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# Reimagining the Economics of Culture

*Investing in arts and culture broadens opportunity and builds a more creative economy, where culture drives the direction of overall growth, not just within 'creative industries'.*

**EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT**

Brazil's Carnival, the greatest party on earth, ended last week. For those who have never been, no description does it justice. The blocos playing in the streets, the samba schools parading through Rio de Janeiro's Sambadrome, the drumlines, the costumes, and the collective joy of millions of people constitute a spectacle unto itself. In dark and divided times, Carnival reminds us that participation, creativity, and shared celebration are not peripheral to economic life. They are part of what economic life is for.

And yet, financial support for arts and culture



is often treated as a cost, not an investment. Whenever governments face fiscal pressure, these budgets are the first to be cut, while finance, technology, and defense are protected as engines of the 'real' real economy.

This prioritization reflects a conceptual failure. Culture is not a sector in the way that manufacturing or construction are. It is a pervasive force that shapes the skills, creativity, and social fabric on which all economic activity depends. In London, the Notting Hill Carnival is too often discussed in terms of crime, disruptions, and policing costs, at worst, or visitor receipts and tourism revenue, at best.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



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# Kuwaiti leadership receives calls of support from world leaders

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received phone calls on 1 March from regional leaders expressing solidarity with Kuwait following the recent Iranian attack on its territory. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan strongly condemned the attack as a blatant violation of Kuwait's sovereignty, international law and the UN Charter, affirming Turkey's full support and readiness to assist. Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa denounced the attack as a breach of sovereignty and voiced Syria's backing for all measures to safeguard Kuwait's security and stability.

Omani Sultan Haitham bin Tariq condemned the violation of Kuwait's territory and airspace, reaffirming Oman's support for efforts to preserve its sovereignty and security.

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune also condemned the attack and expressed Algeria's full support for Kuwait. His Highness the Amir expressed appreciation for the leaders' solidarity and good wishes



Messages of support and solidarity were also sent to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who



received phone calls from the leaders of the United Republic of Comoros, the Republic of Senegal, and the State of Palestine. The leaders

strongly condemned Iran's recent attacks on Kuwaiti territory, describing them as blatant violations of sovereignty and international law.

During the calls, His Highness conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and expressed gratitude for the leaders' firm and fraternal support of Kuwait's security and stability. The communications highlighted strong international solidarity and reaffirmed a shared commitment to upholding sovereignty and regional peace.

On 4 March His Highness the Crown Prince also received a call from Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who condemned the repeated attacks on Kuwait and emphasized the importance of de-escalation and dialogue to maintain regional stability and civilian security.

The Uzbek President affirmed full support for Kuwait's measures to preserve its sovereignty. His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the Amir's greetings and appreciation for Uzbekistan's supportive stance.

## Filipina hit by debris from drone strike at airport recalls terrifying event

By Ricky Laxa  
Staff Writer

A 27-year-old Filipina working for an international restaurant chain at Terminal 1 of Kuwait International Airport was recently discharged from the hospital after being struck by debris during a drone attack on the airport. Camille Joy Dacanay, assigned to the airport's food service division, recounted the harrowing experience as she recovered from her injuries.

The incident occurred at approximately five in the afternoon when an explosion rocked the terminal. Dacanay was on her way to the restroom with a colleague when the blast sent debris flying across the facility. In the chaos that followed, she initially did not realize she had been hit. "I was in shock, and everything happened so fast," she said. "It wasn't until later that I noticed something lodged in my neck."

As emergency responders evacuated the area, Dacanay and her supervisor opted not to wait for an ambulance due to the confusion and instead boarded a bus to seek medical help. They first visited a nearby clinic, but staff informed them they lacked the equipment to safely remove the metal fragment. Dacanay was given an anti-tetanus shot and referred to Farwaniya Hospital, where doctors successfully extracted the debris.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited the hospital to check on the 13 victims injured in the attack. Dacanay expressed gratitude for the swift medical response, noting that the situation could have been far worse. "The airport had been closed two days earlier, so there were very few people inside, mostly just employees," she said. "If it had been a regular day, the casualties might have been much higher."

Medical staff conducted an X-ray to ensure no vital organs were damaged before proceeding with the extraction. Meanwhile, the Migrant Workers Office (MWO) of the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait immediately launched efforts to locate Dacanay after learning of her injury. Aisha Bhakit, an MWO officer, recounted receiving a call from Dacanay herself. "We rushed to the hospital to ensure she received all necessary assistance," Bhakit said.

Dacanay expressed deep appreciation for the MWO support during her ordeal. "It was terrifying, but in moments like these, you need strength and faith to pull through," she said. After being discharged, she was granted a week of medical leave before resuming work.

The incident has drawn attention to the dangers faced by overseas Filipino workers in conflict-prone regions, while Dacanay's recovery serves as a testament to resilience amid adversity.





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# Jazeera Airways activates emergency protocols, prioritizes passenger safety

*"All our aircraft are airworthy, our pilots and cabin crew remain ready and the moment Kuwait reopens its airspace, we are ready to return to the skies. Until then, Jazeera Airways remains on standby, prepared, vigilant, and committed to restoring connectivity for Kuwait and the wider region at the earliest possible opportunity."*

## The Times Kuwait Report

Jazeera Airways is fully prepared to resume operations immediately once Kuwait's airspace reopens, Barathan Pasupathi, Chief Executive Officer of Jazeera Airways, told The Times Kuwait in an exclusive interview.

Speaking about the evolving regional security situation and its impact on aviation, Pasupathi said the airline moved swiftly to activate its emergency response protocols the moment disruptions began. "Our priority from the first minute was passenger safety and ensuring an orderly evacuation from the terminal," said Pasupathi.

He explained that several inbound flights, including services from Egypt and India, were affected. Among the impacted passengers were more than 150 Iranian nationals, along with travelers of various other nationalities. "We worked closely with the Iranian Embassy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other diplomatic channels to move passengers safely out of the terminal. Through coordinated efforts, including city bus transfers and diplomatic clearances, we ensured their safe onward movement."

"Currently only a handful of passengers remain in Kuwait, including some Indian nationals. We continue to house and support them while working closely with the authorities," said the Jazeera CEO. Stranded Jazeera transit passengers are being accommodated at the



Holiday Inn Kuwait - Salmiya; Holiday Inn Kuwait in Farwaniya; and at the Crowne Plaza Kuwait Al Thuraya City. "We are ensuring that passengers are comfortable, safe, and regularly updated. Care, meals, and logistical support are being provided continuously," Pasupathi added.

Despite regional instability, Jazeera Airways confirmed that its dedicated terminal remains ready for commencement and operations. He expanded by noting, "We have carried out engineering inspections, and all our aircraft have been cleared as airworthy. Our fleet is fully fit for flying in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and we have reviewed all safety scenarios, including airspace risks, and taken all necessary internal precautions."

He added that additional precautionary measures have been implemented, including identifying secure shelter areas near the terminal and head office in case of any external threats. Pasupathi also noted that Jazeera Airways is evaluating contingency plans to support Kuwait's travel market if airspace restrictions continue. Elaborating on the contingency plans he said, "We are studying the possibility of operating from airports close to Kuwait's borders. If regulatory approvals are granted and conditions are safe, passengers could travel by road and connect to international flights from neighboring airports."

He reiterated that Jazeera operates strictly

under the supervision of Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and will resume flights only when clearance is officially granted and conditions are deemed safe. Passengers are being kept informed through clear communication channels, and advance notice will be given once operations resume.

"All our aircraft are airworthy, our pilots and cabin crew remain ready and the moment Kuwait reopens its airspace, we are ready to return to the skies. Until then, Jazeera Airways remains on standby, prepared, vigilant, and committed to restoring connectivity for Kuwait and the wider region at the earliest possible opportunity," concluded Pasupathi.

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# Interior Ministry apprehends miscreants inciting unrest, misleading public

Ministry of Interior has announced that security personnel from the Criminal Security Sector successfully monitored and apprehended several individuals involved in serious violations affecting the security and stability of Kuwait.

Those apprehended include individuals who illegally filmed incidents and circulated video clips, actions which contributed to inciting unrest, misleading public opinion, and spreading fear among citizens and residents. Security officials also arrested a number of individuals for publishing content on personal accounts and social media platforms that expressed sympathy with terrorist organizations.

Reaffirming its commitment to maintaining national security, the ministry stressed that its security services will continue to closely monitor social media platforms and workplaces, and



will not hesitate to pursue anyone who violates the law. All necessary legal measures have been initiated against those arrested, and they have been referred to the competent authorities.

The ministry pointed out that it had earlier issued warnings against engaging in such criminal activities and reiterated that it will not tolerate any attempts to undermine the country's security.

Mol urged citizens and residents to rely solely on official state sources for information and to prioritize the national interest by refraining from circulating or reposting unverified videos.

The ministry also emphasized the importance of not filming field events or security personnel while they are carrying out their duties, in order to avoid legal consequences and to prevent obstruction of security operations, thereby safeguarding the security and safety of Kuwait.

## MoI warns against filming or sharing missile interceptions

Ministry of Interior (MoI) has issued a strict directive in multiple languages asking the public not to film or photograph missile interceptions in the sky. Citizens and residents are also warned not to share or livestream such footage on social media platforms.



وزارة الداخلية  
Ministry of Interior  
دولة الكويت | State of Kuwait

of this directive will be legally pursued, and offenders will be held accountable under applicable laws. Authorities stressed that the measure aims to protect public safety and national security, urging everyone to comply and report any suspicious activity related

The ministry emphasized that any violations to missile defense operations.

## Ministry of Interior arrests four for social media misuse

Ministry of Interior is reported to have arrested three individuals in separate incidents related to the misuse of social media, according to an official statement issued as part of ongoing monitoring efforts.

In the first case, two individuals were apprehended after authorities detected video clips they had posted online containing phrases and scenes deemed to mock and disparage the Kuwaiti Armed Forces. The content also allegedly sought to belittle the efforts of the country's air defense system in carrying out its national duties.

The Ministry stated that such actions constitute unacceptable conduct that undermines the prestige of the military institution. Following investigation and confrontation with evidence gathered through search and inquiry operations, the two individuals admitted to filming and publishing the material. They have since been detained and referred to the competent authorities to complete the necessary legal procedures.

In a separate incident, authorities arrested a third individual for using a social media account to publish statements containing insults and content considered harmful to international relations. The account also reportedly featured images of leaders of designated terrorist organizations in its profile.

The Ministry reiterated its previous warnings regarding the importance of adhering to laws and regulations governing social media use. It stressed the need to refrain from publishing or circulating content that could harm military institutions, state interests, or Kuwait's foreign relations.

Emphasizing that the law will be firmly enforced against violators, the Ministry called on the public to uphold their national responsibilities, particularly in light of the current regional circumstances.

Meanwhile, as part of ongoing efforts to maintain security, stability, and uphold the rule of law, Kuwaiti security agencies arrested on 2 March an individual for circulating a video on social media containing false claims about attacks on residential towers in the Mahboula area.

Authorities had detected a video making baseless claims that high-end towers were being targeted. Through intensified investigation and tracking efforts, the identity of the person who published the video was determined, and he was taken into custody. When confronted with the evidence, the person admitted to filming



and sending the video to a group via a social media application. He has since been referred to the competent authorities for legal action.

The ministry emphasized that spreading false reports and rumors is extremely dangerous as it can create public panic, incite anxiety, and hinder the work of security agencies. The ministry reaffirmed that such acts constitute a criminal offense punishable by law, and anyone who disseminates false information will face strict legal measures to protect public security and community safety.

## Information Ministry refers media-law violators to Prosecution

Ministry of Information announced on 4 March that it had referred individuals and entities violating media regulations to the Public Prosecution, urging all media outlets and social media users to act responsibly and uphold the national interest.

In a media statement, the ministry said it has been closely monitoring the circulation of false news and rumors across certain platforms amid current developments, describing such actions as violations of laws governing media work and as attempts to mislead public opinion.

The ministry stressed that freedom of opinion and expression is guaranteed within the framework of the law, but must be accompanied by professional responsibility, accuracy, credibility, and reliance on official sources. It called on all media institutions and users of social media platforms to demonstrate professionalism and prioritize national unity, contributing to the preservation of security and stability.

## Safety Procedures When Hearing Warning Sirens



### While Driving

- Safely pull over to the side of the road.
- Stay inside your vehicle and follow official instructions.



### At Work

- Follow your building's emergency and safety protocols.
- Stay away from windows and open areas.
- Use designated emergency exits if evacuation is required.



### At Home

- Ensure you have an emergency bag with essential supplies.
- Do not leave your home until the "End of Danger" siren is heard.
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# Minister visits public shelter to evaluate food storage standards

Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Reem Al-Faleej, conducted a field inspection last week to several public shelters within the Capital Educational District to review compliance with food storage standards set by the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition.

Speaking to state media following the visit, Al-Faleej said the inspection forms part of the national plan aimed at strengthening the country's emergency response system and establishing strict safety standards for storing food supplies in shelter facilities.

The minister explained that the inspection focused on evaluating the efficiency of food storage systems and ensuring measures are in place to prevent waste or loss of supplies. The initiative also aims to guarantee safe



and reliable access to food for different segments of society during emergencies, while enhancing the readiness of national facilities to respond to various crisis situations.

Al-Faleej stressed that authorities continue to monitor the country's food security system in a precise and systematic manner, while maintaining coordination with relevant government entities to ensure a safe and sustainable food environment across all state facilities.

The tour also included checks on temperature levels in storage areas, food preservation methods, and the adherence of staff to approved health and safety regulations. Officials confirmed that these measures are essential to maintaining the quality and safety of food supplies during emergency situations.

## MoCI reassures public of ample reserve food stocks

Minister of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) confirmed that the country has sufficient stockpiles of foodstuff to withstand the current exceptional circumstances and is continuously monitoring and evaluating supplies in the local market.

In a media statement issued following a visit to several water bottling plants and local vegetable markets on 2 March, Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai reassured the public that the quantities of water, fruits, and vegetables available in the markets are very plentiful, and that the strategic reserves are sufficient.

The statement noted that water bottling factories are continuing to operate at full capacity to guarantee meeting demand and maintaining stable supply.

He also confirmed that the flow of goods and vegetables in the markets is proceeding smoothly and in appropriate quantities to meet consumer needs, stressing the continued monitoring and coordination with the relevant authorities to maintain regular supplies and enhance the stability of the local market.

On Monday evening, Minister Boodai visited the Al-Fardha Fruit and Vegetable market in the Sulaiybiya area to assess the quantities of fresh products received, the available stock of fruits and vegetables, and the supply and distribution mechanisms to ensure the continued flow of goods and the smooth operation of the market, during these exceptional circumstances and to guarantee the continued availability of essential goods in the local market.

He also visited the Al-Rawdatain Water Plant, where the Minister reviewed the strategic water reserves, production capacity, and the 24-hour operation system, which contributes to enhancing supply readiness and meeting consumer needs.

His tour also included a visit to the Aqua Gulf plant, which is operating 24 hours a day with intensified efforts to increase bottled water production, thus supporting market stability and ensuring product availability.



## Jazeera Airways holds discussions with DGCA to resume operations

The Times Kuwait Report

Jazeera Airways held an operations meeting this morning with its senior executive team, engaging with the Directorate-General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) and other relevant government authorities to explore the possibility of restarting flights as early as Sunday, 8 March. The airline made the announcement following numerous requests from customers, embassies, and travel and trade partners eager to learn about updates on flight resumptions.

Jazeera Airways emphasized its commitment to reconnecting families, loved ones, and communities across the GCC, ensuring that Kuwait remains linked to key regional and international markets.

Expressing gratitude, Jazeera Airways thanked the DGCA, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense and all other relevant government stakeholders for their support in



safeguarding the well-being of travelers and facilitating smooth operations. The airline reaffirmed its readiness to serve the people of Kuwait and the region, prioritizing safety, convenience, and seamless connectivity as it prepares to welcome passengers back on board.

## Reimagining the Economics of Culture

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The event generates roughly £400 million (\$536 million) in direct economic value. Similarly, in Brazil, Carnival attracts 1.36 million foreign visitors and generates an estimated US\$2.2 billion in direct tourism-related activity.

Yet in both cases, these numbers represent only the tip of the iceberg. As the artist Alvaro Barrington and I showed in 2024, the Notting Hill Carnival creates immense public value—through skills development, social cohesion, civic identity, and community infrastructure—that no standard cost-benefit framework can capture. The musician and producer Brian Eno contends that Carnival is most successful when “the number of participants isn’t grossly outweighed by the number of spectators”—when people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities are not just watching but joining in and contributing something of their own.

That is a description of co-creation, not mere consumption. But co-creation is exactly what our standard economic metrics overlook. When the official statistics show that Brazil’s creative economy generated \$75 billion in 2025 (3.59% of GDP) and supported 7.8 million workers, they still miss the extraordinarily complex year-round production economy that sustains this activity. For example, in Rio’s City of Samba, the construction of Carnival *carros alegóricos* (floats), the design and fabrication of *fantasias* (costumes)—whose quality reaches the level of haute couture—the training of *passistas* (samba dancers), and the logistics networks that sustain it all are ignored in

the standard impact assessment.

Part of the problem is that all cultural events and institutions, whether museums or carnivals, are assessed by ticket sales, not by the learning, well-being, and social connection they generate. Concert halls are evaluated by the revenue they generate, not by the creative industries they seed or the civic identity they sustain. As I demonstrate in a recent working paper, what we measure shapes what we invest in, and our current metrics systematically undervalue the dynamic, long-run returns that culture generates. Festivals like Carnival are both a powerful illustration of this failure and a powerful corrective for it.

Moreover, Carnival is not just a cultural event; it is a training ground for the state. In Bahia, civil servants and cultural leaders regard Carnival as a public platform for innovation: a real-world test of inter-departmental efforts to deliver high-quality outcomes under pressure. Pulling off a successful Carnival requires coordinating health, security, labor, transportation, and communications across many agencies, in real time, and on an enormous scale.

We should thus be investing in arts and culture to broaden opportunity and build a more creative economy, where culture drives the direction of overall growth, not just within ‘creative industries’. Brazil’s own *Brasil Criativo* program, developed with UNESCO, represents a big step in this direction, by framing support for culture and the arts as a driver of economy-wide spillover effects. It builds on the work of Paulo Miguez, Rector of the Federal University of Bahia, who in 2007 argued for the centrality of culture to all dimensions of economic and social life.

And as Rafaela Bastos, the president of Rio’s *Fundação João Goulart* and a former *passista*, put it to me: Carnival is a “structural laboratory for the public sector.” It trains governments to plan, listen, deliver, and learn. This is precisely the kind of dynamic public-sector capability that is so difficult to build and so easy to destroy through austerity and outsourcing. As my colleagues and I are discovering in work on a Bloomberg Philanthropies-funded project with cities around the world, an event like Carnival can serve as a sandbox for re-learning what the modern state is capable of.

This state-capacity argument comes with an important caveat, however. Capabilities must not overshadow equity concerns. In Rio, the *camarotes* – corporate VIP boxes lining the Sambadrome parade route – are a stark symbol of a wider risk. While communities from some of the city’s poorest favelas produce the spectacle, wealthy audiences passively consume it at premium prices. In Bahia, Carnival generates some \$1.56 billion in tourism revenue, but a disproportionate share of it goes to the already wealthy. Value created collectively is too often captured privately.

This all-too-familiar pattern is not inevitable. Inequality and the commodification of Carnival are design choices. Governance could be structured to promote shared value, with returns flowing back to the communities that created it.

To that end, governments should heed three lessons. First, they should adopt dynamic metrics of cultural value, which means accounting for skills formation, social cohesion, civic trust, and state capabilities; not just tourism revenue.

Second, community governance mechanisms and conditionalities are needed to ensure that the value generated by public support for culture and the arts benefits its creators. And third, policymakers should view culture as a lens through which industrial strategy, urban development, and social investment are imagined and designed.

A collaboration between Brazil’s Ministry of Culture and UCL’s Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose uses Carnival as a case study for how to improve measurement of the public value of arts and culture. The methodology we are developing—moving from static impact assessments to dynamic measures of public value—will, we hope, influence how we think about the economics of arts and culture globally. As the great Brazilian development economist Celso Furtado pointed out decades ago, “Culture is not a sector of development. It is the very foundation of development.” Economic frameworks that ignore this basic truth are failing us.



**Mariana Mazzucato**

*Professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London and the author, most recently, of The Big Con: How the Consulting Industry Weakens Our Businesses, Infantilizes Our Governments and Warps Our Economies*

# MoI grants extensions for visit visas, over-stays abroad

Ministry of Interior has announced a series of exceptional measures in view of the prevailing extraordinary circumstances in the country. A statement from the ministry confirmed the automatic extension of visit visas and additional three month absence permits for residents abroad, with full exemption from related fees and fines.

All types of visit visas that have expired or are set to expire during the present situation will be automatically extended for a period of one month, effective from 28 February. The extension will be processed electronically, without the need for individuals to visit residency affairs departments. The ministry also confirmed a complete waiver of all prescribed



fees and any resulting fines during this period, in consideration of the exceptional circumstances.

Residents currently outside Kuwait who have exceeded the permitted absence period and are unable to return will be granted an additional three-month absence permit. This measure will likewise be implemented automatically through the electronic system, without the need for in-person procedures, and with exemption from applicable fees.

The Ministry emphasized that the specified periods may be extended further depending on developments in the country's situation. It also urged citizens and residents to rely solely on the Ministry's official communication channels for updates and further announcements.

## Authorities issue safety guidelines on encountering suspicious object

Authorities have issued important safety guidelines for citizens and residents who may encounter rocket shrapnel or other suspicious objects from falling projectiles. The public is urged to exercise caution and follow proper procedures to protect lives and property.

Key safety measures include:

**Do Not Touch or Approach:** If you spot any strange object or suspected shrapnel, do not attempt to move or handle it.

**Move to Safety:** Immediately leave the area and ensure that others are kept at a safe distance.



**Report Immediately:** Contact the competent security authorities via emergency number 112, providing a precise description of the location.

**Allow Experts to Work:** Give specialized teams space to handle the site according to established safety procedures.

Officials emphasized that public cooperation with security authorities is vital for maintaining safety and preventing accidents. "Your safety is our responsibility," they stated, highlighting that vigilance and adherence to these guidelines help protect both lives and property.

## Ambassador visits Bangladeshis injured in drone strike on airport



At least 12 people of various nationalities were injured following a drone strike on Terminal 1 of Kuwait International Airport on 28 February. Among the casualties were several Bangladeshis employed at the airport. The injured workers were immediately transferred to multiple hospitals across Kuwait, where they are currently receiving medical treatment.

In a prompt response to the incident, Ambassador of Bangladesh H.E. Major General Syed Tareq Hussain, accompanied by senior officials from the Embassy, visited the hospitals where the injured Bangladeshi

nationals are being treated.

During the visit, the Ambassador met personally with the victims, inquired about their health status, and received detailed briefings from hospital authorities. He conveyed deep concern for their wellbeing and reassured them of the embassy's full support during their recovery.

The Bangladesh Embassy affirmed that it will extend comprehensive consular assistance to the injured workers and remain in close coordination with Kuwaiti authorities to ensure all necessary support is provided to the victims and their families during this challenging time.

## Customs bans the export of foodstuff

Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) stated on 4 March that instructions were issued to all land, sea, and air crossings not to allow the export of any foodstuffs in line with the directive from the Minister of Commerce and Industry No. (20) of 2026.

KGAC clarified in a statement that these instructions have been circulated to all customs

departments, while taking necessary action against violators, to preserve food security and ensure the stability of the local market. It also confirmed that no abnormal radiation readings have been detected through their monitoring systems, adding that all monitoring indicators are within safe limits.

The KGAC added that monitoring systems and devices are operating at high efficiency and readiness, and that inspection work continues regularly to protect the country, and implement all decisions issued by the competent authorities.

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- WHO made it?
- WHAT is the source?
- WHERE did it come from?
- WHY are you sharing it?
- WHEN was it published it?

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# Recipes to Revitalize Ramadan Fasting

*Most people who are fasting during the holy month of Ramadan partake of only two main meals— during Suhoor and at Iftar. Having foods that are hearty and wholesome during these two meals will ensure that you spend the whole month neither under- nor over-nourished. Here are a few recipes that can also be made ahead, so they are ready for it before the sun rises.*



## Sweet Potato with Yogurt, Maple Syrup and Nuts

You can bake the potatoes up to five days in advance so that it just takes a few minutes to assemble this hearty meal. The fiber-rich spuds are sure to fill you up, and the dollop of tangy yogurt gives them a boost of protein.

### Ingredients:

- 1 sweet potato or yam, scrubbed and dried
- 1/4 cup plain or vanilla yogurt
- 1 tablespoon pure maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons chopped nuts (walnuts, cashews, almonds, etc)

### Instructions:

Heat the oven to 190°C. Pierce the sweet potato several times with the tines of a fork. Place the sweet potato inside a loose nest of foil. Bake for around 45 minutes or until tender when pierced with the tip of a paring knife. Remove them from the oven and let them cool enough to handle.

**Make-Ahead Tip:** Sweet potatoes can be cooked ahead of time and kept refrigerated for about five days.

**Serving:** Open the sweet potato across the top, pushing the flesh slightly so it rises out of the skin. Spoon on the yogurt, then the syrup. Sprinkle with nuts, and serve.

## Curried Egg Salad on Naan

The egg salad can be made up to three days in advance and stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator, so it is just a matter of piling it on the naan and digging in.

### Ingredients:

- 6 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons plain Greek yogurt
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon fine salt, plus more for seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/8 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 pieces naan, preferably warmed
- 1 cup loosely packed arugula
- Fresh cilantro leaves, for garnish (optional)



### Instructions:

- Place the eggs in a large saucepan or pot so that they sit in a single layer. Add enough cold water to cover the eggs by 1 inch. Bring to a boil uncovered over high heat. Remove from the heat, cover with a lid, and let sit for 10 minutes.
- Meanwhile, mix the yogurt, mayonnaise, cumin, salt, coriander, turmeric, and pepper together in a medium bowl until smooth. Prepare an ice bath (large bowl filled with ice water).
- When the eggs are ready, tap them gently against the counter to crack the shell in a few places, then submerge in ice water for at least 1 minute. Peel the eggs and dice into small pieces. Fold the eggs into the yogurt mixture. Taste and season with more salt as needed.
- Place the naan on a cutting board. Divide the arugula over the naan. Dollop the egg salad over the arugula, spread into an even layer, and top with cilantro if using. Cut each naan into wedges and serve.



## Qatayef Drizzled in Sweet Syrup

To round off your Ramadan menu, have a bite into Qatayef, one of the most popular Middle-Eastern desserts. Qatayef are basically pancakes that are stuffed with a sweet walnut or sweet cheese filling. Crunchy on the outside, soft on the inside, and drizzled in sugar syrup they make for the perfect dessert.

### Ingredients

#### For the sugar syrup

- 2 cups sugar, 400g
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon rose water or orange blossom water, optional

#### For the batter

- 2 1/2 cups warm water, up to 1/4 cup more as needed
- 1 teaspoon instant yeast
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar, 25g
- 1/3 cup fine semolina, 55g
- 2 cups all-purpose flour, 240g
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Neutral oil or ghee for frying/baking

#### For the nut filling for half the batter

- 1 1/2 cups walnuts, crushed into small pieces
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon powder
- 3 tablespoons simple syrup or honey
- For the sweet cheese filling for remaining half of the batter
- 300 grams sweet cheese, crumbled or shredded

### Instructions:

#### For the syrup:

- Add sugar, water and lime juice to a small pot on medium heat.
- Bring to a boil and then lower the heat and let simmer for an additional 8 minutes.
- Once cooled, add rosewater/orange blossom water if using and let cool completely.

#### For the batter:

- Add the water to the blender, followed by the yeast, baking powder, sugar, fine semolina, flour, salt and vanilla extract. Blend on a medium-high speed for 20 seconds, until bubbles have formed on the surface.
- Let rest for 20 minutes.
- For the walnut and cheese filling:
- Place the walnuts and/or pecans in a ziploc bag and crush them with something heavy, like a rolling pin.
- In a bowl combine the crushed nuts with the cinnamon and the sugar syrup or honey and set aside.
- Crumble the sweet cheese in a bowl and set aside.

Continued on Next Page



## Fresh Fruit and Nut Tabouli

This seasonal twist on the traditional Arabic tabouli salad adds fresh fruit to the mix, but keeps bulgur as its base; the high-fiber whole grain is sure to give you energy. Feel free to swap in the strawberries for your personal favorite fruit, like blueberries or pomegranate seeds.

### Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup sliced almonds

- 1 cup coarse-grind bulgur (cracked wheat)
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 cup thinly-sliced strawberries, stemmed, hulled and washed (about 6 to 7 large berries)
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh mint
- 1/4 cup chopped basil
- About 1/3 cup crumbled goat cheese
- 1/4 cup dried currants
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste

### Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 177 °C. Lay the almonds out onto a small rimmed baking sheet and toast for 5 to 7 minutes until fragrant. Remove from oven and set aside to cool.
- Place bulgur in a medium heat-proof bowl. Bring the water to a boil and then pour over the bulgur. Let stand until the bulgur has absorbed most of the water and has become tender, about 25 to 30 minutes. If there is any remaining water, simply drain and fluff the grains with a fork. Set aside to cool.
- In the meantime, in a large bowl combine the strawberries, mint, basil, goat cheese, and currants. Fold in the bulgur wheat, toasted almonds, lemon juice, olive oil and salt. Stir to combine. Serve at room temperature or cover and refrigerate to serve cold.

### Ramadan Imsakia 2026 - Kuwait

Day	Ramadan	Date	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhur	Asr	Magrib	Isha
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

#### For cooking the qatayef:

- Heat a non-stick medium sized pan over low heat. Once your pan is hot and your batter has rested for 20 minutes, pour approximately a 1/8 cup measure of batter onto your pan (which is half of a 1/4 measuring cup). Depending on the size of your pan, you can make more than one at a time.
- Bubbles will start forming on the surface. Do not move or disturb it while it cooks. You will see the white color of the batter slowly dry up from the outside in. Once it has completely dried, use a flat edged utensil or spatula to remove from the heat. Do not flip it over as qatayef is only cooked on one side. If the first pancake does not have small uniform bubbles and looks thick, simply add 1/4 cup of water to your batter and gently mix it through.
- Place your cooked qatayef on a tea towel and cover with another towel while you cook the remainder of the batter to prevent them from drying out. Arrange them side by side, do not stack them on top of each other, until they are completely cool, otherwise they will stick to



each other.

#### To make the qatayef:

- Hold your qatayef in one hand, bubble side

up. Pinch one end closed to create a cone shape. Place about a spoonful of your nut filling into the centre of the circle.

- Pinch together the edges of the qatayef to make a semi-circle with the filling in the middle. Then pinch over again in the opposite direction to make sure it is securely closed.
- Repeat for all the qatayef. Keep the qatayef covered while you fill the rest.

#### Bake or air-fry:

- To avoid deep frying in oil we recommend either baking or air-frying the qatayef.
- Preheat your oven or air-fryer to 200 C. Place the filled qatayef on a greased baking tray, brushing them with a generous coating of vegetable oil or ghee on both sides. Bake or air fry for 8-10 minutes, turning half way. Baking may require 4-5 additional minutes, depending on your oven, and you can broil for 1-2 minutes on each side at the end for extra goldenness and crunch.
- Remove from oven or air-fryer and while still hot, drizzle the syrup over the qatayef and serve. Garnish with crushed pistachios or walnuts or keep as is, glistening in syrup. Serve warm with additional syrup on the side.

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# UAE banking, financial sector resilient, robust, adapts to changes

*“The UAE’s financial and banking sector remains highly resilient and stable, with banking, financial and insurance institutions continuing to provide services efficiently across the country without interruption.” – Khaled Mohammed Balama, Governor of the Central Bank of the UAE.*

In a recent media statement, Governor of the Central Bank of the UAE, Khaled Mohammed Balama, affirmed that the financial and banking sector in the country enjoys the highest levels of resilience and stability, and that banking, financial, and insurance institutions continue to provide their services to the public efficiently and regularly without interruption throughout the country, despite the ongoing circumstances.

He pointed out: “For over 53 years, the Central Bank of the UAE has built a distinguished track record of achievements. Thanks to the wise vision of the leadership, it has maintained the resilience, strength, and stability of the country’s financial and banking sector. Despite the successive geopolitical changes witnessed in the region during this period, the Central Bank and the UAE’s banking and financial sector have demonstrated a high degree of resilience, adaptability, and growth, reinforcing the UAE’s position as an attractive and safe destination and a leading financial center at both the regional and global levels.

“This remarkable journey reflects the strength of the foundations upon which the UAE’s financial and banking system is built, based on sound governance, discipline, financial and banking diversification, proactive risk management, and a high level of preparedness to address regional changes.

“The UAE’s banking and financial sector enjoys very high levels of capital adequacy and liquidity. The capital adequacy ratio stands at 17 percent, while the liquidity coverage ratio



exceeds 146.6 percent, levels that surpass the regulatory requirements recommended by international bodies and organizations.

“The total assets of the UAE’s banking and financial sector, exceeding AED 5.42 trillion, underscore the substantial and robust financial positions of banking institutions and their ability to meet their obligations and continue supporting economic activity under all

circumstances.

“I would like to emphasize that the banking systems, payment systems, and national financial infrastructure operate with complete efficiency and stability, supported by advanced operational and technological frameworks that ensure the smooth and secure continuity of banking and financial operations,” said Balama..

He added, “Banking and financial institutions

operating in the UAE implement advanced frameworks for identifying and managing risks and ensuring business continuity, in accordance with the best international standards and practices. This enhances their ability to deal with potential changes and challenges efficiently and flexibly. The Central Bank of the UAE continues its ongoing coordination with relevant authorities and financial institutions to monitor developments and ensure full operational readiness and the uninterrupted continuity of financial and banking services.

“Based on our supervisory and regulatory role, we continuously monitor financial stability and liquidity indicators in the banking and financial sector. We conduct periodic assessments and stress tests to ensure the soundness of the banking and financial system. The Central Bank also possesses a comprehensive suite of monetary and prudential tools and policies that enable it to intervene in a timely manner to maintain the stability of the banking and financial sector and enhance confidence and reassurance. The Central Bank has played this role in various circumstances that the region has experienced.”

“In conclusion, I reaffirm the commitment of the Central Bank of the UAE to continue its role in monitoring developments, maintaining full readiness, and providing the necessary support to preserve the gains achieved over more than five decades of prosperity and to continue contributing to the development journey of the country,” said the governor.

## Airspace closures, flight cancellations lead to travel chaos across region

*Airspace closures across the region force reroutes, delays and shifting travel plans*

Ongoing conflict in the region has significantly disrupted air travel across the Middle East, affecting not only the involved belligerents but also the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as Iraq and Syria that have seen either complete or partial airspace closures and tens of thousands of flight cancellations. According to the UK-based aviation data and analytics firm Cirium, more than 23,000 flights across the region have been cancelled since the start of the conflict on 28 February. The firm also noted that of the roughly 36,000 flights scheduled to operate to or from the Middle East over that period, more than half were cancelled, cutting about 4.4 million seats.

Airlines lose revenue when flights cannot operate, also operating rise when aircraft have to detour around closed airspace, extending flight times and fuel burn. In addition, expenses from technical stops, crew overtime, accommodation and airport handling, and in some cases, despite the disruption stemming from force majeure some airlines may opt to pay for meals, accommodation, refunds or vouchers for disrupted passengers to maintain airline loyalty.

On the other hand, limited availability of

seats could see fares soaring which could offset some of the losses to airlines. Airlines with hubs in affected countries face the greatest exposure because their networks depend on regional airspace. Operations over the UAE and

Qatar remain particularly constrained, with hub airports including Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Doha witnessing significant schedule changes and congestion as carriers adjust routes.

The travel chaos could notably impact the

tourism sector in the region with analysts estimating that international arrivals to the region could fall between 11 to 27 percent in 2026, depending on how long the conflict lasts. Experts say that this could lead to 23 million to 38 million fewer visitors to the region than previously expected and a US\$34 billion to \$56 billion hit to tourism spending.

GCC states could see the largest drop in visitor numbers because they attract the biggest share of regional tourism. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are particularly exposed due to their large markets and reliance on aviation links. European airports may also lose revenue and retail spending from weaker Europe-Asia flows, though some may offset declines through parking income or regulatory protections tied to traffic volatility.

Airline industry analysts say the length of the disruption will be crucial in determining the losses that airports, airlines, and travel and tourism-related businesses will absorb due to the situation. Industry losses could be limited if the conflict ends within a month with travel patterns recovering once airspace restrictions are lifted. However, under an extended conflict scenario, the impact on the travel industry could be considerably large.



EXCLUSIVE TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

# India and the Gulf States Could Reshape Global Trade



**Vivek Agarwal, Alexander George**

Vivek Agarwal is Country Director for India at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. Alexander George is Senior Director at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.



The recent Middle East Investment Forum in Sharjah underscored the deepening economic relationship between India and the Gulf states. As US President Donald Trump's tariffs erode the competitiveness of Indian exports, Indian firms are increasingly turning to the United Arab Emirates as a bridge to American markets, strengthening cross-regional ties.

As a result, what was once a relationship based mainly on oil and labor has evolved into a partnership spanning technology, finance, and security. The Gulf and India are no longer merely trading partners; together, they are spearheading a geo-economic realignment and redrawing the map of global trade.

The relationship between India and the Gulf has deep historical roots. For centuries, caravans and merchant ships, carrying spices and textiles, established enduring cultural and commercial ties between the two regions. Moreover, under the British Raj, much of the Gulf was administered from India.

In the decades following India's independence, ties became largely transactional: oil flowed one way, labor the other, and wealth moved in both directions. Only recently have India and the Gulf states rediscovered the strategic value of their historic partnership and begun to reimagine it for the 21st century.

By the mid-2010s, the two sides' strategic priorities began to align. In 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the UAE, the first such visit in 34 years, as Gulf leaders like UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launched ambitious plans to diversify their

“Donors should condition their headline pledges on allocating certain percentages to core funding Global South-led groups and programs focused on delivering care, safety, and access to support.”

economies beyond hydrocarbons.

This convergence was driven by domestic shifts. The Gulf states recognized the risks of fossil-fuel dependence and began channeling resources into renewables, tech, and tourism. Meanwhile, India, racing to industrialize and digitize, found eager partners in the Gulf with the necessary capital and ambition. India sought investment and expertise, and the Gulf sought scale and new avenues for growth.

What followed was a period of intense economic and diplomatic engagement, from the establishment of the I2U2 partnership, which includes India, Israel, the UAE, and the United States, to Gulf leaders being honored at India's national celebrations. The numbers speak for themselves: India-UAE trade has risen to US\$100 billion this year, while India-Saudi trade reached

\$43 billion in 2023-24. Equally important is where that capital is flowing. Sovereign wealth funds like Abu Dhabi's Mubadala and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund have invested heavily in Indian startups, infrastructure, and green-energy projects. These are not one-off transactions but long-term bets on the future of the geopolitical alliance. Building on this momentum, the revitalized India-Gulf axis is now looking outward. The proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor promises to reshape global trade routes, linking Indian ports to the Mediterranean through Gulf rail networks and establishing modern, resilient supply chains alongside the Suez Canal.

In this sense, the partnership represents a modern-day equivalent to the old spice routes. But the spices have been replaced by advanced

technologies, and the caravans have given way to container ships, fiber-optic cables, and digital payments. India's Unified Payments Interface is crossing borders, while undersea power cables and green-hydrogen projects are laying the groundwork for a shared energy and digital ecosystem.

The fledgling partnership is now expanding into Africa. The UAE has pledged over \$100 billion in investments across the continent, while Saudi Arabia has announced \$41 billion in development initiatives. India, for its part, brings decades' worth of goodwill—built through peacekeeping missions, development projects, and a vibrant diaspora network—that complements Gulf capital and amplifies the bloc's influence.

Emerging trilateral ventures, with Emirati capital financing infrastructure built by Indian firms in Africa, represent a compelling alternative to the great powers' projects on the continent, which often lead to debt traps and come with political strings attached. For medium-sized economies wary of being caught in the middle of the US-China rivalry, the India-Gulf alliance offers infrastructure without unsustainable debt, technology partnerships without hidden agendas, and security cooperation without foreign interference.

The India-Gulf partnership also shows how digital tools can drive development. By combining India's affordable, open-source digital architecture with Gulf capital, the partnership is delivering modern infrastructure, inclusive digital IDs, and climate-conscious ventures that generate well-paid local jobs.

But this is not non-alignment 2.0. Instead, the India-Gulf story is one of multi-alignment—a pragmatic geopolitical strategy rooted in shared interests, mutual benefit, and autonomy.

To be sure, the alliance faces powerful headwinds: regional rivalries, domestic frictions, and global volatility. Yet the confidence is unmistakable: no longer bound by others' strategies, India and the Gulf states are charting their own course.

If their partnership endures, it will be more than a bilateral success. The India-Gulf nexus could become a new center of gravity in an increasingly multipolar world—and a template for other emerging economies seeking open-source technology, resilient trade, and broad-based prosperity without subordination.



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# Power of Exosomes in Women's Beauty, Health Care

*Exosomes can treat many conditions from acne scars to hair thinning, as well as complex gynecology conditions.*



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

Exosomes, the tiny extracellular vesicles derived from stem cells and other cells, are emerging as a revolutionary tool for various conditions in the fields of beauty and health care. With their unique properties, exosomes are being studied and applied in various ways that promise to transform women's health care, with some experts also conducting studies to see their effectiveness in treating diseases such as cancer.

"Unlike other treatments, exosomes have a dual effect as it acts as a regenerative molecule and anti-inflammatory at the same time. Before exosomes, doctors needed to use multiple products to get the effect of regeneration of the cells and to reduce inflammation..."



**Dr. Maria Karakoulaki**

Today, exosomes can treat many conditions from acne scars to hair thinning as well as complex gynecology conditions such as lichen sclerosus and menopause," explains Dr. Maria Karakoulaki, a leading aesthetic and functional gynaecologist and menopause expert in the Gulf.

Exosomes are small particles, about 30-150 nanometers in diameter, released by nearly every cell type in the body. They play a crucial role in cell-to-cell communication by transferring proteins, lipids, and genetic material from one cell to another.

Researchers have recently discovered that exosomes from stem cells, especially mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs), can be harnessed for therapeutic purposes. These exosomes carry regenerative properties without the ethical and technical complexities of using whole stem cells, making them a more attractive option for beauty and medical applications.

One of the most exciting uses of exosomes is in the skincare industry. As women age, the skin's ability to repair itself diminishes, leading to wrinkles, loss of elasticity, and a dull complexion. Exosomes, especially those derived from stem cells, have been found to stimulate the production of collagen and elastin, the proteins responsible for keeping the skin firm and youthful.

Exosomes can improve skin texture, reduce fine lines, and promote a more radiant complexion by stimulating collagen production, reducing inflammation, improving

hydration, and giving the skin a healthy, plump appearance.

Many skincare brands and clinics now offer exosome-based treatments, such as serums and facials, that promise to enhance the skin's regenerative capabilities. Clinical results have shown that exosome therapies can accelerate healing, reduce scarring, and provide a more youthful, glowing appearance, making them a powerful tool in the anti-aging arena.

"I believe that we are still in the beginning of the 'Exosome Era' as it will be involved in many medical and therapeutic treatments, such as cancers. There are current studies on it. In addition, it will be used as a drug delivery system since it acts as a carrier between cells," adds Dr Karakoulaki.

Beyond beauty, exosomes are potent in broader healthcare applications. Their regenerative properties make them suitable for healing and repairing tissues, which has significant implications for women's health, particularly in conditions like pelvic floor disorders and reproductive health.

Pelvic floor disorders, such as pelvic organ prolapse and incontinence, affect many women, particularly after childbirth or during menopause. Exosome therapies are being explored as a non-surgical option for treating these conditions by promoting tissue repair and reducing inflammation.

"The most obvious result is the treatment of lichen sclerosus. This condition causes thinning of the skin and severe discomfort to patients. It's a chronic inflammation without a clear root cause. The exosomes attack, heal the inflammation and regenerate the skin simultaneously. As a result, the patient gains healthy skin and stops suffering from the exhausting itching and pain that Lichen sclerosus is causing. Although there is no definitive healing in the case of lichen sclerosus, the flare-ups happen less frequently and with less intensity, which is a big improvement in a patient's life quality," shares Dr. Karakoulaki.

Exosomes are being studied in reproductive medicine for their role in ovarian function and fertility. Studies suggest that exosomes from



specific stem cell sources can help regenerate ovarian tissue, potentially offering new treatments for women with premature ovarian failure or other fertility issues. Furthermore, exosomes are involved in the communication between the embryo and the maternal environment, making them a research focus in improving IVF success rates.

Exosome-based therapies are also being investigated for their potential to modulate the immune system, reduce inflammation, and promote tissue repair in conditions such as endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), and uterine fibroids.

Endometriosis, a painful condition where

tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus, is characterized by chronic inflammation. Exosomes, with their anti-inflammatory properties, may offer a new treatment pathway. By delivering targeted anti-inflammatory signals to affected areas, exosomes can reduce pain and limit the spread of endometrial tissue.

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a hormonal disorder that affects many women. Exosomes are being studied for their potential to improve insulin sensitivity and restore hormonal balance, which could offer relief from some of the symptoms of PCOS, including irregular periods and fertility challenges.

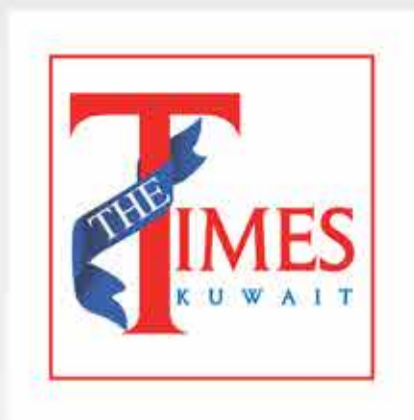
Exosomes may also play a role in regenerative gynecological surgeries. In procedures such as uterine repair or vaginal rejuvenation, exosomes can be used to enhance healing and reduce scarring. They promote faster recovery times and improve overall surgical outcomes.

While exosome therapies are still relatively new, early results are promising, and ongoing studies will help refine their use and improve their effectiveness. From reducing wrinkles and boosting collagen production to offering potential treatments for pelvic floor disorders and reproductive health, exosomes can revolutionize how women care for their bodies. As research advances, the therapeutic applications of exosomes will continue to grow, offering new hope for women seeking innovative, non-invasive treatments for various health concerns.

## Hermoine Macura-Noble


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EXCLUSIVE TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Strengthening Women's Rights

## Organizations Drives Economic Gains



**Anisha Chugh, Laura Leonelli Morey, Teresa Zapeta Mendoza**

Anisha Chugh is Executive Director of the Women's Fund Asia.

Laura Leonelli Morey is Deputy Director of Fondo de Mujeres del Sur.

Teresa Zapeta Mendoza is Executive Director of the International Indigenous Women's Forum. [Françoise Moudouthe, CEO of the African Women's Development Fund, also contributed to this commentary.]

Across the Global South, painful austerity measures such as benefit caps, pay freezes, and subsidy cuts have followed donor governments' recent cuts to foreign aid. The policy pivot has had an especially dramatic impact on women, costing them jobs, services, and protections, and causing widespread economic hardship in many developing countries.

Against this backdrop of shortsightedness, 'Give to gain', the theme of this year's International Women's Day, reminds us that investing in women yields outside returns. As former World Bank President Robert B. Zoellick once put it, "Gender equality is the right thing to do. And it is also smart economics."

Budgets are never neutral: Policy choices, from supporting extractive industries to weakening health systems, can erode women's livelihoods, augment the burden of unpaid care work, and increase poverty rates. Today, 708 million women are outside the labor force because of care responsibilities, reflecting policymakers' failure to recognize or value such work.

Moreover, the International Monetary Fund has found that gender-responsive

budgeting improves resource allocation and transparency by shifting financing away from harmful policies and toward priority areas such as income support for survivors, childcare, and workplace safety. If national budgets do not account for women's rights, fiscal frameworks will continue to create vulnerabilities.

Women's rights begin with physical security. In 2016, United Nations Women (UN Women) estimated that gender-based violence costs roughly US\$1.5 trillion per year, or around 2 percent of global GDP at the time. Intimate partner violence alone can drain 1.2-3.7 percent of GDP—more than many countries spend on education. And workplace harassment and violence against women causes \$6 trillion in global losses each year.

With the right strategies, policymakers can stem these losses and deliver shared gains. But a major obstacle is that women's rights organizations, which are best positioned to address gendered poverty and violence, face persistent funding gaps. When frontline groups lose flexible, multiyear core support,

Examples of such interventions abound. The African Women's Development Fund supports rural women's groups on the continent in contesting land grabs and building cooperatives to raise incomes. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Fondo de Mujeres del Sur supports domestic workers' unions and income-generating cooperatives for former women inmates to improve access to labor rights and decent employment. The Women's Fund Asia complements efforts by migrant and informal workers to organize for fair wages and social protection. The International Indigenous Women's Forum finances campaigns to defend indigenous territory, sustain local economies, and preserve natural ecosystems.

These four women's funds manage 'Leading from the South' (LFS), a feminist philanthropic alliance dedicated to applying this grassroots model to solve challenges that traditional aid donors often overlook. By offering patient capital for core costs, LFS bolsters continuity, which is essential to philanthropic

of the funding that is allocated for gender in the form of multiyear, flexible grants.

Adequate funding and platforms like LFS, with their cross-border collaboration and grassroots infrastructure, can facilitate investment where it is needed most. For example, investment in Indigenous women's leadership and economic autonomy is particularly important, given their critical role in safeguarding biodiversity and protecting land for future generations.

To this end, donors should condition their headline pledges on allocating certain percentages to core funding, Global South-led groups and programs focused on delivering care, safety, and access to support. Frameworks for measuring the impact of gender-responsive budgeting should feature indicators that can show improved outcomes for gender-based violence, such as survivors' uptake of income support and enforcement of safe workplaces.

Policymakers, for their part, must focus on institutionalizing gender-responsive budgeting. All ministries should adopt budget markers that show how spending advances gender equality; review the impact of government spending, with the results made public; and allocate a meaningful share of tax revenue, and public spending more broadly, toward closing the care gap and expanding women's access to assets. That means expanding benefits for survivors of domestic violence—such as income assistance, childcare, and safe transport—and categorizing them as essential services. Lastly, they should collaborate with feminist organizations to co-design policy and track outcomes.

The economic case for boosting investment in women's rights organizations, and for ensuring that financing and budget decisions strengthen women's safety and autonomy, has long been settled. According to the World Bank, every dollar spent on empowering adolescent girls in Africa could generate a tenfold return in terms of growth. Investing in women's rights is not charity; it is a form of giving that generates outside gains for all.

“

*Donors should condition their headline pledges on allocating certain percentages to core funding. Global South-led groups and programs focused on delivering care, safety, and access to support.*

”

reform efforts fall short.

Providing grants to organizations that are working to dismantle barriers to decent work, economic participation, and social equality is a proven solution. With direct funding, these trusted community groups can co-design projects, respond quickly to emerging needs, ensure that essential services are maintained, support informal workers, and mobilize collective action that drives lasting structural change. This is what 'Give to Gain' looks like in practice.

effectiveness. This allows local organizations to look beyond immediate needs, build on cross-border learning, systematize services, and turn pilot projects into policies.

To ensure that gender equity, protection, and justice are at the core of economic policy, donors must realign their investments accordingly. This means ensuring that women's rights organizations, which currently receive well under 1 percent of official development assistance (and only 0.4% of all gender-focused aid in recent years), obtain a significant share

# Genes found to have significant impact on lifespan

The prevailing view among many in the scientific community is that the duration of human life (longevity) is influenced by the environment, lifestyle, and to a lesser extent by genetics. Since the early 1900s improvements in the living environment have extended average life span dramatically. Marked improvements in availability of food, clean water, better housing and living conditions, reduced exposure to infectious diseases, increased access to health care, and raised safety.

Most significantly, advances in biological research improved our knowledge of the causes and cures for diseases, while improvements in public health and its wider access reduced premature death by decreasing the risk of infant mortality. This has increased the chances of surviving childhood, avoiding infection and communicable disease, and living to an older age.

Scientists studying nonagenarians (those 90+ in age), centenarians (100+ in age), and supercentenarians (ages 110+), to determine what contributes to their long lives, found that many long-lived individuals have little in common when it comes to education, income, or profession. However, they do share similarities in lifestyle, with many being non-smokers, non-obese, and generally stress-free. As a result they are less likely to develop chronic diseases, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, than their same-age peers.

More interestingly, the first-degree relatives (siblings and children) of these long-lived people, were also found to remain healthy longer and to live to an older age than their peers. And, if they do develop age-related diseases (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, or type 2 diabetes), these diseases appear later in life than they do in the general population. This finding implies that there could be a genetic link to longevity.

Whole genome sequencing studies of



supercentenarians have also identified many gene variants that possibly promote longevity. Scientists speculate that for the first seven or eight decades, lifestyle is a stronger determinant of health and life span than genetics, but as they advance into their nineties and beyond, genetics could play a progressively more important role in keeping them healthy. Some of the gene variants that contribute to a long life are involved with the basic maintenance and efficient function of the body's cells. This includes DNA repair, chromosome maintenance, especially the chromosome ends (telomeres) connected to aging, and protection of cells from damage caused by free radicals—unstable oxygen-containing molecules. Genes associated with blood fat (lipid) levels, inflammation, and the cardiovascular and immune systems also contribute to longevity by reducing the risk of heart disease, stroke, and insulin resistance.

The study of longevity genes is a developing science and, while the prevailing estimate is that about 20–25 percent of the variation in human life span is determined by genetics, studies are still

ongoing to determine which, and how, specific genes contribute to longevity. Meanwhile, the overall observation that longer life spans tend to run in families suggests that shared genetics, lifestyle, or both play an important role in determining longevity.

Determining how much of human life span results from genes is important for understanding aging more generally. Exploring why there are some people who can make it to well past 100, could provide us clues to interventions or medications that could help improve longevity. The current estimation that only 20 to 25 percent of life span can be attributed to heritability—how genetic differences are responsible for biological variation—is now being challenged by a new study.

The new study postulates that once extrinsic mortality—events that untimely cut life short such as accidents or diseases—are excluded, heritability could account for over half the factors that determine human life span. The study, conducted by researchers at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel examined how aging varies in human

populations using mathematical modeling.

The study found that, with the exception of extrinsic mortality, heritability accounted for a significant part of increased life span. To find out if their postulation remained valid in real-life scenarios, rather than in just mathematical modeling, they compiled mortality data from Swedish, Danish and US databases along with datasets from three studies of life span among Danish and Swedish twins, and one on siblings of US centenarians.

Because these historical data lacked cause-of-death information, the team had to mathematically estimate and separate the impact of deaths from external factors in the datasets. They did this by using prior studies that showed overall mortality rate generally rises with advancing years, and that in any population there is a plateau in mortality between the ages of 20 and 40 due to a dip in extrinsic mortality during those years. Using this knowledge the researchers weeded out external factors in the datasets, and thereby calculated the heritability of life span.

When the team applied their model to the twin datasets, the heritability of life span was consistently high, at around 55 percent—twice that found in many previous studies. The new findings bring life span, which was earlier thought to be different, into the same league as the rest of the traits identified with longevity, including environment and lifestyle.

This new calculation of life span heritability also more closely resembles what scientists have estimated in laboratory animals such as mice and flies. Additionally, biostatisticians, who were not involved with the study, have attested that the new findings are closer to what they had estimated for the heritability of extreme longevity—those living over 100 years—in humans. Findings from the new study, as well as its corroboration by external sources, reinforce the view that heritability could be playing a significant role in human longevity.

## Study reveals protein that rejuvenates aging brain cells

Scientists at the National University of Singapore have identified a protein that may help restore the brain's ability to produce new cells as it ages. Their findings identified a specific protein, which controls how genes are turned on or off (transcription factor), called DMTF-1 or D-binding myb-like transcription factor), as a central regulator of neural stem cell activity in older brains.

Neural stem cells are responsible for generating new neurons, which play an essential role in learning and memory. As people age, these stem cells gradually lose their ability to renew themselves, contributing to cognitive decline. The research team set out to uncover the biological changes that cause neural stem cells to weaken over time, with the goal of identifying targets for future therapies aimed at slowing neurological aging.

To understand how DMTF1 functions, the researchers examined neural stem cells derived from humans and from laboratory models designed to mimic premature aging. Using processes such as genome binding and transcriptome analyses the scientists mapped how DMTF1 influences gene activity, with a key focus on how this protein interacts with stem cells affected by telomere dysfunction. Telomeres are the protective ends of chromosomes that



gradually shorten each time a cell divides. This shortening is widely recognized as a marker of aging.

The team found that levels of DMTF1 were significantly reduced in 'aged' neural stem cells. When they restored DMTF1 expression, the cells regained their ability to regenerate. This suggests that DMTF1 could serve as a promising therapeutic target for restoring stem cell function in the aging brain. Further analysis

also revealed how DMTF1 exerts its effects. The protein regulates helper genes that loosen tightly packed DNA, allowing growth-related genes to become active. Without these helper genes, neural stem cells cannot effectively renew themselves.

Impaired neural stem cell regeneration has long been associated with neurological aging. Inadequate neural stem cell regeneration inhibits the formation of new cells needed

to support learning and memory functions. While studies have found that defective neural stem cell regeneration can be partially restored, its underlying mechanisms remain poorly understood. The new study provides a better understanding into the mechanisms of neural stem cell regeneration, and sets a firmer foundation studying age-related cognitive decline.

The findings indicate that strategies designed to increase DMTF1 levels or enhance its activity could potentially reverse or delay the decline in neural stem cell function linked to aging. Although the current results are based largely on in vitro experiments, the researchers plan to investigate whether boosting DMTF1 can increase neural stem cell numbers and improve learning and memory, in conditions involving telomere shortening and natural aging, without raising the risk of brain tumors.

Over the long term, the team also hopes to identify small molecules capable of safely stimulating DMTF1 activity to rejuvenate aging neural stem cells. Although the study is in its infancy, the findings provide a framework for understanding how aging-associated molecular changes affect neural stem cell behavior, and may ultimately guide the development of successful therapeutics.



# Magical Thinking Will Not Make Europe an AI Power



**Cristina Caffarra**

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A new narrative is gaining traction across Europe: the continent can rebuild its technological power by leveraging its longstanding advantages in mechanics, automation, and engineering. Combined with its deep-rooted open-source tradition and next-generation AI models, these assets could make Europe an industrial AI superpower. While this vision is promising, can it really reverse Europe's slide toward technological decline?

Such a strategy calls for the development of a distinct AI paradigm centered on smaller, specialized models, distributed approaches, open-source collaboration, and high-quality industrial data. A recent report estimates that Germany alone could unlock €1.7 trillion (\$2 trillion) in untapped high-tech potential by 2030.

It is encouraging to see Europe's pessimism about its place in the global AI race give way to renewed confidence. Drawing on its domain expertise, world-class university research, and open-source tools that enable interoperability and collaboration, the European Union hopes to become a global leader in robotics, advanced machinery, aerospace, and defense technologies, helping to shape an AI future in which data quality and specialization matter more than sheer scale.

European politicians love this narrative, which promises a technological resurgence without confrontation. By building on existing strengths, the EU can ostensibly avoid redirecting demand away from foreign providers and sidestep sovereignty debates that are putting it at odds with US companies and President Donald Trump's administration.

The results are already visible. Following intense lobbying by US tech firms, often channeled through American officials, political leaders have begun distancing themselves from France's proposal to introduce a 'European preference' requirement into the bloc's industrial-policy toolkit. The proposal was tied to the Industry Acceleration Act (IAA), promoted by the EU's Prosperity and Industrial Strategy Executive Vice-President Stéphane Séjourné and supported by French President Emmanuel Macron.

US tech giants, which dominate Europe's digital infrastructure, have aligned with European industry groups to oppose the IAA, pushing back against digital sovereignty which several governments had previously committed to support. Their efforts, evident in the rhetorical shift from 'Made in Europe' to 'Made with Europe', include selective invocations of World Trade Organization rules and a pivot toward a 'different' tech growth model that would ultimately leave the status quo intact. While this path may appear promising, Europe cannot wish away its technological dependencies with talk of 'new model architectures'. From cloud services and connectivity to the digital backbone—browsers, search engines, office software, and operating systems—the EU's reliance on non-European infrastructure runs deep.

That dependence carries real costs: reduced resilience and security, lost revenue for European developers, underinvestment in domestic assets, and diminished capacity to shape innovation. Unless these structural weaknesses are addressed, Europe's economic prospects will remain bound to others' infrastructure.

Europe cannot build its AI future through magical thinking. Industrial ambitions, even those backed by domain expertise, valuable data, and open-source tools, will not change Europe's



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Europe's effort to claw its way to technological relevance has encountered intense resistance, as the US tech giants that have blanketed the continent with their infrastructure are not inclined to make room for local competitors.

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status as a digital colony of a handful of mostly US firms. In today's geopolitical landscape, only ownership and control of infrastructure can guarantee strategic autonomy. Europe's drive for technological sovereignty, including initiatives like EuroStack, seeks to address precisely that structural constraint on leadership in industrial AI. It is hardly surprising that Europe's effort to claw its way to technological relevance has encountered intense resistance, as the US tech giants that have blanketed the continent with their infrastructure are not inclined to make room for local competitors. This may well be the coming decade's defining economic battle, with the outcome decided by whether Europe can direct its demand toward domestic developers and suppliers.

The pushback from the US giants often takes a subtle form, with sovereignty presented as an add-on to infrastructure generously provided by American hyperscalers. Nothing illustrates this better than the growing number of events on tech sovereignty hosted by the very companies whose dominance is at issue. Their message to Europe is unmistakable: build whatever you want, but use our AI construction kit. At the same time, orthodox free-trade narratives are increasingly being weaponized to pressure European governments that pride themselves on economic openness. Any attempt to direct European demand toward domestic suppliers, the argument goes, is incompatible with the rule of law and established WTO practices.

Resisting these narratives will not be easy. Over the past two decades, hyperscalers have embedded themselves within Europe's institutional fabric, building extensive lobbying operations, establishing revenue-sharing partnerships with system integrators, and extending their reach into universities, research programs, advisory boards, and standard-setting bodies.

The resulting familiarity has fostered a kind of learned helplessness that continues to shape risk assessments across the public and private sectors. Procurement frameworks favor incumbent architectures, entrenching legacy systems as the default and casting alternatives as risky and uncertain, even when they are technically viable. Likewise, calls to recalibrate demand are resisted because they challenge established economic relationships, institutional habits, and longstanding influence networks.

European policymakers must reject efforts to reframe sovereignty as a trade issue. The core challenge is structural: demand, institutions, and ecosystems have been shaped in ways that reinforce dependence, and now they need to be redesigned.

Given that industries scale where there is sustained, addressable demand, building productive capacity requires demand-side tools, including local-preference mechanisms. To paraphrase US Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, trade rules are not a suicide pact. Every major economy balances compliance with strategic domestic priorities, and the EU should

do the same. This is especially true for digital infrastructure. Far from neutral commercial inputs, these are critical systems woven through public administration, defense, and economic life. Resilience and long-term capacity must take precedence over efficiency.

Above all, European builders must reclaim a meaningful role in their own market. Political

leaders cannot speak of sovereignty and then retreat at the first sign of lobbyist pressure. Forging an AI-driven future requires building durable productive capacity and channeling demand toward domestic suppliers. At a time when major powers are pursuing aggressive industrial policies, the EU cannot afford to remain on the sidelines.

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