Issue No: 1298
Established 1996
06 - 12 September 2026

THE TIMES

KUWAIT'S PREMIER WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

www.timeskuwait.com 250 Fils

timeskuwait
thetimesq8
thetimeskuwait

LOCAL
Kuwait sets strict limits on borrowing from Future Generations Reserve 2

LOCAL
Lesotho seeks new economic partnership with Kuwait 4

7 LOCAL
From Samarkand to Failaka – When the Earth Speaks the Language of Civilization

Kuwait Rewrites the Rules of Media for the Digital Age

The proposed media law could finally bring Kuwait's media rules into the digital age but its success will depend on whether regulation protects the public without suffocating journalism, creativity and innovation

By Reaven D'Souza
Executive Managing Editor

Kuwait is preparing to rewrite the rules of its media landscape at a moment when the very meaning of "media" has changed.

A newspaper is no longer simply a newspaper. A television station is no longer confined to a television screen. Advertising can be a 30-second video on a phone, a social media post by an influencer, a product review or content generated with the help of artificial intelligence.

The proposed new media law recognises this reality. It brings publications, broadcasting, electronic media, digital advertising, content creation, artistic production and emerging technologies under one regulatory umbrella. In doing so, Kuwait is attempting something much bigger than updating an old law: it is trying to redesign the legal architecture of an industry that has been transformed by technology.

That is the good news. The more difficult question is whether Kuwait can regulate this new media economy without regulating away some of the very creativity and openness that make it valuable. That is the test.

Why the overhaul is necessary

Kuwait's existing media legislation was developed at different stages of the industry's evolution. The result is a regulatory system built around separate laws governing publications, audio-visual media and electronic media.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Kuwait sets strict limits on borrowing from Future Generations Reserve

New law allows borrowing only as an exception, with annual and cumulative ceilings

Kuwait has amended the law governing its Future Generations Reserve, allowing the State to borrow from the fund under tightly controlled conditions while protecting its capital and ensuring the long-term growth of its assets.

Decree-Law No. 81 of 2026, amending Decree-Law No. 106 of 1976 concerning the Future Generations Reserve, was published in the official gazette Kuwait Today and has come into force.

The amendment establishes a legal mechanism for the government to borrow from the reserve to support the State's General Reserve, but makes clear that such borrowing is an exception and must meet specific conditions.

Under the new law, borrowing requires a Cabinet decision, based on a proposal from the minister responsible for chairing the Kuwait Investment Authority's Board of Directors and following approval by the KIA Board.

Each borrowing decision must clearly specify the loan amount, purpose, return, repayment period and schedule, as well as conditions governing any restructuring or rescheduling of repayments.

Two strict borrowing ceilings

The law establishes two key limits on borrowing from the Future Generations Reserve. First, total borrowing during any single financial year cannot exceed 100 percent of the average returns generated by the reserve during the previous five audited financial years.

Second, the total outstanding balance of accumulated loans cannot exceed 10 percent of the net value of the reserve's assets, based on its audited financial statements for the previous financial year.

No new borrowing will be permitted if either of these limits is exceeded. Borrowing can resume only once the relevant ratio falls back within the prescribed limits.

Loans protected and prioritized for repayment

The legislation requires the principal amount borrowed, together with accrued returns, to be recorded as an asset owed to the Future Generations Reserve.

The loans will receive priority for repayment from state revenues once a surplus is recorded in the General Budget Account and the state's final account has been approved.

The law also prevents the government from writing off or reducing such loans unless this is authorized through a specific law.

KIA retains responsibility for reserve

The amendments reaffirm the Kuwait Investment Authority's responsibility for managing and investing the Future Generations Reserve.

The KIA will have the authority to use the necessary financial, investment and financing instruments to manage the reserve according to appropriate technical standards. Investment returns will continue to be added to the Future Generations Account.

The amendment also changes the mechanism governing annual allocations to the reserve. When state revenues exceed expenditures, a percentage of the actual surplus recorded in the state's final account will be allocated to the reserve, based on a proposal by the minister responsible for the KIA and with Cabinet approval.

Protecting future generations

The explanatory memorandum said the amendments are intended to strike a balance between the State's current financial requirements and its responsibility to protect the wealth of future generations.

The new borrowing mechanism is designed to provide the government with greater financial flexibility when necessary, while preventing direct or uncontrolled withdrawals from the reserve.

By limiting borrowing to a defined share of investment returns and a small proportion of the reserve's net assets, the legislation seeks to preserve the fund's capital and support the continued growth of its assets over the long term.

The Future Generations Reserve was established as a strategic savings mechanism to preserve part of Kuwait's national wealth for future generations and is managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority.

Messi-signed jersey brings Argentina's football magic to Kuwait

LuLu Exchange honours 'My Albiceleste Moment' contest winner at special ceremony

A memorable piece of Argentina's football history has found its way to Kuwait, as LuLu Exchange presented a Lionel Messi-signed Argentina jersey to the winner of its 'My Albiceleste Moment' campaign.

The prize presentation was held at the LuLu Exchange Al Rai branch on September 1, bringing together football enthusiasts, campaign participants and representatives of the Argentine community in Kuwait.

The campaign was organised by LuLu Exchange as part of its partnership with the Argentine Football Association (AFA), under which the company serves as the Association's Regional Fintech Partner. The initiative sought to celebrate the passion of Argentina's supporters across the region by inviting fans to share their most memorable 'Albiceleste' moments.

The winning entry earned its creator the opportunity to take home an especially coveted prize an Argentina national team jersey personally signed by football icon Lionel Messi.

The presentation ceremony was attended by Argentine Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Ramiro Hernán Velloso, who joined LuLu Exchange General Manager Rajesh Rangray in congratulating the winners and celebrating the enthusiasm generated by the campaign.

The event also highlighted the strong emotional connection that Argentina's national team enjoys with football fans across Kuwait and the wider Gulf. For many supporters, Argentina's blue-and-white shirt represents more than football, carrying memories of World Cup triumphs, legendary players and generations of sporting passion.

The 'My Albiceleste Moment' campaign invited participants to capture and share their personal Argentina football experiences, turning individual memories into a celebration of the wider football community.

Entries were assessed by an independent panel, with storytelling, creativity and audience engagement among the key considerations in selecting the winning contribution. For LuLu Exchange, the initiative forms part of its broader efforts to connect with customers through sport, entertainment and community-focused campaigns. Its partnership with the AFA has provided the company with an opportunity to bring Argentine football closer to supporters across the region.

The partnership between LuLu Exchange and the Argentine Football Association was launched in 2025, establishing the company as the AFA's Regional Fintech Partner and creating a platform for football-themed campaigns and fan engagement activities.

The latest campaign demonstrates how football continues to transcend borders, bringing together communities through shared memories and passion for the game.

For the contest winner, however, the occasion was about much more than winning a competition. Receiving a jersey bearing Messi's signature represents a lasting connection to one of the greatest players in football history and a tangible reminder of a personal 'Albiceleste moment' that will now become a treasured memory.

Home car impoundment limited to eligible violators under new traffic rules

Kuwait's new smart home vehicle impoundment system will come into effect on Sunday, September 6, allowing eligible motorists to serve their vehicle impoundment period at a location of their choice, subject to conditions set by the General Traffic Department.

The system is part of the Ministry of Interior's efforts to modernize traffic services, simplify procedures and make greater use of digital technology. Under the new mechanism, a smart impoundment device will be installed on the vehicle at the location where the violation is recorded. The impoundment period will begin at midnight on the same day, giving the driver sufficient time to move the vehicle to the approved location.

The installation fee for the device is KD10, while an additional KD2 will be charged for each day of the home impoundment period.

Not applicable to all violations

Traffic authorities have clarified that the home impoundment option does not apply to every violation. It is available only in cases where the vehicle is legally subject to impoundment and where the violation meets the conditions established by the General Traffic Department. Certain serious violations and cases requiring corrective action may continue to require the vehicle to be held at a traffic impoundment garage.

For example, vehicles impounded for excessive or disturbing exhaust noise may have to remain at the impoundment garage until the offending modification is removed and the vehicle is inspected by the relevant authorities.

The traffic regulations provide for vehicle impoundment in a range of violations, including reckless driving, racing, excessive speeding, running red lights, using a mobile phone while driving, driving against traffic and deliberately obstructing the movement of vehicles.

Existing impounded vehicles eligible

The new system also allows vehicles currently held at traffic impoundment garages to be transferred to the smart home impoundment system, subject to the applicable conditions, enabling owners to complete the remaining impoundment period at an approved location.

Vehicle owners must not tamper with, damage or remove the smart device. Any malfunction must be reported to the General Traffic Department, while the device must be returned after the impoundment period ends.

Once the period is completed, the vehicle owner will receive a notification through the Sahel government application confirming that the impoundment has ended. The owner must then visit a location designated by the General Traffic Department to complete the vehicle release procedures.

The Ministry of Interior said the smart home impoundment system is intended to provide greater flexibility for motorists while improving the efficiency of traffic procedures and strengthening the use of modern technology in traffic management.

Authorities have nevertheless urged motorists to comply with traffic regulations and avoid violations that endanger their own safety and that of other road users.

Juvenile crime falls 48 percent amid tougher laws, cases fall to 795

Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait announced Saturday that juvenile crimes in Kuwait fell by 48 percent during the first half of 2026, compared with the same period last year. According to Ministry of Justice statistics, the number of juvenile crimes dropped from 1,523 cases in the first half of 2025 to 795 cases during the same period of 2026.

Speaking to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Al-Sumait said juvenile crime had continued to decline for the second consecutive year, recording a 52 percent decrease compared with the first half of 2024, when 1,665 cases were registered. The decline was recorded across several of the most prominent cases handled by the Juvenile Prosecution.

Traffic cases decline 63 percent

Traffic-related juvenile cases recorded the sharpest decline, falling by 63 percent, from 1,048 cases in the first half of 2025 to 383 cases in the first half of 2026. Assault cases also decreased, recording a 32 percent decline during the same period. Al-Sumait attributed the decline in part to a legislative drive pursued by the government to strengthen deterrence and prevention in crimes involving juveniles.

He said a package of legislative amendments had targeted some of the most dangerous behaviors and offenses with the greatest impact on individual and public safety. The reforms included the introduction of the new traffic law, tougher penalties for serious traffic violations, increased penalties for manslaughter and accidental injuries, and a new law combating narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The legislative changes also criminalized the possession or carrying of bladed weapons without legitimate justification in public places, while increasing penalties when such weapons are used to assault or terrorize others.

Legislative and social factors

The Minister of Justice said legislation is one of several important factors that must be considered when assessing the decline in juvenile crime, alongside preventive and social factors. He praised the efforts of the Ministry of Interior in preventing and combating juvenile crime, as well as the Ministry of Social Affairs for its role in caring for and rehabilitating juveniles.

Al-Sumait also commended the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and the Ministry of Health for their efforts to protect children from violence and abuse and provide them with care and support. He stressed the importance of continued coordination among the authorities concerned with juvenile affairs to strengthen prevention and awareness programs and develop protection, care and rehabilitation initiatives.

"Protecting children and preserving their rights is a shared responsibility," Al-Sumait emphasized. The Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the Public Prosecution, will continue monitoring statistical indicators, analyzing the causes of juvenile delinquency and assessing the impact of legislative developments aimed at reducing juvenile crime. Al-Sumait said these efforts are intended to protect young people, preserve family stability and safeguard the security and stability of Kuwaiti society.

Lesotho seeks new economic partnership with Kuwait

Foreign Minister Limpho Tau pitches food security, livestock, healthcare manpower and clean energy as key areas for cooperation

The Times Kuwait Report

Lesotho is seeking to transform its longstanding relationship with Kuwait into a broader economic partnership, with food security, agriculture, livestock, healthcare manpower, investment and clean energy emerging as key areas for cooperation.

Speaking to The Times Kuwait following an official visit to Kuwait, Lesotho's Foreign Minister Limpho Tau said his country wants to move beyond a relationship traditionally centered on development assistance and build partnerships that generate tangible benefits for both countries.

Tau highlighted Lesotho's fertile agricultural land, abundant water resources, livestock potential and renewable-energy capabilities, saying these could offer new opportunities for Kuwaiti investors while helping Kuwait diversify its sources of food and meat.

"Kuwait is a very trusted partner for Lesotho, and we now want to take this relationship to the next level," Tau said.

Food security offers major opportunity

Tau identified food security as one of the most promising areas for expanded bilateral cooperation. Lesotho, a mountainous kingdom of around two million people, currently produces only about a quarter of its food requirements, leaving considerable scope to expand domestic agricultural production, he said.

The country has fertile land, significant water resources and a climate suitable for producing a variety of crops, including grains, wheat and vegetables. "There are large areas of fertile agricultural land in Lesotho that can be used to produce grains, vegetables and different types of food, and Kuwait can import these products from Lesotho," Tau said.

He invited Kuwaiti investors to establish large-scale agricultural and food-production projects in Lesotho, potentially serving both the local market and wider regional markets. Such investment, he said, could simultaneously create commercial opportunities for Kuwaiti businesses and contribute to Kuwait's long-term food-security strategy.

Tau said Lesotho is ready to explore practical arrangements with Kuwait to develop cooperation in grain, wheat and other agricultural products.

Livestock could open new meat supply channel

Livestock is another sector Tau believes could become an important pillar of bilateral economic cooperation. Around 70 percent of Lesotho's territory is mountainous, with its highland areas offering favorable conditions for livestock breeding.

The country has significant numbers of sheep, goats and cattle and sees potential to develop an organized meat-export channel to Kuwait. "Most of the animals are raised in the mountainous areas, and this represents an opportunity for farmers in Lesotho to export meat to Kuwait," Tau said.

He said potential exports could include live animals as well as processed and frozen meat, subject to the health, veterinary and regulatory requirements agreed by the two countries.

Lesotho is also prepared to establish a dedicated unit, entity or company to coordinate with Kuwaiti importers and streamline export arrangements, he added. The development of such a mechanism could provide Lesotho's farmers with access to a new international market while giving Kuwait another potential source of meat imports.

Kuwaiti investors invited to Lesotho

Tau issued a direct invitation to Kuwaiti investors to explore opportunities across Lesotho's agriculture, livestock and

energy sectors. He pointed to the country's moderate climate, water availability and potential for clean-energy generation as important investment advantages.

"There is an opportunity for Kuwaiti investors in grains, wheat, agricultural production and livestock," he said. Lesotho also has the potential to become a supplier of clean energy to the wider southern African region, Tau added, opening another potential avenue for international investment.

He encouraged Kuwaiti institutions and private-sector companies to examine investment opportunities in the country, including the Kuwait Investment Authority, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other private investors.

Lesotho ready to supply healthcare professionals

Healthcare manpower is another area where Lesotho hopes to establish practical cooperation with Kuwait. Tau said discussions with Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs included a proposal to facilitate the recruitment of skilled and specialized workers from Lesotho, particularly nurses and other healthcare professionals.

Asked whether Lesotho would be able to provide healthcare personnel to Kuwait, he said his country was ready to respond to Kuwait's needs once the necessary agreement was concluded.

"Once the agreement is signed, and the Kuwaiti side has the guarantees and arrangements it requires, we will be able to provide the healthcare professionals and personnel needed," Tau said. He described healthcare manpower as a potentially important new component of bilateral relations, complementing cooperation in investment, trade and development.

Welcoming environment for investors

Tau said Lesotho offers a flexible and welcoming environment for foreign investment, highlighting competitive electricity costs and what he described as a committed and hardworking workforce. The presence of investments from major economies, including the United States and China, demonstrates the country's ability to attract international investors, he said.

He stressed that the Lesotho government is ready to work with Kuwaiti companies and institutions to identify viable projects and facilitate investment.

From development assistance to mutual partnership

A key objective of Tau's visit was to redefine the nature of the relationship between Kuwait and Lesotho. While expressing appreciation for Kuwait's longstanding development assistance, he said the next phase should focus increasingly on commercially viable projects and partnerships that benefit both sides.

"We want Kuwait to become a development partner, not only a country that provides assistance to Lesotho," Tau said. He explained that Lesotho wants Kuwait to benefit from the relationship through investments in projects capable of generating economic returns while contributing to Lesotho's development.

One proposal under consideration is the establishment of a fuel-storage facility in Lesotho by Kuwaiti companies under a build-and-operate model. The project could offer investment opportunities for Kuwaiti businesses while strengthening Lesotho's fuel-supply security, Tau said.

He added that there are several other potential projects that Kuwaiti institutions and companies could explore.

Kuwait's longstanding development role

Tau praised Kuwait's contribution to Lesotho's development over several decades, particularly through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development. Diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Lesotho date back to 1978, while Lesotho opened its embassy in Kuwait in 2010.

Over the years, Kuwait has supported a number of development projects in Lesotho, including road and water infrastructure. Tau singled out the Midlands Water Project, which he said provides water to more than five cities, including the capital Maseru.

He described these projects as an important demonstration of Kuwait's longstanding commitment to Lesotho's development and expressed appreciation for the support provided over the years.

Visit aimed at revitalizing bilateral ties

Tau said the principal purpose of his visit was to reinvigorate bilateral relations following a period without high-level exchanges between the two countries. "I came to Kuwait to make sure that we revive our relationship with this great country, but also to offer moral support to Kuwait in the situation it is currently experiencing," he said.

He emphasized that Lesotho remembers Kuwait's support and continues to attach considerable importance to the historical relationship between the two countries. "Kuwait is a very trusted partner for Lesotho and a reliable development partner. We therefore want to take our relationship to the next level," Tau said.

Building a long-term economic partnership

Tau said Lesotho now wants to translate its historic friendship with Kuwait into concrete economic projects. He identified food security, agricultural production, meat exports, healthcare manpower, investment, water and clean energy as priority areas where the two countries can develop practical cooperation.

Lesotho, he said, is ready to work with the Kuwaiti government, development institutions and private sector to convert these opportunities into sustainable partnerships. For Kuwait, the proposed cooperation could provide access to additional sources of agricultural products and meat while opening investment opportunities in agriculture, livestock, energy and infrastructure.

For Lesotho, the objective is to build on decades of friendship and development cooperation and establish a more balanced, long-term economic partnership based on trade, investment and mutual benefit.

Building the Region's Innovation Capacity:

Lessons from the GCC's Energy Economies

The GCC is not starting from zero. It already has the talent, resources and ambition needed to build a knowledge-driven future.

By Dr. Pupjana Kole
Organizational Leadership Researcher – Oil and Gas Sector
Special to The Times Kuwait

For decades, the economies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have been built on oil and gas. That wealth has transformed the region, raising living standards and creating opportunities on a scale few other parts of the world have experienced.

But the next chapter will require something more. Innovation is no longer simply a way for countries and companies to gain a competitive edge. It is increasingly becoming essential to turning today's wealth into lasting prosperity. Across the GCC, this is changing the way governments, businesses and institutions think about the future.

At its simplest, innovation means finding better ways of doing things creating better products, delivering better services and, ultimately, improving people's quality of life.

The challenge for hydrocarbon-based economies is that financial wealth alone does not automatically create a knowledge economy. Sustained innovation requires strong research and development, technology capabilities and a workforce equipped for knowledge-intensive industries. Across the region, there are still gaps in these areas, including relatively modest R&D spending, limited high-technology exports and a comparatively small share of workers in knowledge-intensive roles.

These challenges should not be viewed as failures unique to individual GCC countries. They are largely the result of how these economies developed. Countries that industrialized around the extraction of natural resources naturally built different capabilities from those whose economies grew around research, technology and knowledge production.

What is encouraging is the scale of the region's response.

GCC governments have invested heavily in higher education, recognizing that a successful knowledge economy depends on people just as much as it depends on financial capital. The UAE's Dubai International Academic City is one visible example, bringing together tens of thousands of students from more than 100 nationalities.

Kuwait, meanwhile, has been pursuing its own approach. The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), through its Challenge Innovation programme, has partnered with the University of Cambridge Judge Business School to give Kuwaiti private-sector companies access to international innovation expertise. Through action-learning workshops held in both Kuwait and Cambridge, managers and professionals are given the opportunity to learn innovation practices and, importantly, apply them to real business challenges.

This practical element matters

Research on entrepreneurship in the Gulf suggests that economic diversification is closely linked to innovation and entrepreneurship. Economies that successfully move beyond dependence on a single sector tend to perform better over the long term. But there remains a significant gap between research, industry and government.

The region's universities produce a substantial amount of scientific research. Too often, however, that research does not make the journey from the laboratory into businesses, products and public policy. Researchers point to several reasons, including funding constraints, a shortage of industry-relevant skills and the need for stronger leadership focused specifically on turning research into commercial opportunities.

This is where the private sector including the oil and gas industry has an important role to play. Innovation is sometimes associated with large R&D departments, expensive technology and major government programmes. Yet global industry research increasingly suggests that innovation also depends heavily on the creativity, experience and expertise of individuals.

In other words, technology may provide the tools, but people remain at the heart of innovation. Kuwait's experience with the KFAS Challenge Innovation programme provides a useful example of how this connection can work in practice.

Rather than treating university research and commercial innovation as two separate worlds, the programme brings managers and engineers from Kuwaiti private-sector companies into an action-learning environment developed with Cambridge Judge Business School. They gain new approaches to innovation and then return to their organizations to put those ideas into practice.

For Kuwait, this offers an important lesson

Building innovation capacity is unlikely to happen because of one major announcement or a single government initiative. It is built gradually through people gaining new skills, companies experimenting with new ideas, universities working more closely with industry and policymakers creating an environment where innovation can take root.

For a country whose economy remains closely connected to oil and gas, the objective is not to abandon the strengths that have created its prosperity. It is to build new strengths alongside them.

The GCC is not starting from zero. It already has universities, talented professionals, significant financial resources, ambitious governments and companies with deep technical expertise.

Smart legislation: Kuwait's gateway to foreign investment

By Attorney Abdulrahman Al-Houti
Special to The Times Kuwait

In today's competitive global economy, attracting foreign investment is no longer determined solely by natural resources, geographic location or market size. Increasingly, investors look for a stable, transparent and predictable legislative environment that protects their interests and provides clear rules for doing business.

For Kuwait, developing a modern and flexible legal framework is therefore an essential part of efforts to attract foreign capital, diversify the national economy and strengthen the country's position as a regional commercial and financial hub. Kuwait has taken important steps in this direction through legislation aimed at improving the investment climate and responding to changing economic conditions. Law No. 116 of 2013 on the Promotion of Direct Investment provides foreign investors with a framework for establishing investment entities and offers a range of guarantees and incentives.

The law also established the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), tasked with attracting and promoting direct investment, improving the investment environment, facilitating procedures and encouraging the transfer of modern technologies and management expertise to Kuwait.

Legislative reform as an economic driver

The importance of legislation extends beyond providing legal protection. Well-designed laws can reduce uncertainty, simplify procedures and give investors greater confidence when making long-term decisions.

Kuwait's ongoing legislative modernization efforts are therefore closely linked to its broader economic transformation agenda and Kuwait Vision 2035. The government has been reviewing existing legislation to ensure that it keeps pace with digital transformation, changing investment patterns and increasing competition for international capital.

Recent reforms have addressed areas including digital commerce, public financing, real estate transactions, taxation and business regulation.

The draft legislation governing digital commerce, for example, seeks to create a regulatory framework for emerging digital business models while introducing mechanisms that allow innovators to test new products and services in a controlled environment. Such measures can help create greater confidence in electronic transactions while supporting innovation and entrepreneurship.

Protecting investors and strengthening transparency

Investor confidence depends not only on incentives but also on the effectiveness and transparency of the regulatory system. Kuwait's direct investment framework provides important protections, including safeguards relating to expropriation, confidentiality and the transfer abroad of profits and invested capital. It also provides incentives that can include tax exemptions and certain customs-related benefits for qualifying investments.

At the same time, stronger controls over financial and real estate transactions are intended to prevent abuse and improve market transparency. Measures requiring proof of payment through bank transfers or certified checks for certain real estate transactions, for instance, aim to reduce opportunities for fictitious transactions, fraud and money laundering.

From legislation to implementation

The real test of legislative reform, however, lies in implementation. Investors need more than laws on paper. They require efficient government procedures, consistent enforcement, clear regulatory guidance and timely decisions. Reducing bureaucratic obstacles and improving coordination between government agencies can be just as important as introducing new legislation.

Kuwait's investor roadmap reflects this approach by providing a structured process covering investment licensing, trade-name registration, company incorporation, commercial registration, tax registration and employee registration.

The country's ability to attract quality foreign investment will ultimately depend on how effectively these reforms translate into a predictable and competitive business environment.

The road ahead

Further modernization of key economic legislation could strengthen Kuwait's investment position even more. Areas such as commercial companies, direct investment, public-private partnerships, competition, taxation, labor and insolvency remain central to the development of a modern business environment.

The objective should not simply be to create more legislation, but to develop smart legislation laws that are clear, flexible and capable of adapting to technological and economic change.

For Kuwait, such an approach can help reduce investment risks, encourage entrepreneurship, promote fair competition and attract productive foreign capital.

A modern legislative framework, supported by efficient institutions and transparent implementation, can become one of Kuwait's most important tools for achieving economic diversification and realizing the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035.

PACI warns users to verify Mobile ID authentication requests

The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) has urged citizens and residents to exercise caution when receiving authentication requests through Kuwait's Mobile ID service.

PACI advised users to approve authentication requests only when they have personally initiated the related service or transaction. The authority stressed the importance of carefully checking the details of each request before granting approval. Users should verify the identity of the service provider and ensure that the stated purpose of the authentication request corresponds to a transaction they have initiated.

PACI said the precautionary measures are aimed at protecting users' personal information and preventing unauthorized access through the digital identity system. The authority called on Mobile ID users to remain vigilant and avoid approving any authentication request that they do not recognize or did not initiate.

Kuwait traffic campaigns record 39,932 violations, 1,211 accidents in one week

Authorities intensify enforcement as 196 wanted persons arrested

Intensive security and traffic campaigns conducted across Kuwait last week resulted in 39,932 traffic violations, the arrest of 196 wanted persons, and the handling of 1,211 traffic accidents, according to the Ministry of Interior's Operations Affairs Sector.

The campaigns were carried out by the General Traffic Department (GTD) and Emergency Police as part of the ministry's continuing efforts to enforce traffic regulations, deter dangerous driving and improve road safety.

According to the GTD's weekly statistics, authorities recorded 37,742 traffic violations and dealt with 1,065 traffic accidents. The campaigns also resulted in the impoundment of 503 vehicles and four motorcycles for violations requiring vehicle seizure under the law.

In addition, 29 vehicles wanted by the judiciary were seized and referred to the relevant authorities. Authorities also referred 23 juveniles to the Juvenile Prosecution for committing serious traffic violations, while 28 motorists were detained at the Traffic Detention Centre pending completion of legal procedures.

Meanwhile, Emergency Police campaigns conducted from August 23 to 29 resulted in 2,190 traffic violations and the arrest of 167 wanted persons. The operations also led to the arrest of 98 individuals for violations of residency and labour laws. Police further arrested 20 people suspected of using or possessing narcotics, while five individuals found in an abnormal condition were referred to the Anti-Narcotics Department.

Emergency Police also impounded 90 vehicles and responded to 146 traffic accidents during the same period. The Ministry of Interior said the intensified campaigns reflect its continued efforts to strengthen traffic discipline, enforce the law and protect the safety of motorists and other road users.

Truck movement restrictions resume

Separately, the General Traffic Department has begun enforcing the seasonal truck movement restrictions from September 1. Under the restrictions, trucks are prohibited from using all roads during peak periods from 6:30am to 9:00am and from 12:30pm to 3:30pm.

The restrictions will remain in effect until June 14, 2027, as authorities seek to ease congestion and improve traffic flow during busy periods.

The Traffic Department has stressed that enforcement campaigns will continue across Kuwait, urging motorists to comply with traffic regulations and exercise greater caution on the roads.

From Samarkand to Failaka

When the Earth Speaks the Language of Civilization

By Tareq Yousef Alshumaimry
Former Secretary-General of the Commercial Arbitration Centre of the Gulf Cooperation Council

Cities thousands of years old reveal striking parallels between Uzbekistan's heritage and Kuwait's story. A few days in Tashkent and Samarkand inevitably lead one to reflect on Kuwait's history.

In August 2026, I participated in the International Media Forum, "Islamic Civilization: A New Perspective – New Discoveries," which brought together around 300 experts and media representatives from nearly 50 countries.

Between the forum's sessions and visits, however, something else made itself unmistakably felt: history remains alive in these places.

A History That Is Still Alive

In my address to the forum, I said that the real challenge facing the media today is not simply to preserve the memory of Islamic civilization, but to present it anew to younger generations in a language that enables them to feel that this history is part of their own story and heritage not merely pages in an old book.

The idea that Tashkent and Samarkand share cultural and civilizational similarities is not difficult to grasp. I saw it in their buildings, markets, mosques and roads, and even in the way people welcome their guests. From there, my thoughts naturally turned to Kuwait.

I began looking at Kuwait through the same lens with which I viewed Samarkand, and in many archaeological and historical sites I discovered that Kuwait, too, has a deep and remarkably similar civilizational story.

Samarkand – More Than Two Thousand Years of History

Today, Samarkand stands as one of the oldest historic cities in Central Asia. UNESCO indicates that evidence of settlement in the area dates back to around 1500 BCE, while Afrasiab, ancient Samarkand, was established in the seventh century BCE.

Yet Samarkand's greatness is not simply a consequence of its age. Its true advantage lay in its location. The city stood at the crossroads of caravan routes carrying goods, ideas and cultures between China, Central Asia, Persia and the Middle East. By the early centuries of the Common Era, Samarkand had become an important center along the Silk Roads, reaching the height of its glory during the Timurid period in the 14th and 15th centuries. UNESCO has therefore described it as a "cradle of cultures."

Standing before Samarkand's history its scholars, jurists, mosques and architecture it is difficult to regard these figures and monuments simply as relics of the past. They are remnants of an era in which architecture, science, astronomy, trade and politics formed part of a single civilizational project.

Tashkent – A Story That Began Before the Name We Know Today

In Tashkent, the story takes me back to the ancient region of Chach and the archaeological city of Kanka. UNESCO identifies Kanka as the first capital of Chach a vast fortified city through which the Silk Road network once passed.

Agriculture also developed in this region centuries before the Common Era, with water, farming and trade becoming fundamental drivers of the growth of urban settlements. This offers an important lesson for us in the Gulf: ancient civilizations did not wait for perfect conditions. They turned geography into opportunity.

Uzbekistan had no sea, but it was at the heart of Asia, so it transformed the caravan routes into lifelines. Kuwait was not at the heart of the continent, but it stood at the head of the Gulf, and it transformed the sea into its gateway to the wider world.

Kuwait – A Story That Began More Than 7,000 Years Ago

The Kuwait we know today with its modern cities, ports, roads and markets conceals beneath its soil a history stretching back to the end of the sixth millennium BCE, more than 7,000 years ago.

In Subiya, north of Kuwait, archaeological excavations have uncovered settlements associated with the Ubaid culture, workshops for producing shell beads, and evidence of maritime activity, including a clay model of an early seagoing boat.

The discovery of Greek-era remains on Failaka Island, dating to the third century BCE, makes the picture even more compelling. Among the most significant is the Ikaros inscription, dated approximately to between 246 and 226 BCE, which UNESCO added to the Memory of the World Register in 2025.

These discoveries make one thing clear: Kuwait was not a remote periphery of the great civilizations of the ancient world. It was part of their network of communication and exchange.

The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters has noted that archaeological surveys and excavations indicate that human settlement in Kuwait began in the late sixth millennium BCE. Excavations at Subiya have documented Ubaid-period sites, shell-bead workshops, evidence of maritime activity and a clay boat model.

The end of the third millennium and the beginning of the second millennium BCE also witnessed the emergence of Bronze Age villages, with evidence of this period found at several locations and islands across Kuwait, including Failaka, Umm Al-Namil, Shuwaikh and northern Kuwait Bay.

Samarkand and Kuwait – Caravans and Trading Ships

I have not found evidence of a direct ancient route linking Samarkand and Kuwait. The similarity, however, lies in the role each played. Samarkand was a station for caravans, while Failaka and Kuwait served as stations for ships. Samarkand opened its doors to travelers arriving from the East and West; Kuwait opened its shores to those arriving from the north, east and south of the Gulf. Both transformed trade into something greater than an exchange of money. They created communities that encountered people from elsewhere, engaged with them and benefited from their differences.

The Guest Comes First – A Shared Tradition in Kuwaiti and Uzbek Homes

In Kuwait and across the Gulf, one does not need a history book to understand the meaning of hospitality. The majlis, coffee, dates and food, asking after the guest and the host's insistence on honoring and welcoming them are all traditions that Kuwaitis and Gulf Arabs understand instinctively.

In Uzbekistan, I encountered something remarkably similar. Hospitality expressed through tea, bread, shared family meals and a warm welcome is not simply a tradition maintained for visitors or tourists. It is deeply rooted in Uzbek social culture.

Even the marketplace has a similar role. The old markets of Samarkand and Tashkent were not merely places for buying and selling, just as Kuwait's traditional markets were never simply shops. They were places to meet, exchange news, build relationships and introduce new cultures into society.

The same can be said of the respect for knowledge

Samarkand became associated with scholars of astronomy, mathematics, medicine and religion, while Kuwait developed, from an early period, a tradition of kuttabs, religious education and scholarly gatherings before the emergence of modern formal education. The details may differ, but the value placed on knowledge and learning feels familiar in both experiences.

The Modern Story of Kuwait and Uzbekistan

The most encouraging aspect of the Kuwait-Uzbekistan story is that it does not end with the past. On February 17 and 18, 2025, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited Kuwait, opening a new chapter in relations between the two countries. The two sides announced the elevation of their relationship to the level of a comprehensive partnership

The agreements covered a wide range of sectors, including industry, aviation, labor, smart cities, healthcare, tourism, culture and the arts, in addition to cooperation with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Kuwait introduces new rules for domestic violence protection teams

Kuwait has introduced new regulations governing the exercise of judicial police powers by qualified employees of the Protection Centers Department, strengthening the procedures for dealing with domestic violence cases while protecting the privacy and rights of victims.

Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah announced the issuance of a ministerial decision regulating the powers and procedures of employees at the Protection Centers Department of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. The decision implements the provisions of Decree Law No. 11 of 2026 on Protection from Domestic Violence.

Speaking to the Kuwait News Agency, Al-Huwailah said the decision aims to empower qualified national personnel with the legal and social expertise needed to protect vulnerable groups, identify cases of domestic violence and respond to them promptly within a framework based on justice, confidentiality and integrity.

Authorized employees will be able to identify and document domestic violence cases, inspect locations they are legally permitted to enter and record their observations in official reports. They will also have the authority to request documents, preserve evidence and refer reports to the competent authorities without delay, helping ensure that cases are dealt with quickly and within the law.

Strict safeguards and confidentiality

The decision places clear limits on the use of these powers. Employees are prohibited from exploiting their authority for personal benefit, interfering in family relationships outside the scope of their duties or making media statements or publishing photographs that could reveal the identities of people involved in cases. Employees must also immediately withdraw from any case where there may be a conflict of interest and notify their direct supervisor. The regulations impose strict confidentiality on all data, correspondence and documents relating to domestic violence cases. This obligation will remain in force even after an employee leaves government service.

Annual assessment of protection system

The Protection Centers Department will prepare an annual statistical report assessing the effectiveness of the protection system and identifying practical challenges. The report must not contain information that could reveal the identities of victims.

Al-Huwailah said the decision represents an important step in institutionalizing Kuwait's social and legislative approach to family protection, creating a secure legal environment that safeguards the dignity of families and their members, particularly children, women, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

The new measures form part of Kuwait's broader effort to strengthen its national family-protection framework following the enactment of Decree Law No. 11 of 2026, which provides an expanded legal framework for prevention, protection and support for victims of domestic violence.

BSK and TSK welcome students back for the 2026-2027 academic year

A New Year of Learning, Growth and New Beginnings

A new school year means more than simply a return to the classroom. For some students, it marks a transition into a new class or phase; for others, it is the opening chapter of an entirely new educational experience. For everyone, it is another year of learning, development, new experiences, and lasting memories.

This was the spirit in which the 2026-2027 academic year began at The British School of Kuwait (BSK) and The Sunshine Kindergarten (TSK), as classrooms, corridors, and outdoor spaces came back to life. Students eased back into the familiar rhythm of their school routines, supported by comprehensive preparations and carefully organised arrangements covering every aspect of the return to school.

From the very first day, a spirit of readiness shone brightly across both the school and kindergarten. Academic and administrative teams stood ready to greet and guide students to their classrooms, while arrivals flowed smoothly through designated entrances for each phase. All of this was underpinned by a comprehensive framework of security and safety measures, alongside carefully managed traffic arrangements to ensure a seamless arrival and departure experience for families.

While returning students quickly settled back into their familiar routines and reunited with their friends and teachers, the start of the year held a different meaning for students new to BSK. For them, it was the beginning of their journey in a new educational environment, as they became familiar with their classrooms, teachers, and classmates. Teachers were on hand to support this transition, helping students to settle in, build confidence and to quickly feel truly part of school life at BSK.

At The Sunshine Kindergarten, the return brought a particular kind of excitement, particularly for children experiencing their first educational setting beyond their home. Teachers supported children through their first steps, gradually helping them become familiar with their teachers, classrooms and daily routines, accompanied by the natural curiosity that comes with discovering new places and new people. Throughout this process, children were given the space to play, explore, and learn in an environment attuned to their individual needs.

At BSK, activity quickly returned to the corridors, outdoor spaces and classrooms. Students began settling into their timetables and daily routines, while teachers introduced them to what lay ahead in the new school year and established the foundations for a well-organised academic start.

The return to school was supported by comprehensive arrangements spanning all aspects of the school day, from managing traffic and arrivals through designated entrances to welcoming and guiding students throughout the school and kindergarten. Dedicated teams worked to ensure these processes ran smoothly while maintaining a safe and organised environment, allowing students to focus their full attention on their school day from the moment they arrived.

Parents, too, were an important part of the back-to-school experience, whether accompanying their child as they took their first steps into kindergarten or school, or proudly watching their son or daughter move into a new class or phase. As always, photographs captured those opening moments of another year in their children's educational journey, before the routines of everyday school life gradually replaced the uncertainty of new beginnings with familiarity and new memories.

With the academic year now underway, BSK and TSK have begun another year-long journey that extends beyond academic achievement. It encompasses the development of skills, the building of character, and the growth of confidence and independence, within an educational environment that places students' safety, wellbeing, and growth at the heart of their school experience.

Promoting Common Security:

Middle East's Aspiration, China's Endeavor

By H.E. Yang Xin
Ambassador of China
Special to The Times Kuwait

A few days earlier Chinese President Xi Jinping successfully concluded his state visit to Egypt, marking an important diplomatic mission by China towards the Middle East. During his visit, President Xi Jinping made a four-point proposal on improving the common security of the Middle East. First, unleashing the internal momentum of regional common security. The people in the Middle East should be the masters of their own affairs. Regional countries should be supported in strengthening dialogue on peace and security. Second, advancing the comprehensive governance of regional common security. The many highly interrelated hotspot issues in the Middle East require comprehensive solutions. Third, cementing the development foundation of regional common security. Lasting stability and security in the Middle East relies fundamentally on development. Fourth, enhancing international coordination on regional common security. The UN Charter and international law serve as the basic guidelines for handling Middle East affairs. The UN should be supported in playing a tangible role in regional affairs.

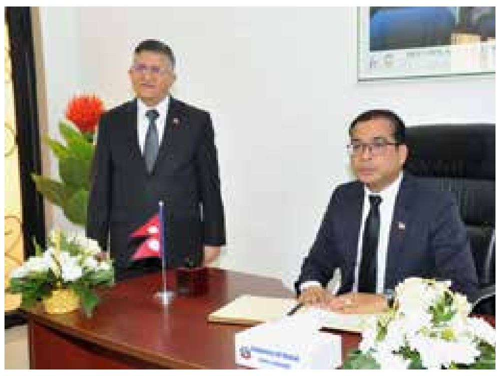
Standing firmly on the side of peace and dialogue, and on the right side of history, China has worked actively to play a constructive role in safeguarding and promoting peace and stability in the Middle East.

The latest four-point proposal made by President Xi Jinping, following his earlier four propositions on safeguarding and promoting peace and stability in the Middle East and four principles on advancing the settlement of the Palestinian question, once again offers a Chinese solution for securing lasting stability and security in the overall situation in the Middle East. All these important proposals announced by President Xi Jinping place the fundamental interests of the people of the region at the core, strike the right balance between security and development, and give due weight to the legitimate security concerns of all countries, charting feasible pathways and pointing the direction for resolving the Middle East security predicament.

As hostilities continue to flare in the Middle East, the regional situation has plunged into the quagmire of conflicts. Since the outbreak of the conflict, China has been working tirelessly for the end of fighting and for peace. China believes in dialogue and negotiation as the way to address regional hotspot issues and differences among parties, and opposes the threat or use of force. China stresses that the sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity of Kuwait and other Gulf states should be fully respected, civilians and non-military assets should be protected, and the safety and security of shipping lanes and energy infrastructure should also be safeguarded. Not long ago, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, said during his meeting with Foreign Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in Beijing that the current situation in the Middle East and the Gulf region has once again reached a critical juncture, adding that the old script of recurring conflict must not be replayed, and a new chapter of stability and prosperity should be opened as soon as possible.

China has always maintained that, no matter how serious the differences, a way forward should be found at the negotiating table rather than through the force of arms. Since steps have already been taken toward a ceasefire and an end to hostilities, there should be no turning back. China calls on the parties concerned to respond positively to the international community's desire for peace, prioritize the well-being of people across the region and return to dialogue and negotiations as soon as possible. The top priority is to de-escalate the situation.

As an Arab saying goes, "The best words are those backed by actions." China will remain committed to implementing President Xi Jinping's important proposals on the Middle East situation, and join hands with Kuwait and other countries in the region and beyond in sincere efforts to achieve lasting stability and security in the Middle East. In this way, China will contribute its share to promoting peace, stability, development and prosperity in the region.



Nepal hails Kuwait's solidarity as flood disaster leaves nation reeling

Ambassador Lamsal says no Kuwaiti nationals among victims; assures tourists that Nepal remains open and major gateways are operating normally

The Times Kuwait Report

Nepal has expressed its deep appreciation for Kuwait's solidarity and support following devastating floods that have caused extensive loss of life, property damage and disruption to vital infrastructure across the Himalayan nation. Nepal's Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Ghana Shyam Lamsal said the messages of sympathy and support received from Kuwait and other friendly countries had provided comfort to the Nepali people as the country confronts one of its most difficult periods.

Speaking on the sidelines of the opening of a condolence register at the Embassy of Nepal in Kuwait in memory of those who lost their lives in the floods, Ambassador Lamsal thanked Kuwait for standing with Nepal during the crisis.

The gathering was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Nawaf Abdul Latif Sulaiman Al-Ahmad, along with ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Kuwait.

Kuwait's solidarity deeply valued

Ambassador Lamsal said the people of Nepal had been deeply moved by the international outpouring of sympathy and goodwill following the disaster. "On behalf of the Government of Nepal, the people of Nepal and the entire embassy family, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of the State of Kuwait for its support and solidarity with us during this difficult moment," he said.

He noted that the floods had resulted in significant loss of life while causing widespread damage to homes, property and essential infrastructure. The ambassador said Kuwait's response was particularly meaningful because it reflected the longstanding friendship and goodwill between the two countries.

He added that Nepal highly values the support extended by Kuwait and other international partners as the country continues search, rescue and relief operations and begins assessing the road towards recovery.

Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said that the government has mobilised substantial resources for rescue, relief and recovery operations, while international partners have also offered specialised assistance.

No Kuwaiti casualties reported

Addressing concerns over Kuwaiti citizens in Nepal, Ambassador Lamsal confirmed that there were no reports of Kuwaiti nationals among those killed in the disaster.

The embassy continues to follow developments and the situation of foreign nationals in affected areas.The floods h ave nevertheless raised concerns over the possible impact on Nepal's tourism sector, particularly in areas directly affected by the disaster.

Ambassador Lamsal acknowledged that the floods would inevitably affect tourist numbers in some locations but expressed confidence that the impact would be temporary.

Nepal's major airports remain operational

Seeking to reassure visitors and international travellers, the ambassador stressed that Nepal remains open and that its principal international gateways continue to operate normally.

Tribhuvan International Airport, Gautam Buddha International Airport and Pokhara International Airport remain operational, while designated land-entry points used by tourists travelling to Nepal by road are also functioning.

The message is aimed at making clear that while certain areas have suffered severe damage, the disaster has not brought international travel to Nepal to a standstill.

Focus now turns to recovery

The devastating floods have left Nepal facing a major humanitarian and reconstruction challenge, with authorities continuing search-and-rescue operations and providing emergency assistance to affected communities.

Nepal's government has appealed for reliance on verified information as casualty and missing-person figures continue to be updated during ongoing search operations. The country is also preparing for the longer-term task of rebuilding damaged roads, bridges, homes, hydropower facilities and other critical infrastructure.

For Nepal, the support expressed by Kuwait comes at a particularly significant moment. Beyond the immediate humanitarian response, Kathmandu sees the solidarity shown by Kuwait as a reflection of the close and growing friendship between the two countries.

As Nepal begins the difficult process of recovery, the message from its embassy in Kuwait is one of gratitude and reassurance that, despite the devastation suffered in several parts of the country, Nepal remains open to the world and determined to rebuild.

Kuwait steps up fight against money laundering in gold and real estate

New rules put greater responsibility on businesses to know their customers, track transactions and report suspicious activity

Kuwait is tightening the net around money laundering and terrorist financing, with new rules placing stronger responsibilities on businesses dealing in gold, precious metals and real estate. The measures, issued by Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Al-Boodai, are aimed at making it harder for illicit money to move through sectors where large-value transactions, valuable assets and complex ownership arrangements can make financial crime more difficult to detect.

Under the new framework, businesses will have to look beyond simply completing a transaction. They will be expected to understand who their customers are, who ultimately owns or controls a business, where funds come from and whether a transaction presents unusual or elevated risks.

Gold and precious metals under closer scrutiny

Decision No. 172 introduces risk-based requirements for companies trading in gold, precious stones and precious metals. Businesses will need to establish appropriate internal controls, carry out due diligence on customers and beneficial owners, monitor transactions and report suspicious activity to the authorities.

They must also maintain relevant records and ensure that employees receive appropriate training so they can recognise and respond to potential money-laundering risks. The focus on the sector is significant. Gold and other precious metals can carry substantial value in a relatively small and easily transferable form, making the sector particularly vulnerable to attempts to conceal or move illicit funds. Kuwait has already been strengthening its oversight of the sector. In July, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry introduced 17 warning indicators to help businesses identify suspicious behaviour, including customers reluctant to provide identification, unexplained sources of funds and transactions that appear inconsistent with normal purchasing behaviour.

Real estate faces tougher checks

Real estate brokers and intermediaries will also face stronger

compliance obligations under Decision No. 173. Businesses must verify customers and beneficial owners, understand ownership and control structures and maintain appropriate records. Relevant records must be retained for at least five years, while suspicious transactions must be reported to the Kuwait Financial Intelligence Unit. The emphasis on real estate reflects the importance of transparency in property transactions, particularly where companies, intermediaries or complicated ownership structures are involved. For brokers, the message is increasingly clear: knowing the person standing in front of them is no longer enough. They must also understand who ultimately benefits from the transaction.

A shift from paperwork to risk awareness

The latest measures are part of a broader change in the way Kuwait approaches financial crime. Rather than relying solely on routine checks, regulators are increasingly asking businesses to identify where the greatest risks lie and respond accordingly.

That means a transaction that appears ordinary on the surface may require additional scrutiny if the customer, ownership structure, source of funds or transaction pattern raises questions.

The Kuwait Financial Intelligence Unit and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry have also been working directly with businesses to improve compliance. Earlier this year, 57 training workshops were conducted for compliance officers in the gold, precious metals and gemstones and real estate brokerage sectors, with a focus on suspicious transaction reporting and the use of the goAML system.

Enforcement is already increasing

The new requirements come as Kuwait steps up enforcement. During the second quarter of 2026, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry imposed KD141,500 in financial penalties on businesses in the gold, silver jewellery, precious metals, gemstones and real estate brokerage sectors.

The ministry also issued hundreds of corrective orders and written warnings, while businesses submitted applications to appoint dedicated compliance officers.

The figures underline the direction of travel: compliance is moving from being a technical requirement to becoming a central responsibility for businesses operating in these sectors.

Part of Kuwait's wider financial transparency drive

The latest rules also fit into Kuwait's broader efforts to strengthen its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing framework.

Kuwait has made progress in several areas identified through the FATF/MENAFATF assessment process, including beneficial ownership transparency, risk-based supervision and oversight of designated non-financial businesses and professions such as real estate agents and dealers in precious metals and gemstones.

For businesses, the practical message is straightforward: know your customer, understand who ultimately owns the transaction, keep proper records and speak up when something does not look right. For Kuwait, the objective is broader to build a financial and commercial environment in which legitimate business can thrive while making the country increasingly difficult to exploit for illicit financial activity.

Documenting Eight Decades of Kuwait–Holy See Friendship



The Times Kuwait Report

A new book documenting more than eight decades of relations between Kuwait and the Holy See was launched last week at the Apostolic Nunciature in Kuwait, bringing together a large number of heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the country, along with officials, guests and other prominent figures.

Titled Historical Relations Between the Holy See and the State of Kuwait, the book was written by researcher Nasser Mohammed Al-Hajeri, tracing the development of the relationship from the beginnings of the Catholic presence in Kuwait in 1945 through 2026.

The story of Kuwait's relationship with the Holy See is not simply a story of diplomacy. It is also a story of people those who built bridges between communities, preserved memories and documented a relationship that has evolved over decades.

Among those who have played a role in bringing this history together is Nasser Mohammad Al-Hajeri, whose work has sought to document the historical development of relations between Kuwait and the Holy See and place that relationship within the wider story of Kuwait's history and its tradition of religious coexistence.

His contribution is particularly significant because much of the history of the relationship is found not only in diplomatic records, but also in personal memories, church archives, historical documents and the experiences of generations who lived through Kuwait's transformation.

By bringing these strands together, Al-Hajeri has helped highlight a relationship that is sometimes overshadowed by the broader political history of the Gulf.

The Kuwait–Holy See relationship has a long history. Early contacts developed alongside Kuwait's emergence as an important commercial and, later, oil-producing country. The arrival of Catholic workers, professionals and families created a growing Christian community and, with it, a need for places of worship and pastoral care.

For Al-Hajeri, documenting this history is therefore also about recording an important part of Kuwait's social history. The relationship reached a significant diplomatic milestone in 1968, when Kuwait became the first Gulf state to establish formal diplomatic relations with the Holy See. The development reflected Kuwait's independent foreign policy and its longstanding openness to dialogue with different religious and cultural traditions.

The establishment of a resident Apostolic Nunciature in Kuwait in 2000 subsequently provided a stronger institutional foundation for relations. But the history documented by Al-Hajeri goes beyond these formal milestones. It seeks to capture the human dimension of the relationship the people, institutions and communities that helped build connections between Kuwait and the Catholic Church.

One of the most important symbols of that history is the Church of Our Lady of Arabia in Ahmadi. The church emerged from the circumstances of Kuwait's rapid economic development and the arrival of large numbers of foreign workers. Over the decades, it became a place of worship and community for generations of Catholics living and working in Kuwait.

Its story is therefore inseparable from the story of modern Kuwait itself. The significance of the church was further underlined in January 2026, when it was elevated to the status of a Minor Basilica. The historic distinction, the first of its kind for a Catholic church in the Arabian Gulf, represented an important moment for the Catholic community and another milestone in the history of Christianity in Kuwait.

The occasion also coincided with the visit of Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, whose presence highlighted the continuing importance attached by the Holy See to its relationship with Kuwait.

For Al-Hajeri, such developments give added relevance to the task of documenting the past. History, he argues through his work, is not simply about dates and diplomatic agreements. It is about understanding how relationships developed, how communities interacted and how mutual respect was built over generations.

This approach gives his contribution particular value at a time when the importance of interfaith understanding has become increasingly evident.

Kuwait has long presented itself as a country where different religious communities can coexist. Churches, mosques and other places of worship have formed part of the country's social landscape, reflecting the diversity of the people who have contributed to Kuwait's development.

The Holy See has likewise placed interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence at the centre of its international engagement. The relationship between Kuwait and the Holy See consequently offers an example of how diplomacy can develop alongside religious and cultural dialogue.

It is this wider dimension that Al-Hajeri's work seeks to preserve. By documenting the relationship, he is also ensuring that future generations understand that Kuwait's engagement with the Holy See did not begin with a single diplomatic agreement. It developed gradually through personal relationships, community life, religious engagement and a shared commitment to dialogue.

The historical record also demonstrates that Kuwait's relationship with the Catholic community is closely connected to the country's broader experience as a multicultural society.

Generations of Catholic priests, workers, professionals and families have lived in Kuwait and contributed to its development. Their experiences form part of the country's wider social history and deserve to be recorded alongside its political and economic achievements.

Al-Hajeri is not merely recounting a diplomatic timeline. His work brings together different pieces of a historical narrative and gives them context. By recording people and events that might otherwise gradually disappear from collective memory, he contributes to preserving an important chapter of Kuwait's history.

The eight-decade relationship between Kuwait and the Holy See is ultimately a story of continuity. From the early presence of the Catholic community to the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1968, from the creation of the Apostolic Nunciature to the elevation of the Church of Our Lady of Arabia as a Minor Basilica, each chapter has added to a relationship founded on mutual respect.

As Kuwait and the Holy See look toward the future, the history documented by Al-Hajeri provides more than a record of the past. It offers an example of how dialogue, respect and coexistence can endure across generations.

In that sense, preserving the history of Kuwait–Holy See relations is itself an act of diplomacy ensuring that a story of friendship and understanding remains part of Kuwait's historical memory.

When the Earth Speaks the Language of Civilization

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

In the past, caravans and ships did not necessarily provide a direct route between Kuwait and Samarkand. Yet they were among the most important instruments of commercial and cultural exchange in both regions.That connectivity today is being carried forward through investment, aviation, technology, artificial intelligence, education and development projects.

The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, established in 1961, represents one of the clearest practical expressions of Kuwait's relations with countries around the world. It was never merely a financing institution; it became one of the ways Kuwait established its presence and reputation across the developing world. In Uzbekistan, the Fund financed development projects including a rural housing infrastructure project through a loans, and contributed to a project to equip specialized medical institutions in urology, kidney diseases, dialysis and kidney transplantation. As modern Uzbekistan advances its development vision, I see opportunities for cooperation expanding into infrastructure, logistics, agriculture, green energy, healthcare, industry, services and investment.This is how political relations can evolve into development partnerships rooted in a shared civilizational outlook.

From the Memory of Civilization to a Future of Cooperation

Perhaps what stayed with me most from the forum in Tashkent is the realization that the story of civilization should not remain confined to museums and books. A living civilization is one that can move from memory into the future. That is why, when I think of Samarkand today, I no longer see it as a distant and unfamiliar city in Central Asia. I see a city that resembles Kuwait in an important way: both recognized early that openness to the world could be a source of strength rather than a threat to identity.

The caravans of Samarkand carried silk and ideas. Kuwaiti ships carried pearls, goods and news.

Today, airplanes, investments, universities, media and culture can carry something even more valuable: partnership between two peoples. Both peoples have deep histories, and both look toward the future. The goal is not to live in the past, but to understand it well so that we do not build the future without roots.

From Samarkand to Failaka, and from the Silk Roads to the Gulf routes, times change and means of communication evolve. Yet humanity continues to search for connection, learning and trade to discover the other, and then return home enriched by what it has learned from the wider world.

There may be no single ancient road between Kuwait and Samarkand that can be traced on a map. But between them lies an idea that is far older:

Civilization begins when geography is transformed from a boundary into a bridge of cooperation and partnership.

Tareq Yousef AlShumaimry, served as Chairman of the Finance Committee and Chairman of the General Budget Committee of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague (PCA) and an observer in the Administrative Council of the Court and the Consular at International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in the Netherlands during this period from 2013 to 2020. Email: tareq@alshumaimry.com

Türkiye's Victory Day in Kuwait: A celebration of history, friendship and a farewell

Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez reflects on Türkiye's historic victory, deepening Kuwait ties and her final national day in Kuwait

The Times Kuwait Report

Türkiye's 104th Victory Day celebration in Kuwait was more than a commemoration of a defining moment in Turkish history. It was also an evening of friendship, reflection and, for Ambassador Tuba Nur Sönmez, a particularly personal farewell.

Hosted by Ambassador Sönmez and Military Attaché Colonel Gökhan Tekin at the Marina Hotel, the reception brought together senior Kuwaiti officials, diplomats, military representatives and members of the media to mark the Turkish victory of August 30, 1922.

For Sönmez, who concluded her tenure as Türkiye's ambassador to Kuwait, it was her final Victory Day celebration in the country giving the occasion an added sense of emotion.

She expressed her appreciation to the Kuwaiti officials, diplomats, friends and colleagues with whom she had worked during her posting, reflecting on the warmth and close ties that have characterised relations between the two countries.

Remembering a defining moment

Victory Day commemorates the decisive victory of Turkish forces during the Turkish War of Independence under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. For Türkiye, August 30 remains a powerful symbol of national determination, sovereignty and independence.

Speaking at the reception, Ambassador Sönmez said the significance of the victory extends beyond Türkiye's own history, describing it as an enduring source of inspiration for peoples striving for freedom, dignity and sovereignty.

More than a century later, she said, the same spirit continues to influence Türkiye's approach to national security, defence and its role in the international community.

From battlefield victory to technological strength

A significant part of the ambassador's address focused on how Türkiye has transformed its defence capabilities over the decades.

She highlighted the modernisation of the Turkish Armed Forces, extensive training and operational experience, together with major investment in domestic defence technologies.

Türkiye's growing defence industry, she noted, has developed from an effort to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers into an increasingly competitive sector capable of producing advanced systems and technologies.

Among the areas she highlighted was Türkiye's rapidly expanding unmanned aerial systems sector.

But Sönmez stressed that military capability, in Türkiye's view, is ultimately intended to support peace and security. She pointed to the participation of Turkish personnel in NATO, United Nations and other multinational missions, as well as bilateral training and security cooperation, saying that lasting peace requires more than military strength.

Kuwait-Türkiye defence ties gaining momentum

That message also provided a natural link to one of the strongest areas of the Kuwait-Türkiye relationship defence cooperation. Sönmez said bilateral defence relations have expanded steadily and now include military dialogue, training, exercises and cooperation in the defence industry.

One of the most visible examples is Kuwait's acquisition of Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial systems, which the ambassador described as an illustration of the practical depth of defence cooperation between the two countries. With the region facing an increasingly complex security environment, she expressed confidence that Kuwait and Türkiye would continue to expand cooperation in defence and security.

A relationship built on trust

Beyond defence, Sönmez spoke warmly about the broader relationship between Kuwait and Türkiye.

She described the partnership as being founded on mutual respect, trust and what she called genuine brotherhood.

During her tenure, she said, she had been particularly pleased to witness the relationship continue to develop across political, diplomatic, economic and strategic fields. The close relationship between the two countries has also been reinforced by strong ties between their leaderships, with Sönmez praising the continued development of bilateral relations under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

A poignant tribute to Kuwait

One of the most moving moments of the evening came when the ambassador turned her attention to Kuwait and those who had lost their lives in Iranian attacks.

Sönmez offered her condolences to the families of the military personnel and civilians who were killed, praying that Allah grant them mercy. She also expressed her appreciation to the Kuwaiti Armed Forces for their commitment to protecting the country and its people.

The tribute gave the evening a deeper meaning, connecting Türkiye's own history of struggle and national resilience with Kuwait's own experience and its determination to safeguard its sovereignty and security.

Kuwait's sovereign wealth fund borrowing can reach 50% of GDP, Moody's says

Moody's Investors Service has described Kuwait's new framework allowing the government to borrow from the Future Generations Reserve as credit-positive, saying it strengthens the country's financial resilience and expands its financing options amid expectations of a wider fiscal deficit.

The decree issued on September 1, 2026, authorizes the State General Reserve Fund to borrow from the Future Generations Reserve under specific conditions. Moody's said the framework gives the government access to part of its substantial accumulated financial savings, including to help cover a portion of the deficit expected from the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

Moody's, which rates Kuwait A1 with a stable outlook, estimated that the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) managed around $750 billion in government financial assets at the end of 2025, equivalent to about 475 percent of GDP. The KIA manages the General Reserve Fund and Future Generations Fund, along with other state assets.

Amendment creates a clearer institutional framework

The agency said the amendment also creates a clearer institutional framework governing the relationship between the General Reserve Fund, which serves as the government's treasury account, and the Future Generations Reserve, the KIA's main investment portfolio.

Before the amendment, legislation governing the Future Generations Reserve explicitly prohibited the government from withdrawing funds from the reserve. Any use of its assets therefore required separate legislative approval, Moody's said.

Under Decree Law No. 81 of 2026, borrowing from the Future

Generations Reserve is permitted as an exception to support the State General Reserve. The borrowing requires a Council of Ministers decision based on a proposal from the relevant minister, who chairs the KIA Board of Directors, as well as approval from the board.

Loan agreements must specify amount

Loan agreements must specify the amount, purpose, interest rate, maturity and repayment schedule, including installments and interest. They must also set out conditions for restructuring or rescheduling payments. Loans must be repaid from state revenues when a surplus is achieved and cannot be reduced or forgiven except through legislation.

The decree alo establishes borrowing limits. Total outstanding loans in any fiscal year cannot exceed 100 percent of the reserve's average returns over the previous five audited fiscal years. In addition, the total outstanding loan balance cannot exceed 10 percent of the reserve's net asset value based on its latest audited financial statements. No new borrowing is permitted if either limit is breached.

Based on its estimates and an assumed average return of 6 to 8 percent, Moody's estimates that annual borrowing from the Future Generations Reserve could amount to roughly 30 to 40 percent of GDP, while the total outstanding balance could reach around 50 percent of GDP.

The agency noted that the actual borrowing capacity could vary depending on the Investment Authority's asset base and its growth. Some estimates put the authority's assets at around 640 percent of GDP at the end of 2025, with reinvested returns continuing to support asset growth.

Moody's said access to domestic financing from the Investment Authority broadens the government's financing options and could slow the pace of debt accumulation if more financing needs are met through domestic sources. However, the agency said it will not count borrowing from Kuwait's sovereign wealth fund as part of existing government debt.

Kuwait has already increased borrowing since the new Finance and Liquidity Law was enacted in March 2025. Moody's said the government issued 3.75 billion dinars in domestic debt, equivalent to 7.9 percent of GDP for fiscal 2025-26, alongside $17.25 billion in dollar-denominated international bonds, equivalent to 11.1 percent of GDP, and another $11.65 billion in external debt, equivalent to 7.7 percent of GDP.

Kuwait courts undergo major reshuffle as judicial circuits move between governorates

New labor and civil cases redirected from September; transfers to take effect in October

The Ministry of Justice has announced a major reorganization of judicial circuits involving several courts across Kuwait, with new registration arrangements taking effect in September and the physical transfer of several circuits scheduled for October.

The measures are aimed at streamlining the registration of lawsuits, improving the distribution of judicial jurisdictions and enhancing the efficiency of court operations.

Under the new arrangements, all labor courts will be transferred from the governorate courts to Jahra Court, effective October 1, 2026. The registration of new labor cases at the existing courts has been suspended, with new cases to be registered at Jahra Court from September 1.

A similar change has been introduced for civil courts. All civil circuits currently operating at Farwaniya Court will move to Hawalli Court from October 1. New civil cases are being registered at Hawalli Court from September 1, while registration at Farwaniya Court has been halted. The reshuffle also includes the Farwaniya and Jahra Appeals Court Rental Cases Circuit (1), which will move from Jahra Court to Farwaniya Court.

In addition, a number of other judicial circuits will be redistributed among the Jahra, Farwaniya and Hawalli courts. These include misdemeanor cases, municipal violations,

environmental cases, cybercrime, commercial cases and customs-related cases. These transfers are scheduled to take effect from October 1.

The Ministry said the measures are part of efforts to reorganize and develop judicial operations while ensuring a smoother distribution of circuits and jurisdictions.

The changes are also intended to facilitate the registration of lawsuits and ensure more efficient court operations.

Supervisors and department heads have been instructed to take the necessary administrative measures to ensure that the transfers are implemented according to the specified timetable.

The Ministry emphasized that the restructuring forms part of its broader efforts to improve the efficiency and organization of Kuwait's judicial system.

Kuwait Rewrites the Rules of Media for the Digital Age

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

But the distinctions that once made sense have become increasingly blurred. A journalist can publish a story on a newspaper website, distribute it through social media, broadcast it as a video and discuss it on a podcast all within minutes.

An influencer can simultaneously be a publisher, advertiser, reviewer and commercial promoter. An artificial-intelligence system can produce text, images, audio and video at a scale that would have been unimaginable when much of Kuwait's existing media legislation was written.

A fragmented regulatory system is therefore increasingly difficult to apply consistently. A single framework has the potential to bring clarity where uncertainty currently exists. And clarity matters. For a media organisation, knowing what licence is required, what obligations apply and who is legally responsible for published material is essential.

The strongest argument in favour: clarity

Perhaps the greatest strength of the proposed legislation is that it attempts to replace regulatory confusion with a more coherent system. A unified electronic licensing platform could reduce administrative duplication and make it easier for media businesses to deal with government authorities.

That is not a glamorous reform, but it could be one of the most important. Kuwait wants to develop a stronger digital and creative economy. It will be difficult to attract serious investment into media, entertainment, technology and content industries if entrepreneurs have to navigate overlapping regulations and unclear responsibilities.

A modern media economy needs modern administration. The proposed framework could therefore be good for both established media companies and a new generation of digital entrepreneurs.

The influencer economy finally gets recognised

Another positive is the recognition that social media is no longer simply a space for personal expression. It is big business. Influencers and digital creators now play a major role in advertising and consumer behaviour. Sponsored reviews, product demonstrations, competitions, promotional campaigns and paid endorsements can reach audiences far beyond traditional advertising.

Rules requiring greater transparency can therefore protect consumers. If someone is being paid to promote a product, audiences should know. If a review is sponsored, that relationship should not be hidden. If content targets children, additional safeguards are reasonable.

These provisions could help build greater trust in Kuwait's rapidly expanding digital advertising market. The danger, however, is that regulations must be sufficiently precise. If the distinction between professional digital activity and ordinary personal expression is unclear, people may not know where the law begins and ends.

The proposed distinction between professional activity and ordinary personal accounts is therefore important but its effectiveness will depend heavily on how the executive regulations define "professional" activity.

AI: Kuwait is regulating the future before it arrives

Perhaps the most forward-looking aspect of the proposed legislation is its recognition of artificial intelligence. AI is already changing how information is produced. News stories can be drafted in seconds. Images can be generated without a camera. Voices can be replicated. Videos can be manipulated. Advertising can be personalised at enormous scale.

The technology creates enormous opportunities but also enormous risks. The law's decision to focus on professional and ethical standards surrounding AI, rather than attempting to regulate the technology itself, is potentially a sensible approach.

But AI regulation will require flexibility. Technology moves much faster than legislation. A rule written today could become outdated tomorrow. Kuwait will therefore need regulations capable of evolving without requiring the country to rewrite its media law every time a new digital tool emerges.

The most important issue: freedom of expression

This is where the debate becomes more complicated. The draft explicitly recognises freedom of opinion and expression and guarantees freedom of the press, printing, publishing and media, while maintaining legal protections concerning public order, public morals, national security, national unity and the rights and dignity of others.

Those safeguards are understandable. Every modern society needs laws against defamation, incitement, exploitation, fraud and other forms of harmful content.

But the boundaries matter. Words such as "public order", "public morals" and "national security" can have very broad interpretations. The more broadly such provisions are applied, the greater the risk that legitimate journalism or criticism could become unnecessarily cautious.

A journalist should know where the legal line is. A publisher should know where the legal line is. A content creator should know where the legal line is. And, equally important, the public should know that legitimate journalism will not be discouraged simply because it asks difficult questions.

The success of the new law will therefore depend not only on what it says about freedom of expression, but on how those provisions are interpreted and enforced.

Proportionality could be a major improvement

There is, however, an encouraging feature in the proposed approach to penalties. The draft introduces the principles of gradualism and proportionality, with administrative responses beginning with measures such as notification, warning or admonition before more serious financial or administrative penalties are imposed depending on the nature and seriousness of the violation.

This is important. Not every mistake is a crime. Not every regulatory breach should destroy a business. And not every inaccurate piece of content should carry the same consequence as deliberate and serious misconduct.

A proportionate system can distinguish between an honest mistake, negligence and deliberate wrongdoing. That distinction is essential if Kuwait wants its media sector to become more professional without becoming more fearful.

The potential downside: regulation can become a barrier

Every regulation has a cost. Licensing requirements, compliance obligations, reporting responsibilities and penalties can improve standards but they can also make it harder for smaller businesses and independent creators to operate.

A large media organisation may have lawyers, compliance officers, editors and technical specialists. A young digital entrepreneur may have none of these. If compliance becomes too complicated or expensive, the new system could unintentionally favour large established players over smaller and emerging voices.

That would be particularly unfortunate at a time when Kuwait is trying to encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and diversification. The objective should not be simply to create a more regulated media market.

It should be to create a better media market. The danger of regulating yesterday's problems. There is another challenge. Legislation is often designed in response to problems that already exist. But technology does not wait. By the time regulators have dealt with today's social media practices, tomorrow's platforms may already have changed the landscape again.

The law therefore needs principles that are sufficiently clear to protect society but sufficiently flexible to accommodate innovation. Too little regulation creates risks. Too much regulation creates another risk: stagnation.

Kuwait cannot build a competitive digital economy while simultaneously making legitimate digital activity unnecessarily difficult.

The real battle will begin after the law is passed

Perhaps the most important point is that the legislation itself will not tell the whole story. The executive regulations will matter enormously. They will determine how professional digital activity is defined, how licensing works in practice, how compliance requirements are interpreted and how many of the law's broad principles are applied.

The draft provides for executive regulations within one year of publication, followed by a six-month period before the law takes effect, with existing media activities receiving additional time to comply.

That transition period should be used wisely. The government has an opportunity to consult journalists, publishers, broadcasters, digital creators, advertisers, lawyers, technology companies and civil society before the detailed regulations are finalised.

Good regulation is rarely produced in isolation. It is strengthened when those who will live under it are given a meaningful opportunity to explain what works, what does not and where unintended consequences could arise.

Kuwait has an opportunity and a responsibility

There is little doubt that Kuwait needs a modern media framework. The old distinctions between print, broadcasting and electronic media no longer reflect the world in which people consume information.

The proposed law gets many things right: one regulatory framework, simpler licensing, greater digital transparency, consumer and child protection, recognition of AI and more proportionate enforcement.

But modernization should not be measured by how many activities the state can regulate. It should be measured by whether Kuwait can create an environment in which responsible journalism can flourish, legitimate criticism can be expressed, creative industries can grow, consumers are protected and technology can develop without unnecessary barriers.

That is the balance that matters. Kuwait does not have to choose between freedom and responsibility. It needs both. It does not have to choose between regulation and innovation. It needs regulation that enables innovation.

And it does not have to choose between protecting society and allowing the media to question those in power. A confident society should be capable of doing both.

The proposed media law is therefore more than another piece of legislation. It is a statement about what Kuwait wants its media sector and, ultimately, its digital society to become. The government has opened the door to a modern regulatory framework. The next question is how wide that door will remain open. The answer will determine whether Kuwait's media overhaul becomes a genuine platform for a new digital era or simply a more sophisticated way of regulating the old one.

Rovaniemi

Where the Arctic turns travel into an unforgettable experience

From Northern Lights and husky rides to Santa Claus Village and the silence of Lapland's forests, Finland's Arctic capital offers Middle Eastern travellers a magical escape into a world of snow, nature and extraordinary experiences.

The Times Kuwait Travel Feature

There are destinations that travellers visit to see famous landmarks, and then there are places that offer an experience so different from everyday life that the journey itself becomes the attraction.

Rovaniemi, in Finnish Lapland, is one such destination of a lifetime.

Located directly on the Arctic Circle, Rovaniemi is a city where forests stretch towards the horizon, rivers cut through vast northern landscapes and winter can transform the surroundings into a seemingly endless world of white. It is also internationally recognised as the official hometown of Santa Claus, making it one of the world's most distinctive family destinations.

For travellers from the Middle East, however, Rovaniemi offers something even more unusual: the opportunity to step into a climate and landscape that is almost the complete opposite of the Gulf. Instead of intense summer heat, there are snow-covered forests and frozen landscapes. Instead of bright desert horizons, there are dark Arctic skies illuminated by the Northern Lights.

It is this contrast that makes Rovaniemi so fascinating.

A journey to the Arctic Circle

The first experience begins with the landscape itself. Rovaniemi is surrounded by forests, rivers, lakes and Arctic wilderness. The city serves as the gateway to Finnish Lapland and offers a remarkable combination of nature and urban convenience. Visitors can enjoy comfortable hotels, restaurants and cafés while being only minutes away from forests and outdoor adventure.

For Middle Eastern visitors accustomed to travelling for sunshine and beaches, the attraction here is precisely the opposite. The cold becomes part of the holiday. Stepping outside into falling snow, walking through a forest covered in frost or watching one's breath disappear into the Arctic air can be an experience in itself.

Santa Claus Village: the heart of the magic

For families, the natural starting point is Santa Claus Village, located on the Arctic Circle. Here, visitors can meet Santa Claus, cross the Arctic Circle, send postcards from Santa's official post office and explore a village designed around the timeless Christmas experience.

But Santa Claus Village is not simply for children. Adults will appreciate the atmosphere, the architecture, the surrounding snow-covered landscape and the novelty of standing at the Arctic Circle. For families travelling from Kuwait and other Gulf countries, Santa Claus Village can become the centrepiece of a multi-generational holiday.

The Northern Lights

If Santa Claus provides the fantasy, the Aurora Borealis provides the spectacle. The Northern Lights are among the principal reasons travellers journey to Finnish Lapland. On clear nights, ribbons of green and other colours can appear across the Arctic sky, creating one of nature's most extraordinary displays.

There is no guarantee of seeing the aurora on a particular night, but waiting for it becomes part of the adventure. Travellers can join organised Northern Lights excursions, travel away from city lights or stay in accommodation designed to provide views of the night sky.

For Middle Eastern visitors, the experience can be especially powerful because of the sheer darkness and silence of the Arctic night. There are no skyscrapers, busy highways or dense urban surroundings.

There is simply the forest, the snow and the sky.

Reindeer, huskies and the Arctic wilderness

A visit to Rovaniemi would not be complete without encountering the animals that are inseparable from Lapland. Reindeer safaris allow visitors to experience the traditional relationship between the people of Lapland and reindeer. During winter, visitors can ride through snow-covered forests on reindeer-drawn sleighs.

Husky experiences provide a more energetic alternative. Teams of huskies pull sleds through Arctic forests, giving visitors the opportunity to experience the landscape at speed while surrounded by snow and silence.

Other activities include snowmobiling, snowshoeing, skiing and ice fishing.

Understanding the Arctic

For visitors who want to understand the region rather than simply photograph it, Arktikum is essential. The striking glass-roofed building houses the Arctic Centre and the Regional Museum of Lapland, with exhibitions examining Arctic nature, history, culture and the lives of people living in the north. It also provides insight into Sámi culture and the history of Lapland.

This cultural dimension adds depth to the holiday. Rovaniemi is not simply a place of snow and tourism; it is part of a distinctive northern culture shaped by climate, geography and centuries of adaptation.

Winter adventures beyond the ordinary

Rovaniemi's appeal extends well beyond Santa Claus and the Northern Lights. Visitors can ride snowmobiles across frozen landscapes, go snowshoeing through forests, try ice fishing, ski, take photography tours or experience traditional Finnish sauna culture. For someone arriving from the Gulf, the combination of outdoor Arctic activities followed by warmth and relaxation can become one of the most enjoyable parts of the journey.

There is also the opportunity to stay in glass-roofed cabins, allowing guests to watch the night sky from the comfort of their rooms. Imagine lying beneath a warm blanket while snow covers the forest outside and the Northern Lights appear above the glass roof.

That is perhaps the essence of Rovaniemi.

The magic is not limited to winter

Although Rovaniemi is particularly famous for its winter landscape, the city is not exclusively a winter destination. Summer transforms Lapland completely. The snow disappears, forests turn green and the Midnight Sun creates extraordinarily long periods of daylight. Visitors can hike, cycle, kayak, canoe, fish or simply enjoy the tranquillity of the northern landscape. For travellers who prefer milder temperatures, summer provides a completely different but equally fascinating version of Lapland.

Why Rovaniemi works for Middle Eastern travellers

Perhaps Rovaniemi's greatest attraction for Middle Eastern travellers is its sense of difference. The Gulf has created a travel culture where luxury hotels, shopping malls, beaches, restaurants and warm-weather resorts are readily accessible. Rovaniemi offers almost the opposite.

Here, luxury can mean sitting beside a fireplace after returning from a snowmobile excursion. It can mean watching the Northern Lights from a glass-roofed cabin. It can mean spending the afternoon travelling through a forest pulled by huskies or reindeer.

The destination also offers the advantage of combining adventure with comfort. Visitors do not have to sacrifice good accommodation, restaurants or modern services to experience the wilderness.

Getting there from Kuwait: Turkish Airlines offers a convenient gateway

For travellers departing from Kuwait, Turkish Airlines provides a practical route into the Arctic, with Istanbul serving as the connecting gateway. Turkish Airlines currently lists flights from Kuwait to Istanbul, while its network also includes Istanbul–Rovaniemi itineraries. This makes it possible for Kuwait-based travellers to plan the journey around a single airline and connection through Istanbul, subject to the specific schedule and travel dates.

For travellers who prefer to have the entire holiday organised rather than arranging flights, hotels, transfers and activities separately, ITL World Kuwait can be an attractive option.

ITL World's leisure travel division specializes in personalised and tailor-made programmes, including family holidays, with dedicated leisure professionals able to build experiences around travellers' interests. The company also offers flight and accommodation services and holiday packages.

For a Rovaniemi holiday, this approach can be particularly useful because the experience involves several elements that need to work together: international flights, airport transfers, Arctic accommodation, excursions, Northern Lights tours, Santa Claus Village, reindeer and husky experiences and, for families, suitable room arrangements. Rather than booking every component independently, travellers can ask ITL World Kuwait to create a package around their preferred dates, family size, accommodation category and activities.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Asia's Natural Disasters Must Not Become Financial Crises

Yasuto Watanabe

Yasuto Watanabe is Director and CEO of the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO).

The catastrophic flooding in Nepal has demonstrated, once again, the devastating human and economic toll of climate change. The immediate priority must be to save lives and support affected communities. But the devastation also highlights how physical hazards can quickly morph into macroeconomic shocks.

These events have different causes, and no single disaster should be casually attributed to El Niño or climate change. Nonetheless, the World Meteorological Organization expects a strong El Niño to intensify from August through October, increasing the likelihood of above-normal temperatures in much of the world and major shifts in rainfall. In Southeast Asia, El Niño often brings drier conditions and raises the risk of drought, wildfires, and haze, although its effects vary across countries and seasons.

For policymakers, the imperative is to prepare for the economic chain reactions triggered by extreme weather events. Droughts, floods, and heat waves damage crops and infrastructure. In countries with inadequate food stocks, weak logistics, and concentrated import sources, lower production can lead to shortages, higher prices, and declining household purchasing power. Governments face pressure to subsidize prices or facilitate emergency imports, while central banks confront the difficult combination of supply-driven inflation and weaker demand.

Then comes the fiscal aftershock. If roads, ports, irrigation systems, schools, and hospitals cannot be repaired or replaced in a timely manner, temporary disruptions can turn into a permanent drag on productive capacity. Governments may be forced to divert spending from development, borrow at short notice, or wait for external assistance. A post-disaster financing gap can all too easily become a long-lasting economic slump.

When disaster strikes, countries must be prepared not only to limit physical damage, but also to reduce economic downtime, maintain essential public services, contain financial stress, and prevent short-term losses from weakening long-term growth. A robust, rapid recovery requires providing humanitarian support and stabilizing macroeconomic conditions.

The scale of the challenge is staggering. According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, direct disaster losses averaged $180–200 billion annually between 2001 and 2020. When accounting for indirect, cascading, and ecosystem effects, the total annual cost rises to more than $2.3 trillion.

Asia must be prepared. To that end, in May, finance ministers and central bank governors from ASEAN+3 countries (the Southeast Asian member states, plus China, Japan, and South Korea) endorsed the Disaster Risk Financing Initiative's 2026–28 roadmap. This framework will help members develop national disaster-risk financing strategies and expand their use of insurance, catastrophe bonds, and other relevant instruments.

To be sure, prearranged financing cannot cover the full costs of a major disaster. Nor should insurance be expected to do so. Their value lies in providing reliable funding during the critical early stage of a crisis, when delays are most damaging, and governments have the least room to improvise. For example, on September 1, the Southeast Asia Disaster Risk Insurance Facility, a regional platform under the umbrella of ASEAN+3, paid $1 million to Laos within five business days after official data showed that more than 260,000 people had been affected by heavy rainfall and widespread flooding.

The right approach is to match financing to risk. Budget reserves and disaster funds can cover frequent, relatively small losses. Contingent credit may be used for medium-size shocks, while insurance and capital-market instruments should be reserved mainly for less frequent but fiscally severe events. To ensure that the funds reach affected communities quickly, governments must have effective social-protection systems and contingency plans.

This process converts uncertain post-disaster liabilities into risks that can be measured, priced, allocated, and, most importantly, managed in advance. When some of the recovery costs are prearranged, governments are less likely to increase taxes abruptly, slash public investment, resort to emergency borrowing, or delay aid. Fiscal exposure becomes more predictable, reducing uncertainty around public debt, inflation, and economic growth.

The benefits extend beyond government balance sheets. Such an approach also provides businesses and financial markets with greater clarity about post-disaster taxation, public-investment cuts, payment delays, and credit conditions. And it enables a quicker restoration of ports, roads, electricity, and communications, limiting disruption to regional supply chains. Across the closely integrated ASEAN+3 region, recovery in one economy helps preserve its neighbors' stability.

The economics of climate change has reframed the role of disaster-risk finance. No longer merely a peripheral instrument that pays claims after an extreme weather event, it has become a policy lever that protects fiscal space and improves the medium-term outlook before a crisis occurs. Disaster-risk finance functions as a macroeconomic firewall for fiscal policy, financial stability, food security, social protection, and infrastructure planning, reducing both economic volatility and uncertainty about the recovery.

ASEAN+3 has spent decades building its regional financial safety net against currency and financial crises. As a strengthening El Niño threatens to take its toll on the region, the next task is clear: prevent natural disasters from becoming humanitarian, fiscal, and, ultimately, financial crises. With regional disaster-risk finance, governments will be in a better position to restart their economies, preserve fiscal space, and contain spillovers. That is what real resilience looks like in a warming world.

> "The dangerous flooding in Nepal and Tibet has demonstrated, once again, the need for prearranged disaster-risk financing to prepare for the economic chain reactions triggered by natural disasters. Asia's policymakers must act now to help cash-strapped Nepal and strengthen other countries' resilience before the next crisis hits."

TIMES
KUWAIT'S PREMIER WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

Publisher & Editor-In-Chief
Tareq Yousef Al-Shumaimry
editorial@timeskuwait.com

Managing Editor
Sheikha Suhaila Fahad Al-Sabah
editor@timeskuwait.com

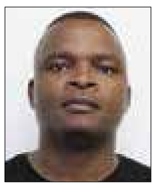
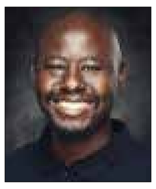
Executive Managing Editor
Reaven D'Souza
reavendsouza@timeskuwait.com

P O Box 5141, Safat 13052, Kuwait
Tel : 24814404, 24810109
Email : editor@timeskuwait.com
Printed in: Al Khat Printing Press Co.

www.timeskuwait.com @timeskuwait @thetimesq8 @thetimeskuwait @thetimeskuwait

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

How Developing Countries Can Do More With Less

Takunda Chirau, Steven Masvaure, Hlanganani Mnguni

Takunda Chirau is Director of the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa. Steven Masvaure is a senior evaluation technical specialist at the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa. Hlanganani Mnguni is a researcher at the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa.

As donor governments slash aid budgets, and multilateral institutions come under increasing financial strain, development organizations must confront the combination of growing need and declining resources. How to address persistent challenges such as poverty and inequality, climate change, and humanitarian crises with fewer resources is an especially urgent question in Africa, where many countries have long relied on external financing to support essential programs and services.

The answer lies in how development is monitored and evaluated, often framed as a neutral, technical exercise measuring whether projects have achieved their objectives. In fact, evaluation is deeply political: it reflects what is seen as important and whose knowledge is trusted, and it influences which programs continue to receive funding. Thus, evaluation determines how resources are allocated and whose solutions are supported and expanded.

> Evaluation frameworks for development projects have long been influenced by donor priorities. But foreign-aid cuts have created an opportunity for African countries to implement equitable evaluation practices, both to channel limited resources more effectively and to shape the future of global development governance.

More significantly, the standards by which development projects are assessed are important not only for deciding where to channel limited resources, but also for shaping the future of global development governance.

The African Union and its member states have long called for reforms to the international development and financial architecture, advocating greater representation, more equitable financing, and a stronger voice for Africa in global decision-making. But these reforms, while important, often overlook another powerful driver of change: control over knowledge and evidence.

To date, evaluation frameworks have largely been influenced by donor priorities, with the aim of tracking and comparing results across contexts. As a result, they often fail to capture the realities within communities and rarely reflect local values.

When funders define success, the communities most affected by development programs are treated as sources of data rather than partners in deciding what constitutes meaningful change and how to measure it. As argued in the volume Equitable Evaluation: Voices from the Global South (which two of us co-edited), donors' expectations and desired outputs take precedence over those of local communities.

With fewer resources now available, and their allocation increasingly dependent on evidence demonstrating impact, there is no better time to implement equitable evaluation practices, which challenge the idea that development can be understood through universal indicators alone. This methodological innovation is grounded in the belief that evidence is shaped by history, context, culture, and power, and that these factors must be considered if evaluation is to advance equity.

African countries and communities, in particular, could adopt Made in Africa Evaluation approaches, which seek to assess development projects according to African realities, values, and priorities. That means recognizing Indigenous knowledge, local institutions, and community experiences as important sources of evidence, while emphasizing that evaluation should reflect the social, cultural, and political contexts in which development takes place. Such a shift ultimately reshapes who holds authority over knowledge itself.

Community participation forces governments to be accountable to citizens, not just funders. For example, when rural health committees monitor clinic performance using community-designed scorecards rather than relying on donor audits, facility managers can identify and respond more quickly to drug shortages, long wait times, or service gaps, while health authorities gain access to locally generated evidence.

Similarly, when farmers help assess irrigation projects, evaluations have revealed practical constraints—such as unreliable water supplies, inadequate maintenance, and inequitable land distribution—that may be overlooked by externally designed indicators. These data can also inform national priorities, resulting in more responsive and efficient development spending. And if regional institutions build their own evaluation capacities, countries will become less dependent on frameworks that may not reflect their development goals.

As such examples show, giving African countries a greater say in international institutions is not enough to reform global development governance. Structural transformation requires giving them a greater role in the collection, interpretation, and use of data and evidence. Without significant changes to evaluation and the resulting knowledge production, calls to "decolonize development" will continue to ring hollow.

The current aid landscape underscores the urgency of this task. The scaling down of foreign assistance should not mean abandoning commitments to equity. Governments, donors, and development organizations should instead work even harder to direct the remaining funds to those who have historically been excluded. This requires evaluation systems capable of revealing inequalities rather than masking them behind national averages and aggregate performance indicators.

It is unclear whether the era of abundant foreign aid is ending

Rovaniemi: Where the Arctic turns travel into an unforgettable experience

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

For first-time Arctic travellers, this can make the experience considerably easier and more comfortable. A well-planned package can also allow travellers to build the holiday around their priorities. Families with young children may place Santa Claus Village and reindeer experiences at the centre of the itinerary, while couples might prioritise Northern Lights excursions, glass-roof accommodation and private wilderness experiences.

Adventure-focused travellers can add snowmobiling, husky safaris and snowshoeing, while those seeking a slower holiday can concentrate on Arctic nature, local cuisine, museums and the unique atmosphere of Lapland.

For Kuwait travellers considering the journey, the combination of Turkish Airlines for the international routing and an experienced travel operator such as ITL World for the holiday arrangements offers a straightforward way to turn the idea of an Arctic escape into a fully organised trip.

Planning the journey

The best time to visit depends on what travellers want to experience. For those seeking snow, reindeer sleighs, huskies, snowmobiles and the strongest winter atmosphere, the colder months are the obvious choice.

Travellers hoping to see the Northern Lights should allow several nights rather than relying on a single evening, as visibility depends on weather and aurora conditions. Families travelling during the Christmas period should also plan well ahead because the destination is particularly popular.

For Middle Eastern travellers, proper winter clothing is particularly important. The Arctic cold is fundamentally different from the winter temperatures experienced in the Gulf, and appropriate thermal layers, insulated footwear, gloves and outerwear are essential for enjoying outdoor activities comfortably.

This is another area where a professionally organised holiday can be helpful, particularly for families visiting the Arctic for the first time.

More than a holiday

Ultimately, Rovaniemi is not simply a destination to be checked off a travel list. It is an experience of contrasts.

It is warmth inside and cold outside. Silence after the noise of the city. Darkness followed by the sudden appearance of the aurora. Ancient landscapes alongside modern tourism. Children's excitement at Santa Claus combined with an adult appreciation of one of Europe's great wilderness regions.

For travellers from the Middle East, that contrast is perhaps its greatest strength.

Rovaniemi offers something difficult to replicate elsewhere: the chance to leave behind the familiar world of sunshine, heat and urban life and enter an environment where snow, forests, reindeer and the Arctic sky become the main attractions.

And when the lights of the Aurora finally appear over a silent Arctic forest, the reason for making the long journey north becomes very easy to understand.

Modi's Uzbekistan visit deepens strategic partnership with focus on uranium, trade and connectivity

India and Uzbekistan elevate ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, set a $5 billion trade target and expand cooperation in energy, defence, critical minerals, tourism and culture

The Times Kuwait Report

India and Uzbekistan have agreed to elevate their bilateral relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Tashkent opened a new phase of cooperation spanning energy security, trade, defence, connectivity, education and culture.

The most significant development for India was the announcement of a long-term framework for uranium supplies from Uzbekistan. The arrangement, which has yet to be formally signed, is intended to support India's growing civilian nuclear energy requirements and strengthen the reliability of its long-term energy supply.

Indian Foreign Ministry Secretary (West) Sibi George, former Ambassador of India to Kuwait, said discussions on the uranium arrangement had been positive and that the two sides were close to concluding an agreement.

Economic cooperation was another central focus, with both countries setting an ambitious target of increasing bilateral trade to $5 billion by 2030. Trade has already crossed the $1 billion mark, and the two sides agreed to address barriers relating to market access, connectivity, banking and payment mechanisms.

The partnership is also being expanded into strategic sectors including critical minerals, mining, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, jewellery, information technology, healthcare, education and digital public infrastructure.

Defence and security featured prominently in Modi's discussions with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. The two sides agreed to strengthen defence-industry cooperation, including co-production and co-development, while welcoming progress under their Joint Working Group on Military Cooperation. They also highlighted the successful Dustlik joint military exercise held in Uzbekistan in April.

On terrorism, India and Uzbekistan reaffirmed their commitment to a policy of zero tolerance and condemned terrorism in all its forms, including cross-border terrorism. They called for stronger international action against terrorist organisations, financing networks, safe havens and infrastructure supporting terrorism.

Travel and tourism are also set to receive a boost. Uzbekistan announced plans to allow Indian citizens to visit visa-free for stays of up to 30 days, while President Mirziyoyev noted that air connectivity had expanded to 14 direct flights a week. The combination of easier travel and improved connectivity is expected to encourage tourism, business exchanges and people-to-people contacts.

Culture and education formed another important pillar of the visit. The leaders highlighted the work of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture and the Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Indian Studies. India also announced 100 scholarships for Hindi-language studies and an ICCR Sanskrit Chair at Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies.

The two sides witnessed the exchange of 11 agreements and memoranda of understanding covering sectors including mining, culture, education, tourism and Ayurveda. They also agreed on a Letter of Intent for restoring and conserving the Buddhist heritage sites of Fayaz Tepa and Kara Tepa.

Environmental cooperation was reflected in India's announcement of a $1 million grant for afforestation in the Aral Sea region. Urban development also emerged as a new area of cooperation, with Modi suggesting that Uzbekistan study India's GIFT City in Gujarat as it develops New Tashkent.

The visit concluded on August 30 before Modi travelled to Bishkek for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit. Taken together, the agreements signal India's effort to build a deeper Central Asian partnership anchored in energy security, trade, defence, connectivity and cultural diplomacy.