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World Bank Sees Tougher Road Ahead:

Can Kuwait and the GCC Turn Global Uncertainty into Opportunity?

The Times Kuwait Report

The World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects report offers a sobering assessment of where the global economy is headed. While it stops short of predicting a crisis, it warns that the world is entering a period of slower growth, heightened uncertainty and persistent geopolitical risks that could weigh on investment, trade and consumer confidence.

For Kuwait and its Gulf neighbours, the report carries particular significance. As energy exporters with strong financial reserves, the GCC countries are in a better position than many economies to weather global shocks. But the World Bank makes it clear that relying on oil revenues alone will not be enough to secure long-term prosperity.

The report suggests that the coming years will test how quickly countries can adapt, diversify and build more resilient economies.

The World Bank expects global growth to remain subdued as economies grapple with geopolitical tensions, tighter financial conditions, elevated debt levels and weaker investment. While inflation has eased in many countries, uncertainty continues to cloud the outlook, especially as conflicts in several parts of the world threaten supply chains and energy markets.

Rather than predicting an imminent downturn, the Bank cautions that risks remain firmly tilted to the downside. Any escalation of geopolitical conflicts or prolonged disruptions to global trade could further weaken economic activity. For an interconnected region like the Gulf, developments far beyond its borders can quickly influence economic performance at home.

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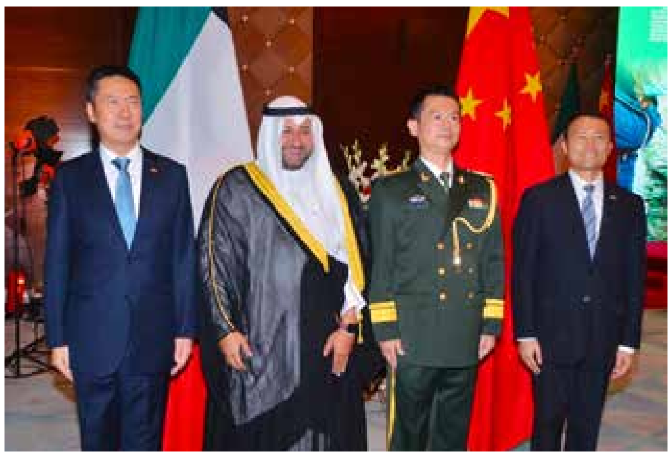


Kuwait, China Seek to Expand Defense Cooperation Amid Regional Security Uncertainty

The Times Kuwait Report

Kuwait and China have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening defense and military cooperation as both countries seek closer strategic coordination in response to evolving regional security challenges and growing geopolitical uncertainty. The renewed commitment was highlighted during celebrations marking the 99th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), attended by senior Kuwaiti military officials, diplomats and representatives of the international community.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Yang Xin said Beijing is closely monitoring developments in the Gulf and remains deeply concerned by the recent escalation of regional tensions. He stressed that safeguarding the sovereignty of all nations, protecting civilians and civilian infrastructure, and resolving disputes through dialogue remain fundamental principles of China's foreign policy.

The ambassador reiterated China's support for diplomatic engagement, urging all parties to return to negotiations and avoid actions that could further destabilize the region. He noted that attacks on civilian facilities are unacceptable under international law and emphasized that dialogue remains the only viable path toward lasting peace.

Defense cooperation gaining momentum

Ambassador Yang said defense cooperation has become an increasingly important pillar of the broader strategic partnership between Kuwait and China, adding that bilateral collaboration has already produced tangible results and continues to expand across multiple areas. He noted that the two countries have maintained close communication on regional and international security issues while exploring additional opportunities for cooperation between their armed forces.

Military ties continue to strengthen

Chinese Military Attaché Senior Colonel Liu Zongchen reaffirmed Beijing's commitment to broadening military exchanges with Kuwait and enhancing cooperation between the armed forces of both countries in ways that support their shared interests while contributing to regional peace and stability.

He said the People's Liberation Army continues to modernize under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, while maintaining China's longstanding national defense policy, which emphasizes peaceful development, international cooperation and collective security. Liu highlighted China's extensive participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, noting that more than 50,000 Chinese military personnel have served in over 20 conflict zones, making China the largest troop contributor among the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Strategic partnership continues to expand

The military attaché attributed the growing defense relationship to the strong support of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Chinese President Xi Jinping, whose leadership has helped elevate Kuwait-China relations into a comprehensive strategic partnership.

He said cooperation between the two countries has expanded steadily in recent years, extending beyond economic and infrastructure projects to include greater engagement in defense, security and military exchanges.

Addressing the broader regional landscape, Liu described the Gulf as entering a particularly sensitive period marked by rapid geopolitical shifts and heightened security challenges.

He praised the professionalism and resilience of Kuwait's armed forces and expressed confidence that deeper military cooperation between the two countries would contribute to regional stability and mutual security.

"The Gulf today stands at a crossroads between war and peace," he said, stressing that closer collaboration between friendly nations is essential to addressing emerging security challenges and preserving regional stability.

Broader bilateral cooperation

The renewed emphasis on defense ties comes as Kuwait and China continue to deepen cooperation across a wide range of sectors, including infrastructure, trade, investment, technology, logistics and sustainable development. Both countries have repeatedly described their relationship as one built on mutual respect, shared interests and long-term strategic cooperation, with defense and security emerging as another key pillar of an expanding bilateral partnership.

Kuwait's Inflation Climbs 2.19% in June as Food and Transport Costs Push Prices Higher

Kuwait's annual inflation edged up to 2.19% in June 2026, with food prices rising 5.55% year-on-year to remain the biggest driver of higher living costs. While monthly inflation stayed flat, persistent increases in transport and consumer goods continued to put pressure on household budgets.

Kuwait's annual inflation rate edged up to 2.19 percent in June 2026, driven primarily by rising food, transport and consumer goods prices, although overall price growth remained moderate with monthly inflation holding steady, according to the latest figures released by the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB).

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) stood at 139.9 points, unchanged from May, indicating that prices remained stable on a month-to-month basis. However, compared with June 2025, the index recorded a 2.19 percent increase, reflecting continued upward pressure on household expenses across several key spending categories.

Food prices remain the main inflation driver

Food and beverage prices continued to be the largest contributor to inflation, recording an annual increase of 5.55 percent. The rise was driven by higher prices for staple food items, including cereals, bread, meat, poultry, dairy products, edible oils, fruits, vegetables, sugar and beverages.

The miscellaneous goods and services category posted the highest overall annual increase at 5.80 percent, while transport costs rose 4.83 percent, reflecting higher expenses associated with mobility and related services.

Moderate increases across most sectors

Several other expenditure groups registered more modest year-on-year price increases.

Recreation and culture rose 1.13 percent, household furnishings and maintenance increased 1.11 percent, while healthcare and communications each recorded a 1.03 percent increase. Education costs climbed 1.02 percent, clothing and footwear rose 0.89 percent, restaurants and hotels increased 0.22 percent, and housing services recorded a marginal 0.16 percent rise. Tobacco prices remained unchanged during the period.

Monthly prices largely stable

Despite the annual rise, monthly inflation remained subdued. Food and beverage prices increased by just 0.18 percent compared with May, although prices for fish and seafood declined

during the month. Recreation and culture rose 0.15 percent, while housing, transport, education, clothing, household furnishings, and restaurants and hotels recorded slight monthly increases ranging between 0.07 and 0.08 percent.

The only major category to register a monthly decline was miscellaneous goods and services, which fell 0.40 percent, mainly due to lower prices for personal accessories and luggage. Healthcare, communications and tobacco prices remained unchanged.

Underlying inflation pressures persist

The CSB data also showed that inflation excluding food and beverages rose 1.43 percent on an annual basis. Meanwhile, the index excluding housing services increased 3.07 percent, indicating that price pressures remain evident across a broad range of consumer goods and services despite the stability of the headline monthly inflation rate.

The latest figures suggest Kuwait continues to experience moderate and relatively contained inflation, supported by stable monthly price movements. However, sustained increases in food prices, transport costs and everyday consumer goods continue to place upward pressure on household budgets.

With global commodity prices and regional economic conditions remaining uncertain, inflation is expected to remain closely monitored in the months ahead as policymakers seek to preserve price stability while supporting consumer purchasing power.

Kuwait Among World's Top 35 for Quality of Life, Strong Economic Fundamentals Drive Ranking

The annual index ranked Kuwait 35th globally, highlighting the country's continued appeal as a destination for both citizens and expatriates. The assessment measures overall living standards using a broad range of indicators, including purchasing power, healthcare, safety, cost of living, housing affordability, traffic conditions, pollution, and climate.

Kuwait has secured a place among the world's top 35 countries for quality of life, reflecting its strong purchasing power, affordable cost of living, and safe environment, according to the latest 2026 Quality of Life Index released by Numbeo.

The annual index ranked Kuwait 35th globally, highlighting the country's continued appeal as a destination for both citizens and expatriates. The assessment measures overall living standards using a broad range of indicators, including purchasing power, healthcare, safety, cost of living, housing affordability, traffic conditions, pollution, and climate. Kuwait achieved an overall Quality of Life Index score of around 161, outperforming many advanced economies and reinforcing its position as one of the region's most attractive places to live.

Purchasing power remain Kuwait's biggest strength

One of Kuwait's standout achievements in the index is its exceptionally high Purchasing Power Index of 185.8, placing it among the world's strongest performers in terms of residents' ability to purchase goods and services relative to local prices.

The ranking reflects the country's combination of competitive salaries, relatively low taxation, and moderate living costs, allowing residents to enjoy greater spending power than in many other countries.

Housing affordability also contributed positively to Kuwait's ranking. The country recorded a Cost of Living Index of 43.4, indicating relatively affordable everyday expenses, while its Property Price-to-Income Ratio of 6.09 suggests home ownership remains more attainable than in many global cities despite rising property prices.

Safety remains a key advantage

Safety continues to be one of Kuwait's strongest assets. The country posted a Safety Index of 67.5, underscoring its reputation as one of the safer countries in the region and an important factor supporting overall quality of life for residents, families, and expatriates.

While Kuwait performed strongly in several economic indicators, the report identified areas where further progress could improve future rankings. The country recorded a Healthcare Index of 58.6, reflecting moderate performance in healthcare quality and public perception.

Environmental factors also weighed on Kuwait's overall score. A Pollution Index of 74.2 ranked among its weaker indicators, while the country's Climate Index of 20.2 reflected the impact of prolonged periods of extreme summer heat on overall living conditions.

GCC comparison

Within the Gulf region, Kuwait ranked fourth, behind Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, while remaining ahead of Saudi Arabia. Oman emerged as the region's highest-ranked country and one of the world's top performers in the index.

Measuring quality of life

Numbeo's Quality of Life Index combines eight major indicators to assess living standards:

- Purchasing power
- Safety
- Healthcare
- Cost of living
- Property price-to-income ratio
- Traffic commute times
- Pollution
- Climate

Rather than relying solely on income or GDP, the index provides a broader picture of residents' day-to-day living conditions. Countries with higher overall scores are considered to offer better living standards and greater overall well-being.

Looking ahead

Kuwait's position among the world's leading countries for quality of life reflects the nation's strong economic fundamentals, high purchasing power, affordable living costs, and secure environment.

At the same time, the report suggests that continued investments in healthcare services, environmental sustainability, and urban livability could further strengthen Kuwait's global standing while supporting the long-term objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035.

Turkish Ambassador Holds Farewell Reception in Kuwait

The Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Kuwait, H.E. Tuba Nur Sönmez, hosted a farewell reception at her residence on Sunday evening, bringing together senior Kuwaiti officials, diplomats, business leaders and distinguished guests as she concluded a successful four-year diplomatic mission marked by the deepening of bilateral ties between Türkiye and Kuwait.

The Times Kuwait Report

In her farewell address, Ambassador Sönmez reflected on her tenure with a sense of pride and gratitude, describing her assignment in Kuwait as one of the greatest privileges of her diplomatic career. She thanked Kuwait's leadership, government, diplomatic community and people for the warmth, friendship and cooperation extended to her throughout her mission.

Highlighting the remarkable progress achieved over the past four years, the Ambassador said relations between Türkiye and Kuwait had evolved into a comprehensive strategic partnership driven by regular high-level exchanges and growing cooperation across political, economic, cultural and security sectors. She cited the historic visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Türkiye his first official visit outside the Arab world after assuming office—as well as the visit of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Kuwait as defining milestones that elevated bilateral relations to new heights.

Recalling the devastating earthquakes that struck Türkiye in February 2023, Ambassador Sönmez expressed profound appreciation for Kuwait's swift humanitarian response. She said the relief air bridge, emergency assistance and deployment of search and rescue teams demonstrated the enduring bonds of friendship and solidarity between the two nations, gestures that would remain forever etched in the hearts of the Turkish people.

During her tenure, the Turkish Embassy organized more than 150 events spanning diplomacy, trade, education, culture and the arts. Among the highlights were the celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2024, featuring exhibitions, concerts, archival displays and the publication of a commemorative book chronicling six decades of Türkiye-Kuwait friendship. Other initiatives included the unveiling of the Friendship Mural at Souq Al-Mubarakiya and environmental awareness campaigns inspired by Türkiye's internationally recognized Zero Waste initiative.

On the economic front, Ambassador Sönmez noted that bilateral trade surpassed US$1 billion for the first time in 2025, representing a 52 percent increase over the previous year. She also highlighted expanding cooperation in defense and security, including Kuwait's acquisition of Türkiye's Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as growing collaboration through regional and international platforms such as the NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Regional Centre and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue.

The Ambassador also reflected on the people-to-people connections forged during her assignment, describing the Embassy's "Embassy Diwaniya" initiative as one of the most meaningful programs introduced during her tenure. The gatherings created a platform for dialogue and strengthened friendships between members of the Turkish community and their Kuwaiti counterparts.

"As I bid farewell to Kuwait, which has truly become my second home, I leave with immense gratitude," Ambassador Sönmez said, expressing appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, government institutions, members of the diplomatic corps and the many Kuwaiti families and friends who welcomed her throughout her stay. She also thanked her colleagues at the Turkish Embassy and wished her successor continued success in further strengthening the longstanding partnership between the two countries.

The reception concluded with guests paying tribute to Ambassador Sönmez's distinguished diplomatic service and her significant contribution to advancing Türkiye-Kuwait relations. The evening served not only as a farewell to a respected envoy but also as a celebration of the enduring friendship and growing strategic partnership between the two nations.

Airlines extend Kuwait Flight Suspension as Middle East Tensions Continue to Disrupt Regional Air Travel

The Times Kuwait Report

Heightened security concerns across the Middle East continue to disrupt air travel, prompting governments to issue fresh travel advisories and airlines to revise schedules, with Emirates becoming the latest major carrier to extend the suspension of its Kuwait services until August 21 while introducing expanded travel options for affected passengers. The developments reflect the continuing impact of regional instability on commercial aviation, despite efforts by airlines to minimize inconvenience for travelers.

Governments across several countries have urged travelers to exercise increased caution as the security situation remains fluid. Australia has advised its citizens to reconsider non-essential travel to parts of the Middle East, including Oman, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, warning that further military escalation could result in flight disruptions, fuel shortages and changing travel conditions. The United States has also urged its citizens to carefully assess travel plans to the region and remain alert to evolving security risks. The aviation sector has also responded to the uncertainty. The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) has extended its safety advisory covering parts of Gulf airspace, including Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Gulf of Oman, recommending that airlines avoid operating in affected areas until at least July 29 because of the potential risk posed by missile and drone activity.

Emirates extends Kuwait suspension

Emirates has confirmed that its daily EK857 and EK858 services between Dubai and Kuwait will remain suspended until August 21, extending an earlier cancellation that had been scheduled to end on July 31. The airline cited operational reasons for the decision and advised passengers to review their travel plans and contact Emirates or their travel agents to arrange alternative itineraries.

Several Gulf carriers adjust operations

Emirates is among several regional airlines that have modified services to Kuwait in response to the evolving security environment. Qatar Airways has temporarily suspended flights to Kuwait and continues to offer passengers rebooking and refund options, although it has yet to announce a date for the resumption of services. Etihad Airways has cancelled selected Abu Dhabi–Kuwait flights while gradually restoring operations subject to operational and security assessments. Air Arabia has also suspended selected Kuwait services as airlines continue to closely monitor developments.

Kuwait's national carriers have likewise adjusted schedules where necessary. Kuwait Airways has revised flight operations in response to changing airspace conditions, while Jazeera Airways has advised passengers to verify the status of their flights before travelling to the airport.

Passengers urged to monitor latest updates

Airlines continue to emphasize that schedules may change at short notice depending on the regional security situation and operational requirements. Passengers are being encouraged to regularly check their flight status, ensure their contact information is up to date with their airline, and remain in close contact with travel agents before heading to the airport.

While aviation authorities describe many of the current measures as precautionary, the continuing travel advisories, airspace restrictions and airline schedule adjustments underscore the challenges facing regional aviation as geopolitical tensions persist across the Middle East.

Kuwait Population Reaches 5.31 Million as Expatriates Continue to Form 70% of Residents

Times Kuwait Report

Kuwait's population climbed to approximately 5.31 million by the end of June 2026, with expatriates continuing to make up seven out of every 10 residents, according to the latest figures released by the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI). The data underscores the country's continued reliance on foreign workers, particularly in the private sector and domestic employment, while highlighting a predominantly young and economically active population.

According to the PACI statistics, Kuwaiti nationals numbered around 1.56 million, accounting for 30 percent of the population, while 3.74 million expatriates represented the remaining 70 percent.

Indians remain the largest expatriate community

Indians continued to be the largest expatriate community in Kuwait, with approximately 1.06 million residents, representing around 20 percent of the country's total population. Egyptians ranked second with nearly 670,000 residents (13 percent), followed by Bangladeshis with 333,100 people (6 percent). Other major expatriate communities include Filipinos (226,500), Syrians (201,500), Sri Lankans (197,400), Nepalese (186,600), Saudis (155,500), and Pakistanis (105,700), reflecting Kuwait's diverse demographic profile.

Young population continues to dominate

The figures show Kuwait maintains a relatively youthful population structure. Around 870,600 people (16 percent) are below the age of 15, while approximately 4.28 million residents (81 percent) fall within the

economically productive age group of 15 to 64 years. Those aged 65 and above account for about 158,200 people, or 3 percent of the population.

Housing statistics indicate that 4.21 million people live in private households, while around 1.09 million residents are accommodated in collective housing.

Labour market remains heavily dependent on expatriates

Kuwait's labour force stood at approximately 3.26 million workers, representing 61 percent of the country's total population. Expatriates continue to dominate the workforce, with nearly 2.8 million foreign workers, equivalent to 75 percent of the expatriate population residing in Kuwait.

By nationality, Indians account for the largest share of the workforce at 28.8 percent, followed by Egyptians (14.6 percent) and Kuwaitis (14.2 percent). Bangladeshis make up 9.9 percent, Filipinos 6.6 percent, Sri Lankans 5.8 percent, Nepalese 5.7 percent, while Syrians and Pakistanis each account for 2.3 percent. Jordanians represent around one percent of the workforce.

Public and private sector employment

Employment across Kuwait's public and private sectors totals approximately 2.37 million people, including about 531,600 government employees and 1.84 million private-sector workers. Kuwaiti nationals remain concentrated in government employment, while the private sector continues to rely predominantly on expatriate labour.

Among Kuwaiti citizens, around 32 percent participate in the labour force, with men and women represented in nearly equal proportions. Overall, employed individuals account for roughly 45 percent of Kuwait's population.

Domestic workforce

The data also shows Kuwait is home to approximately 883,300 domestic workers, representing 27 percent of the country's workforce and around 17 percent of the total population.

Women account for 57.7 percent of domestic workers, while Indians constitute the largest nationality group in the sector, followed by Sri Lankans, Filipinos, Bangladeshis and Nepalese. Men continue to outnumber women in Kuwait's population. The latest figures show approximately 3.21 million males, representing 60 percent of the population, compared with 2.1 million females, who account for the remaining 40 percent.

Demographic trends

The latest PACI figures reaffirm Kuwait's status as a country with a large expatriate majority and a labour market that remains heavily dependent on foreign workers, particularly in the private sector, construction, services and domestic employment.

The data also highlights the country's relatively young population profile, with more than four-fifths of residents falling within the working-age bracket, providing a strong demographic base to support economic activity and future development.

Kuwait Bank Deposits Climb to KD 61.9 Billion as Savings and Government Funds Fuel Growth

Deposits in Kuwait's banking sector continued their upward trajectory during the first five months of 2026, reflecting sustained confidence in the country's financial system and healthy liquidity across both the public and private sectors.

According to data released by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), total deposits held by local banks reached KD 61.89 billion at the end of May, marking a 4.6 percent increase from KD 59.15 billion recorded at the close of 2025. On an annual basis, deposits rose by 10.5 percent, compared with KD 55.98 billion in May last year.

The increase was driven by growth across private sector, government and institutional deposits, highlighting the resilience of Kuwait's banking sector despite ongoing regional and global economic uncertainties.

Private Sector Deposits Continue to Expand

Private sector deposits, including both dinar and foreign currency accounts, climbed to KD 45.79 billion, an increase of KD 619.8 million, or 1.4 percent, since the beginning of the year. Compared with May 2025, private deposits were up 4.7 percent, reflecting continued confidence among businesses and households.

Among dinar-denominated deposits, non-interest-bearing accounts remained the largest category. These deposits grew by 3.6 percent during the January-May period to reach KD 10.52 billion, accounting for approximately one-quarter of all private sector dinar deposits.

Demand deposits also recorded solid growth, rising 4.1 percent to KD 9.68 billion, while savings deposits increased 3.2 percent to KD 6 billion. Foreign currency deposits expanded by 2 percent, reaching KD 6.24 billion, supported by stronger foreign currency holdings across the banking system.

Belgian Ambassador Visits The Times Kuwait, Explores Stronger Media and Cultural Cooperation

H.E. Christian Domes, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to Kuwait, paid a courtesy visit to the offices of The Times Kuwait, where he held cordial discussions with Editor-in-Chief Tareq Yousef Al-Shumaimry and Executive Managing Editor Reaven D'Souza on a range of issues of mutual interest, including bilateral relations, media cooperation, cultural exchange and the evolving global landscape.

The visit reflected the growing importance of constructive engagement between diplomatic missions and the media in fostering greater understanding between nations and promoting informed public discourse.

Welcoming Ambassador Christian Domes, Al-Shumaimry highlighted The Times Kuwait's commitment to responsible, balanced and credible journalism, noting the publication's role over the years in strengthening Kuwait's multicultural fabric by serving as a bridge between Kuwait and the international community. He emphasized that the newspaper has consistently sought to showcase Kuwait's development, diplomatic outreach, economic progress and vibrant cultural diversity while giving voice to the country's large expatriate community.

D'Souza provided an overview of the newspaper's journey and its evolution into one of Kuwait's leading English-language publications. He spoke about the publication's growing digital presence and its efforts to embrace new media platforms while maintaining the highest standards of journalistic integrity. He also highlighted The Times Kuwait's role in promoting dialogue, cross-cultural understanding and international cooperation through its extensive coverage of diplomatic, business, cultural and community affairs.

Ambassador Domes commended The Times Kuwait for its professionalism and its contribution to enhancing public understanding of issues affecting Kuwait and the wider region. He noted that an independent and responsible media plays an essential role in building informed societies and strengthening international friendships.

The discussions also explored the longstanding and friendly relations between Belgium and Kuwait, with both sides acknowledging the steady growth in cooperation across political, economic, commercial and cultural spheres. They exchanged views on opportunities to further strengthen people-to-people ties through cultural initiatives, educational exchanges, tourism and business partnerships.

The meeting also touched upon regional and international developments, the rapidly evolving media environment, and the growing impact of digital technologies on journalism and public communication. Both sides agreed that accurate information, responsible reporting and meaningful dialogue are more important than ever in today's interconnected world. Ambassador Christian Domes expressed appreciation for the opportunity to visit The Times Kuwait and engage with its editorial leadership, reaffirming Belgium's commitment to strengthening its partnership with Kuwait across multiple sectors.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Ambassador was presented with commemorative publications from The Times Kuwait, while both sides expressed confidence that the exchange would contribute to closer cooperation and continued engagement between the Belgian Embassy and the publication in the years ahead.

General Fire Force Urges Safe Charging of Lithium Battery Devices

The General Fire Force has urged the public to follow safety precautions when charging electronic devices powered by lithium batteries to reduce the risk of fires.

In a safety awareness campaign, the Fire Force advised using only certified, high-quality chargers and avoiding counterfeit products that can overheat or cause electrical faults. It also warned against leaving devices charging overnight or for extended periods and cautioned against exposing smartphones, laptops and spare lithium batteries to direct sunlight or high temperatures.

Officials further recommended avoiding overloaded electrical outlets and storing lithium batteries in cool, well-ventilated areas away from flammable materials.

The campaign is part of the Fire Force's ongoing efforts to raise public awareness and prevent fires caused by the improper use and handling of electronic devices and lithium batteries.

RECIPE

Restaurant-Style Achari Paneer

A delicious North Indian curry featuring soft paneer cubes cooked in a rich, tangy, pickle-inspired gravy. Made with freshly ground achari spices, mustard oil, yogurt, and aromatic herbs, this restaurant-style dish is bursting with bold flavors and pairs perfectly with naan, roti, paratha, or jeera rice.

Preparation Time: 20 minutes
Cooking Time: 30 minutes
Total Time: 50 minutes
Servings: 3

Chef Chhaya Thakker

Ingredients

Achari Masala:
- 2 tsp fennel seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- ½ tsp mustard seeds
- a pinch of fenugreek seeds
- 2–3 dried Kashmiri red chilies
- 2 tsp dry mango powder
- ½ tsp black salt
- a pinch of salt.
- *Paneer & Vegetables:
- 1 tbsp mustard oil
- a pinch of cumin seeds
- ¼ tsp nigella seeds

- 1 tbsp chopped garlic
- 2–3 sliced green chilies
- 300–350 g paneer (cubed)
- 1 tomato (diced)
- 1 capsicum (diced)
- 1 onion (petals)
- a pinch of salt
- ¼ tsp turmeric
- ½ tsp Kashmiri red chili powder
- a pinch of achari masala.

Gravy:
- 2 tbsp mustard oil
- a pinch each of cumin
- nigella and mustard seeds
- 2 chopped onions
- 1 tbsp ginger-garlic-green chili paste
- ¼ tsp turmeric
- 1 tbsp Kashmiri red chili powder ½ tsp red chili powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 2 tbsp achari masala
- 2 tomatoes puree
- ¾ cup whisked yogurt
- 2–3 tbsp fresh cream
- 1-inch ginger (julienned)
- a pinch each of crushed kasuri methi and garam masala chopped coriander.

Method
- Dry roast all the whole spices for the achari masala until aromatic. -Cool and grind with dry mango powder, black salt, and salt into a coarse powder.
- Heat mustard oil until smoking, then add cumin, nigella, garlic, and green chilies.
- Add paneer, tomato, capsicum, onion, salt, turmeric, chili powder, and a pinch of achari masala.
- Toss on high heat for 2–3 minutes and keep aside.
- In the same pan, heat mustard oil and temper cumin, nigella, and mustard seeds.
- Sauté onions until golden, then add the ginger-garlic-green chili paste.
- Add turmeric, chili powders, coriander powder, and achari masala.
- Sprinkle a little hot water and cook until the oil separates.
- Add tomato puree and whisked yogurt, stirring continuously. Cook until the oil separates again. -Add hot water to make a semi-thick gravy.

Finally, add the tossed paneer and vegetables, fresh cream, ginger, kasuri methi, garam masala, and coriander. Simmer for 2 minutes and serve hot with naan, roti, paratha, or jeera rice.

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

Kuwait Introduces 17 Red Flags to Strengthen Anti-Money Laundering Oversight in Gold Trade

Kuwait has introduced 17 new warning indicators for the gold and precious metals sector, helping businesses identify suspicious transactions and strengthen safeguards against money laundering and terrorist financing in line with international standards.

Kuwait has introduced 17 new warning indicators to help detect suspicious financial activities in the gold and precious metals sector, reinforcing the country's efforts to combat money laundering and terrorist financing while aligning its regulatory framework with international standards. The updated guidance is aimed at businesses dealing in gold, jewelry and precious metals, providing clearer benchmarks for identifying transactions that may warrant closer scrutiny.

The new indicators have been incorporated into Kuwait's monitoring guide for dealers in precious metals and gemstones as part of ongoing initiatives to enhance financial transparency and strengthen compliance with anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CTF) regulations.

Enhanced due diligence for high-risk transactions

The revised guide calls on businesses operating in the sector to exercise greater vigilance when dealing with customers or transactions that display unusual characteristics or deviate from normal commercial practices.

Authorities emphasized that the presence of one or more warning signs does not automatically indicate criminal activity. Instead, the indicators are designed to assist businesses in identifying transactions that may require enhanced due diligence, additional verification or the submission of a suspicious transaction report to the relevant authorities.

Seventeen warning indicators identified

Among the newly introduced red flags are customers who are unwilling or unable to provide adequate identification documents or information regarding the source of funds used for purchases.

The guide also highlights transactions involving unusually large cash payments, purchases that appear inconsistent with a customer's known financial profile, and repeated high-value transactions carried out without a clear commercial or personal purpose.

Other warning indicators include customers attempting to structure transactions into smaller amounts to avoid reporting requirements, frequent buying and selling of precious metals without an apparent economic rationale, and the use of third parties to conduct transactions on behalf of the actual purchaser.

Businesses are also advised to pay close attention to requests for unusually complex payment arrangements, rapid resale of purchased items, unexplained cross-border transactions, or dealings involving jurisdictions identified as presenting elevated money laundering or terrorist financing risks.

Sector plays a key role in financial integrity

The gold and precious metals trade has long been regarded internationally as a sector vulnerable to money laundering due to the high value, portability and liquidity of precious metals and gemstones.

By strengthening oversight of the industry, Kuwaiti authorities aim to protect the integrity of the financial system while ensuring that legitimate businesses operate within a robust compliance framework consistent with recommendations issued by international bodies such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The updated guidance also reinforces the responsibility of dealers to implement effective customer due diligence procedures, maintain accurate transaction records, monitor unusual business activity and train employees to recognize potential warning signs.

Businesses are encouraged to establish internal compliance systems capable of identifying suspicious behavior at an early stage and to cooperate fully with regulatory and law enforcement authorities whenever concerns arise.

Strengthening Kuwait's regulatory framework

The introduction of the expanded monitoring indicators forms part of Kuwait's broader strategy to enhance financial governance, improve regulatory oversight and safeguard the country's financial and commercial sectors from illicit activities. By providing businesses with clearer guidance on identifying suspicious transactions, the updated framework seeks to strengthen compliance across the precious metals industry while supporting Kuwait's continued commitment to international anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing standards.

Traffic enforcement drive records 3,278 violations in a single day

A nationwide traffic enforcement campaign launched by Kuwait's General Traffic Department last Tuesday resulted in the issuance of 3,278 traffic violations within 24 hours, as authorities intensified efforts to improve road safety and enforce traffic regulations.

The violations included speeding, mobile phone use while driving, towing-related offences, radar violations and illegal window tinting, according to security officials.

During the campaign, traffic patrols also arrested 17 individuals wanted on outstanding arrest warrants or for residency-related violations, who were referred to the competent security authorities for further legal action. Authorities also apprehended four juveniles for driving without valid licences, while three individuals were placed in 48-hour precautionary detention. In addition, one vehicle was impounded under a judicial order.

The enforcement drive extended to hospitals across the country, where traffic officers issued 184 violations for offences including illegal parking and obstruction of traffic. Three vehicles were also impounded for 60 days for violating traffic regulations.

The Ministry of Interior said the campaign forms part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen road safety, ensure compliance with traffic laws and curb reckless driving across Kuwait.

'Window to the World' Connects Kuwait's Youth with Global Leaders

Reconnaissance Research concludes its inaugural four-day programme, bringing together 20 young participants and eight distinguished leaders for candid conversations on diplomacy, business, aviation, journalism and personal growth.

The Times Kuwait Report

Reconnaissance Research concluded the inaugural edition of Window to the World, a four-day youth programme that brought 20 young participants into direct conversation with eight distinguished figures from diplomacy, business, aviation, journalism and the creative arts.

Held over four consecutive evenings at the headquarters of Reconnaissance Research, the programme was designed to give young people access to the personal and professional experiences behind accomplished careers. Rather than concentrating solely on achievements, speakers discussed the decisions, challenges, setbacks and values that shaped their respective journeys.

Organised under the theme “Young Minds. Global Impact.”, Window to the World brought together participants from different nationalities, academic disciplines and educational institutions for a series of candid, interactive conversations.

The programme was organised by Reconnaissance Research, an independent Kuwaiti think tank founded in 2019 to promote objective analysis, strategic dialogue and the exchange of knowledge. Through Window to the World, the centre sought to extend that mission to a younger generation by creating a space in which emerging talent could engage directly with senior diplomats, executives, entrepreneurs and media professionals.

Conversations Beyond the Conventional Lecture

Unlike traditional conferences built around formal speeches and large audiences, Window to the World adopted an intimate, discussion-based format.

Guests participated in a dedicated 45-minute session. Participants were encouraged to ask questions and engage openly with the speakers.

The format allowed discussions to move beyond conventional career advice. Speakers reflected on moments of uncertainty, changing ambitions, difficult decisions and the lessons they learned.

The programme’s 20 participants came from institutions including Babson College, the University of Edinburgh, the American University of Kuwait, Kuwait University, Taylor’s University, Coventry University, the University of Arizona, Amity University and University College London.

Their fields of study included international relations, political science, finance, engineering, law, business and nutrition. This range of academic and cultural backgrounds contributed to discussions shaped by different interests, experiences and perspectives.

Eight Speakers, Eight Distinctive Journeys

The programme opened with H.E. Anne Koistinen, Ambassador of the European Union to the State of Kuwait, who introduced participants to the realities of a career in international diplomacy. The conversation explored multilateral cooperation, the role of dialogue in addressing shared global challenges and the professional choices young people face when considering careers in

*H.E. Anne Koistinen
EU Ambassador to Kuwait*

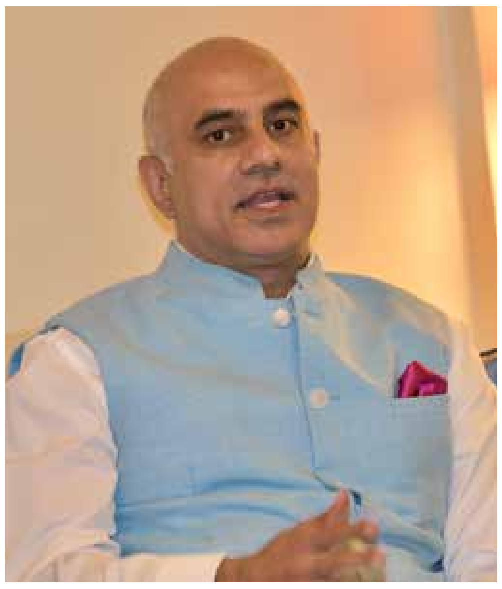
H.E. Tuba Nur Sönmez, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Kuwait

H.E. Christian Dooms, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to Kuwait

H.E. Phub Dorji, Ambassado of the Kingdom of Bhutan to Kuwait

Dhiraj Oberoi, Co-founder of Kuwait Indo Trading Company (KITCO)

Barathan Pasupathi, Chief Executive Officer of Jazeera Airways



Reaven D'Souza, Executive Managing Editor of The Times Kuwait

Claudia Farkas Al Rashoud, Photojournalist and Visual Chronicler of Kuwait

diplomacy and international affairs. She also engaged closely with participants' thoughtful questions about their own educational and professional journeys.

H.E. Phub Dorji, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the State of Kuwait, offered participants a rare introduction to the Kingdom of Bhutan, its national identity and its distinctive approach to development. He discussed Bhutan's philosophy of Gross National Happiness, which considers social well-being, cultural preservation and environmental sustainability alongside economic growth. He also spoke about the ambitious Gelephu Mindfulness City project, explaining Bhutan's vision for creating a new economic centre grounded in sustainability, mindfulness and the country's cultural values.

Participants also welcomed Claudia Farkas Al Rashoud, photojournalist and visual chronicler of Kuwait, who took them through several decades of the country's history using photographs and personal stories. Drawing on her extensive archive and her work on KUWAIT: Before and After the Storm, she reflected on the transformation of Kuwait, the experience of documenting the country before and after the Iraqi invasion and the power of photography to preserve memories that might otherwise be lost. Her session demonstrated that photographs are not merely images, but historical records capable of capturing the character of a society and the experiences of its people.

Dhiraj Oberoi, Co-founder of Kuwait Indo Trading Company (KITCO), shared the story of building one of Kuwait's most recognisable home-grown food companies after establishing the business in 1962. Rather than presenting entrepreneurship as a straightforward path to success, he spoke candidly about rejection, setbacks and the many challenges encountered along the way. His session became a lesson in resilience, perseverance and the determination to continue moving forward even when circumstances appear discouraging.

H.E. Tuba Nur Sönmez, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the State of Kuwait, reflected openly on the experiences and relationships that shaped her diplomatic journey. As she approached the conclusion of her mission in Kuwait, she spoke warmly about the country, the personal connections she had developed and the importance of approaching diplomacy through genuine human engagement. Her candid reflections gave participants a more personal understanding of diplomatic service and of the lasting bonds that can develop between representatives and the societies in which they serve.

H.E. Christian Dooms, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to the State of Kuwait, surprised participants by explaining that he had not followed a conventional path into diplomacy. Before entering foreign affairs in his early thirties, he had worked in several different professions and explored a variety of professional interests. His honest account challenged the assumption that young people must determine their entire future at an early age. It reminded participants that careers can evolve, that changing direction is not a failure and that it is never too late to pursue work that genuinely inspires them.

Barathan Pasupathi, Chief Executive Officer of Jazeera Airways, brought participants into the world of aviation and executive leadership. Drawing on his professional journey across the airline industry, he discussed the demands of leading a major organisation, making decisions in a fast-moving commercial environment and remaining adaptable when circumstances change. The conversation also gave participants insight into the discipline, personal responsibility and resilience required to progress from professional ambition to senior leadership.

The programme concluded with Reaven D'Souza, Executive Managing Editor of The Times Kuwait, who shared reflections from his long career in journalism and media in Kuwait. He discussed the evolving nature of the media industry, the responsibility involved in informing the public and the importance of maintaining credibility in an environment increasingly shaped by speed, social media and competing sources of information. His session also highlighted the value of curiosity, professional judgement and consistency in building a lasting career in journalism.

Learning from Setbacks as Well as Success

Although the speakers represented different countries, industries and professions, several common themes emerged throughout the programme.

Participants heard that successful careers are rarely linear and that professional growth often involves uncertainty, rejection, changing direction and learning from failure. The speakers did not present achievement as an effortless process. Instead, they discussed the discipline, curiosity, adaptability and perseverance required to continue moving forward. These candid accounts helped participants look beyond job titles and public profiles to understand the personal decisions and sustained effort behind them.

An International Learning Environment

The multinational composition of the cohort was an important part of the inclusive programme. Participants from more than eight nationalities contributed different cultural viewpoints and educational experiences to the discussions.

Learning therefore extended beyond the formal sessions. Participants exchanged views with one another, encountered unfamiliar perspectives and developed connections with peers whose academic and personal backgrounds differed from their own.

For several members of the cohort, the programme was their first opportunity to converse directly with ambassadors, chief executives and senior media professionals in an informal setting where questions and dialogue were actively encouraged.

A Platform for Future Dialogue

Across its eight sessions, Window to the World created a space for intellectual curiosity, respectful disagreement and the exchange of ideas across professions, cultures and generations. For the 20 participants, the programme provided more than an introduction to eight distinguished careers. It offered a closer understanding of the choices, challenges and personal qualities that influence professional and public life.

For Reconnaissance Research, the initiative represents a further extension of its commitment to dialogue and knowledge exchange. Following the conclusion of the inaugural programme, the centre intends to continue developing Window to the World as a platform through which young people in Kuwait can meet experienced leaders, broaden their perspectives and engage more confidently with the world around them.

Indian Embassy launches new consular outsourcing system as revised fees take effect

The Embassy of India in Kuwait has announced the commencement of a new outsourced consular service system alongside the implementation of revised passport and passport-related service fees, marking one of the most significant changes to consular services for the Indian community in recent years. The new fee structure came into effect on 1 July 2026 and applies to all passport and related applications submitted from that date onward, irrespective of when appointments were booked.

The revised charges, introduced under the Government of India's Gazette Notification G.S.R. 516 (E), apply across all Indian diplomatic missions worldwide, including Kuwait, and cover passport issuance, renewals, Tatkaal services, Police Clearance Certificates (PCC), Emergency Certificates, Surrender Certificates and several other passport-related services.

New outsourcing partner begins operations

With the transition to the new consular outsourcing arrangement, applicants will now submit their passport and consular applications through the designated Indian Consular Application Centres (CACs), while final approval and issuance will continue to be handled by the Embassy of India.

The Embassy said the outsourcing initiative is intended to improve efficiency, streamline application processing and enhance customer service for the nearly one million Indians residing in Kuwait. Applicants are advised to follow the updated procedures and ensure they carry all required original documents when visiting the centres.

Passport fees revised across all categories

Under the revised schedule, the fee for a standard 36-page passport (fresh or reissue) for adults has increased to KD 38, while the Tatkaal service is now KD 76. Applicants seeking a 60-page jumbo passport will pay KD 53 for normal processing and KD 91 under the Tatkaal scheme.

Replacement of lost or damaged passports has also become more expensive. A replacement 36-page passport now costs KD 76 under the normal category and KD 114 under Tatkaal, while replacement of a 60-page passport costs KD 91 and KD 129, respectively.

Concessions continue for children and senior citizens

Minor applicants continue to receive concessional rates. A fresh passport or reissue for applicants below 18 years costs KD 28, while newborns, children up to eight years of age receiving a five-year passport, and senior citizens above 60 years are eligible for a discounted fee of KD 26.

Tatkaal passport services for minors are charged at KD 65, while replacement passports due to loss or damage cost KD 65 under the normal category and KD 103 under Tatkaal processing.

The revised schedule also increases charges for several commonly used consular services. A Police Clearance Certificate (PCC) now costs KD 13, up from the previous KD 8. The same fee applies to:

- Birth Certificate based on Passport
- Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Certificate
- NRI Status Certificate
- No Objection Certificate (NOC)
- Surrender Certificate
- Miscellaneous Passport Certificates
- Global Entry Program Verification

Meanwhile, the fee for an Emergency Certificate remains KD 5, while a Certificate of Identity continues to cost KD 16.

Updated application procedures

The Embassy has reiterated that all passport applications must be submitted in person to facilitate identity verification, document scrutiny and collection of signatures or thumb impressions before final submission.

- Minor applicants, except newborn infants, are also required to be physically present during the application process.
- Applicants opting for Tatkaal services must additionally submit:
- A written undertaking explaining the urgency of the request;
- Three Indian address proof documents (two in the case of minors); and
- The prescribed Tatkaal fee.
- The Embassy noted that approval of Tatkaal applications remains subject to verification and eligibility.
- Valid residency required

Applicants who do not possess a valid Kuwait residence visa on the date of application may only be issued a short-validity passport, subject to applicable rules and verification procedures.

For PCC applications, the Embassy clarified that clearances are ordinarily issued by the police authorities of the State or Union Territory in India where the applicant previously resided, and all PCC requests must be submitted in person.

Embassy issues important reminders

The Embassy has also reminded applicants that photography, videography and audio recording are strictly prohibited inside Embassy premises and the outsourced Consular Application Centres.

Applicants are encouraged to carefully review the revised fee schedule and documentation requirements before scheduling appointments to avoid delays in processing.

The revised fee structure represents the first comprehensive overhaul of overseas passport charges in several years and accompanies the rollout of the Embassy's new outsourced consular service model aimed at delivering faster, more efficient services to the Indian community in Kuwait.

Kuwait to Introduce New Rules Governing Children's Use of Online Platforms

Kuwait is preparing to introduce new regulations governing children's use of online platforms as part of a broader national strategy to enhance child welfare, strengthen family protection and create a safer digital environment for young users.

The announcement was made by Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology and Acting Minister of Information and Culture Omar Al-Omar, who said the forthcoming regulations will form an integral part of Kuwait's National Family Protection Program a comprehensive government initiative that brings together multiple ministries and public institutions to safeguard families and children in the digital age.

Speaking during a high-level meeting on the program, Al-Omar described family protection as a shared national responsibility that requires coordinated action across government agencies rather than isolated initiatives by individual ministries. He said the program represents a new model of inter-agency cooperation designed to address the evolving social and technological challenges facing families in Kuwait.

Focus on Safer Digital Spaces

As part of Kuwait's ongoing digital transformation, the minister revealed that regulations governing children's access to and use of electronic platforms are expected to be issued in the near future.

The proposed framework aims to protect children from harmful online content, promote responsible use of digital technologies and strengthen cybersecurity awareness among families. The initiative also seeks to establish clearer responsibilities for digital platform operators while encouraging safer online experiences for young users.

Al-Omar noted that while drafting legislation is relatively straightforward, the greater challenge lies in ensuring effective implementation and enforcing compliance particularly when dealing with international technology companies that operate outside Kuwait's jurisdiction.

"Legislation is the easier part," he said, stressing that the real test will be developing practical enforcement mechanisms capable of ensuring technology companies adhere to the new rules.

Learning from International Experience

To develop an effective regulatory framework, Kuwait is studying successful international models, including approaches adopted by several European countries as well as neighboring Gulf states such as the United Arab Emirates.

The government intends to draw on these experiences while tailoring the regulations to Kuwait's legal system, cultural values and social environment.

The Ministry of Justice is leading the preparation of the legal framework in coordination with the National Cyber Security Center and the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA), ensuring that legal, technical and cybersecurity considerations are fully integrated into the new regulations.

Digital Transformation Through Sahel

Al-Omar also reaffirmed the government's commitment to its digital transformation strategy, emphasizing that all future government digital services will continue to be delivered through the unified Sahel platform.

Rather than developing standalone government applications, ministries will integrate new services into the existing platform, leveraging strategic partnerships with global technology companies including Microsoft and Google to improve efficiency and accessibility for users.

Responding to Growing Digital Risks

The move comes amid increasing global concern over the impact of unrestricted online activity on children, including exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, digital exploitation, excessive screen time and online privacy risks.

Many countries have introduced or are considering stricter safeguards for minors using digital platforms, including age verification systems, parental controls and enhanced obligations for technology companies to protect young users. Kuwait's forthcoming regulations are expected to align with these broader international efforts while addressing the country's own social and legal priorities.

Once implemented, the new measures are expected to become a key pillar of Kuwait's National Family Protection Program, reinforcing the country's commitment to promoting responsible digital citizenship, strengthening family welfare and ensuring that children can benefit from technology within a safer and more secure online environment.

KPC's $16 Billion Shaheen Project Marks a New Era for Kuwait's Energy Future

Historic partnership with Blackstone, Brookfield and KKR delivers Kuwait's largest-ever foreign direct investment while preserving national ownership of strategic energy assets.

In one of the most significant economic announcements in Kuwait's modern history, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has signed a landmark US$16 billion infrastructure partnership with a consortium of three of the world's largest investment firms Blackstone, Brookfield and KKR in a deal that is expected to reshape the country's energy investment landscape while reinforcing international confidence in Kuwait's economy.

Named the Shaheen Project, the transaction represents the largest foreign direct investment (FDI) ever undertaken in Kuwait and ranks among the Gulf region's biggest energy infrastructure partnerships. More importantly, it introduces a financing model that enables Kuwait to unlock capital from strategic infrastructure while maintaining full ownership and operational control of critical national assets.

A Different Kind of Investment

Unlike a conventional privatization or asset sale, the Shaheen Project is structured as a lease-and-leaseback agreement spanning 20.5 years.

Under the arrangement, Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), a wholly owned subsidiary of KPC, will establish a joint venture with the investor consortium. The venture will lease the usage rights to Kuwait's domestic and export crude oil pipeline network before leasing them back exclusively to KOC under a volume-based tariff system.

The transaction covers 13 crude oil pipelines extending approximately 320 kilometers across Kuwait, connecting oil fields with processing facilities and export terminals.

Crucially, KOC will retain a 51 percent majority stake, while the consortium of Blackstone, Brookfield and KKR will collectively own the remaining 49 percent, with equal participation among the three firms. KOC will also continue to own, operate, maintain and manage the entire pipeline network, ensuring that all strategic and operational decisions remain firmly under the control of the State of Kuwait.

Unlocking Capital Without Losing Control

The agreement is expected to generate approximately US$7.85 billion in upfront proceeds upon financial close. Those funds will be reinvested into Kuwait's ambitious energy expansion programme, including KPC's long-term objective of increasing crude oil production capacity to 4 million barrels per day by 2035. The proceeds will also support broader capital expenditure plans across Kuwait's energy sector while reducing reliance on traditional sources of project financing.

For Kuwait, the transaction demonstrates how infrastructure assets can be leveraged to attract international investment without relinquishing sovereignty.

Officials emphasized that the agreement imposes no restrictions on Kuwait's oil production, refining capacity or export decisions, all of which remain exclusively under the authority of the Kuwaiti government.

Strong Vote of Confidence

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the Shaheen Project extends beyond its financial value. The agreement was finalized at a time when geopolitical uncertainty continues to affect the Middle East, making it one of the first major cross-border infrastructure investments concluded in the Gulf since heightened regional tensions disrupted investor sentiment.

Its successful completion sends a strong signal that leading international institutional investors continue to view Kuwait as a stable, reliable and attractive destination for long-term capital despite broader regional challenges.

KPC Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah described the project as a transformative milestone, saying it reflects global confidence in Kuwait's energy sector and supports the country's long-term economic vision. He noted that the partnership aligns with KPC's strategy of strengthening its investment base while maintaining national control over strategic infrastructure.

Global Investors Bring Long-Term Capital

The consortium itself represents some of the world's most influential infrastructure investors.

Blackstone is one of the largest alternative asset managers globally, with hundreds of billions of dollars invested across energy, infrastructure, real estate and private equity.

Brookfield Asset Management oversees one of the world's largest portfolios of infrastructure assets, including utilities, transport networks and renewable energy projects.

KKR has decades of experience investing in infrastructure, energy and industrial assets across global markets.

Their collective participation reflects confidence not only in Kuwait's oil industry but also in the country's long-term economic stability and regulatory framework.

Supporting Kuwait Vision 2035

The Shaheen Project also complements Kuwait's broader economic transformation agenda. While oil will remain the backbone of the national economy for decades to come, Kuwait Vision 2035 seeks to diversify funding sources, modernize infrastructure and attract greater foreign investment into strategic sectors.

By introducing global institutional investors into infrastructure financing without privatizing state assets, the project offers a model that could potentially be replicated across other sectors, including logistics, utilities and transportation.

It also strengthens Kuwait's reputation among international investors seeking stable, long-term infrastructure opportunities backed by government institutions.

Kuwait's move mirrors a wider trend across the Gulf

Over the past several years, major regional energy companies including Saudi Aramco, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and Bahrain's Bapco Energies have monetized infrastructure assets such as pipelines while retaining operational control. These transactions have enabled Gulf governments to unlock billions of dollars for reinvestment into strategic projects without compromising national ownership.

The Shaheen Project places Kuwait firmly alongside its regional peers in adopting innovative financing structures that appeal to global institutional investors while safeguarding strategic national interests.

Beyond its record-breaking value, the Shaheen Project represents an evolution in how Kuwait finances its future.

Rather than relying solely on public expenditure or conventional borrowing, the country is increasingly embracing sophisticated investment structures that mobilize private capital to support national development priorities.

If implemented successfully, the partnership could become a blueprint for future infrastructure investment, helping Kuwait accelerate energy expansion, strengthen fiscal flexibility and deepen engagement with global financial markets.

As global competition for investment intensifies, the Shaheen Project demonstrates that Kuwait remains capable of attracting world-class investors through strong assets, sound governance and a clear long-term vision.

Far more than a pipeline transaction, it marks a strategic milestone in Kuwait's journey toward a more diversified, globally connected and investment-driven economy.

Large Language Models for Small Language Communities

Vivek Badrinath

Former World Bank Group chief economist and editor-in-chief of the American Economic Review, is Professor of Economics at Yale University.

Much has been said about AI's security and military risks. But the cultural and economic threats posed by large language models (LLMs) trained on a limited number of languages and owned by a handful of multinational companies have been largely overlooked. The market dominance of these LLMs leaves developing countries with minority languages at a distinct disadvantage.

Ever since OpenAI released ChatGPT in November 2022, industry leaders and policymakers have touted AI's potential to improve society by revolutionizing health care and education, as well as by driving productivity growth and income gains. But these benefits are not equally shared.

Many developing economies cannot access these AI systems, owing to their language biases. Most LLMs are trained on only 100 or so of the more than 7,000 languages spoken around the world, with English and the other Big Five "high-resource" languages—Chinese, Spanish, French, and German—accounting for nearly all of the data used. But only 400 million people are native English speakers, and just 25% of the global population speaks one of the Big Five as their first language. This imbalance could lead to cultural and economic isolation in the short term and strangle growth and diminish linguistic diversity in the long term.

There is also the bitter irony that rich countries' rapid adoption of AI, supported by a massive buildout of data centers equipped with ever more powerful compute infrastructure, has made it harder for users in developing countries to access the internet and benefit from digital tools. The AI-driven chip demand has raised the cost of smartphones, putting them out of reach for millions of people.

LLMs must better reflect local languages and cultures. Otherwise, communities risk losing their unique lexicons, long shaped by historical events, mass migrations, and political legacies. Moreover, the current lack of language diversity in AI systems will slow adoption. Digital financial services in Peru must communicate colloquially to be relevant to consumers. To deliver effective treatment, online health care in Vietnam requires the clarity that only a native language model can provide.

> *Viewed in isolation, the Trump administration's new, more restrictive student-visa policy may seem modest. But as part of a broader retreat from openness, it signals that the country once known for offering ambitious outsiders a chance to transform their lives is less willing to do so.*

Mobile network operators (MNOs) are uniquely positioned to create "local" language models, owing to their armies of developers and data-processing capabilities. They are also licensed and trusted government partners. This is important because a major barrier to creating LLMs for minority languages is the lack of training data. The solution lies in the huge amounts of data held by governments, which tend to be sensitive and confidential.

For example, Ukraine's largest MNO, Kyivstar, created a partnership with the Ministry of Digital Transformation to develop the country's first national LLM, which was tailored to Ukrainian as well as other languages spoken in the country, including Russian, Bulgarian, and Crimean Tatar. Complicating the task was the fact that much of the literature in Ukraine was written under Russian rule and thus considered culturally inappropriate. As a result, four advisory committees with binding authority over the model's technical, legal, cultural, historical, and linguistic aspects guided the curation of training texts.

The Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA), of which I am director general, is pursuing a similar strategy in much of Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, Madagascar, Togo, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through the African AI Language Models project. The initiative is bringing together the continent's Group of Six MNOs—Airtel, Axian Telecom, Ethio Telecom, MTN, Orange, and Vodacom—and other telecommunications companies, public and private actors, academics, and civil-society groups to build scalable and inclusive LLMs for African languages.

To scale AI startups that generate positive socioeconomic outcomes for the underserved, the GSMA has launched the EmergingTech program, funded by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office. Its first cohort includes ToumAI, which creates voice interfaces in Morocco's local dialects to help low-literate, rural users access digital and financial services through simple spoken commands, and Wiseyak, which is developing a multilingual mix-code conversational AI solution to help reduce Nepal's digital divide.

These initiatives are extremely important as the world moves from prompt-driven to agentic AI. Digital services such as banking, health care, and education are increasingly embedding AI to assist users and will become crucial to supporting lives and livelihoods. Firms, too, are benefiting from open-source models.

Investment in local AI creates a virtuous circle for developing economies, generating a pool of tech talent that is critical to digital independence. As concerns over data and data-processing sovereignty grow, these economies must improve operational control and governance over the deployment of agentic AI. That means collaborating with developers and MNOs to build minority language models that meet their society's needs.

Can Kuwait and the GCC Turn Global Uncertainty into Opportunity?

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait enters this period from a position of financial strength. Its sizeable sovereign wealth assets, relatively low public debt and substantial hydrocarbon reserves provide important buffers against external shocks.

Yet the World Bank's message is that financial strength should not breed complacency. Periods of elevated oil prices can provide welcome fiscal support, but they can also create a false sense of security. If global demand weakens or investment slows, oil revenues may not remain as robust as they have in recent years.

That reinforces the importance of reforms already outlined under Kuwait Vision 2035, including strengthening the private sector, improving the business climate and reducing dependence on government spending as the primary engine of growth.

The Gulf's Balancing Act

One of the report's more interesting observations is the complex relationship between geopolitics and energy markets.

Periods of regional tension often push oil prices higher, benefiting exporting countries in the short term. But those same tensions also increase shipping costs, raise insurance premiums, unsettle investors and contribute to higher inflation globally. The result is a paradox. Higher oil prices may boost government revenues, but they can also coincide with weaker global growth and more volatile financial markets. That is why the World Bank argues that long-term resilience will depend less on commodity cycles and more on the ability of countries to diversify their economies.

Diversification Moves to Centre Stage

The report reinforces a message that Gulf policymakers have increasingly embraced over the past decade: diversification is no longer simply desirable it is essential.

Future growth, the Bank argues, will increasingly come from higher productivity, innovation, technology adoption, stronger institutions, improved education and greater private-sector participation.

Across the GCC, governments have launched ambitious programmes aimed at expanding sectors such as logistics, tourism, financial services, manufacturing, renewable energy and digital technologies. Countries that implement reforms consistently and attract investment into these emerging sectors are likely to be better positioned to withstand future global shocks.

For investors, the World Bank expects volatility to remain a defining feature of international markets. That does not necessarily mean opportunities will disappear. Instead, it suggests that diversification, careful risk management and a longer-term investment horizon will become increasingly important.

Technology, artificial intelligence, digital infrastructure, clean energy and advanced manufacturing continue to feature among sectors with strong long-term potential.

The report also underscores the strategic role of Gulf sovereign wealth funds, whose scale and financial flexibility allow them to invest during periods when global markets become unsettled.

Oil Still Matters

Oil remains central to Gulf economies, and the World Bank acknowledges that energy prices will continue to be influenced by geopolitical developments. However, it also cautions against viewing higher prices as a substitute for sustainable economic growth.

History has shown that price spikes driven by conflict or supply disruptions are often accompanied by slower global demand, higher inflation and tighter financial conditions factors that eventually weigh on economic activity worldwide. For Kuwait, that reinforces the need to use periods of strong revenues to accelerate reforms rather than postpone them.

Looking Ahead

Perhaps the report's most important takeaway is that resilience has become as valuable as growth itself. Countries that strengthen their institutions, diversify their economies, encourage entrepreneurship and invest in people are likely to emerge stronger from an increasingly uncertain global environment. For Kuwait, the foundations are already in place. Strong public finances, one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds and significant natural resources provide advantages that many countries would envy.

The next step is ensuring those strengths translate into a more dynamic, competitive and diversified economy capable of creating opportunities well beyond the oil sector.

The World Bank's report is therefore more than a set of economic forecasts. It is a reminder that while global uncertainty cannot always be controlled, the way countries prepare for it can make all the difference. For Kuwait and the wider GCC, the challenge is not simply to withstand the next period of volatility, but to use it as a catalyst for building a stronger and more sustainable future.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

America Is Closing the Door on Opportunity—and Talent

Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg

Former World Bank Group chief economist and editor-in-chief of the American Economic Review, is Professor of Economics at Yale University.

Global imbalances are moving back to the top of the policy agenda, reflecting angst about the "second China shock." As China's industrial exports have surged while imports have stagnated, its growing trade surpluses have become a problem for everyone.

The familiar recommendation to address this state of affairs is for China to consume more, Europe to invest more, and the United States to consolidate its fiscal position. But these prescriptions are incomplete, because each fails to capture the industrial and technological dynamics that are now at work.

At the root of the problem is the increasing asymmetry and concentration of industrial production and capacity in a few countries. Today's imbalances are not simply the result of poor macroeconomic coordination. Rather, they reflect strategic behavior and a departure from the bias toward openness on which the postwar trade order was built. Gone is the idea that countries would try to maximize consumer welfare within a shared rules-based system. Instead, trade and industrial strategies in China and some other economies have exploited two old lessons of economic theory.

First, in modern economies, scale and learning decide all. A sector's performance improves as it gains size, and productivity increases and unit costs decline as experience accumulates. Together, scale and learning interact to generate increasing returns and create cumulative dynamics, where performance strengthens performance and ensures economic and technological dominance.

In other words, comparative advantage, as the Nobel laureate Paul Krugman emphasized as early as 1987, is created, rather than arising from underlying national endowments. China owes its spectacular success in electric vehicles, batteries, and solar panels not to some pre-existing comparative advantage, but to a cumulative interaction of scale, learning, industrial policy, and global market penetration.

Second, to generate this dynamic, firms must export, because domestic demand is rarely sufficient to reach the scale needed for technological leadership. Gaining global market share is not a by-product of success but rather a condition of it.

Meanwhile, to channel domestic resources toward research, production capacity, infrastructure, and industrial ecosystems requires policies that force savings and shift investment from non-tradable to tradable sectors, including through exchange-rate management. The risk of periodic oversupply and imbalances is seen as an acceptable cost of building scale in strategic sectors.

The analytical foundations for such policies have existed for decades. What is less often noticed is their price. By pushing exports and constraining consumption, such a strategy implies running sustained current-account surpluses. A current-account surplus is necessarily associated with a net export of capital—the economy necessarily produces more than it consumes and invests at home, which is both a financial and a real transfer to the rest of the world. Its workers and households forgo part of the goods and services they could otherwise enjoy. The difference is saved and exported. These financial and real transfers are inseparable—two expressions of the same strategy. And herein lies the paradox: Countries receiving the transfers increasingly object to them.

> *Viewed in isolation, the Trump administration's new, more restrictive student-visa policy may seem modest. But as part of a broader retreat from openness, it signals that the country once known for offering ambitious outsiders a chance to transform their lives is less willing to do so.*

In terms of welfare, European consumers should welcome cheap electric vehicles, batteries, and solar panels that are subsidized directly or indirectly by Chinese workers and taxpayers. But Europeans instead see them as a threat, which is rational from a dynamic perspective. Cheap imports may raise purchasing power today, but they can destroy the industrial base on which tomorrow's income depends. The transfer is generous in the present, but costly in the future.

The calculus is inverted for the surplus country, which sees present transfers as a small price to pay for unleashing the cumulative process of learning-by-doing, through which comparative advantage becomes larger and increasingly irreversible. The current-account surplus is not the final objective. It is a means to achieve market and technological dominance.

A useful complement to this strategy is capital controls. Controls on outflows keep domestic savings at home, while restricting inflows prevents the economy from rebalancing from tradable to non-tradable sectors—the opposite of what the strategy aims to achieve. Capital inflows strengthen the currency, weaken exports, and support consumption. They accelerate domestic absorption before scale and learning are secured, thus impeding the pursuit of comparative advantage.

These drawbacks explain why several Asian economies, China above all, have combined high savings, capital controls, exchange-rate management, and industrial policy. Each of these instruments is usually analyzed separately, with capital controls treated as financial repression, exchange-rate management as mercantilism, subsidies as trade distortions, and high savings as a macroeconomic imbalance. But, together, they form a coherent strategy for blocking normal domestic adjustment, keeping resources in tradable sectors, preserving competitiveness, and building dynamic comparative advantage.

The liberal assumption that all countries seek to maximize consumer welfare within a common trade-policy framework was too simple. We must accept the reality that different countries have different objectives with different time horizons. Global imbalances reflect deliberate strategies that use trade surpluses as instruments of industrial policy. The question is not just how to cope with insufficient coordination, but how to respond to conflicting strategies.

Acknowledging reality is a prerequisite for devising effective policy responses. But that doesn't mean advocating aggressive tariffs and retaliation, which at best may provide short-term relief (at consumers' expense), while failing to address the underlying dynamics that caused the problem in the first place.

Instead, different trade and exchange-rate disciplines will be required. In a world of powerful externalities and pronounced asymmetries, large actors may continue to have natural incentives to pursue export promotion and strategic dominance.

If so, only effective red lines on market access and domestic subsidies can keep them in check. Otherwise, scale will compound itself, and the largest players will become harder to challenge.

Benign neglect of exchange rates is no longer tenable. Trade rules cannot be separated from exchange-rate policies and capital controls. Active surveillance of exchange-rate policies should therefore become a core part of the trade regime. As long as this goes unrecognized, the rules designed to govern international economic relations will remain little honored and often breached.

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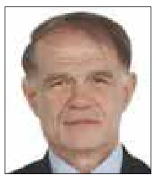
Rethinking Global Imbalances




Jean-Pierre Landau, Sébastien Jean

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Global imbalances are moving back to the top of the policy agenda, reflecting angst about the "second China shock." As China's industrial exports have surged while imports have stagnated, its growing trade surpluses have become a problem for everyone.

The familiar recommendation to address this state of affairs is for China to consume more, Europe to invest more, and the United States to consolidate its fiscal position. But these prescriptions are incomplete, because each fails to capture the industrial and technological dynamics that are now at work.

At the root of the problem is the increasing asymmetry and concentration of industrial production and capacity in a few countries. Today's imbalances are not simply the result of poor macroeconomic coordination. Rather, they reflect strategic behavior and a departure from the bias toward openness on which the postwar trade order was built.

Gone is the idea that countries would try to maximize consumer welfare within a shared rules-based system. Instead, trade and industrial strategies in China and some other economies have exploited two old lessons of economic theory.

First, in modern economies, scale and learning decide all. A sector's performance improves as it gains size, and productivity increases and unit costs decline as experience accumulates. Together, scale and learning interact to generate increasing returns and create cumulative dynamics, where performance strengthens performance and ensures economic and technological dominance.

In other words, comparative advantage, as the Nobel laureate Paul Krugman emphasized as early as 1987, is created, rather than arising from underlying national endowments. China owes its spectacular success in electric vehicles, batteries, and solar panels not to some pre-existing comparative advantage, but to a cumulative interaction of scale, learning, industrial policy, and global market penetration.

Second, to generate this dynamic, firms must export, because domestic demand is rarely sufficient to reach the scale needed for technological leadership. Gaining global market share is not a by-product of success but rather a condition of it.

Meanwhile, to channel domestic resources toward research, production capacity, infrastructure, and industrial ecosystems requires policies that force savings and shift investment from non-tradable to tradable sectors, including through exchange-rate management. The risk of periodic oversupply and imbalances is seen as an acceptable cost of building scale in strategic sectors.

The analytical foundations for such policies have existed for decades. What is less often noticed is their price. By pushing exports and constraining consumption, such a strategy implies running sustained current-account surpluses. A current-account surplus is necessarily associated with a net export of capital—the economy necessarily produces more than it consumes and invests at home, which is both a financial and a real transfer to the rest of the world. Its workers and households forgo part of the goods and services they could otherwise enjoy. The difference is saved and exported. These financial and real transfers are inseparable—two expressions of the same strategy. And herein lies the paradox: Countries receiving the transfers increasingly object to them.

In terms of welfare, European consumers should welcome cheap electric vehicles, batteries, and solar panels that are subsidized directly or indirectly by Chinese workers and taxpayers. But Europeans instead see them as a threat, which is rational from a dynamic perspective. Cheap imports may raise purchasing power today, but they can destroy the industrial base on which tomorrow's income depends. The transfer is generous in the present, but costly in the future.

The calculus is inverted for the surplus country, which sees present transfers as a small price to pay for unleashing the cumulative process of learning-by-doing, through which comparative advantage becomes larger and increasingly irreversible. The current-account surplus is not the final objective. It is a means to achieve market and technological dominance.

A useful complement to this strategy is capital controls. Controls on outflows keep domestic savings at home, while restricting inflows prevents the economy from rebalancing from tradable to non-tradable sectors—the opposite of what the strategy aims to achieve. Capital inflows strengthen the currency, weaken exports, and support consumption. They accelerate domestic absorption before scale and learning are secured, thus impeding the pursuit of comparative advantage.

These drawbacks explain why several Asian economies, China above all, have combined high savings, capital controls, exchange-rate management, and industrial policy. Each of these instruments is usually analyzed separately, with capital controls treated as financial repression, exchange-rate management as mercantilism, subsidies as trade distortions, and high savings as a macroeconomic imbalance. But, together, they form a coherent strategy for blocking normal domestic adjustment, keeping resources in tradable sectors, preserving competitiveness, and building dynamic comparative advantage.

The liberal assumption that all countries seek to maximize consumer welfare within a common trade-policy framework was too simple. We must accept the reality that different countries have different objectives with different time horizons. Global imbalances reflect deliberate strategies that use trade surpluses as instruments of industrial policy. The question is not just how to cope with insufficient coordination, but how to respond to conflicting strategies.

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> *Today's global imbalances, starting with China's massive trade surplus, are not simply the result of poor macroeconomic coordination. Rather, they reflect long-term strategic thinking and a departure from the bias toward openness on which the postwar trade order was built.*

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