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Phone down, eyes on the road

Kuwait's new traffic law delivers a KD 75 wake-up call

A moment of distraction behind the wheel can now cost motorists dearly and, more importantly, put lives at risk

The Times Kuwait Report

That WhatsApp message can wait. The phone call can wait. Even that quick glance at a notification can wait. What cannot wait is the road ahead.

Kuwait's Ministry of Interior has issued a clear warning to motorists under the country's new traffic law: using a mobile phone while driving can result in a KD 75 settlement fine, as authorities take a tougher stance against distracted driving.

The message is deliberately simple when you are behind the wheel, keep your phone out of your hands and your eyes on the road. For thousands of motorists who routinely reach for their phones while driving, the new rules represent more than an increase in the cost of a traffic violation. They

signal a fundamental change in how Kuwait is approaching road safety.

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Uzbekistan at 35: From a historic legacy to a new era of national progress

By Ayubkhon Yunusov
Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Kuwait

As Uzbekistan marks the 35th anniversary of its independence, the occasion offers more than an opportunity to look back at the country's journey since 1991. It is a moment to reflect on how far the nation has travelled, the profound changes that have taken place over the past three and a half decades, and the ambitious vision that is shaping its future.

Thirty-five years is a relatively short period in historical terms. Yet for Uzbekistan, these decades have represented an entire era of nation-building, the consolidation of independent statehood, economic and social transformation, and the establishment of the country as an increasingly active and respected member of the international community.

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Kuwait considers allowing government employees to own freelance business licenses

Proposed reforms seek to modernize licensing rules, expand entrepreneurship and curb commercial concealment

Kuwait's Ministry of Commerce and Industry is studying a package of structural and regulatory reforms that could allow Kuwaiti government employees to own freelance business licenses, in a significant proposed change to the country's commercial licensing framework.

The proposed amendments are aimed at modernizing the licensing system, supporting entrepreneurship, improving transparency in business ownership and creating greater flexibility for small and specialized businesses.

Under the current rules, government employees are restricted from owning freelance businesses. The proposed changes would remove this restriction, subject to specific regulatory conditions and licensing requirements.

Around 120 freelance activities covered

Freelance businesses currently cover around 120 small-scale and specialized activities that can be operated without the need for a traditional commercial establishment such as an office or shop.

The activities include consulting services, software design and programming, website development, fashion and clothing design, jewelry design, event photography, beekeeping and other specialized fields.

At present, applicants seeking such licenses are generally required to establish a one-person company under the legal framework governing companies in Kuwait.

One of the key reforms under consideration is the separation of ownership from management. The proposed rules could allow the owner of a freelance business to appoint a qualified Kuwaiti manager from outside the ownership structure. This would represent a major change from the existing system, under which the founder is generally required to manage the business personally. The proposed arrangement could also expand access to freelance business ownership for retirees and private-sector employees, subject to the conditions to be established by the ministry. The reforms are intended to provide greater flexibility while ensuring that businesses remain properly licensed and that their actual beneficial owners are clearly identified.

Government employees could benefit

If approved, the changes would give Kuwaiti government employees an opportunity to establish and own freelance businesses while continuing their public-sector employment. The proposal is also expected to address some of the difficulties created by existing restrictions, which can encourage businesses to be registered in the names of individuals who are not their actual beneficiaries.

The ministry is seeking to strengthen beneficial-ownership transparency and reduce practices associated with commercial concealment, while providing legitimate entrepreneurs with a clearer legal pathway to establish businesses.

The proposed reforms would also introduce stricter links between certain specialized business activities and the qualifications of applicants. Individuals seeking licenses for professional or specialized activities could be required to hold a relevant university degree or other recognized specialized qualification.

Similar requirements could apply to certain consulting activities, ensuring that those providing professional services possess appropriate academic or technical credentials.

The proposed changes are also broadly aligned with existing provisions governing one-person companies. Under current rules, a Kuwaiti government employee may own 100 percent of a one-person company where the business has a commercial headquarters, such as an office or shop, while management requirements must also be fulfilled. The proposed reforms could extend similar ownership flexibility to freelance businesses that operate without a traditional commercial headquarters.

More activities could be added

Another proposed amendment would allow business owners to add additional economic activities to their licenses when those activities are included in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's official business directory, subject to the relevant licensing conditions.

The measure could make it easier for small-business owners to diversify their operations without having to establish separate businesses for every activity.

Rules remain unchanged for now

The proposed amendments remain under study and have not yet replaced the existing regulations. Current licensing requirements and restrictions therefore remain in force until any amendments are formally approved and issued.

The ministry's review forms part of broader efforts to modernize Kuwait's commercial licensing system, encourage legitimate entrepreneurship and create a more flexible business environment in line with the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035.

The proposed reforms also seek to strike a balance between facilitating small-business activity and strengthening safeguards against misuse of commercial licenses and inaccurate identification of beneficial owners.

Kuwait, India agree to deepen defence cooperation across key areas

First Joint Defence Committee meeting in New Delhi focuses on training, exercises, military medicine, defence industry and R&D

Kuwait and India have agreed to further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation across a wide range of areas, including military training, joint exercises, military medicine, staff talks, defence industries and research and development.

The agreement was reached during the inaugural meeting of the Kuwait-India Joint Defence Committee (JDC) held in New Delhi on Friday, marking an important step in translating the two countries' existing defence cooperation framework into practical and sustained engagement. The meeting reviewed opportunities to expand cooperation between the two armed forces and identified several areas where greater institutional engagement could be developed.

Focus on training and joint exercises

Military training and joint exercises featured prominently in the discussions, with both sides exploring ways to enhance professional exchanges and strengthen operational cooperation. The two countries also discussed military medicine and the possibility of expanding cooperation in defence medical services, alongside regular staff-level consultations.

Defence research and development and opportunities for greater cooperation between the two countries' defence industries were also identified as important areas for future engagement. As part of the visit, the Kuwaiti delegation held discussions with representatives of India's defence industry to explore potential areas of cooperation and opportunities for strengthening links between the two countries' defence sectors.

The discussions are expected to provide a platform for examining India's growing defence manufacturing capabilities and identifying areas where technical cooperation, expertise and industrial partnerships could be developed.

First meeting gives new momentum to defence ties

The inaugural JDC meeting represents a new institutional mechanism for advancing Kuwait-India defence relations. The two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Cooperation in December 2014, during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kuwait. The framework covers cooperation between the armed forces and provides a basis for expanding bilateral defence engagement.

The establishment of the Joint Defence Committee gives the two sides a regular mechanism to review existing cooperation, identify new areas of engagement and coordinate future initiatives.

Part of expanding strategic partnership

The defence discussions come amid a broader strengthening of Kuwait-India relations. Bilateral ties were elevated to a strategic partnership during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Kuwait in December 2024, providing fresh momentum to cooperation across political, economic, energy, security and other sectors. Kuwait and India have maintained diplomatic relations since 1962, supported by longstanding historical, commercial and people-to-people links. The large Indian community in Kuwait has also remained an important bridge between the two countries and a significant contributor to their multifaceted relationship.

With defence cooperation now gaining a more structured institutional framework, the two countries are expected to explore additional opportunities in military training, exercises, defence production, medical cooperation and emerging defence technologies.

The latest developments underline the growing breadth of Kuwait-India relations and the two countries' shared interest in building stronger institutional partnerships in the security and defence domain.

Kuwaitis account for 79% of banking workforce as national employment reaches 11,452

Kuwaiti nationals employed in the country's banking sector reached 11,452 by the end of June 2026, underscoring the industry's continued role as one of the largest employers of Kuwaitis in the private sector.

According to the latest quarterly data from the Kuwait Banking Association, Kuwaitis accounted for 79 percent of the banking workforce at the end of March 2026, reflecting the significant progress made in the sector's Kuwaitization drive.

The figures highlight the transformation of the banking workforce over the past two decades. The number of Kuwaitis working in the sector stood at only 1,543 in 2000, but has since increased more than sevenfold, surpassing 11,000 this year.

Banking sector accounts for major share of private employment

The banking industry also represents a substantial component of Kuwait's national private-sector workforce. Labor-market data, including figures from the Kuwait Banking Association, indicate that banking employees account for approximately one-quarter of Kuwaitis registered in the private sector with the Public Authority for Manpower, excluding workers in the oil sector and those covered under Article 5 of the Social Security Law.

The sector's contribution to national employment extends beyond direct recruitment, with local banks also providing significant financial support to initiatives designed to encourage Kuwaitis to join and remain in private-sector employment.

KD380 million invested in national employment initiatives

According to the Kuwait Banking Association, local banks contributed approximately KD380 million between 1992 and the end of 2025 toward initiatives supporting national employment and encouraging Kuwaitis to pursue careers in the private sector.

The banking sector's employment policies operate within a regulatory framework established by the Central Bank of Kuwait. Article 71 bis of Law No. 32 of 1968, concerning the Currency, Central Bank of Kuwait and Regulation of the Banking Profession, requires banks to maintain a Kuwaiti workforce of at least 50 percent of total employees, or the percentage determined by the Council of Ministers under the National Employment Support Law, whichever is higher.

While Kuwaitization remains an important regulatory objective, the Central Bank of Kuwait has increasingly emphasized the quality of national employment rather than focusing

solely on meeting numerical targets.

Banks have been encouraged to strengthen training and professional development programmes, create career pathways for Kuwaiti employees and prepare national talent to assume responsibilities at different administrative levels.

The Central Bank has also placed emphasis on increasing the number of qualified Kuwaitis in senior and middle-management positions and expanding opportunities in specialized fields required by the banking industry.

Banks have additionally been urged to reduce dependence on labor-supply companies for positions that can be filled through their own workforce. The Central Bank has described the banking sector as the largest employer of Kuwaiti nationals in the private sector and has sought to strengthen the representation of Kuwaitis in decision-making and leadership positions.

Previous directives have emphasized giving priority to qualified Kuwaitis for technical, administrative, senior and middle-management positions, supported by training and qualification programmes.

The approach reflects a broader shift in Kuwaitization policy — from simply increasing the number of nationals employed to ensuring that Kuwaiti employees have meaningful opportunities for professional advancement and leadership.

Kuwaiti women make up 86% of female banking workforce

Kuwaiti women continue to account for a substantial share of national employment in the banking sector. The latest Kuwait Banking Association data, covering the end of March 2026, show that Kuwaiti women represented 86 percent of all women employed in the banking industry.

The figure highlights the strong participation of Kuwaiti women across the sector, including professional, technical and leadership positions. With national employment in banking continuing to expand, the sector is expected to remain a key pillar of Kuwait's private-sector Kuwaitization strategy, while greater emphasis is placed on developing specialized skills and creating a stronger pipeline of Kuwaiti professionals for senior positions.

Toyota Named Most Influential Automotive Brand

Based on the results of Ipsos' inaugural "Most Influential Brands (MIB) in Kuwait 2026" study

Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons Est. Co. W.L.L. has announced that Toyota is recognized as the Most Influential Automotive Brand in Kuwait for 2026 by Ipsos, a global leader in market research. The award was presented as part of Ipsos' inaugural "Most Influential Brands (MIB) in Kuwait 2026" study.

The MIB study, conducted by Ipsos in January 2026, surveyed 1,489 adults aged 18 and above residing in Kuwait through computer-aided personal interviews, with results weighted to census data to ensure the sample was representative of Kuwait's population. The study evaluated 98 national and global brands across 15 categories, measuring brand influence across six core dimensions: Trustworthiness, Leading Edge, Corporate Citizenship, Engagement, Utility, and Empathy. Within the automotive sector, Toyota was identified as the leading brand, reflecting strong consumer perceptions of trust, reliability, and long-standing presence in the Kuwaiti market. Across the overall study, trustworthiness and leading edge emerged as the strongest drivers of brand influence in Kuwait, followed by engagement and corporate citizenship — underscoring the importance Kuwaiti consumers place on brands that are dependable, innovative, and responsive to their needs.

According to Bader Faisal Al-Sayer, Senior Marketing Manager for Toyota at ALSAYER "This recognition from Ipsos is a testament to the trust the people of Kuwait continue to place in Toyota and a source of great pride for our entire team. For decades, ALSAYER has worked to bring Toyota's promise of quality, reliability, and innovation to every customer we serve".

ALSAYER Group will continue to build on this recognition by deepening its commitment to customer trust, product innovation, and community engagement across Kuwait, in line with Toyota's global vision of mobility for all.

Kuwait-Saudi partnership to bring skills-based recruitment into sharper focus

Testing a worker's professional ability before recruitment will help employers select the right candidates, boost productivity and improve Kuwait's labour-market efficiency.

Kuwait is moving to tighten the screening of foreign workers and place greater emphasis on professional skills as part of a new partnership aimed at improving productivity and making the labor market more efficient.

The initiative follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) and Saudi-based Takamul Holding to strengthen cooperation in labor-market development, professional skills accreditation and service improvement, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior.

The agreement was signed at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Kuwait by PAM Director General Engineer Rabab Al-Osaimi and Takamul Saudi Arabia CEO Ahmed Al-Yamani, in the presence of officials from the Ministry of Interior and representatives of both sides.

Al-Osaimi said the agreement reflects directives from First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Yousef Saud Al-Sabah to expand cooperation with specialized institutions and benefit from international expertise in improving work systems and services.

She said the partnership would support PAM's efforts to raise the quality of services provided to both workers and employers while strengthening professional standards across the labor market.

Skills to be assessed before recruitment

A central element of the agreement is the introduction of clearer mechanisms to identify and assess workers' professional abilities before recruitment. Al-Osaimi said Kuwait aims to establish professional standards, define the skills required for different occupations and assess workers against those standards before they enter the country. Such a system, she noted, would enable employers to recruit workers who actually possess the skills required for specific jobs, rather than relying primarily on qualifications or recruitment claims.

She also linked the initiative to efforts to address some of the persistent problems affecting Kuwait's labor market, including the trading of residency permits. If employers have an accurate tool to identify the skills they need, she said, the impact could extend beyond recruitment to productivity and the wider organization of the labor market.

Unified professional guide at the core

Al-Yamani said the partnership will initially focus on developing a unified professional guide, an initiative on which PAM has already made considerable progress. The guide will link specific occupations to clearly defined professional skills, creating a common reference for employers, workers and recruitment processes.

He said verifying workers' actual skills has become an increasingly important challenge worldwide and that the new system would help Kuwait move towards a more transparent and skills-based labor market.

Under the agreement, Takamul will automate the verification of workers' skills, qualifications and professional value, making the process faster, simpler and less costly for employers and workers.

The system is also expected to help Kuwait attract talent whose abilities match genuine market requirements, while reducing mismatches between workers and the jobs for which they are recruited. Takamul currently operates around 200 labor testing and examination centers in major labor-exporting countries, Al-Yamani said. Online testing is also used in countries where the number of workers seeking employment in the Gulf is relatively small.

The company has conducted more than 1.5 million tests for workers heading to Gulf countries, with certificate and skills verification services covering around 160 countries. Al-Yamani said the experience gained through these operations would support Kuwait in developing a more comprehensive system for assessing professional competencies.

Beyond recruitment, the initiative could provide Kuwait with a broader picture of the skills available within its expatriate workforce and the occupations most in demand.

Al-Yamani said data generated through professional testing could eventually help identify shortages in particular occupations, the skills required by the market and the training programmes needed to prepare Kuwaiti citizens for future employment opportunities.

This could allow workforce planning to become more closely aligned with actual market demand, while helping employers find candidates whose capabilities correspond directly with the requirements of individual jobs.

Skills increasingly valued over degrees

Al-Yamani also pointed to a broader shift in global recruitment, saying more than 80 percent of employers worldwide are now placing greater emphasis on practical skills than academic degrees when assessing candidates.

For Kuwait, a skills-based recruitment model could therefore help improve productivity while ensuring that workers entering the country possess competencies that correspond to the positions they are being hired to fill. Al-Osaimi said PAM would continue expanding cooperation with specialized institutions and developing partnerships that enable Kuwait to keep pace with changes in the labor market.

The Kuwait-Saudi initiative represents another step towards a more structured labor market in which professional competency, rather than simply the possession of a qualification or employment visa, becomes a key factor in determining whether a worker is suited to a particular job.

Lulu Brings Kerala's Festive Spirit to Kuwait with 'Onam Evidayanu'

The vibrant spirit of Kerala came alive in Kuwait as Lulu Hypermarket launched its special Onam promotion, "Onam Evidayanu," across all its outlets. Bringing together tradition, taste, culture and festive shopping, the promotion offers families and shoppers an opportunity to experience the colours, flavours and timeless traditions of Onam.

The traditional lamp was lighted at Lulu Al Rai outlet on August 22 by Lulu Kuwait Director Mr. Sreejith K.S., marking the inauguration of the 'Onam Evidayanu' celebrations. Regional Director Mr. Sakkir Hussain, senior management officials, well-wishers and distinguished guests were present on the occasion.

A major highlight of the celebration was the colourful Pookalam competition sponsored by Eastern, with 25 teams participating. The beautifully designed floral arrangements transformed the Lulu floor with the traditional charm of Kerala, creating a lively atmosphere filled with Onam happiness, creativity and togetherness.

Adding sweetness to the festivities, Payasamela, a special payasam-making contest, saw more than 50 participants showcasing the rich and authentic flavours of Kerala's favourite festive dessert. The celebrations were further enriched by cultural programmes and traditional dance performances, bringing the heritage and festive energy of Kerala to life.

As part of the Onam promotion, Lulu offers customers an authentic culinary experience with a traditional Onam Sadhya featuring 23 delicious items at an affordable price. For payasam lovers, more than 14 varieties of payasam are available, offering a delightful selection of Kerala's traditional sweet delicacies. Bulk orders and advance bookings are also available, making it convenient for families, organisations and groups to enjoy the traditional flavours of Onam together. The festive offers extend beyond food, with special promotions on Indian vegetables and essential Onam groceries, making it convenient for families to prepare their traditional celebrations. Lulu also offers a flat 25% off on sarees, churidars, and kurtis, along with a wide selection of traditional Onam fashions for men, women, and children, helping shoppers embrace the festive spirit in traditional style.

Special deals on electronics, home appliances and a wide range of other products add further excitement to the Onam shopping experience. Lulu Shopping Gift Cards are also available across all outlets, offering a convenient gifting option for the festive season.

With its unique combination of tradition, culture, authentic flavours and attractive offers, "Onam Evidayanu" brings the rich heritage and timeless traditions of Kerala to everyone in Kuwait, offering a true taste and experience of Kerala's festive spirit.

This Onam, visit Lulu, enjoy great festive offers, savour the authentic taste of Kerala and celebrate the spirit of togetherness.

Kuwait, Pakistan sign defence agreement to deepen military cooperation

Pact expands cooperation in training, capacity building, border management and operational readiness

Kuwait and Pakistan have signed a new defence cooperation agreement aimed at strengthening military ties, enhancing operational coordination and expanding cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries.

The agreement was signed in Islamabad by Kuwait's Minister of Defence Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Pakistan's Minister of Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif during Sheikh Abdullah's official visit to Pakistan.

The signing marks a significant step in the longstanding defence relationship between Kuwait and Pakistan and provides a framework for expanding practical military cooperation across several key areas.

Focus on training and capacity building

Under the agreement, the Pakistan Armed Forces will provide assistance to the Kuwait Armed Forces in areas including military training, capacity building, border management and other mutually agreed fields of defence cooperation.

The agreement is also designed to facilitate the exchange of military expertise and strengthen coordination between the two armed forces. Kuwait's Ministry of Defence described the agreement as an important milestone in bilateral military cooperation, saying it would contribute to enhancing operational coordination, exchanging expertise and improving the readiness and integration of the two countries' armed forces.

During their meeting, the two defence ministers reviewed the longstanding relations between Kuwait and Pakistan and discussed ways to further strengthen cooperation in the defence and military fields.

They also exchanged views on regional and international developments and issues of common interest, with particular attention to efforts aimed at supporting security and stability in the region.

The Pakistani side described the agreement as reflecting the deep trust, mutual respect and shared strategic interests underpinning the two countries' longstanding defence relationship.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening their partnership in support of mutual security, regional peace and stability.

Kuwait delegation meets Pakistan military leadership

As part of the visit, the Kuwaiti delegation also met Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. The discussions focused on regional security, matters of mutual interest and ways to expand bilateral defence cooperation.

Both sides reaffirmed their intention to strengthen institutional military ties and develop mutually beneficial areas of cooperation. The Kuwaiti delegation also praised the professionalism and operational capabilities of the Pakistan Armed Forces and their contribution to regional peace and stability.

Longstanding defence partnership

The latest agreement builds on decades of military cooperation between Kuwait and Pakistan and provides a more structured framework for future engagement. The two countries have maintained close relations across political, economic and security fields, with defence cooperation forming an important component of their bilateral partnership.

The agreement comes at a time of heightened regional security concerns and growing emphasis among Gulf states on strengthening defence capabilities, military preparedness and cooperation with trusted international partners.

For Kuwait and Pakistan, the new framework is expected to facilitate greater military exchanges, professional training and cooperation in areas of mutual strategic interest, while contributing to the broader objective of regional security and stability.

Kuwait consumers spend KD3.7 million a day on overseas online shopping

Kuwait's growing appetite for international online shopping is sending millions of dinars abroad every day, with consumers spending KD786.4 million on purchases from foreign websites and online stores during the first seven months of 2026.

The figures, released by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), show that overseas e-commerce purchases averaged around KD3.7 million a day between January and the end of July. The total represented around 46.4 percent of all payment transactions conducted outside Kuwait through various channels during the period, which amounted to approximately KD1.695 billion.

July records highest spending

July emerged as the busiest month for overseas online shopping during the seven-month period, with purchases from foreign websites reaching approximately KD134.6 million. The figures highlight the growing importance of international e-commerce to consumer spending in Kuwait, as shoppers increasingly turn to foreign platforms for products, services and other purchases.

Credit cards accounted for the largest share of overseas e-commerce spending. According to CBK data, purchases made through credit cards amounted to approximately KD512 million, representing 65.1 percent of the total. Debit card purchases accounted for the remaining KD274.4 million, or 34.9 percent of the total value. The figures indicate that credit cards remain the preferred payment method for consumers making purchases from international websites.

Nearly 34 million transactions

The scale of overseas online shopping becomes even clearer when measured by transaction volume. Around 33.85 million transactions were carried out through foreign websites during the first seven months of the year, averaging approximately 160,000 transactions every day. Based on the total value and number of transactions, the average overseas online purchase stood at approximately KD23.2.

CBK tightens beneficial ownership rules for banks, financial firms

New measures require institutions to strengthen ownership checks, report changes and prevent financial structures from being misused to conceal assets

The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has tightened requirements governing the identification and reporting of beneficial ownership, directing banks and financial institutions under its supervision to strengthen checks on who ultimately owns, controls or benefits from assets and entities.

The new measures require institutions to promptly report any changes in beneficial ownership to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry through the mechanism specified by the ministry.

The directive applies to local banks, exchange companies, finance companies, electronic money service providers, electronic payment service providers and electronic payment system operators. Under the updated procedures, financial institutions are required to follow the latest provisions of the Guide to the Concept of the Beneficial Owner and ensure that ownership information is properly identified, verified and kept up to date.

The CBK warned that failure to comply could expose institutions to the measures and penalties stipulated under Article 15 of Law No. 106 of 2013 on combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

Strengthening transparency

The updated guidance forms part of Kuwait's continuing efforts to strengthen financial-sector compliance and bring beneficial ownership practices in line with the latest recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

The measures are aimed at preventing legal entities and complex legal arrangements from being used to obscure the identity of their true owners or controllers.

Particular attention has been given to complicated ownership structures that could make it difficult for financial institutions and regulators to establish who ultimately controls assets.

The guidance also provides safeguards to prevent suspected beneficial owners from distancing themselves from assets through complex arrangements designed to make ownership difficult to trace.

Such structures can potentially be used to conceal illicit funds, evade financial or tax obligations, or frustrate regulatory investigations.

New provisions for endowments

The updated guidance also expands beneficial ownership requirements to cover endowments, or awqaf, and sets out procedures for identifying their beneficial owners.

An endowment must be established through an official document registered with the relevant authorities and signed by the endower and two witnesses, or through the courts.

When establishing an endowment, the endower is required to provide the Ministry of Justice with detailed information concerning the endowment, including its assets, the endower, the supervisor and its beneficiaries.

The Ministry of Justice is required to retain this information in its records, while the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs must maintain relevant electronic records when it appoints a supervisor.

Three categories of beneficial ownership

The revised guidance identifies three principal categories of beneficial owners in relation to endowments. The endower is the individual who establishes the endowment and contributes its assets. The supervisor is the person or institution responsible for managing and overseeing the endowment's assets.

The beneficiaries are the individuals or groups who ultimately benefit from the endowment and are either specifically named or clearly identified as a category. Financial institutions and designated financial businesses must identify and verify these beneficial owners when dealing with clients linked to endowments.

Endowments considered low risk

The guidance classifies endowments in Kuwait as presenting a relatively low risk of money laundering and terrorist financing, citing restrictions on foreign or external involvement and the widespread use of endowment assets for local or family real estate purposes.

An endowment is generally structured to preserve the principal of money or property while directing the benefits and returns generated from those assets toward charitable or benevolent purposes.

Kuwait banks seek six working days to process customer complaints

Banks propose starting five-day response period from working day after complaint registration

Kuwait's banks are seeking changes to the way the deadline for responding to official customer complaints is calculated, a move that would effectively give banks up to six working days to process complaints in certain cases.

Under the current Complaints Management System (CRS), banks are required to provide a written response within five working days of receiving a customer complaint. The banking sector has proposed that the five-day period instead begin on the working day following the date on which the complaint is registered.

The proposal follows the Central Bank of Kuwait's decision to reduce the complaint-response period from 15 days to five working days, with the new timeframe taking effect at the beginning of May.

Banks cite late-day complaints

Banks argue that the existing method of calculating the deadline can leave them with less than five full working days to examine and respond to a complaint.

The issue is particularly relevant when complaints are registered late in the working day. In some cases, banks may receive an official complaint only two hours or less before the end of working hours.

If the day of registration is immediately counted as the first of the five working days, banks effectively have only four complete working days to review the complaint, conduct any necessary investigation and prepare a comprehensive response.

The banking sector says this could put pressure on the quality and efficiency of complaint handling, particularly when cases require detailed examination or coordination between different departments.

Proposal seeks consistency

Banks are therefore proposing a return to the calculation method used during the initial update of the CRS, under which the five-working-day period would begin on the next working day following registration.

The banking sector argues that this approach would provide institutions with a full five working days to process each complaint while also bringing the system into line with the mechanism used by the Central Bank in calculating grievance periods. According to the banks, the proposed adjustment is intended not to weaken customer protection but to ensure that institutions have adequate time to investigate complaints and provide accurate and well-supported responses.

Focus on complaint quality

The review comes as the CBK continues to place greater emphasis on customer protection and the quality of banking services. Banks have also been required to develop periodic performance indicators to assess customer satisfaction and measure the effectiveness of their complaint-handling procedures.

The banking sector maintains that giving institutions a full five working days from the day after registration would allow complaints to be handled more thoroughly without compromising the regulatory objective of ensuring timely responses.

ALSAYER Employees Partners for Blood Donation Campaign

As part of its ongoing commitment to corporate social responsibility, and community wellbeing, ALSAYER Group successfully organized its annual blood donation campaign in collaboration with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank (KCBB) on 10 and 13 August 2026. The campaign was held at the headquarters and ALSAYER Car World in Shuwaikh, bringing together employees in a collective effort to support a lifesaving cause.

Mr. Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer CEO noted that, "the initiative reflects ALSAYER Group's long-standing dedication to creating a positive social impact and supporting national healthcare efforts, all contributing to the future wellbeing of our community."

Through this partnership with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank, ALSAYER Group continues to strengthen blood reserves while simultaneously raising awareness about the vital role that regular blood donations play in supporting patients in need. The campaign aligns with the Group's broader sustainability strategy, which focuses on creating lasting value for society through meaningful community engagement and responsible corporate citizenship. Commenting on the initiative, Eng. Nehad Al Haj Ali, Group Manager of ALSAYER Group's Corporate Excellence Department, said "the blood donation campaign demonstrates ALSAYER's lasting commitment to the community and to its Corporate Social Responsibility Programs. Moreover, we are contributing to the objective of enhancing blood bank stocks and raising awareness of the importance and benefits of blood donations in the community."

ALSAYER Group's dedication to public health and community welfare has been evident through its continued support of awareness and wellness initiatives over the years. Such initiatives highlight the essential role donors play in supporting healthcare systems and improving the lives of others. The successful 2026 blood donation campaign further strengthens ALSAYER Group's position as a responsible corporate citizen committed to fostering a healthier and more resilient society. By encouraging employees to participate in initiatives that make a tangible difference, The Group continues to demonstrate that sustainable business practices extend beyond operations to include meaningful contributions that positively impact communities and future generations.

Celebrating Victory Day: A nation's determination, a century of achievement

By H.E. Tuba Nur SÖNMEZ
Ambassador of the
Republic of Türkiye to the State of Kuwait
Special to The Times Kuwait

Today, as we proudly celebrate the 104th anniversary of the Victory Day of the Republic of Türkiye, we commemorate a defining moment in our nation's history. On 30 August 1922, under the leadership of founder and the first President of the Turkish Republic, Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Turkish nation achieved a decisive victory in its struggle for independence, paving the way for the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye. This historic victory also became a source of inspiration for many nations around the world seeking freedom and sovereignty.

One hundred and four years later, the same spirit of determination continues to guide Türkiye. Today, it is reflected in the strength of the Turkish Armed Forces, the remarkable transformation of our defence industry and Türkiye's growing contribution to regional and international peace and security.

A Global Defence Industry

Over the past two decades, under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye has transformed its defense industry into a globally competitive ecosystem capable of designing and manufacturing advanced systems across the land, air and maritime domains.

The figures demonstrate the scale of this transformation. Over the past decade, Turkish defence companies have exported products to 185 countries. In 2025, our defence and aerospace exports surpassed the 10-billion-dollar threshold for the first time, reaching 10.054 billion US dollars. Türkiye has also become the country that increased its defence industry exports the most when the last decade is compared with the preceding ten years.

Our achievements in unmanned aerial systems are particularly noteworthy. Today, Türkiye accounts for approximately 65 percent of the global UAV market. Our growing international standing is also reflected in the Defense News Top 100 list, which featured five Turkish companies in 2025: ASELSAN (43), TUSAŞ/Turkish Aerospace Industries (47), ROKETSAN (71), ASFAT (78) And MKE (80). This Made Türkiye One Of Only Five Countries in the world with five or more companies on the list.

From the KAAN and HÜRJET fighter jets to the Bayraktar TB2, ANKA, AKINCI, and KIZILELMA unmanned aerial vehicles, and from the indigenous ALTAY tank to the MİLGEM warships and TCG Anadolu, the diversity of these platforms stands as a testament to the technological expertise and industrial capacity Türkiye has built in a relatively short period.

An Army of Peace

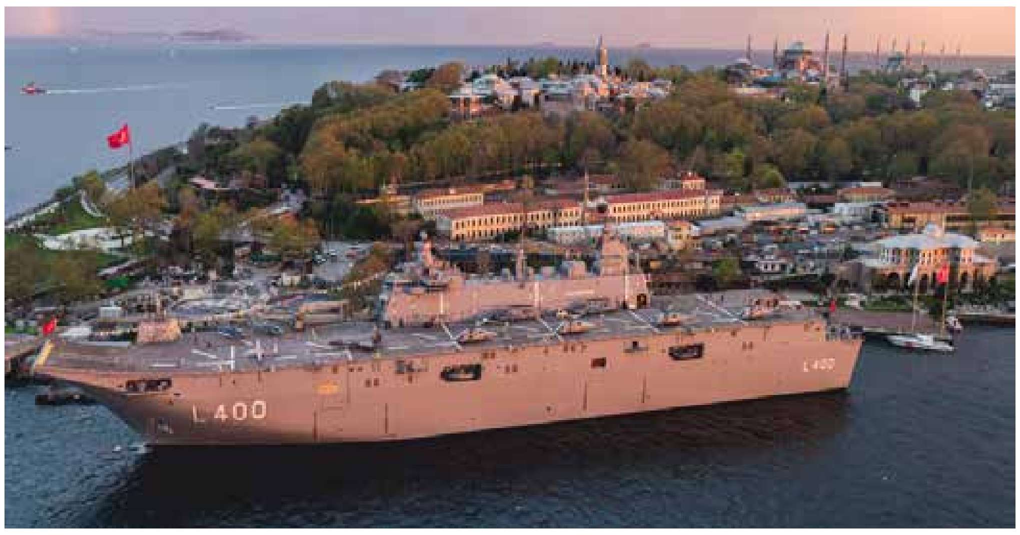
This technological transformation goes hand in hand with the growing capabilities and international role of the Turkish Armed Forces. Guided by our enduring objective to achieve "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" as set out by the founder of our Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and within the framework of our President's vision of the "Century of Türkiye", we continue to invest in both our Armed Forces and defense industry. The Turkish Land, Naval, Air Forces and Gendarmerie all rely heavily on indigenous systems, turning the Security and Armed Forces into a living showcase of our industry's achievements.

Moreover, Türkiye, as NATO's second-largest army and ranked the ninth strongest military worldwide, has long served as the cornerstone of security on NATO's southeastern flank. As President Erdoğan underlined, "The Turkish Army is an army of peace."

Today, Turkish soldiers serve in different parts of the world through NATO missions, multilateral peacekeeping operations and bilateral training and cooperation activities. Wherever they serve, their contribution goes beyond military presence. They contribute to peace and stability, strengthen the capacities of our partners and allies and help create the secure environment in which communities and regions can prosper.

On the other hand, at a time of increasing threats against regional and global security, The Joint Defence Agreement (JDA) between Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan reflects a shared sense of responsibility for regional security, stability, prosperity and common future.

The JDA is based on the principles of sovereignty, reciprocal commitment and equal say, and provides an open and inclusive platform for cooperation with regional actors that adhere to international law and share these principles. The goal is to develop regional ownership, in order to contribute to a predictable order that consolidates security, stability and prosperity for the people of the region.



Growing Cooperation with Kuwait

In this respect, we believe that countries such as Kuwait, which attach importance to regional peace, stability and dialogue, have an important role to play in strengthening regional ownership of security. This understanding is also at the heart of our relations with friendly and brotherly Kuwait.

Türkiye and Kuwait share a strong commitment to regional peace and stability. We both attach great importance to dialogue, mediation and peace, while recognizing the importance of strengthening national defence capabilities in an increasingly challenging security environment.

Hence, defence cooperation has become an important pillar of our bilateral relations. Kuwait's procurement of Bayraktar TB2 UAVs in 2023 marked a significant milestone. This was followed by the signing of a Government-to-Government Defence Industry Procurement Protocol during the historic visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Türkiye in May 2024.

This cooperation has been further strengthened through an intensive exchange of high-level visits. His Excellency President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Kuwait on 21 October 2025, while Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, H.E. Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, visited Türkiye twice, on 4 May and 6 July 2026.

These engagements were further complemented by the visit of Minister of Defence of Kuwait, H.E. Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, to attend the SAHA Expo Defence Exhibition on 6 May 2026, as well as the official visit of Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shuraian, to Türkiye on 16 July 2026.

We believe that stronger cooperation between Türkiye and Kuwait will contribute not only to the security of our two countries, but also to the peace, stability and prosperity of our wider region.

As I approach the completion of my tenure in Kuwait, I am particularly gratified to have witnessed the steady advancement of relations between our two brotherly nations. I am confident that the foundations we have built together, including in the field of defence, will continue to strengthen and flourish in the years ahead.

On this proud occasion, I remember with profound respect and gratitude Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, his comrades-in-arms, our martyrs and veterans, and pay tribute to all members of the Turkish Security and Armed Forces who serve our nation with honor and devotion, at home and abroad.

May Allah Almighty protect Türkiye and Kuwait from all harm and further strengthen the enduring bonds of friendship and brotherhood between our nations.

Happy 30 August Victory Day.

Kuwait ranks third in Gulf with $250 million in July contracts

UAE dominates regional awards with $10.9 billion as MENA contract activity slows

Kuwait ranked third among Gulf countries in the value of contracts awarded during July, with projects worth approximately $250 million, as overall contract activity across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) recorded a notable slowdown.

According to data reported by MEED magazine, total contract awards across the MENA region fell to $20.4 billion in July, compared with $26.2 billion in June. The July figure also marked a significant decline from the exceptionally strong levels recorded at the beginning of the year.

Regional contract awards stood at around $40 billion in both January and February before declining to approximately $26 billion in March and $18 billion in April and May. Activity recovered to $26.2 billion in June before falling again in July.

Kuwait recorded two contract awards during July, with the largest valued at approximately $232 million. The contract was awarded to China State Construction Engineering Corporation for the construction of the permanent headquarters of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) in Sharq, Kuwait City.

The project includes a 275-metre-high, 55-storey office tower and is scheduled for completion in 2028. The project represents one of Kuwait's major recent commercial and institutional developments and forms part of the country's broader efforts to strengthen its investment infrastructure.

UAE leads Gulf and region

The UAE dominated the regional contract market in July, recording awards worth approximately $10.9 billion. A major contributor was the $6.2 billion gas cap and surface pressure enhancement project at Abu Dhabi's Umm Shaif field.

Egypt ranked second regionally with $6.6 billion in contract awards, with a major share coming from the second phase of the fourth line of the Greater Cairo Metro. Saudi Arabia recorded approximately $1.9 billion in July awards, a sharp decline from the $9.9 billion recorded in June. One of the major Saudi contracts was a $261 million project to construct accommodation for hotel-sector employees as part of the Qiddiya development.

The transportation and gas sectors were the principal drivers of regional contracting activity during July. Transport projects accounted for approximately $6.7 billion, while gas projects contributed around $6.5 billion in awarded contracts. The figures underline the continued importance of large-scale infrastructure, energy and transportation projects in driving investment across the region, even as the overall pace of contract awards moderated during the month.

Major projects across MENA

Elsewhere in the region, Iraq recorded two oil and gas contracts worth a combined $500 million. In Morocco, Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power secured a project to expand the Khalladi wind farm by around 40 megawatts, with investment estimated at approximately $60 million.

Tunisia also recorded a major infrastructure award, with an Indian company securing a $36 million contract to design, supply and install 400-kilovolt overhead lines for the Tunisia-Italy ELMED electricity interconnection project.

Syria selected Consolidated Contractors Company for the design and implementation of the Damascus Financial Center, a project estimated at approximately $600 million, while Oman awarded a $23 million dual-carriageway project in Salalah.

Despite the decline in overall July awards, Kuwait's ranking highlights the continued flow of major institutional and infrastructure projects into the country, with the KDIPA headquarters project accounting for the bulk of its monthly contract value.

BSK graduates achieve outstanding 2026 IGCSE, AS and A Level result

Students at The British School of Kuwait (BSK) have achieved outstanding results in their global examinations in 2026 across Years 11, 12, and 13 (IGCSE, AS, and A Level), fittingly concluding years of hard work supported by their teachers and parents.

This year's results are particularly important, given the exceptional circumstances students faced over the past academic year and the uncertainty that accompanied a critical stage of their education as a result of the regional situation. Showing a remarkable ability to remain resilient and adapt to changing circumstances, BSK students maintained their commitment to their studies and delivered outstanding results.

Year 11 students achieved fantastic results in their GCSE/IGCSE examinations, earning top marks up to a 9 (the equivalent of the former A*). They also delivered strong performance across a wide range of subjects, positioning them to continue excelling as they move into Year 12 in the new academic year.

In Year 12, many students achieved an A (the highest grade) in all of the AS Level subjects they studied. Some of these students plan to attend universities in Kuwait or abroad in the new academic year, while others intend to stay on for Year 13 at BSK to complete their A Levels, before moving on to top universities worldwide.

BSK's Year 13 students also delivered exceptional performance; a number of them have achieved A* marks in all of their subjects, while many other students achieved an outstanding combination of A* and A grades across various subjects.

With regards to subjects offered to Year 11 (GCSE/IGCSE) students, BSK offers both the core subjects (English, mathematics, and science), alongside a wide range of subject choices, including astronomy, information and communication technology, graphic communication, photography, and design and technology. For AS and A Level students, the school also offers a broad selection of 17 subjects, including further mathematics, business studies, economics, fine art, graphic communication, photography, drama, French, and German.

This year, BSK graduates are headed to a number of prestigious universities around the world, including the University of Connecticut and the University of Pennsylvania in the United States; University College London, The University of Glasgow, The University of Manchester, The University of Edinburgh, and Durham University in the United Kingdom; Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands; University of Toronto in Canada; and the Universidad Europea in Spain.

At these top universities, BSK graduates have chosen multiple diverse fields of study, from health sciences, neuroscience, infection and immunity, and biomedical engineering, to law, dentistry, aerospace engineering, medicine, electrical engineering, life sciences, and computer science.

BSK Principal Emma Bowie expressed her pride in the achievements of Year 11, 12, and 13 students when commenting on these results. She noted that the school is committed to offering a broad program of IGCSE, AS, and A Level courses that allows students to choose subjects suited to their interests, ambitions, and future goals, adding that it is a joy to see their hard work rewarded with such excellent grades.

Building on the Principal's remarks, Jane Warne, Higher Phase Head Teacher, said these results reflect not only students' tremendous academic abilities but also their resilience, maturity, and determination during a year marked by unprecedented challenges, noting that they met this uncertainty with remarkable composure and remained committed to learning and to supporting one another.

She added that students are moving into the next stage of their education equipped not only with excellent qualifications but also with confidence and the ability to adapt and persevere, preparing them to face whatever lies ahead.

Kuwait's new traffic law delivers a KD 75 wake-up call

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A second that can change everything

The danger of mobile phone use is not limited to making a call. A driver looking down to read a message, check a notification, change a song, browse an application or respond to a WhatsApp text can lose precious seconds of awareness.

In those seconds, a vehicle can travel a significant distance. A pedestrian could step onto the road. The car ahead could brake suddenly. A vehicle could move into the driver's lane. Traffic could come to a sudden stop.

And by the time the driver looks up, it may already be too late. This is precisely why the Ministry of Interior is treating distracted driving as a serious road-safety concern rather than a minor traffic offence.

The phone has become the new danger behind the wheel Mobile phones have transformed the way people communicate, work and navigate their daily lives. But that convenience has also created a dangerous habit on the roads.

For some drivers, checking the phone while driving has become almost instinctive particularly when a notification appears. The new law is intended to break that habit.

The authorities are effectively telling motorists that there is no urgent message, phone call or social media notification important enough to justify putting another life at risk.

Even a traffic light is no excuse. Another behaviour that motorists should reconsider is reaching for the phone while waiting at a traffic signal. Authorities have warned that using a mobile phone at traffic lights can also constitute a violation under the stricter traffic rules.

The temptation may seem harmless: the vehicle is stationary, so why not quickly check a message? But the moment the light changes, the driver needs to be alert. More importantly, looking at a screen takes attention away from the surrounding traffic and pedestrians.

A much tougher traffic regime

The KD 75 phone-use penalty comes as Kuwait moves towards significantly tougher enforcement of traffic regulations. The revised system increases penalties for a range of violations and places greater emphasis on dangerous driving practices.

The underlying message is unmistakable: traffic rules are no longer being treated as minor inconveniences. Motorists are expected to understand the consequences of their behaviour and take greater responsibility for the safety of everyone sharing the road.

The real cost cannot be measured in dinars

But the KD 75 fine is not the most important part of the warning. The real cost of distracted driving can be far higher. A fine can be paid. A vehicle can be repaired. But injuries, disabilities and loss of life cannot simply be reversed.

Every day, motorists make countless decisions in traffic. Most are routine. Yet one careless decision one glance at a phone, one message typed at the wheel, one moment of lost concentration can change several lives permanently.

That is why the Ministry's latest clarification should be seen as a wake-up call to every driver in Kuwait. Put the phone away. The safest solution is also the easiest.

Before starting the journey, set the navigation, choose the music and put the phone somewhere it cannot become a distraction. If an important call or message arrives, wait until reaching a safe and legal stopping place.

Because the question is no longer simply whether a driver can afford a KD 75 fine. The more important question is whether anyone can afford the consequences of one distracted second.

The road demands attention. The phone can wait.

Sheikh Jarrah's Tokyo trip marks first solo Kuwait Foreign Minister visit since 2010

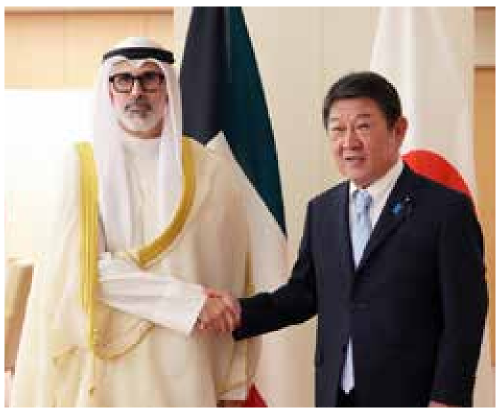
By H.E. Mukai Kenichiro
Ambassador of Japan to the State of Kuwait
Special to The Times Kuwait

On August 26, H.E. Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, paid an official visit to Japan. Japan-Kuwait bilateral relations have continued to be maintained and strengthened through high-level reciprocal visits; H.H. the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah's visit to Japan in May 2025, followed by the visit of Japan's then Foreign Minister, Mr. IWAYA Takeshi, to Kuwait in September 2025.

It is worth mentioning that this is the first solo visit by a Kuwaiti foreign minister to Japan since 2010. Furthermore, as the regional situation remains tense, the visit of H.E. Sheikh Jarrah at such a juncture is meaningful for both countries, and we would like to express our respect and gratitude to H.E. Sheikh Jarrah for his decision to visit Japan.

Sheikh Jarrah paid a courtesy call on Ms. TAKAICHI Sanae, Prime Minster of Japan, carrying a personal letter from H.H. Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Japan's Prime Minister rarely meets with a foreign minister alone.

Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.



Thus, the warm welcome extended by the Prime Minister to Sheikh Jarrah shows that Japan attaches importance to Kuwait as a partner that shares the fundamental values of the rule of law, respect for international law, and the resolution of issues through dialogue in the international community, and that contributes together to the resolution of international and regional challenges.

Prime Minister Takaichi, while conveying to Sheikh Jarrah her determination to continue to work closely with Kuwait for peace and stability in the Middle East, stated that Japan wishes to play an active role in enhancing the resilience of the GCC countries through reconstruction and economic growth.

The closeness of the two countries is already seen in the frequent contacts between Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, and Sheikh Jarrah over a short period (telephone calls in April and June, and a meeting in Ankara in July).

During the latest bilateral meeting in Japan, Minister Motegi expressed his respect for Kuwait's efforts to maintain a secure and stable energy supplies to the global market under challenging regional circumstances and expressed – in particular – his gratitude for the long-standing stable supply of crude oil from Kuwait to Japan.

Asian countries are greatly affected by the current regional situation as well. Therefore, Japan launched "POWERR Asia" as a framework to reinforce energy security and finance emergency crude oil procurement across Asia. This also contributes to expanding supply hubs and overseas stockpiles of the Gulf oil-producing countries in the Asian region, and cooperation with Kuwait is indispensable.

In addition, Japan is promoting Updated FOIP (Free and Open Indo-Pacific) which aims to enhance the autonomy and resilience of countries while maintaining a rules-based maritime order, ensure freedom of navigation and support economic prosperity in vital sea lanes.

For Japan, there is no doubt that Kuwait is an important country in terms of securing a stable supply of energy. However, the relationship today is not limited to that alone. Under the "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," we have built a wide-ranging relationship that extends not only to the economy but also to education, culture, and sports.

It is noteworthy that on August 24, 2026, the Japanese Embassy held a send-off ceremony at my residence for Kuwaiti athletes participating in Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games & Asian Para Games, with the attendance of H.E. Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs, H.E. Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait Olympic Committee, and H.E. Mr. Mansour Al-Sarhid, President of Kuwait Paralympic Committee. The outcome of Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah's visit to Japan will further support such exchanges, and it is also my responsibility to solidify them here in Kuwait.

Archbishop Nugent bids emotional farewell to Kuwait, praises its enduring voice for peace

The Times Kuwait Report

For Archbishop Eugene Martin Nugent, his farewell to Kuwait was about much more than the end of a diplomatic assignment. It was a farewell to a country, a community and friendships that had become deeply personal during his years in the Gulf.

The Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See to Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar brought his mission to a close with an emotional reception at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Najeeb Abdulrahman Al-Bader, ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps, government officials, Christian church leaders, priests, religious sisters and brothers, members of the business community and the Catholic faithful.

Hosted by the Vatican Embassy in Kuwait, the gathering reflected the close relationship that has developed over the years between Kuwait and the Holy See. But it was Archbishop Nugent's personal reflections that gave the farewell its special character.

Looking back on his years in Kuwait, the Irish-born archbishop spoke with warmth about the people he had met, the friendships he had formed and the hospitality that had made the country feel like much more than a diplomatic posting.

He expressed his gratitude to Kuwait's leadership and people, conveying his respect for His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

He also praised Kuwait for remaining committed to dialogue, moderation and peaceful coexistence at a time when the region and the wider world have been passing through exceptionally difficult circumstances.

His tenure coincided with some of the most turbulent years in recent international history, including the final stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, Pope Francis' historic visit to Bahrain, the visit of Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin to Kuwait in January 2026, and the more recent regional conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran.

For Archbishop Nugent, however, the defining memories of Kuwait were not the crises that filled newspaper headlines. They were the people. He recalled the warmth with which he was received, the conversations he shared, the doors that were opened to him and the friendships that grew over the years.

Addressing Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and members of the diplomatic corps, he thanked them for their cooperation, friendship and solidarity, stressing that diplomacy at its best is not simply about protocol and official meetings, but about building genuine trust between people.

Perhaps the most touching moment of his farewell came when he reflected on his relationship with the thousands of Catholics living and working in Kuwait. "I came here as a bishop to encourage them in their faith. But very often, they were the ones who encouraged me in mine," he said.

The words captured the personal side of his mission and his appreciation for the Catholic community, many of whose members live far from their families and home countries while quietly contributing to Kuwait's social fabric.

Archbishop Nugent also expressed his appreciation to Bishop Aldo Berardi, priests, religious men and women and others serving the Catholic Church in Kuwait. Among the memories he will carry with him are religious celebrations, cultural gatherings, visits and even traditional desert kashtas occasions that brought people from different nationalities, religions and cultures together.

For him, these gatherings demonstrated that friendship could often achieve what formal diplomacy could not. They allowed people to meet simply as human beings.

Quoting Irish poet William Butler Yeats, Archbishop Nugent summed up his farewell with a line that appeared to capture exactly what Kuwait had come to mean to him:

"My glory was, I had such friends."

It was a fitting sentiment for an envoy whose farewell was marked less by diplomatic protocol and more by genuine affection. As he prepares to take up his next assignment as Apostolic Nuncio to the Czech Republic in Prague, Archbishop Nugent acknowledged the emotion of leaving Kuwait but said he would carry with him memories of the country's generosity, hospitality and extraordinary diversity and, above all, its people.

His message about Kuwait's role in promoting peace was equally clear. At a time when conflict and mistrust continue to divide communities and nations, he praised Kuwait as a country that has maintained its commitment to dialogue and moderation.

"Kuwait rooted in friendship is a beacon of dialogue and moderation, hospitality, tolerance, faith, friendship and peaceful spirit," he said. The farewell concluded with prayer and a blessing for the Amir, the Crown Prince, the State and people of Kuwait, the wider Gulf region and a troubled world.

As Archbishop Nugent leaves for his new mission in Europe, he leaves behind more than diplomatic memories.

He leaves with a simple message that was at the heart of his farewell: dialogue creates understanding, friendship builds trust, and peace remains something that people and nations must work for together.

And perhaps, more than anything else, he leaves Kuwait knowing that his years here were measured not only by what he gave, but also by what he received from the people he came to serve.

Kuwait's skies fill up again as airlines restore and expand flight frequencies

The Times Kuwait Report

Kuwait's international air connectivity is showing clear signs of strengthening, with airlines gradually restoring and expanding services to the country as the aviation sector moves into September.

The latest indication comes from Turkish Airlines, which will increase its Istanbul–Kuwait–Istanbul service to seven flights a week from September 1, effectively restoring a daily connection between Kuwait and Istanbul.

According to the airline's latest schedule notice, the Kuwait-bound service will operate from Terminal 4, while the Kuwait–Istanbul departure will return to its original 06:35 timing. The schedule is designed to provide passengers with improved connections to Turkish Airlines' extensive international network through Istanbul.

Kuwait International Airport's published timetable confirms the daily Turkish Airlines operation from September 1 through October 24, with TK770 arriving from Istanbul at 05:40 and TK771 departing Kuwait at 06:35.

The increase is significant for passengers travelling not only to Türkiye but also to Europe, North America and other destinations where Istanbul serves as a major transit hub.

Gulf carriers maintain strong Kuwait connectivity

Turkish Airlines' move comes against a broader backdrop of airlines rebuilding their Kuwait schedules. Qatar Airways continues to maintain a strong presence on the Kuwait–Doha sector, with the Kuwait airport timetable showing daily Qatar Airways services and the carrier operating multiple frequencies to connect passengers through Hamad International Airport.

Saudi Arabian Airlines (Saudia) is also maintaining daily Riyadh–Kuwait services, while Emirates continues to connect Kuwait with Dubai, giving passengers access to one of the region's largest international aviation hubs.

The Kuwait airport's published timetable lists Emirates, Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways, flydubai, Air Arabia, Gulf Air, Oman Air, SalamAir, Saudia and Turkish Airlines, alongside Kuwait Airways and Jazeera Airways, among the carriers serving Kuwait.

This breadth of services is particularly important for passengers who depend on Gulf hubs for onward travel to India, Pakistan, Southeast Asia, Europe and the Americas.

The return of daily Turkish Airlines flights also

adds another strong international option for travellers. For passengers heading west, Istanbul provides an alternative to traditional Gulf transit points such as Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi. For airlines, meanwhile, the increase reflects renewed confidence in demand from Kuwait and the wider regional market.

Turkish Airlines is already selling Kuwait–Istanbul services throughout September, with its booking system showing availability across the month. The airline's expanded schedule also comes at a time when Kuwait is seeking to strengthen its position as a regional aviation and tourism hub.

For Kuwait's large expatriate population, increased frequencies mean more than simply additional seats. More flights can translate into greater choice of departure times, better connections, reduced dependence on a single transit hub and potentially more competitive fares.

This is particularly relevant for passengers travelling to the Indian subcontinent and Asia, where airlines serving Kuwait connect through Istanbul, Doha, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Jeddah, Bahrain and Muscat.

Kuwait's airport timetable also shows a broad network of Indian and Asian carriers, including Air India Express, IndiGo and SriLankan Airlines, alongside regional and international airlines.

The increase in Turkish Airlines' frequency is therefore more than an isolated schedule adjustment. It is another indication that Kuwait's aviation network is gradually moving toward a more stable and better-connected operating environment.

For travellers, the immediate benefit is straightforward: more flights, more connections and more options for reaching destinations around the world.

Uzbekistan at 35: From a historic legacy to a new era of national progress

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The message delivered by President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of independence reflects both the historic significance of this journey and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Independence rooted in history

For the Uzbek people, independence cannot be viewed simply as a political milestone or a date on the national calendar. Its meaning reaches much deeper. As President Mirziyoyev has emphasized, Uzbekistan's independence is rooted in a history of more than three thousand years of civilization and traditions of national statehood. It represents the restoration of historical memory, national identity, dignity and self-respect. Independence gave the people of Uzbekistan renewed freedom to preserve and develop their sacred religion, native language, national traditions and cultural values passed down through generations.

On this important national occasion, we also remember with profound respect those who struggled and sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the homeland. At the same time, it is important to recognize the historic contribution of Uzbekistan's First President, the distinguished statesman Islam Abduganievich Karimov, to the establishment and consolidation of the independent Uzbek state.

Putting human dignity at the centre

In recent years, Uzbekistan has entered a new phase of development, with human dignity, individual interests and the well-being of society placed at the heart of the reform agenda led by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

One of the defining principles of these reforms has been the importance of listening to people and responding to their concerns. This has gradually translated into wide-ranging changes in social, economic and public life.

Uzbekistan has eliminated forced and child labour, including in the cotton sector, removed restrictions on currency convertibility and fundamentally reformed the restrictive residence registration system formerly known as propiska.

The country has also opened itself more widely to the international community, creating new opportunities for citizens, entrepreneurs, investors and foreign partners.These reforms are increasingly reflected in the country's economic and social indicators. According to figures highlighted by President Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan's poverty rate has fallen from 35 percent in 2017 to 4 percent today. This transformation has improved the quality of life of approximately 10 million people and brought greater opportunities and security to millions of families. Uzbekistan had initially set itself the target of reaching a gross domestic product of $160 billion by 2030. The President has now announced that this target is expected to be achieved this year, creating the possibility of Uzbekistan entering the group of upper-middle-income economies.

The country is already looking beyond that milestone, with a new target of raising GDP to $300 billion by 2030. Behind these numbers are people and their everyday lives — new businesses, employment opportunities, improved roads and infrastructure, better schools and universities, modern healthcare facilities and, perhaps most importantly, a stronger sense of confidence about the future. Economic development alone cannot determine the strength of a nation. Uzbekistan increasingly views its people their knowledge, skills, creativity and ability to innovate as its greatest strategic asset. Education, science, technology and innovation have therefore become central pillars of the country's development strategy.

One particularly significant development is the growing participation of women in higher education. Today, women and girls account for more than half of students enrolled in Uzbekistan's higher education institutions.

The significance of this extends well beyond university campuses. An educated woman contributes to an educated family; an educated family contributes to a stronger generation; and an educated generation lays the foundation for a more enlightened and prosperous society.

This emphasis on human capital is central to the idea of the "New Uzbekistan" — a country seeking to compete globally not merely through its natural resources, but through the capabilities and aspirations of its people.

Against this background, President Mirziyoyev's vision of transforming Uzbekistan into a centre for progressive technological initiatives has emerged as one of the country's major long-term priorities.

Healthier lives, better quality of life

The transformation underway in Uzbekistan is also reflected in public health. Between 1991 and 2025, average life expectancy increased from 66.4 years to 75.4 years. During the same period, maternal and infant mortality rates declined fourfold. The next phase of healthcare reform is expected to place greater emphasis on prevention rather than simply treating illness after it occurs.

Uzbekistan also intends to expand state health insurance to cover every family in the country. This reflects an important principle behind the country's broader development strategy: economic growth should ultimately serve people. Development has meaning when it enables citizens to live longer, healthier and more dignified lives.

The next decade as an era of national progress

The 35th anniversary also comes at a moment when Uzbekistan is looking firmly towards the future. President Mirziyoyev has described the coming decade as a new era of national progress, with the country preparing to implement seven major national programmes designed to further improve human dignity and quality of life.

Among the priorities are transforming knowledge and skills into the principal capital of future development; building a modern healthcare system centred on prevention; fundamentally improving the management of water resources and environmental protection; strengthening legal safeguards for citizens and entrepreneurs; and giving the mahalla Uzbekistan's traditional neighbourhood institution an even greater role in community development.

Although these priorities cover different aspects of national life, they share a common purpose: ensuring that development translates into a better quality of life and greater dignity for every citizen.

An Uzbekistan increasingly open to the world

From my position as Ambassador of Uzbekistan to the State of Kuwait, and through my continuing engagement with international partners, I have witnessed the growing interest in Uzbekistan and in the transformations taking place across the country. Uzbekistan today is not only one of Central Asia's major markets and an increasingly attractive destination for investment. It is also seeking to establish itself as a country of regional cooperation, connectivity, constructive dialogue and mutually beneficial partnerships.

Our foreign policy remains multivector, prudent and balanced. Uzbekistan seeks to strengthen its role as a centre of economic and technological development while also contributing to international diplomacy and constructive dialogue.

Within this open and pragmatic foreign policy, relations with the State of Kuwait and the wider Arab world occupy an important place.

Uzbekistan and Kuwait:
A partnership with room to grow

The relationship between Uzbekistan and Kuwait rests on more than official diplomacy. Our peoples share values that include mutual respect, a commitment to peace, strong family and community traditions, and a genuine culture of hospitality.

These shared values provide a natural foundation for expanding practical cooperation in trade, investment, economic development, culture, education, humanitarian exchanges and other areas of mutual interest.

A particularly important milestone in this relationship was the first official visit of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Kuwait in February 2025.

The visit, including warm and substantive meetings with His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, and His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait, reflected the depth of friendship, mutual respect and trust between the two countries.

More importantly, the visit gave a significant impetus to bilateral relations and created a stronger foundation for cooperation across political dialogue, trade and investment, industry, healthcare, education, transport and logistics, culture and tourism. Today, the understandings reached during that historic visit are increasingly being translated into practical cooperation.

There is growing interest on both sides in expanding trade and economic relations, attracting investment, developing industrial partnerships and pursuing joint initiatives in agriculture, infrastructure, transport and logistics, healthcare, education and tourism.

The potential is considerable. What is needed now is to continue converting political goodwill into concrete projects, business partnerships and exchanges that directly benefit the people of both countries. Uzbekistan regards Kuwait as an important and reliable partner. The political will of the leadership of both countries, combined with the longstanding friendship and mutual respect between our peoples, provides a strong foundation for taking bilateral cooperation to a new level.

Independence as a responsibility

The 35th anniversary of independence is therefore both a celebration of achievement and a reminder of responsibility.

Uzbekistan today is stronger than it was yesterday, but the ambitions for tomorrow are even greater. President Mirziyoyev captured this sense of confidence when he stated: "Today, we are stronger than we were yesterday, and tomorrow we will be even stronger than we are today."

These words reflect the spirit of the New Uzbekistan a belief in the strength, resilience and potential of its people. They also convey another important message: when people and the state work together towards a common goal, there are few frontiers that cannot be overcome.

As Uzbekistan celebrates 35 years of independence, it does so with its ancient history providing a sense of identity, its reforms providing confidence in the present, and its aspirations providing a clear direction for the future.

The journey has been significant, but it is far from complete. Uzbekistan is now looking towards a new era one defined by openness, progress, knowledge, innovation and prosperity, while remaining firmly anchored in its history and national identity.

I am confident that the courageous, resilient and noble people of Uzbekistan will continue to pursue the country's great goals and build a modern, prosperous and globally engaged nation in which peace and stability prevail and development is firmly grounded in human dignity, knowledge and creativity.

Global Capability Centres (GCC) in India

Where Companies Can Build Their Global Future

By H.E. Paramita Tripathi
Ambassador of India to Kuwait
Special to The Times Kuwait

When people in Kuwait and in the Gulf Region think about doing business in India, the first images that may come to mind are a vast and growing consumer market, Indian professionals working across the Gulf, major infrastructure projects, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, textiles and technology.

Beyond these, another India is emerging, less visible to the casual visitor and increasingly important to global business.

Across Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chennai, Pune, Delhi-NCR and a growing number of smaller Indian cities, teams of Indian engineers, scientists, accountants, designers, software developers and business professionals are working every day on products and services used around the world.

These are India's Global Capability Centres, or GCCs, which could become an important new bridge between India and Kuwait and the Gulf Region.

A GCC is no longer simply a low-cost back office. The best centres today work on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, financial analytics, semiconductor technology, engineering, product design, digital platforms, research and global business strategy. India has more than 1,700 such centres, employing almost 2 million professionals.

For Kuwaiti or Gulf companies looking to become more international, this offers an interesting proposition: India can become the place where they build the capabilities needed for their next stage of growth.

Why India?

World's leading GCC destination, supported by a large pool of skilled professionals, tech ecosystem, competitive costs and growing capabilities in AI, digital technology and engineering.

Scale

More than 1,700 GCCs (over half of the world's GCCs), over 2,000 centres projected by 2030. Nearly 2 million professionals, expanding beyond traditional IT services to advanced research, product development, and innovation. Generating close to $100 billion in revenue.

Why Kuwait?

Offer another model for building technology and specialised capabilities in India, and support operations across the Middle East in areas such as AI, software development, cybersecurity, finance, analytics and engineering.

The bigger shift

India's GCC story is moving from "low-cost outsourcing" to "global innovation and technology hub". Multinationals are increasingly using their Indian centres to design products, develop technology and drive innovation for worldwide markets.

The mega-cities and beyond

India's strength lies partly in the extraordinary variety of its cities.

Bengaluru is perhaps the best-known example. It has become a global centre for software, AI, engineering and deep technology.

Hyderabad has developed strong capabilities in technology, pharmaceuticals, healthcare and aerospace.

Mumbai is India's financial capital and naturally suited to banking, investment, insurance and financial analytics.

Pune brings together engineering, manufacturing, automobiles and technology. Chennai has deep expertise in automobiles, electronics, industrial engineering and digital services.

Delhi-NCR combines technology and professional services with proximity to India's government and regulatory institutions.

And then there is the next layer of India.

Cities such as Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Coimbatore, Kolkata, and Indore are increasingly attracting technology and business operations. For a company, this means that India is not one talent market but many, each with different skills, costs, cultures, and areas of expertise.

This is particularly useful for a Kuwaiti or a Gulf company. It could, for instance, have financial analytics in Mumbai, engineering in Pune, technology in Bengaluru, and specialised operations in Ahmedabad, Kochi, or Jaipur.

Close familiarity between Kuwait/Gulf and India

Kuwaiti traders and businesses have been investing and operating in India for centuries. Companies such as Alghanim Industries, Alshaya Group, Asiya Investments and Agility Logistics have established a presence in the Indian economy. Alghanim Industries' Kirby India, for example, has manufacturing facilities in Hyderabad, Haridwar and Halol.

There are examples also from the wider Gulf Region. UAE-based DAMAC Group established a shared services and capability centre in Noida, supporting functions such as finance, human resources, sales operations, commercial activities and digital initiatives. It is developing another centre in Pune.

What is changing in India is the nature of the opportunity. A Kuwaiti company operating in India traditionally needed factories, shops, hotels, warehouses or investment assets. Today, it can also build a team that works for the company globally.

The significance of such a move goes beyond the number of employees in the centre. It represents a change in thinking: India is now not merely a market, but an attractive place from which to run and grow an international business.

What India offers that is difficult to replicate

Perhaps India's greatest advantage is its people.

Every year, millions of young Indians enter the workforce. Among them are engineers, scientists, doctors, finance professionals, software developers, designers, and management graduates. Many have studied or worked internationally and are comfortable operating across cultures and time zones.

But numbers alone do not explain India's attraction.

Over several decades, India has developed an ecosystem around this talented workforce, investing in universities, technology companies, start-ups, professional services firms, research institutions, tech parks, and increasingly sophisticated digital infrastructure.

This makes it possible for a company to start small and grow quickly.

As an example, a Kuwaiti business might begin with 50 specialists in India. With expansion in international operations, that team can grow from 500 to 5,000. It can move from accounting and customer support to data science, product development, engineering, and research. The Alshaya Group's GCC in Bengaluru is an excellent example.

That journey, from support function to strategic capability, is one of the defining features of India's GCC story.

A natural fit for Kuwaiti companies

Kuwaiti companies have strong expertise in sectors such as energy, banking, investment, logistics, retail, real estate, and hospitality. India offers complementary strengths in technology, engineering, analytics, pharmaceuticals, digital services, and a large pool of skilled professionals.

Imagine a Kuwaiti bank using India for cybersecurity, digital services, and AI. A logistics company developing its global digital platform from Bengaluru. An energy company using Indian engineers and data scientists to improve operational efficiency. A Kuwaiti investment company building a research and analytics team in Mumbai or GIFT City. These are not distant possibilities. The building blocks already exist.

There is also an important financial connection emerging through GIFT City in Gujarat, India's international financial centre, which is developing capabilities in international banking, capital markets, insurance and financial technology. India and Kuwait have already established institutional cooperation between Kuwait's Capital Markets Authority and India's International Financial Services Centres Authority in April 2024.

A relationship entering its next chapter

India and Kuwait have a relationship that is much older than today's business statistics, built through trade, seafaring, pearls, dates, textiles and, above all, people. Generations of Indians have lived and worked in Kuwait, while Kuwaiti businesses have developed relationships in India.

The next chapter of that relationship can be built around something new: knowledge and capability.

For Kuwait, establishing a GCC in India need not mean moving jobs away from Kuwait. It can mean creating an additional arm of a Kuwaiti enterprise, one that draws on India's talent while supporting the company's operations in Kuwait and other international markets.

And for India, Gulf investment brings something equally valuable: international capital, entrepreneurial experience and access to markets where Indian talent and technology can create new value.

The most interesting question, therefore, is not whether India can provide skilled people at competitive cost. That question has largely been answered.

The more important question is: What could a Kuwaiti company build in India that it could not build as easily anywhere else?

The answer could range from a technology centre to a global research team, from an investment-analytics platform to an engineering hub.

India's GCC story is ultimately a story about people. It is about talented young Indians working on global challenges, and about international companies discovering that the capabilities they need for tomorrow can be built in Indian cities today.

For Kuwait and the wider Gulf, that makes India more than an investment destination. It makes India a potential partner in building the future.

For any clarification or further information, please send an email to *amb.kuwait@mea.gov.in*

GCCs in India (Indicative)

Location	Approx. number of GCCs	Companies
Bengaluru	487+	JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Microsoft, Google, Walmart
Hyderabad	270+	Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs, Charles Schwab, Microsoft
Delhi NCR (Gurugram, Noida, Ghaziabad, etc.)	270+	American Express, Barclays, BlackRock
Mumbai	200+	Citi, JPMorgan Chase, Morgan Stanley
Pune	175+	Deutsche Bank, Barclays, BNY Mellon
Chennai	160+	Citi, HSBC, Standard Chartered, Wells Fargo

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

To End Global Hunger, Invest in Rural Communities

Esther Ngumbi

Dean of the Blavatnik School of Associate Professor of Entomology and African-American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The United Nations recently released its State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2026 report, which, perhaps surprisingly, delivered some encouraging news. While roughly 645 million people experienced hunger in 2025, that was nearly 14 million fewer than in the previous year. For the first time in a decade, the number of hungry people in Africa also declined.

But despite these positive developments, significant regional disparities persist. Most notably, the report finds that food insecurity remains more prevalent in rural communities and disproportionately affects women. The key question facing governments and development organizations, then, is how to improve food security in those communities and accelerate progress toward eliminating hunger.

Four priorities stand out. First, enhancing food security in rural communities requires boosting agricultural productivity on existing farmland in ways that are sustainable and minimize environmental impacts. As growing populations place increasing demands on agricultural systems, simply expanding farmland risks accelerating deforestation and environmental degradation. Producing more on existing farmland is thus essential to meet rising demand without further damaging natural ecosystems.

Healthier soils are critical to efforts to boost agricultural productivity. Any strategy to strengthen food security in rural communities must therefore begin with a simple but fundamental question: Are soils healthy enough to support sustainable increases in crop production?

Unfortunately, recent studies suggest that agricultural productivity in hunger-affected regions remains severely constrained by extensive soil degradation despite decades of attempts to improve soil health. Recognizing that poor soil threatens food and nutrition security, rural livelihoods, and environmental sustainability, African leaders endorsed the ten-year African Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan and the longer-term Soil Initiative for Africa Framework in 2024.

The good news is that once the foundational questions about soil health and quality have been answered—using available soil-health tests, as well as science-based indicators and assessments—corrective measures can be taken. There are numerous principles and practices for building soil health, including cover cropping, intercropping, crop rotation, rotational grazing, and the use of organic fertilizers and biofertilizers, as well as minimizing soil tillage, maximizing soil cover, increasing biodiversity, and maintaining living roots.

Second, efforts to improve soil health must be accompanied by investments in rural farming communities. Food producers need access to improved seed varieties, biofertilizers, water, and emerging technologies such as precision agriculture. Together, these investments could further boost agricultural productivity and bolster food security.

Third, stronger land tenure is crucial to improving food security in rural communities. Land-tenure security has long been recognized as a fundamental pillar of agricultural production, development, and rural transformation, incentivizing farmers to make long-term investments in restoring soil health and adopt other productivity-enhancing practices.

> Even as hunger declines around the world, food insecurity remains prevalent in rural communities. Restoring soil health, expanding access to new technologies, strengthening land rights, and upgrading public infrastructure are essential to boost agricultural productivity and protect rural livelihoods.

The link between stronger land rights and agricultural productivity is well documented. This link is particularly important for women, who contribute significantly to agricultural production yet remain disadvantaged in land ownership and tenure security. Although the effects of greater land-tenure security vary across regions and policy contexts, ensuring women's ownership rights can advance gender equality, enhance agricultural productivity, support rural livelihoods, and deliver lasting improvements in food security.

Lastly, governments must invest in the infrastructure that connects rural producers to markets, including electricity, refrigerated transportation, and roads. Better access to urban markets can help farmers generate additional income by enabling them to sell more of what they produce. Improved transport networks can also lower costs, enabling farmers to reinvest their savings in advanced technologies, thereby reducing post-harvest losses while diversifying into a wider range of higher-input crops.

With healthy soils, access to agricultural inputs and emerging technologies such as precision agriculture and AI, robust land-tenure rights, and upgraded infrastructure, rural farms around the world could sustainably increase agricultural productivity. Greater productivity would, in turn, protect livelihoods and help rural communities move from hunger to abundance.

But time is of the essence. While the latest decline in global hunger is encouraging, sustaining and building on this progress will require considerable investment in the rural communities where food insecurity is most entrenched, in Africa and beyond.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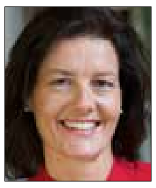
EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Democracies Must Get Serious About Industrial Policy



Ngaire Woods
Dean of the Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford.

Many democratically elected leaders grew up in a world where they were expected simply to referee markets and trust that their country's firms would prevail. But countries whose leaders still think this way are now losing ground to those where governments play a more strategic economic role.

In Europe alone, thousands of jobs are being lost each month as Chinese companies outcompete EU rivals in electric vehicles, solar panels, wind turbines, pharmaceuticals and biotech, and, increasingly, deployable AI. While China is the most prominent example of this approach, it is far from the only country using state subsidies, innovation incentives, protectionist measures, and financial policies to gain a competitive edge.

Unsurprisingly, voters in countries where jobs and industries are under pressure are increasingly demanding a change of course. The latest Democracy Perception Index, which surveyed 94,146 people across 98 countries, found that most respondents see "improving living standards and well-being" as democracy's primary purpose. To meet this expectation, democracies can and must rediscover and revitalize industrial policy. Their own history, together with a wave of recent studies, offers valuable insights into how to do it.

Industrial policy means deliberate government intervention aimed at changing the sectoral or technological composition of the economy. To this end, governments can use tax incentives, tariffs, subsidies for exports and research and development, training programs, infrastructure investment, and industrial parks.

Effective industrial policy requires public officials to analyze, plan, and implement measures that foster new industries and strengthen existing ones. Its current poster children are Singapore, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, China, and, arguably, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The many successful examples of industrial policy in Western democracies in the 1950s and 1960s, however, are often overlooked. After World War II, the French government used a series of national economic plans to guide its interventions, which included steering investment toward priority sectors. These policies helped transform France from a rural, protected economy into a modern, competitive one. Finland used dirigiste methods to build and direct capital toward tradable, capital-intensive industries such as basic metals, fertilizers, energy, and related industries.

> For decades, Western governments have ceded the strategic direction of their economies to the market. To dominate the industries of the future, they must learn from their own history and rebuild the institutions, expertise, and discipline that effective industrial policy demands.

By the 1980s, industrial policy had fallen out of fashion across the West. Guided by an economic philosophy that saw government intervention as inherently harmful, debt-ridden governments grappling with inflation slashed R&D investment and dismantled planning ministries, national development banks, and government marketing authorities. By leaving almost everything to the market, they neatly absolved politicians and public officials of responsibility for the strategic direction of the economy. For the next four decades, academic and policy researchers followed suit, focusing overwhelmingly on the failures of industrial policy.

Earlier this year, the World Bank made a striking volte-face. In a study of national development plans across 183 countries, it found that all have pursued some form of industrial policy. The Bank's chief economist, Indermit Gill, acknowledged that its 1990s-era opposition to industrial policy "has not aged well" and has the "practical value of a floppy disk today."

Academic economists have also begun to question the decades-old consensus on industrial policy. A 2009 study, for example, linked Italy's rapid postwar growth, structural transformation, and rising living standards to its use of subsidized long-term credit to spur manufacturing investment. More recently, a paper by London School of Economics economist Nathan Lane examined the industrial policies pursued by South Korea in the 1970s, once dismissed as an expensive failure, and found that they helped shift domestic manufacturing into more advanced industries.

The challenge facing governments today is to create an ecosystem in which firms compete vigorously to build the industries of the future. That is easier said than done. It demands that politicians use tariffs, procurement rules, local-content requirements, and subsidies for the right reasons—to renovate the economy. Too often, industrial policy ends up focused on winning political support, protecting incumbent firms, or favoring particular regions and towns.

Public officials, meanwhile, must be able to present politicians with clear options and feasible plans. They need to be close enough to business to know what a particular industry needs to thrive, but independent enough to identify and resist lobbying and regulatory capture. Achieving that balance means investing in training and ensuring officials develop and maintain a deep understanding of how businesses and markets operate.

While China's use of industrial policy has led to astonishing results, replicating it may be beyond the reach of democratic governments that lack China's resources, expertise, and market size. Rather than reproducing the Chinese model wholesale, they should focus on more targeted measures. In Romania, for example, payroll-tax exemptions for qualified computer engineers encouraged more workers to get degrees in the field, helping to turn the country into a major software-development hub. Brazil took a different route, directing scientific research toward local staple crops and region-specific ecological challenges, thereby laying the groundwork for its emergence as an agricultural powerhouse.

Over the past few months, several CEOs have asked me whether democracy is simply too slow and cumbersome to compete with countries like Singapore, China, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. My first response has been to point out that most of the world's poorest 50 countries, measured by nominal GDP per capita, are not democracies. In fact, only 12 are classified as full or flawed democracies by the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2024 Democracy Index, while more than 40 of the world's richest 50 countries are democratic.

But that is no reason for complacency. To compete for the industries of the future, policymakers and business leaders must shake off decades of lazy thinking about the role of government and start investing in the institutions, expertise, and discipline needed to get industrial policy right.

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Publisher & Editor-In-Chief
Tareq Yousef Al-Shumaimry
editorial@timeskuwait.com
Managing Editor
Sheikha Suhaila Fahad Al-Sabah
editor@timeskuwait.com
Executive Managing Editor
Reaven D'Souza
reavendsouza@timeskuwait.com
P O Box 5141, Safat 13052, Kuwait
Tel : 24814404, 24810109
Email : editor@timeskuwait.com
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Thought for the week

"We all live under the same sky, but we don't all have the same horizon. In an instant age, perhaps we must relearn the ancient truth that patience, too, has its victories.

- Konrad Adenauer

Proper diet
when breastfeeding

Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy

Hello Ladies!

Studies have proven that babies who were breastfed have a higher IQ when they grew older, show a better performance at school and are more sociable.

Breastfeeding benefits both the mom and the baby, and increases the bond between both of them. Breast milk is very rich in nutrients and antibodies that protect the baby. It is more easily digested by the baby than milk formula, and has just the right amount of fat, sugar, water, and protein to help your baby continue to grow.

Many new moms wonder if diet can affect breastfeeding or can make them produce less milk. You do not have to make major changes to what you eat or drink if you follow a normal healthy diet. Nevertheless, there are a few considerations to follow.

Keep in mind: If your diet is too low in calories or relies on only one food group, then this will affect the quality and quantity of your milk.

Calories: The exact amount depends on your weight, your workout level, your metabolism and how frequently you are breastfeeding. Remember, breastfeeding increases your calorie needs, usually moms who are breastfeeding need 2,000 calories per day.

- Increase your water consumption by half a liter a day. Nursing women tend to get thirsty especially during feeding sessions because part of their water consumption goes directly to milk production.
- Eat five meals a day, with two snacks in between and focus on healthy cooking, high fiber food choices, and plenty of vegetables and fruits.
- Keep in mind that everything you eat will go directly to your milk.
- So avoid any food that can cause bloating problems for your baby such as cauliflower, raw carrots, couscous, brocolli, capsicums, cabbage, beans, lentils and spices(you need to see the effects of these food on your baby).
- Avoid nicotine, caffeine, alcoholic beverages and artificial sweeteners, including diet sodas. Those will decrease breast milk production.

Don't Forget: Good Nutrition for you means good nutrition for your baby!

Eat like Mira
Create healthy habits, not restrictions

To subscribe to my diet programs, don't forget to log in to: www.eatlikemira.com.

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

RECIPE

Strawberry Mawa Rolls

Delicate, melt-in-the-mouth milk fudge rolls infused with the refreshing flavour of strawberry. These creamy rolls are made with milk powder and finished with a beautiful white chocolate drizzle, making them elegant enough for festive gifting and special occasions.

Preparation & Cooking Time
• Preparation: 10 minutes
• Cooking: 12–15 minutes
• Shaping & finishing: 15 minutes
• Total:40 minutes
•Yield
18–20 rolls

Chef Chhaya Thakker

Ingredients:
*For the Strawberry Mawa:
• Full-fat milk powder – 200 g
• Milk – 100 ml
• Fresh cream – 50 ml
• Powdered sugar – 60 g
• Unsalted butter – 25 g
• Strawberry crush – 50 g
• Strawberry essence – ½ tsp
• Pink food colour – a tiny drop(optional)
• White chocolate – 50 g, for drizzle
• Pistachio& rose petals – for garnish

Method:
• In a non-stick pan, combine milk, cream and milk powder. Mix thoroughly until smooth and lump-free.
•Add butter and powdered sugar and cook on low to medium-low heat, stirring continuously.
• When the mixture thickens and starts leaving the sides of the pan, add the strawberry crush.
• Continue cooking until the mixture becomes a soft, smooth mawa-like dough. Do not overcook, as the rolls can become dry.
•Switch off the heat. Add strawberry essence, cardamom powder and a tiny amount of pink colour, if desired.
•Transfer to a greased plate and allow it to cool until comfortable to handle.
•Grease your hands lightly with ghee and divide the mixture into equal portions.
•Roll each portion into a smooth small cylindrical roll.
•Melt the white chocolate and drizzle it lightly over the rolls.
• Garnish with a few pistachio or almond slivers and allow the drizzle to set.

Tips:
• Use full-fat milk powder for the richest mawa texture.
• Add strawberry crush only after the mixture has thickened; this helps prevent excess moisture.
• Cook on low heat to keep the rolls soft and creamy.
• If the mixture feels too soft, cook for another 1–2 minutes .
• use a delicate white-chocolate drizzle rather than coating them completely.

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

In the AI Gold Rush, the Cloud Wins

Cecilia Rikap

Associate Professor of Economics and Head of Research at University College London's Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, is the author, most recently, of The Rulers: Corporate Power in the Age of AI and the Cloud (Verso Books, 2026).

When Google (Alphabet) reported its latest quarterly results on July 22, investors balked at its negative free cash flow and increased capital expenditures on data centers. But Google is not like OpenAI or Anthropic, which are both still trying to find a profitable business model as they burn through cash. It remains a cloud-computing giant, and its cloud division's results for the second quarter were nothing short of extraordinary.

Google Cloud's revenues grew by 82% year on year and are now equivalent to 40% of the revenues generated by Google Search. And its operating margin was equally impressive, rising by 15 points to hit 36%. The era when Google generated profits exclusively from advertising is long gone.

Two other tech giants, Microsoft and Amazon, are in the same boat. Microsoft's cloud business is its fastest-growing division, generating record profits in 2026, and Amazon Web Services' net sales have jumped by 37% year on year, in what the company described as the fastest increase in 18 quarters. AWS's operating income grew even more—by over 60% compared to the same quarter in 2025. Just like Google, Amazon's free cash flow turned negative in this period. But given its other results, this is not a signal of weakness but of a quest for future growth.

AI is these cloud giants' Trojan Horse. More AI hype means more cloud usage, which expands their businesses. Because they own the cloud, they control the whole digital stack. Everything from data and software to semiconductors and frontier AI models is offered through the cloud, which is the indispensable supermarket for those developing or deploying (consuming) digital technologies. Because third parties offer digital technologies as services, too, they expand the appeal of the cloud as a one-stop shop. The result is a vast network of thousands of companies—including other giants like SAP, Oracle, and IBM—offering their technologies through platforms owned by Amazon, Microsoft, and Google.

Thus, the cloud is where digital technologies are co-produced by the many for the disproportionate benefit of the few. Controlling the cloud has distinguished Amazon, Microsoft, and Google even from other massive tech companies like Oracle and Nvidia. Their own advantages depend narrowly on AI, though Nvidia, a chokepoint for chip design, has more leeway within the AI value chain, whereas Oracle is trying to reinvent itself as an AI infrastructure provider after deciding in 2023 that it would operate its cloud infrastructure services on Microsoft's data centers. Similarly, Meta's recent infrastructure investments mostly reflect its AI ambitions.

Unlike Oracle or Meta, the cloud giants are investing in data centers not only to train and run AI models, but also to bring more clients into their existing ecosystems. Companies from every industry, along with governments and even international organizations, rent vast, bespoke suites of digital services from Amazon, Microsoft, and Google. These include storage on virtual servers, content delivery networks, cybersecurity software, technology for routing user traffic, and hundreds of other services.

This far more diverse business explains why the cloud giants are less exposed to AI-industry risks than Oracle, Nvidia, or Meta, not to mention companies like OpenAI and Anthropic. For the cloud hegemons, AI is just one more feature to integrate into an existing suite of thousands of other cloud services.

The greater the competition between AI models, the stronger the cloud giants will become. More AI models means more digital-technology development and consumption, and thus more cloud businesses. Because AI labs like OpenAI and Anthropic suffer every time a Chinese or US startup releases a competitive open-weight model, they cannot pursue a strategy independent of the cloud giants. They must focus all their time and attention on releasing even more advanced models, which pushes them to consume more cloud services.

If the promise of AI fails, it is companies like Oracle and Nvidia that will feel the squeeze. Given the growing discontent over data-center construction and the increasingly suspect narrative about AI's return on investment, these companies have good reason to worry. But Amazon, Microsoft, and Google would emerge as strong as ever, or even stronger, owing to their greater financial leeway and a more diversified business.

The companies and public bodies migrating to the cloud out of a sense of AI FOMO (fear of missing out) will remain cloud-bound even if the AI investment boom turns out to be a bubble. Digital architecture is increasingly the backbone of most organizations and activities today, and building similar systems outside of the cloud hegemons' ecosystems would be incredibly costly and challenging, if not impossible.

Regardless of what happens with AI, the cloud giants' control over our economies and societies will only grow, becoming unaccountable accretions of private power that no democracy can accept. With all eyes on AI, we risk missing the forest for the trees.