledgeable, and socially better protected than at any time before. However, this progress has not been uniform and headways made in certain areas have stalled or remain limited, exacerbating the stark inequalities that endure around the world.

The 'Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development', signed by world leaders at their United Nations Summit in 1995, recognized the significance of social development and human well-being for all. The seminal document affirmed that economic and social development, human rights, justice, environmental protection, and international peace and security are deeply intertwined and



central to sustainable development. The Declaration asserted that the most productive economic and social policies and investments are those that empower people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities. It also emphasized that people are at the center of sustainable development and are entitled to a healthy and productive life, while underscoring that gender equity and equality in opportunities and rewards were pivotal to realizing sustainable economic and social development.

The theme for this year's World Day of Social Justice, commemorated annually on 20 February is 'Renewed Commitment to Social Development and Social Justice'. The theme, which reiterates the people-centric approach to social development, comes in the wake of the Second World Summit for Social Development held in Doha, Qatar in November 2025.

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Ramadan Imsakia 2026 - Kuwait

Day	Ramadan	Date	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhur	Asr	Magrib	Isha
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

Maintain health and strength during Ramadan fast

In addition to its spiritual benefits, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan is said to bring with it immense physical and mental benefits. If done properly, the healthy outcomes of fasting could include the removal of toxins from the body, improved weight loss and even increased mental wellbeing. But with the increasing heat outdoors and long fasting hours, restricting fluid and food intake for extended periods can also have a negative impact, unless you take necessary precautions. Some of the downsides include heartburn, constipation, dehydration, irritability, lack of concentration, weight loss or weight gain.



So as yet another Ramadan begins, here are the top ways to keep yourself healthy and strong while fasting.

Eating a balanced iftar and suhoor: Iftar, the evening meal that ends a Ramadan fast, should ideally begin with dates, then soup, a salad, followed by the main course. Long hours of fasting causes a tendency to crave sweet or unhealthy food, so a best practice

is to begin a meal with two to three dates. This helps to ease the stomach into eating after a long day of fasting and replenishes the body's fluids and blood sugar levels. The main dish, which can be delayed until later, must be balanced. It should consist of wholesome ingredients, plenty of fruits and vegetables, in addition to sources of carbohydrates and proteins.

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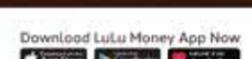

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Cabinet approves reforms to nationality, defense, development

Council of Ministers during its regular weekly meeting last week, presided over by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, approved a draft decree-law introducing amendments to certain provisions of Amiri Decree No. 15 of 1959 concerning the Kuwaiti Nationality Law and referred it to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for final approval.

The proposed amendments come in line with the government's firm stance on importance of nationality as a pivotal pillar of the state and aims to protect Kuwait's national identity, strengthen national belonging, and safeguard the country's legal sovereignty in nationality-related matters.

The draft law seeks to modernize the legislative framework governing citizenship while achieving a balance between protecting the national fabric and addressing humanitarian and social considerations. It also establishes clearer legal controls regulating the granting, withdrawal, loss, and revocation of nationality. The Cabinet also approved recommendations from the Supreme Committee for Kuwaiti Nationality Investigation concerning cases involving the loss or withdrawal

of nationality in accordance with existing legal provisions.

At the start of the session, ministers extended congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and the Kuwaiti people on the 65th National Day and the 35th Liberation Day, praying for continued security, stability, and prosperity for the country.

During the meeting, the Cabinet reviewed the outcomes of the Amir's recent visits to the Ministry of Defense and the National Guard headquarters, during which His Highness the Amir had emphasized that safeguarding the nation by land, sea, and air remains a fundamental national duty and called for continued implementation of the 2025-2030 strategic defense plan, expansion of international cooperation, and strengthening joint Gulf and Arab coordination.

The cabinet also praised advances in defense development, including enhanced training programs, technological cooperation, and the empowerment of women through the enlistment of the first batch of female university graduates in the military sector.



held in Washington, where Kuwait announced a commitment of US\$1 billion to support humanitarian and stabilization efforts in Gaza, reaffirming Kuwait's longstanding support for the Palestinian cause.

The Cabinet also reviewed plans to establish the Urban Policies and Structural Plan Committee aimed at optimizing land use, supporting economic development, and coordinating national urban planning priorities. The government also tasked the Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment with preparing a comprehensive action plan to advance institutional restructuring, strengthen governance and integrity standards, accelerate development projects, and enhance digital government services, with monthly progress reports to be submitted to the Cabinet.

Additionally, ministers endorsed green urban development initiatives focused on beautification projects and public spaces, and praised contributions from private entities and civil society supporting environmental and aesthetic improvements across the country. The Council of Ministers also approved several international agreements and memoranda of understanding,

On foreign affairs, the Cabinet reviewed diplomatic measures taken in response to Iraqi maritime claims submitted to the United Nations that Kuwait considers an infringement on its sovereignty. Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also briefed ministers on the outcomes of the Peace Council meeting

Kuwait, Chinese partnership in infrastructure set to accelerate in 2026



Pace of Kuwaiti-Chinese partnership projects is reported to have accelerated significantly under the supervision of the ministerial committee chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah. Recent developments reflect a qualitative shift, as several joint projects have moved beyond planning and agreement-drafting stages into active execution.

The partnership spans multiple development paths, beginning with infrastructure modernization across vital sectors and extending to renewable energy initiatives that support energy diversification and environmental sustainability. It also includes environmental protection programs aligned with sustainable development goals, alongside major housing and urban expansion projects designed to stimulate economic growth.

The year 2026 is likely to be a decisive year for infrastructure projects implemented by Chinese companies in Kuwait, with most of the contracts covering key development sectors and linked to the seven memoranda of understanding signed between Kuwait and China late last year are expected to be finalized this year. At the forefront stands the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, whose contract was signed late last year, becoming the first project to officially enter the execution phase. The port is viewed as a strategic logistics hub that will strengthen Kuwait's position on regional trade routes and expand prospects for long-term economic integration.

Among other prominent developments is the North Kabd wastewater treatment plant, valued at approximately KD1 billion and designed to process nearly one million cubic meters of wastewater daily using advanced technologies. Contracts are also expected to be finalized for the Shagaya Renewable Energy Project (Phases Three and Four) and the Abdaliyah Power Plant, which will generate about 3,200 megawatts. Both projects have progressed significantly following approval of their economic feasibility studies by the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy. Plans for new cities, including Al-Sabriya city and workers' residential cities in Al-Sabriya and South Al-Jahra are also said to be making rapid progress.

Experts believe that executing these projects according to agreed timelines will create a major developmental leap for Kuwait. Mubarak Port is expected to strengthen Kuwait's share in global trade and position the country as a regional logistics center, while renewable energy projects will support Kuwait's goal of generating 15 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. The roadmap also includes waste recycling initiatives, afforestation programs, and environmental protection projects aimed at improving air quality, preserving natural resources, and promoting balanced sustainable development.

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New Decree-Law regulates activities in digital commerce sector

Kuwait's Ministry of Commerce and Industry has announced that all e-commerce activities, including online sales and social media promotions, will require a specialized license under a new Amiri decree regulating digital commerce. The law aims to enhance transparency, consumer protection, and fair business practices, with mandatory licensing taking effect six months after publication. Violations may lead to fines, imprisonment, or business closure as part of efforts to create a more regulated and trustworthy digital marketplace.

Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has announced that the e-commerce sector, including online advertisements, promotions and sales of goods and services through social media platforms or buy-and-sell applications will require obtaining a specialized license.



The licensing of e-commerce activities comes under a new Amiri decree regulating activities in the digital commerce sector. The move aims to keep pace with global digital transformation while balancing innovation, consumer protection, and transparency in commercial transactions. MoCI has been tasked with regulating and supervising the digital commerce sector, issuing rules for electronic auctions and intermediary platforms, and preparing a schedule of financial penalties.

The law is set to come into force six months after its publication in the Official Gazette. After that period, obtaining a license from the

Ministry of Commerce will become mandatory for conducting any digital commercial activity inside Kuwait, whether by individuals or companies.

Advertisements and promotions must clearly disclose the identity of the product or service provider, pricing, specifications, and contact details, while misleading or false promotional content is strictly prohibited.

The decree permits providers to offer logistical services such as storage, shipping, transportation, and direct delivery through modern technological solutions or licensed entities inside or outside the country. However, additional charges may not be imposed on consumers unless clearly stated in advance within the electronic contract terms.

When influencers are involved in promotional campaigns, providers must retain all related data, contracts, and records for at least five years and submit them to the ministry upon request. Payments to influencers must also be made through reliable methods that comply with anti-money-laundering regulations and instructions issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait. Any deceptive or misleading promotional practices are prohibited. The decree also requires providers to maintain a business address, disclose commercial registration details and contact information, and clearly present contractual terms, including product descriptions, final pricing, payment methods, offer duration, and return policies.

Consumers are granted the right to withdraw from contracts within 14 days of receiving a product, or to return or replace it without additional cost, provided the product remains in

its original condition, except in specified cases.

The announcement of the decree sparked widespread debate across social media platforms, accompanied by numerous questions regarding those subject to the law, licensing procedures, advertising standards in digital commerce, applicable fees, and potential penalties.

Under Article 39, violators may face imprisonment of up to one year and fines ranging from KD1,000 to KD10,000, or one of these penalties. Violations include submitting false data, providing forged documents, offering illegal products or services, breaching public order or health regulations, or refusing to comply with decisions of the Dispute Settlement Committee.

Penalties may be doubled in cases of repeat offenses, alongside confiscation of tools or funds linked to violations and closure of the offending business. Responsibility for violations falls on

the actual manager of a legal entity if awareness or benefit from the violation is proven. The decree also allows reconciliation procedures in certain offenses to enhance procedural flexibility and reduce judicial burdens. Certain Ministry employees will also be granted judicial enforcement authority to monitor violations.

The decree forms part of a broader government strategy to regulate the digital economy, strengthen confidence in electronic transactions, safeguard consumer rights, and create a more transparent and disciplined digital marketplace in Kuwait.

It also requires adherence to national cybersecurity standards, regular data protection updates, and limits electronic payment processing to entities licensed by the Central Bank, while prohibiting additional payment fees without prior approval.

Maintain health and strength during Ramadan fast

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Suhoor, the meal consumed early in the morning before beginning the fast, is vital. This meal must not be skipped as it provides you with the strength needed for fasting during the rest of the day. It must be rich in wholesome foods that give you protein like oatmeal, cheese, labneh, fresh fruits and vegetables. Choose the healthiest and wisest options.

Ramadan menu: Do not consume fried foods that can cause increased cholesterol levels, instead opt for healthy cooking methods such as baking, grilling, boiling and roasting. Caffeine must be avoided as much as possible, as it leads to a loss of water, which further increases thirst during the fasting period. You must try to include foods packed with proteins in every Ramadan meal, such as meat, legumes, dairy products and eggs, which will also help to increase your satiety level and avoid overeating. It is important to have fewer carbohydrates, as they make you inactive and sleepy. Sweets must be either prepared using moderate amounts of oil and sugar and low-fat dairy products, or consumed in moderation.

For vitamins and minerals, make sure to eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables during Ramadan. Including dates, dried fruits and nuts in your diet is advisable, as these provide plenty of nutrients and energy. Starting your Iftar with two to three dates helps to replenish blood sugar levels after fasting, but should be consumed in moderation to avoid weight gain.

Moderation in eating: Limiting portions during your meals is the best way to avoid overeating. Eating too much, too soon can cause problems such as frequent urination, which leads to dehydration, indigestion, heartburn, nausea and low energy levels. For those who feel full quickly during iftar, eat dates, soup and salad while breaking the fast, while the main dish can be delayed until later. This ensures that you will not be uncomfortably full after a day of fasting. For dessert, you must allow occasional indulgence while making sure that you are practicing portion control. Limit the portion to a few bites of one type of sweet. Moderation in the consumption of deep-fried foods is also important.

Planned meals: Planning and preparing your meals in advance will make it easier to be organized. Start by preparing weekly plans to make wiser choices about what to eat and what not to eat. Planning ahead will also help prevent you from deviating

from it, and choosing a less healthy option. You should not be over- or under-nourished by the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Exercising: Fasting during the month of Ramadan can be a real trouble for bodies, if not done correctly. Some tend to remain sedentary and gain weight during the month. You have to remain active and continue regular exercise during Ramadan, as it will help you maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle.

Some people prefer exercising just before they break their fast, while others prefer exercising in the hours before starting their fast. Mild to moderate physical activity is recommended, and this must be based on personal preference as stamina levels among people tend to vary, and often people can get too fatigued or tired.



If you are not one for workouts, you can opt for brisk walks, as it is a comfortable exercise that is suitable for people of all ages. It is better to focus on light cardio exercises, and not put yourself through very high intensity training during this time.

A high carbohydrate intake, such as bananas, peanut butter, and sweet potato are best foods for people who exercise, as this is important for increasing energy levels and stamina. For those who want to lose weight, it is best to avoid heavy meals, have zero carbohydrate diets, and eat more of white meat, fruits and vegetables.

Hydration: It is important to avoid the sun as much as possible during the fasting period to avoid getting dehydrated. Remember to stay hydrated and drink enough water, at least two liters, before the fast. A well-hydrated person can tolerate a fast much better than a dehydrated one. Your choice of drinks should be refreshing ones, such as coconut water, which helps to maintain hydration during a fast, as well as lemon juice. Fruits and fruit juices that have high water content like melons and strawberries are also beneficial.

GCC-India FTA marks new phase in strategic partnership



Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassim Al-Budaiwi affirmed Tuesday that the launch of talks for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the GCC and India marks a new phase of strategic partnership.

In a statement, the GCC General Secretariat said the remarks were made during the signing ceremony of a joint statement to launch FTA negotiations between Al-Budaiwi and India's Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal in the Indian capital, New Delhi.

Al-Budaiwi stressed that the ties between the GCC member states and India go beyond transient economic interests, describing them as deep-rooted historical relations strengthened by centuries of cultural and social rapprochement.

He noted that these ties reflect the shared vision of Their Majesties and Highnesses, the leaders of the GCC countries, to enhance cooperation across all fields in a way that achieves mutual interests. He pointed out that India is one of the GCC's most important global trading partners, adding

that the growing volume of trade exchange and integration in vital sectors such as energy, food security and technology make deepening cooperation a strategic economic necessity.

India, he said, is not only a vast and promising market but also a global hub for innovation and industry that the GCC is proud to partner with.

Al-Budaiwi added that the terms of reference signed on February 5, 2026 provide a comprehensive and clear framework for the negotiations. Both sides agreed to explore enhancing cooperation in key strategic areas, including trade in goods, customs procedures, trade in services and digital trade.

The framework also covers sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS), intellectual property rights, and cooperation on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), in addition to other topics of mutual interest, reflecting the comprehensive nature of the agreement and its capacity to keep pace with the future economy.

'Free Residency, a new visa status for unregulated workers

As part of ongoing government efforts to regulate Kuwait's labor market and curb illegal residency practices, authorities are moving toward introducing a new residency framework known as 'free residency', allowing expatriates to work independently without a traditional sponsor under a regulated legal system.

The initiative was announced by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Fahad Al-Yousef during a recent meeting with private-sector representatives, sparking widespread debate among business owners, economists, and workers awaiting further details on how the system will operate. The proposed system aims to shift unregulated labor into an organized framework, reducing illegal practices such as residency trading while improving oversight and professional standards, reports Al-Rai daily.

Discussions intensified on social media, where many highlighted rising daily wages for informal labor — sometimes reaching 25 dinars or more — alongside concerns about inconsistent quality

and lack of accountability. Supporters believe a regulated freelance residency would enhance competitiveness, lower costs for basic services, and improve work quality by placing workers under clear legal and administrative supervision.

According to preliminary guidelines, the first phase will target simple professions, with annual fees expected to range between 750 and 1,000 Kuwaiti dinars. Applicants would need to meet several requirements, including a verified residential address, approved electronic contact details, and complete personal documentation. Authorities are expected to announce full implementation details, application mechanisms, and eligible professions within the next two months.

Entrepreneurs and economists say regulating marginal labor could significantly improve Kuwait's business environment by eliminating residency brokers and ensuring workers operate within transparent legal frameworks. The system is also expected to reduce worker exploitation, provide legal stability for



freelancers, and encourage the growth of small independent businesses aligned with modern labor market needs.

Entrepreneur Bashar Al-Ustad described the proposal as a positive step in combating human

trafficking but stressed that strict oversight and professional verification mechanisms will be essential to prevent misuse. Similarly, Abdulaziz Bandar, head of the delivery company owners' committee, warned that sectors such as delivery services could face unfair competition unless strong regulatory controls ensure compliance with quality and operational standards.

The 'free residency' initiative forms part of a wider reform package aimed at modernizing Kuwait's labor regulations, strengthening transparency, and improving operational efficiency in line with international best practices.

Observers believe the move could help shrink the informal economy by integrating large segments of freelance workers into the formal system, improving service quality while increasing state oversight and fee collection. If implemented effectively, the system is expected to mark a significant shift in balancing labor market flexibility with regulatory control, creating a more stable and competitive employment environment.

CBK instructs banks to stop storing, safekeeping money with third parties

Local banks are reportedly studying a proposal to establish a specialized company to manage cash liquidity, following a regulatory directive issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) instructing them to establish independent liquidity management centers, and halt the practice of safekeeping or storing bank cash with third parties.

The move aims to ensure bank funds are preserved, transferred, and managed solely under the direct responsibility of banks and within the supervisory framework of the Central Bank, in accordance with approved



protection, control, and security standards. This comes as part of efforts by the CBK to strengthen the resilience of the banking sector and reduce operational, security, and legal risks linked to outsourcing cash custody and transportation services.

Among the options said to be under review by local banks is the creation of a

jointly owned company that would act as a unified cash management hub for banks, similar to their shared ownership structures in KNET and CINET. Other proposals include forming smaller partnerships between two or more banks or acquiring an existing licensed company specialized in cash custody, storage, and transportation in line with new regulatory standards.

Bank ownership of such an entity represents the most practical solution to address governance concerns raised by regulators, particularly since existing cash custody companies currently operate outside direct Central Bank supervision. The proposed structure would ensure full accountability for cash assets while aligning operations with international best practices in liquidity and risk management.

Despite its strategic importance, the initiative presents operational and technical challenges, including limited banking expertise

in cash logistics and the need to comply with strict regulatory controls. No final agreement has yet been reached regarding the preferred implementation model.

CBK has emphasized the need for banks to enhance operational efficiency in managing cash liquidity, adopt documented policies approved by senior management, and maintain full traceability of cash movement from receipt to delivery. Requirements also include dual auditing mechanisms, strong internal controls, accurate record-keeping, and comprehensive business continuity plans supported by regular testing.

In addition, banks are required to maintain emergency and crisis-management frameworks addressing natural disasters, technical failures, and security incidents, alongside 24-hour monitoring systems, controlled access procedures, fire protection measures, and strict separation of duties to reduce operational and internal risks.

Heritage, hospitality in focus at Holiday Inn Salmiya's Ramadan Ghabga



Holiday Inn Salmiya hosted its annual Ramadan Ghabga gathering in a warm and festive atmosphere that reflected the spirituality and traditions of the holy month.

The event brought together a distinguished group of media professionals, influencers, representatives from various organizations, as well as partners and clients, as part of the hotel's ongoing commitment to strengthening communication and building sustainable relationships across different sectors.

Guests were welcomed into an elegant Ramadan setting, with the hotel's garden decorated with touches inspired by Arab heritage. Traditional musical performances added a special charm to the evening, creating an authentic ambiance reminiscent of Kuwait's well-known Ramadan Ghabga traditions.



Addressing the gathering, General Manager Saifuddin Mohammed emphasized that organizing the Ramadan gathering reflects the hotel's belief in the importance of social occasions that promote connection, compassion, and community spirit—values strongly associated with the holy month in Kuwait. He noted his pleasure in sharing an evening that combined the essence of Ramadan with genuine hospitality.

He further highlighted that the hotel adapts its Ramadan programs each year to meet guests' expectations. These include diverse iftar and suhoor menus prepared by experienced chefs, as well as fully equipped halls, lounges, and outdoor garden spaces designed to host corporate and private events. Flexible packages are also offered to suit a wide range of needs.



He added that the Ramadan Ghabga serves as an opportunity to strengthen partnerships, exchange Ramadan greetings, and showcase the hotel's high service standards as one of Salmiya's prominent venues for events and celebrations. He also extended his heartfelt congratulations to the country's leadership and people on the occasion of Ramadan, which this year coincides with Kuwait's national celebrations, wishing the nation continued security, stability, and prosperity.

The evening featured a variety of traditional Ramadan dishes, desserts, and classic beverages, receiving positive feedback from attendees who praised the organization, hospitality, and the distinctive atmosphere that truly captured the spirit of the holy month.

Kuwait achieves remarkable economic gains in 2025

"The country entered the global top 10 in the 2025 Global Innovation Index, driven by digital transformation and 5G advancement."

Kuwait marks its National Day on February 25 annually, with this year's celebration spotlighting 2025's remarkable progress under His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's guidance, fostering a thriving nation with a robust economy, humanitarian diplomacy, and rising global influence.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Statistical Center's report Tuesday, "State of Kuwait: Deep Roots and Steps Toward the Future," noted unprecedented financial and investment surpluses, with sovereign funds exceeding USD 1 trillion in assets and banking sector assets surpassing KD 100 billion, underscoring a robust financial system and international confidence in the economy.

Kuwait's Stock Exchange (KSE) recorded gains over KD 6.9 billion, affirming an enticing investment environment and rising regional and global investor trust. Kuwait achieved a historic ranking of 19th globally in national brand



value, representing about 9 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - one of the highest rates worldwide.

It also ranked in the top 10 on the 2025 Global Innovation Index (GII), driven by advancements

in 5G technology, mobile internet speed, digital government, and digital workforce efficiency.

The country's credit ratings remain high with a stable outlook, enhancing its global economic position. In 2025, key milestones included the

world's longest cross-continental robotic surgery, highest daily gas production in 90 years from the Jurf Al-Bahri field, exceptional archaeological discoveries on Failaka Island confirming Kuwait's ancient heritage, regional leadership in civil aviation safety, and development of public health labs to top international standards.

Kuwait solidified its role as a global humanitarian hub, continuing leadership in international relief and aid, making it a core part of its national and diplomatic identity.

It also secured a diplomatic milestone with the first United Nations resolution named after it in innovation, boosting its international presence. Over 45 years, Kuwait has been a cornerstone in the GCC, hosting eight historic summits that produced key economic and regulatory decisions to strengthen Gulf integration, such as steps toward a common Gulf market, financial market integration, unified environmental and logistical systems, and support for Arab economic development.

LuLu Hypermarket presents a flavorsome Iftar snack collection for the Holy Month

In celebration of the holy month, LuLu Hypermarket has introduced an extensive range of freshly prepared Iftar snacks across all stores, offering customers a perfect combination of taste, tradition, and quality.

The specially prepared menu features more than 100 varieties of snacks, bringing together a delightful mix of Indian, Arabic, and international Iftar favorites. Carefully curated to suit the diverse tastes of customers, the selection includes a variety of crispy bites, savory classics, and traditional Ramadan delicacies that make every Iftar table more enjoyable. Adding a distinctive touch to the menu, customers can also find authentic Kerala Malabar special snacks, known for their rich flavors and traditional

recipes. These specialties bring a taste of home for many and offer something unique for everyone to enjoy during the holy month. All snacks are freshly prepared by LuLu's experienced chefs, who focus on authentic taste, consistent quality, and high standards of hygiene.

Every item is crafted with care to ensure customers receive delicious and freshly made snacks perfect for breaking the fast. With its commitment to quality, variety, and value, LuLu Hypermarket continues to be a preferred destination for Ramadan shopping and Iftar preparations.

Customers are invited to visit their nearest selected LuLu store and explore the wide range of Iftar specials available this season.



Peace, Inclusivity, Equity, Vital to Social Justice

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The Doha Declaration reaffirmed commitment to the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration and noted that poverty eradication, full and productive employment, and social inclusion, were interrelated pillars of social development.

The Declaration emphasized the need for macroeconomic frameworks that, among others, promotes gender equality, expands opportunities for youth, supports the transition from informal to formal economy, ensures fair and inclusive transformations in the digital and green economies, and encourages the implementation of universal social protection.

At Doha, leaders applauded the progress achieved over the past three decades, noting the significant gains recorded in poverty reduction, education and social protection coverage, but also acknowledged the persistent and emerging challenges to realizing social development for all. They noted that structural inequalities, labor market informality, gender disparities, and declining trust in institutions continue to impede inclusive and sustainable development.

Representing His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Summit, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to comprehensive and sustainable social development and to the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. He also underlined the need for collective global action aimed at poverty eradication and social justice through a human-centered approach that focuses on social protection, equality, employment, and inclusivity.

For her part, Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthah Al-Huwailah,

speaking on the sidelines of the summit at an event titled, 'SheBuilds: Women Innovating Social Solutions for an Inclusive Future', stated that women in the region and the world are a driving force for positive transformation and for building a more inclusive, just, and equitable future for all. She added that investing in women is not only a commitment to equality but a genuine investment in creating sustainable solutions for entire societies.

In her address at the high-level event, Minister Al-Huwailah said that women in Kuwait and elsewhere are redefining the very meaning of development and social justice from a human-centered perspective. Pointing out that an innovative mindset is important in tackling social challenges and transforming ideas into practical solutions, she presented real-life stories and experiences of women-led innovations in Kuwait that creatively and constructively addressed social challenges.

She noted that women-led social innovation is inherently inclusive, as it is grounded in a deep understanding of the needs of marginalized groups and dedicated to removing barriers to their participation in development. She praised the event for celebrating women's creativity in social development and their ability to devise solutions that make a real difference in communities and people's lives. Kuwait's humanitarian approach and strategic commitment to supporting social development of countries worldwide, were further highlighted in mid-February.

Speaking at a function honoring employees of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of KFAED Board of Directors, Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, affirmed that the Fund continues to engage in humanitarian and development roles

and strengthen its international partnerships.

Pointing out that the Fund has implemented development projects in 106 countries across vital sectors, the foreign minister said that this support is contributing to improving the quality of life for millions and reinforcing Kuwait's status as a trusted partner in achieving sustainable development worldwide. He also indicated that the Fund is one of the most prominent tools of Kuwait's foreign policy and a key pillar of its socio-development diplomacy.

The Fund's people-centric and humanitarian approach to social development, stems from the belief that investing in people is a fundamental pillar for building a more prosperous and just future world, said Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah. He added that it also reflects Kuwait's continued commitment to promoting solidarity and cooperation, and building bridges of friendship with nations worldwide.

There have been several remarkable achievements around the world since the Copenhagen Declaration three decades ago—child labor has dropped from 20.6 percent in 1995 to 7.8 percent in 2024; extreme poverty has fallen from 4 in 10 in 1995 to 1 in 10 by 2023; and working poverty—those employed but still in poverty—has decreased from 27.9 percent in 2000 to 6.9 percent by 2024. Also, output per worker, which was 78 percent three decades ago, has risen to 215 percent in upper-middle-income countries; and 50 percent of the global population is now covered by some form of social protection.

Despite these advances, latest figures from UN entities show that in 2024 nearly 12.5 percent of the world population, or 817 million people, lived in 'extreme poverty' (less than US\$3 per day); over half the world's population lacks essential health services coverage; around 27 percent of school-age (5–

17) children were out of primary and secondary levels of education; and that the top 1 percent of the world population, holding over 40 percent of global wealth, owns more than the combined wealth of the bottom 95 percent of humanity.

The figures from the UN and other agencies reveal that pursuing social justice has become more critical than ever before. Social justice refers to fair and equitable societies where all individuals, irrespective of their background or identity, have equal access to rights, opportunities, and resources. Globalization, once expected to bring about social equity, while undoubtedly giving a boost to global economic development, has also created and widened inequalities and social injustices.

Today there is widespread consensus that economic growth alone does not guarantee social justice and that efforts should be made to support and promote the enhancement of equitable social development throughout the world. This would enable all men and women, especially those most vulnerable and socially excluded, to exercise their rights, share the responsibilities and utilize the resources that enable them to lead satisfying lives, and contribute to the well-being of their families, communities and humanity.

It bears stressing that social justice is not just an ideal to strive for, but an actionable commitment to ensure fair, inclusive and sustainable societies, based on the principle of peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. Ultimately, social justice is inseparable from human dignity. Ensuring access to quality education, healthcare, employment, and strengthening social and legal protection mechanisms, fosters individual well-being and stable, resilient societies, promoting long-term peace worldwide.

Freedom of expression intact in Kuwait, more responsible, respectful

Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef said freedom of expression in Kuwait remains protected but is now more organized and respectful, emphasizing responsible criticism without personal attacks. He also highlighted intensified anti-corruption efforts, ongoing money-laundering investigations, and improved public compliance with laws, reflected in fewer traffic violations.

During an interview on the 'Theater of Life' program broadcast on local TV and online, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef said freedom of expression in Kuwait remains intact but is now more organized and respectful compared to previous years.

Responding to questions about claims that the ceiling of criticism has narrowed, Al-Yousef stressed that freedom still exists, but within responsible limits. "To be honest, freedom exists in Kuwait today, but freedom is in order," he said. "In the past, freedom turned into chaos and behavior that did not exist before, and many countries criticized Kuwait. Today there is freedom with respect."

He noted that no newspapers are being censored, adding that society itself has begun recognizing the need to regulate discourse and avoid insults directed at individuals or countries maintaining relations with Kuwait. Al-Yousef emphasized that criticism does not mean personal

attacks or harm diplomatic relations, stressing that Kuwait expects mutual respect from other nations and applies the same principle domestically.

He attributed past social tensions partly to cases of citizenship forgery, saying irregular naturalizations contributed to behavior that did not reflect Kuwaiti values. According to him, recent reforms have helped restore order and reinforce social responsibility. Addressing concerns about opposition movements outside Kuwait, Al-Yousef said overseas opposition figures number only a handful of individuals, describing them as people facing personal or legal issues inside the country. He added that opposition exists in every nation but should not overshadow the broader population living and working in Kuwait.

The minister revealed that authorities are currently pursuing two major corruption cases receiving high-level attention, alongside an intensified crackdown on financial crimes. He said Kuwait is uncovering between three and five money-laundering cases every week, involving



large financial sums, with numerous suspects already detained or sentenced.

"No one is above the law in Kuwait," Al-Yousef said, noting that investigations include both current and former officials, while fugitives abroad are being pursued through international

arrest warrants. He added that some individuals left Kuwait after reforms began, but authorities are continuing legal action and coordinating internationally to bring suspects to justice. Al-Yousef also addressed prison policies, clarifying that he does not have authority to reduce sentences but has advocated reviewing long-term imprisonment cases after observing rehabilitation systems in Gulf and Arab countries. He described a visit to Saudi Arabia's correctional facilities as a model of humane treatment, which encouraged discussions on improving rehabilitation conditions in Kuwait and offering inmates opportunities for reform. Commenting on the new traffic law, Al-Yousef rejected claims it was introduced as a revenue-raising measure. Despite stricter penalties and expanded surveillance, traffic fine revenues actually declined — a sign, he said, that drivers have become more compliant with regulations. "The drop in violations proves people are respecting the law," he said, adding that enforcement now applies equally to everyone.



Regency Hotel hosts Ramadan Iftar



Regency Hotel Kuwait hosted its annual Ramadan Iftar in a festive atmosphere at the hotel's Ramadan village, attended by a distinguished group of diplomats, media, and social figures.

The event, marked by a warm ambiance and generous hospitality, reflected the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan, promoting values of connection and fellowship as guests gathered around an elaborate Iftar buffet featuring a wide selection of traditional Middle Eastern and international dishes.

The annual initiative by the hotel comes in appreciation of the significant role played by diplomatic missions and media institutions in

strengthening communication and cultural openness in the country. The event also reflects the hotel's commitment to building strong relationships with various segments of society, particularly the diplomatic and media communities in Kuwait.

The Regency's Ramadan Iftar has become a highly anticipated annual occasion, offering guests an opportunity to meet and interact in a friendly setting away from formal work environments. The event underscores the hotel's continued dedication to community engagement during the holy month, maintaining a tradition that has become an integral part of Kuwait's Ramadan social calendar.

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Tareq Yousef AlShumaimry, Editor-in-Chief of The Times Kuwait welcomes Diplomats to his Diwaniya



Tareq AlShumaimry welcoming Ambassadors of Uzbekistan, UNHCR, Charge D'Affairs of Lebanon and IOM Chief

Diwaniya Diplomacy: A time-honored Kuwaiti tradition



Welcoming Ambassador of Uzbekistan

On 24 February, Editor-in-Chief of The Times Kuwait, Tareq AlShumaimry, hosted his annual Ramadan diwaniya, welcoming friends, dignitaries, diplomats, and well-wishers during the holy month of Ramadan. More than a social gathering, the event reflected the enduring strength of Kuwait's diwaniya culture as a cornerstone of community engagement, dialogue, and informal diplomacy.

The diwaniya provided a warm and inclusive setting where families, community leaders, foreign diplomats, and members of the business community came together to exchange greetings and extend their best wishes for Ramadan. In keeping with Kuwait's time-honored traditions, the

gathering fostered meaningful interaction between citizens, expatriates, and residents, reinforcing social cohesion in a respectful and friendly atmosphere.

While rooted in heritage, the Ramadan diwaniya also holds significant strategic value across social, diplomatic, and economic dimensions: The presence of diplomats at these events underscores the diwaniya's role as an informal diplomatic platform.

In Kuwait, such gatherings often function as spaces where relationships are strengthened outside formal protocol. This setting allows for trust-building conversations that can support bilateral cooperation, cultural understanding, and long-term strategic partnerships.



Welcoming Indian Ambassador



Welcoming Ambassador of EU and Consul at US Embassy



Welcoming The US embassy team



Welcoming Russian Ambassador and Abdul Rehman Al Houti



Welcoming Canadian Ambassador



Welcoming Ambassador of Greece



Welcoming Ambassador of France



Welcoming Ambassador of Khazakstan



Welcomng Ambassadors of Switzerland, Bulgaria and Charge d'Affairs of Serbia



Welcoming Turkish embassy and defence officials



Welcoming ambassador of Romania, Bangladesh and Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK)



Welcoming Ambassadors of Lesotho, China, Netherlands, Charge d'Affaires South Africa and Ambassador of Greece



Welcoming Ambassador of Malawi, Khazakstan, Indonesia, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Ethiopia and Abdul Rehman Al Houti



Welcoming guests



Welcoming Dean of Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan



Welcoming Ambassador of Belgium



Welcoming Ambassador of Khazakistan



Welcoming Ambassador of Spain, Yousef Al Shumaimry and Abdul Rehman Al Houti



Welcoming Ambassador of El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan, and Togo



Yousef Al Shumaimr with guests



Welcoming Ambassador of Poland



Welcoming Ambassador of Kenya



Welcoming Ambassador of Romania



Welcoming diplomat from Egypt



Welcoming Ambassador of Nepal



Welcoming Ambassador of Bhutan



Welcoming diplomats and guests to the Diwaniya

Kuwaiti Diwaniya, an enduring centuries-old tradition



“Recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage, diwanis remain the cornerstone of Kuwaiti social life—where dialogue, unity, and tradition meet.”



By Sheikha Suhaila Al Sabah
Managing Editor, The Times Kuwait

Diwanis, a unique Kuwaiti cultural aspect, have been a pillar of social life since the time of the country's founding as a settlement sometime in early 18th-century. Traditionally a male-centered space set aside in a tent where community members gathered to talk on social, political, or business matters over cups of Arabic coffee, diwanis have evolved over the centuries to become, in some cases, grand venues equipped with digital interactive screens and provisions for online streaming.

While the modern version of the diwanis reflect individual affluence along with the country's progress and development over the decades as an oil-rich nation, the tradition still retains its essential character—serving as a space where community members connect to discuss current events, strengthen bonds, and share tea or coffee. Recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage, diwanis form a cornerstone of Kuwaiti social life, strengthening community ties, facilitating the exchange of views, and fostering dialogue.

Today, the multinational, multicultural nature of social life in Kuwait has meant that the traditional diwanis have in many cases become venues for building connections and promoting cultural exchanges between people from around the world. For many diplomats accredited to Kuwait, diwanis are often



their first touch-point with Kuwaiti culture and traditions, providing them with an opportunity to share experiences and perspectives on societal and global issues, enriching collective knowledge and fostering a spirit of unity and solidarity.

Considered one of the oldest and most important social traditions in Kuwait and the

Gulf region, the emergence of the diwaniya is linked to the beginning of the settlement of Kuwaiti families and the development of commercial and maritime activity, as they provided a space for exchanging business and political news and addressing social issues.

In modern times, some diwanis have begun organizing educational lectures and

seminars, hosting specialists in various fields, with the aim of raising awareness and educating the community. Some diwanis have also become platforms for supporting ambitious youth, offering them advice and guidance in their fields of study and work, enhancing their role as incubators of ideas and talent.

Many diwanis are also a venue for discussing humanitarian initiatives and supporting charitable projects, where businessmen and philanthropists meet to plan social and charitable contributions to needy families, support educational or health initiatives that improve the lives of the less fortunate. Additionally, diwanis have also helped unify volunteer efforts and organize relief campaigns during crises and disasters, playing a pivotal role in promoting the values of social solidarity and cooperation among members of society.

Throughout the ages, diwanis have provided a free and vibrant environment for discussing issues of community-concern. The emergence of democracy and parliamentary life in the country following Kuwait's independence have led diwanis becoming a political venue, where national issues are raised and views on local and international political events exchanged. Today, diwanis continue to play an important role in the dissemination of a democratic culture and encouraging open dialogue on various issues.

With rapid social and technological changes, diwanis face new challenges in preserving their traditional identity while keeping pace with modern developments. Despite these developments, diwanis continue to maintain their essence and remain rooted in promoting social dialogue, encouraging intergenerational communication, and preserving the customs and traditions that are an essential element of Kuwaiti identity.





The Red Sea

A New Frontier in Travel

The Times Kuwait Report

As global travel shifts away from predictability, The Red Sea is emerging as one of the world's most distinctive destinations for travelers seeking something new and exciting. Stretching along Saudi Arabia's western coast, the destination unfolds across an archipelago of more than 90 pristine islands, alongside vast desert landscapes, volcanic mountains, and coral-rich waters, offering a rare sense of scale and discovery in an increasingly crowded travel landscape. As one of the world's newest destinations to welcome international travelers, it presents a moment few places can offer; the chance to explore a region while it is still being revealed.

Across islands and inland terrain, exploration is shaped by contrast and depth. On the water, Shebara resort's mirrored overwater and beach villas open directly onto sailing, e-surfing, and reef ecology experiences. Meanwhile the Ummahat Islands, home to the St. Regis Red Sea Resort and Nujuma, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, invite immersion through snorkeling, kayaking, marine workshops, and nights filled with stargazing ventures setting a gateway for the curious astronomer, set against white sand beaches and calm lagoons.

Inland, the landscape shifts dramatically. Desert Rock resort is carved into ancient volcanic formations, offering guided climbs, desert navigation, including stargazing, while Six Senses Southern Dunes, The Red Sea resort draws inspiration from Nabataean heritage through sadu weaving, spice blending, desert wellness rituals, and nature-led culinary

An emerging destination where islands, desert, and sea converge through world-class experiences



experiences shaped by centuries of desert wisdom.

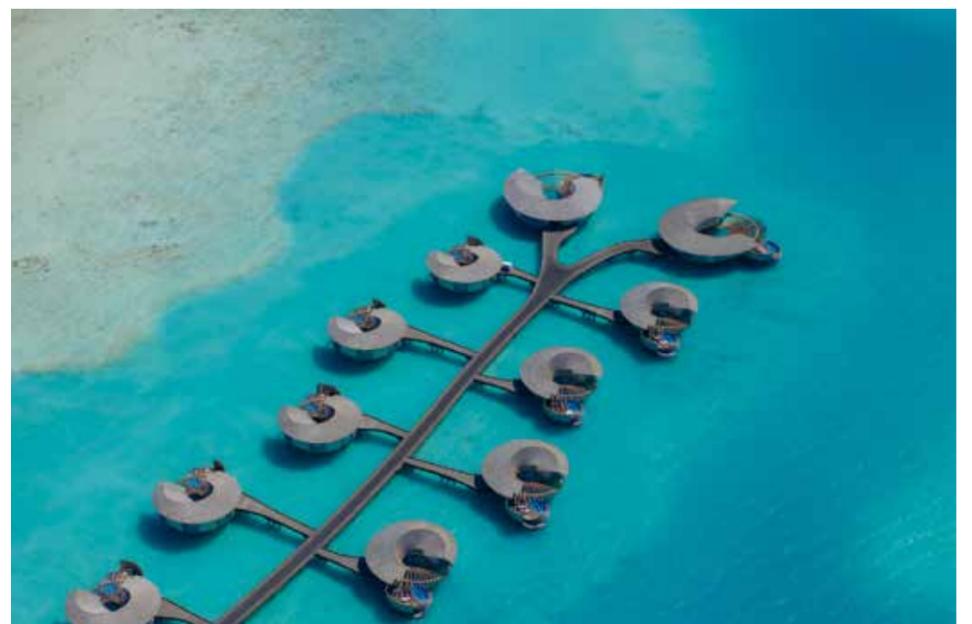
Exploration across land and sea is unified through The Red Sea's experience brands.

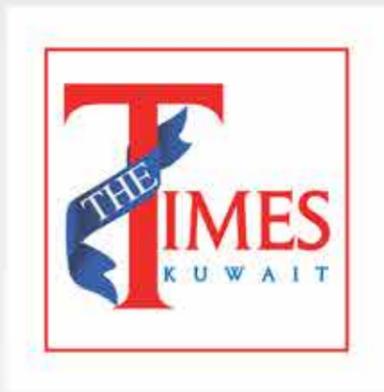
WAMA delivers responsible over-water activities, Galaxea opens access to vibrant underwater ecosystems through guided diving and reef exploration, and Akun leads guests

across desert trails, geological routes, and night skies once used by ancient travelers for navigation. Together, they form an ecosystem of discovery rooted in respect, education, and place.

Anchoring this emerging frontier is a collection of world-class resorts and experiences developed as part of a regenerative tourism vision that prioritizes protection over expansion. Architecture and infrastructure are designed in harmony with the landscape rather than reshape it, positioning The Red Sea as both a destination of the future and a blueprint for responsible growth.

The destination is easily reached via Red Sea International Airport, with direct flights from Riyadh, Jeddah, Dubai, Doha, and Milan, alongside one-stop connections from major cities across Europe and beyond. For travelers, The Red Sea offers not simply a new destination, but a place defined by vast landscapes and experiences shaped by land and sea.





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The Pierre

Where New York's Classic Elegance Meets Indian Hospitality

By Nourah Khan
Special to The Times Kuwait

In New York City, a place defined by reinvention, there are addresses that remain timeless. They do not chase trends; they preserve presence. Among them stands The Pierre, A Taj Hotel, an icon facing Central Park, where elegance, legacy, and quiet confidence have converged for decades.

My stay was in the Signature Park Suite, a spacious residence overlooking Central Park



There is a certain magic in knowing that the very corridors you walk through once welcomed some of the world's most celebrated figures. Over the years, The Pierre has hosted legends such as Elizabeth Taylor, Joan Collins, Sophia Loren, Audrey Hepburn, Coco Chanel, and Karl Lagerfeld. As I stayed there today, I found myself imagining those moments—opening the same windows, crossing the same halls, inhabiting a space layered with stories. It is a rare sensation: to experience the present while quietly sharing it with the past.

True luxury reveals itself not through excess, but through intuition. At The Pierre, service is seamless, respectful, and effortlessly attentive. The staff understand the art of presence—available when needed, invisible when not. Everything flows naturally, creating a sense of ease that reflects the hotel's deep understanding of refined hospitality.

This philosophy of understated elegance feels especially meaningful knowing that The Pierre has recently celebrated 95 years of continuous, unsurpassed hospitality, a rare milestone in New York City and officially recognized through a Mayoral proclamation. It is a testament to a legacy not only preserved, but lived daily.

One of the highlights of my stay was dining



at Perrine, the hotel's signature restaurant. The experience was both elegant and memorable—beautifully presented dishes, balanced flavors, and an atmosphere that mirrors the hotel's understated sophistication. Every element, from the quality of ingredients to the finesse of service, reaffirmed that The Pierre considers dining an integral part of the guest journey, not merely an amenity.

An essential dimension of The Pierre's character lies in its management by India's storied Taj Hotels, one of the world's most respected luxury hospitality brands. Taj's philosophy, rooted in warmth, precision,

and genuine care, adds a distinct layer to the experience. It is hospitality that feels personal, thoughtful, and deeply human.

At The Pierre, New York's classical elegance meets the refined spirit of Indian hospitality, resulting in a harmonious balance between heritage and heartfelt service.

Directly facing Central Park and steps away from New York's cultural and shopping landmarks, The Pierre offers a rare duality: tranquility when desired, and vibrant city life at arm's reach. It is a location that elevates every moment of the stay.



For me, staying at The Pierre was not simply about comfort or luxury—it was about presence. Waking up to snow-covered Central Park, returning each evening to a suite steeped in quiet grandeur, and knowing that I was inhabiting a place where history once stayed.

The Pierre did not just host me; it invited me into its story. And as I lived there, if only briefly, I became part of its ongoing narrative. These are the experiences that remain long after the journey ends; not because they were lavish, but because they felt timeless.

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



in its winter glory. Each morning began with a breathtaking panorama: the park wrapped in pristine white snow, the city momentarily hushed, revealing a softer, almost poetic side of New York. The suite itself was more than refined accommodation—it was a private retreat. Classical interiors, generous space, and thoughtful details created an atmosphere of calm luxury. Here, one does not feel like a hotel guest, but rather a resident of a distinguished New York home, where discretion and comfort are instinctive.





EXCLUSIVE TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

New Age of Resource

Competition Needs Transparency



Helen Clark, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Helen Clark is a former prime minister of New Zealand and former administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former president of Liberia, is Founder of the EJS Presidential Center for Women and Development and Co-Chair of the Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response.

With the global order under strain, the scramble for control of energy and minerals is increasingly framed as a matter of national security. From Venezuela and Greenland to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Ukraine, the competition for strategic resources is shaping global power dynamics, alliances, and conflicts.

We have lived through such eras before. Across the Global South, the pursuit of oil, diamonds, timber, minerals, and other resources has distorted domestic governance and perpetuated asymmetric power relationships, too often leaving producer countries poorer, more divided, and more indebted than before. Today, as the world races to secure the minerals needed for clean energy, digital technologies, AI, and defense industries, we are entering another such era—one that implies both great promise and grave peril.

But the speed and scale of change are different this time. No longer a distant goal, the transition away from fossil fuels is well underway and gaining speed. In 2025, global

investment in clean energy was double that in oil, gas, and coal. Although oil and gas are still part of the energy mix and support public revenues in many economies, the energy transition is accelerating.

That transition depends on critical minerals, and demand is surging. By 2040, on current projections and patterns of annual usage, lithium demand could increase fivefold, graphite and nickel demand may double, cobalt and rare-earth demand could climb by more than 50 percent, and copper demand could grow by nearly one-third. These projections are shaping current investment decisions, trade policies, and diplomatic strategies.

Still, more attention needs to be devoted to improving energy efficiency and supporting innovation in energy generation, recycling, and conservation. The global mineral supply chain remains highly concentrated. The DRC produces about 70 percent of the world's cobalt, and Indonesia produces nearly 60 percent of global nickel.

“*Transparency is not an optional add-on or bureaucratic excess. It is the cornerstone of good governance. Citizens have a right to know how their resources are developed, who profits, what taxes are paid, and how revenues are managed.*”

Processing is even more concentrated. China has an average market share of 70 percent for 19 of the 20 minerals considered by the International Energy Agency to be strategic, and its role continues to grow. In recent years, China accounted for much of the growth in refined cobalt, graphite, and rare earths, among other minerals. This concentration has heightened geopolitical

competition and concerns about supply-chain vulnerability, which in turn are reshaping how governments think about energy security and industrial policy.

In response, countries are seeking to lock in access through bilateral deals and strategic partnerships—often negotiated hastily and in secret. When contracts are signed behind closed doors, citizens cannot see the terms under which their resources are pledged, and environmental and social costs often are treated as secondary concerns. We know from experience what can follow: corruption, conflict, environmental damage, and the accumulation of unaccountable wealth.

Weak governance of natural resources has long undermined development. Too often, extraction has enriched a few individuals while leaving entire communities displaced, ecosystems degraded, and governments saddled with debt. The rhetoric may have changed with the shift from oil to lithium, and from pipelines to batteries, but the risks are depressingly familiar. The current race for

starts with ensuring transparency.

Transparency is not an optional add-on or bureaucratic excess. It is the cornerstone of good governance. Citizens have a right to know how their resources are developed, who profits, what taxes are paid, and how revenues are managed. Public scrutiny of contracts, company ownership, and fiscal terms is one of the most effective safeguards against abuses and mismanagement.

Participation matters, too. Women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and affected communities must have a meaningful voice in decisions that shape their land, livelihoods, and futures. Protections must be maintained for the journalists, activists, and civil-society organizations who can hold governments and companies to account, thereby ensuring that resource wealth translates into shared prosperity.

There are proven models for doing this well. For more than two decades, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative has shown that openness and accountability are possible, even in politically complex environments. Today, 55 countries adhere to the global standards it has created for the extractive sector, working alongside companies and civil-society groups. This approach now needs to be scaled up and adapted specifically for critical minerals.

These resources are not just inputs for the energy transition. They are strategic assets shaping geopolitics, investment flows, and the future of development. Global cooperation in this domain is urgently needed. Government leaders must demand and apply the highest standards of ethical governance and transparency to ensure that this new era of resource competition delivers fairness, accountability, and lasting public benefit.

We have a choice. We can repeat the mistakes of the past, or we can ensure that economies where mining contributes to growth also support peace, prosperity, and justice.

critical minerals could easily reproduce the same injustices under a green banner.

But that outcome is not inevitable. If managed well, mineral wealth can be transformative, generating public revenues, supporting economic diversification, and funding investments in infrastructure, education, and health. But this requires a decisive break from past practices, and that

Aging linked protein reverses cartilage loss, stops arthritis



A study led by researchers at Stanford University in the United States has found that an injection blocking a protein linked to aging can reverse the natural loss of knee cartilage in older mice, as well as stop arthritis from developing after knee injuries. The study also found that human cartilage samples taken from knee replacement surgeries, which included both extracellular matrix of knee joints and cartilage-producing chondrocyte cells, also responded positively to the injection, by forming new functional cartilage.

The researchers added that an oral version of the treatment is currently being tested in clinical trials aimed at treating age-related muscle weakness. Together, these findings suggest that cartilage lost due to aging or arthritis may one day be restored using either a targeted injection or a pill. If successful in people, such treatments could reduce or even eliminate the need for knee and hip replacement surgery.

The protein at the center of the study is called 15-PGDH. Researchers refer to it as a gerozyme because its levels increase as the body ages. Gerozymes were identified by the same research team in 2023 and are known to act as a 'master regulator' enzyme that drives aging, muscle wasting, and tissue decline over time. In mice, higher levels of 15-PGDH are linked to declining muscle strength with age. Blocking the enzyme using a small molecule, boosted muscle mass and endurance in older animals, in contrast producing more 15-PGDH. caused their muscles to shrink. Until now, there has been no drug that directly treats the cause of cartilage

loss. Current treatments focus on managing pain or replacing damaged joints surgically. Osteoarthritis develops when joints are stressed by aging, injury, or obesity, which breaks down collagen—the structural protein in cartilage—resulting in thinner, softer cartilage and causing inflammation, swelling and pain. With the new approach targeting the root cause of the disease rather than its symptoms, it offers a potential shift in how osteoarthritis is treated.

The human body contains three main types of cartilage. Elastic cartilage, which forms structures such as the outer ear; fibrocartilage, which helps absorb shock in places like the spaces between spinal vertebrae; and hyaline cartilage, which allows joints such as the hips, knees, shoulders, and ankles to move with low friction. Hyaline, also called articular cartilage, is the form most

commonly damaged in osteoarthritis. Under normal conditions, articular cartilage has very limited ability to regenerate.

Previous studies have shown that prostaglandin E2—a hormone-like lipid compound that plays a significant role in inflammation, pain sensitization, and tissue repair—is essential for muscle stem cell function. The enzyme 15-PGDH breaks down prostaglandin E2. By blocking 15-PGDH or increasing prostaglandin E2 levels, researchers were able to repair damaged muscle, nerve, bone, colon, liver, and blood cells in young mice.

Suspecting that the same pathway might be involved in cartilage aging and joint damage, the team compared knee cartilage from young and old mice. They found that 15-PGDH levels roughly doubled with age. Researchers then injected a

small molecule that inhibits 15-PGDH into the knee joint of older mice, resulting in cartilage that had become thin and dysfunctional with age, beginning to thicken across the joint surface. The team observed similar benefits in mice with knee injuries that resemble tears to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL)—one of the knee ligaments that connects the thigh bone (femur) to the shin bone (tibia)—which are common among athletes and recreational exercisers. Although such injuries can be surgically repaired, about half of affected people develop osteoarthritis in the injured joint within 15 years.

Mice that received twice-weekly injections of the gerozyme inhibitor for four weeks after injury were far less likely to develop osteoarthritis. Treated mice also moved more normally. Closer analysis showed that chondrocytes in older mice expressed more genes linked to inflammation and the conversion of cartilage into bone, along with fewer genes involved in cartilage formation. Treatment with the gerozyme inhibitor shifted these patterns.

The researchers also tested cartilage taken from patients undergoing total knee replacement for osteoarthritis. After one week of treatment with the 15-PGDH inhibitor, the tissue showed fewer 15-PGDH-producing chondrocytes, reduced expression of cartilage degradation and fibrocartilage genes, and early signs of articular cartilage regeneration. Phase 1 clinical trials for muscle weakness have shown that it is safe and active in healthy volunteers. The researchers hope that a similar trial will be launched soon to test its effect in cartilage regeneration.

Mineral that ramps up rice production sustainably



Rice is the staple grain for more than 3.5 billion people worldwide, however, the cultivation of rice comes with extremely high environmental, climate and economic costs. Growing rice sustainably and in quantities needed to feed nearly half the global population has been a topic of research by rice-research institutions and university scholars alike.

The Green Revolution in India, starting in the mid-1960s, introduced high-yielding, semi-dwarf varieties of rice, doubling or tripling yields in Asia and preventing famine in many places. While this massively boosted agriculture output, it also came with significant environmental degradation, chemical resilience, and costs.

Part of what made the Green Revolution so revolutionary was the invention of nitrogen-heavy fertilizers that could keep agricultural yields high. But these fertilizers are expensive to make, and when nitrogen is applied to soils, it interacts with the soil's incredibly complex chemistry and microbes, which ultimately leads to enormous amounts of greenhouse gases

(GHG), such as methane, ammonia and nitrous oxide that harm the environment.

Moreover, much of the fertilizer used washes away. Most crops only use about 40-60 percent of the nitrogen applied to them, a measurement known as nitrogen use efficiency (NUE). The NUE of rice can be as low as 30 percent in some places, which means that 70 percent of what a farmer puts on their fields washes away into water bodies such as lakes, rivers, coastal waters and the oceans.

Aside from the waste of 70 percent of the cost of fertilizers used, this runoff leads to harmful environmental impacts, including eutrophication—excessive enrichment of water bodies with nutrients, primarily nitrogen and phosphorus, from agriculture, industrial and sewage wastage. Eutrophication leads to dense algal blooms that later decompose causing severe oxygen depletion in water

bodies, creating aquatic life 'dead zones'.

With the Green Revolution now increasingly running out of steam, researchers have been looking for ways to raise rice production without negative impacts. A new joint study by scientists at the University of Massachusetts in the United States and China's Jiangnan University, has shown that nanoscale applications of the element selenium—crucial to plant and human health—can decrease the amount of fertilizer necessary for rice cultivation, while sustaining yields, boosting nutrition, enhancing the soil's microbial diversity and cutting GHG emissions.

Nanoscale application of selenium to the foliage and stems of the rice, reduced the negative environmental impacts of nitrogen fertilization by 41 percent and increased the economic benefits by over 38 percent per

ton of rice, relative to conventional practices. Importantly, these positive impacts on rice cultivation work in real-world conditions, not just in a laboratory environment.

Using an aerial drone the researchers sprayed the rice growing in a paddy field with the suspension of nanoscale selenium. The direct contact between the foliage and chemical meant that the rice plant was far more efficient at absorbing the selenium than it would be if it had been applied to the soil. The selenium application was found to stimulate the plant's photosynthesis, which increased by over 40 percent.

Increased photosynthesis means the plant absorbs more CO₂, which it then turns into carbohydrates that flow down into the plant's roots, causing them to grow bigger. Healthier larger roots release a host of organic compounds that cultivate beneficial microbes in the soil, which then work symbiotically with the rice roots to pull more nitrogen and ammonium out of the soil and into the plant, increasing its NUE from 30 to over 48 percent, and decreasing the amount of nitrous oxide and ammonia released to the atmosphere by 19 to 46 percent.

With more nutrients coming in, the rice itself produced a higher yield, with a more nutritious grain possessing increased levels of protein, certain critical amino acids, and selenium. Furthermore, the researchers found that their nano-selenium applications allowed farmers to reduce their nitrogen applications by 30 percent. Since rice cultivation accounts for 15-20 percent of global nitrogen use, the new technique could mitigate the threats arising from climate change and the rising economic and environmental costs of agriculture.



Perils of Premature Automation



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The dominant narrative about Artificial Intelligence (AI) is to move fast or fall behind. Governments are urged to adopt the technology quickly, scale it aggressively, and regulate it lightly, as if speed itself were a development strategy.

This assumption is as wrong as it is dangerous. In reality, the main risk for many developing economies is embracing AI too early, before they have the digital infrastructure, institutional capacity, labor-market absorption mechanisms, and productive capabilities required to ensure that automation delivers broad-based gains.

I call this risk premature automation, which mirrors a phenomenon that Dani Rodrik described as premature deindustrialization: the erosion of manufacturing employment in developing countries before they could realize its full growth potential. Hasty AI adoption will likely produce a similar outcome: destroying jobs, eroding capabilities, and hindering development rather than fostering transformation.

In advanced economies, AI can help supplement an aging labor force and boost white-collar workers' productivity. By contrast, many emerging economies have much younger populations and limited employment opportunities. Each year, an estimated 12 million young Africans enter the labor market, of which only three million secure formal employment. Against this backdrop, rapid automation in service industries such as customer support, logistics, and finance, or even in public administration, could displace workers before alternative pathways emerge.



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Latin America and parts of Europe face the same threat: embedding AI into fragmented and outdated administrative systems and sectors with stagnant productivity growth will most likely eliminate middle-skill jobs without creating new engines of growth. If economies with weak fundamentals try to leapfrog into AI-enabled automation, the effort will only amplify their dysfunction. When countries have paper-based public registries, fragmented payment systems, and weak data governance, AI models are trained on poor inputs and built on brittle infrastructure. Errors scale, and bias hardens, resulting in institutional overload.

Examples abound: Automated eligibility systems for public services have excluded legitimate beneficiaries because the underlying registries were incomplete; algorithmic decision-making tools were introduced before appeal mechanisms existed; and predictive systems were implemented without interoperable data. These are sequencing failures, not technological breakdowns. In the absence of deliberate

sequencing, countries may end up exporting raw data and importing algorithms, platforms, and governance systems designed elsewhere, creating new dependencies. Value capture is concentrated upstream, while local firms and workers are relegated to marginal roles or displaced entirely. The technology may be different, but the goal is still extraction.

In this environment, data governance is industrial policy. Countries that fail to devise strategies for interoperability, ownership, and standards will be at the mercy of AI companies. To avoid that outcome, they should focus on sequencing—in other words, embracing frontier technology only after building the necessary foundations.

In practice, sequencing means digitizing records and developing interoperable digital public infrastructure before automating decisions. It also means determining the pace of AI adoption, so that innovation is sustainable. Sandboxes, sector-specific pilots, and labor-impact assessments allow

governments to learn, adapt, and correct course. Crucially, such an approach would prevent economic dislocation by ensuring that automation complements, rather than replaces, human labor. When organizations can still learn by doing and accumulate capabilities, AI becomes a development accelerator.

Late-mover status can even be an advantage, because it allows countries to design guardrails before diffusion accelerates, avoiding advanced economies' mistakes. Pix, Brazil's government-backed payments system, illustrates how deliberate sequencing and strong public infrastructure can help a latecomer not just catch up, but set global benchmarks.

Current debates about AI governance focus heavily on ethics, safety, and frontier risks. While these issues are important, the more immediate challenge for most countries is the misalignment between AI's capabilities and institutional readiness. To address this problem, policymakers and stakeholders must consider who captures value; how productive capabilities are built; what happens to workers; and how the technology interacts with existing state capacity.

Premature automation, like premature deindustrialization, will leave economies more fragile and dependent. Africa does not need to win a race it never signed up for.

Nor do the many middle-income, and even advanced, economies confronting stagnant productivity and social problems. Instead, they need an AI strategy grounded in logic: digitization precedes automation, capacity precedes scale, and governance precedes diffusion. In an era increasingly shaped by geopolitical competition over data, semiconductors, and cloud infrastructure, sequencing becomes a tool of sovereignty by allowing countries to engage with technology on their own terms. AI need not be a destabilizing force. But it almost certainly will be if policymakers rush to adopt systems they cannot govern.



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