Issue No: 1299
Established 1996
13 - 19 September 2026

THE TIMES

KUWAIT'S PREMIER WEEKLY NEWSPAPER
www.timeskuwait.com
250 Fils

timeskuwait
thetimesq8
thetimeskuwait

LOCAL
Kuwait Education Ministry Tightens Rules on School Conduct, Photography and Fundraising
2

LOCAL
Cambodia and Kuwait seek new momentum in bilateral ties
4

12
LOCAL
BRICS Summit in New Delhi A summit shaped by a changing world

Kuwait Education Ministry Tightens Rules on School Conduct, Photography and Fundraising

The new regulations place stronger responsibility on schools and staff to protect students, maintain professional standards and ensure that all school activities, financial dealings, photography and social media use remain within approved Ministry of Education rules.

The Ministry of Education has introduced comprehensive new controls governing professional conduct, school activities, photography, fundraising, social media use and the handling of student information, with schools instructed to take immediate action against violations.

The new regulations, issued through a circular by Ministry of Education Undersecretary Dr Khaled Al-Rashid, apply to schools, teaching staff, administrative employees and other personnel. They are intended to strengthen discipline, protect students' privacy and wellbeing, safeguard public funds and ensure that school operations remain within approved administrative and educational frameworks.

The circular is based on Ministerial Resolution No. 151 of 2026 concerning the comprehensive regulatory framework for education, as well as applicable regulations governing health and food requirements, gifts and donations and the code of conduct for government employees.

Strict ban on fundraising, donations and commercial activity

One of the most significant provisions prohibits schools and their employees from collecting money or accepting cash, gifts, in-kind contributions or donations from teachers, administrators, students or parents for any purpose. Schools and employees are also prohibited from selling, promoting or advertising goods and services to students or staff for personal or financial benefit.

The ministry has further prohibited employees from using their official positions or school facilities for personal or commercial gain. All purchasing, contracting, payment and collection procedures must be conducted strictly in accordance with approved government regulations.

The measures are intended to ensure that school premises and official positions are not used for unauthorized financial activities or private benefit.

Tighter controls on school canteens

The circular also introduces detailed requirements governing school canteens. Schools may not sell, distribute or bring food and beverages from unapproved sources onto school premises. Canteens must comply with health and food-safety requirements issued by the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition and the Ministry of Education.

School administrations are required to verify the source, safety, storage and preservation of food products and ensure that canteen operations comply with approved standards.

Daily monitoring records must be maintained, including documentation of violations involving food products, health requirements or canteen workers. The ministry has also instructed schools to enforce the conditions of canteen contracts. Where violations occur, contractors must be given at least three working days to correct them. Failure to do so may lead to termination of the contract in accordance with applicable regulations.

Prior approval required for school events

Schools will face tighter controls over events, celebrations and activities involving individuals or organisations from outside the Ministry of Education. The circular prohibits schools from organising such events without prior written approval from the competent authority.

Schools may not invite, host or contract external institutions, organisations or individuals to conduct activities without official authorization. Any approved activity must have a clear educational objective and form part of the school's approved plan.

The ministry has also restricted the use of its name and logo, as well as school names, in advertisements, publications and commercial sponsorships without the necessary approvals.

Photography and filming placed under strict controls

Photography and filming inside schools are also subject to tighter restrictions. Students may not be photographed, recorded or have their images or personal information published without prior written consent meeting the applicable requirements.

The circular also prohibits the circulation of students' photographs through private social-media accounts or communication groups, particularly where images are linked to personal information or used for purposes unrelated to education. Employees are similarly prohibited from photographing Ministry workplaces or employees and publishing such material by exploiting their official positions.

The rules are designed to strengthen student privacy and prevent the unauthorized use or distribution of images and personal information.

Restrictions on social media and official statements

The ministry has also placed restrictions on what employees may publish in connection with their official duties.

Employees may not issue statements, publish news or content on behalf of the Ministry of Education or an individual school without authorization from the competent authority.

The use of official ministry or school logos on personal pages, advertisements or other unauthorized material is also prohibited. The circular further prohibits the disclosure or leaking of school documents, confidential information and personal data relating to students, parents or employees.

Employees are prohibited from obtaining or requesting information unrelated to their official duties or misusing information obtained through their work. The ministry has also warned against publishing rumours, false information or material deemed offensive or inappropriate toward the ministry, schools, students or employees.

Teachers reminded of professional responsibilities

The circular places particular emphasis on professional conduct and the role of teachers and administrators as role models for students. Staff are required to maintain respectful relationships with students, protect their physical and psychological wellbeing and avoid conduct that falls outside the approved educational framework.

The ministry also called for greater cooperation between teaching and administrative staff and instructed employees to resolve workplace disputes through established administrative channels.

Teachers must also avoid using mobile phones or smart devices during lessons except for educational purposes. Such use must not interfere with professional responsibilities or disrupt classroom activities.

Unauthorized activities may lead to investigation

The ministry warned that organising an event without the required approvals constitutes an administrative violation and may result in immediate referral to the Legal Affairs Department for investigation.

Disciplinary action may subsequently be taken in accordance with applicable regulations.

The ministry said it would take the necessary administrative and legal measures against violations and would not tolerate conduct that undermines professional standards, school discipline or the proper functioning of educational institutions.

Schools instructed to act immediately

School administrations have been directed to inform all employees of the new circular and document that they have reviewed and acknowledged its provisions.

The regulations must also be made available through official communication channels. Where a violation occurs, school administrations are required, where necessary, to immediately stop the offending activity, preserve relevant evidence, prepare an incident report and refer the matter through the appropriate administrative chain.

The circular takes effect from the date of its issuance and cancels any previous internal instructions that conflict with its provisions.

What the new rules mean for schools and parents

The new framework places greater responsibility on school administrations to ensure that everyday activities remain within formally approved procedures.

For schools, this means obtaining approvals before hosting outside guests or organisations, maintaining stricter controls over events and canteens and ensuring that financial and commercial activities follow official regulations.

For teachers and staff, the rules reinforce professional conduct, confidentiality, responsible social-media use and restrictions on unauthorized photography, filming and commercial activity.

For students and parents, the measures provide additional controls over the collection of money, the use of student images and personal data, food sold on school premises and activities conducted within schools.

The ministry's latest circular therefore brings several previously separate areas of school administration from fundraising and food safety to photography, social media and professional conduct under a more clearly defined regulatory framework.

Five Years. Five Wins. One Unstoppable Journey.

ITL World named 'Kuwait's Leading Travel Management Company' for the fifth consecutive year at the World Travel Awards 2026

ITL World has once again been named 'Kuwait's Leading Travel Management Company' at the World Travel Awards 2026, extending its winning streak to five consecutive years and reinforcing its standing as one of the region's most established and trusted travel management companies.

The achievement comes at a time when the travel industry is being reshaped by rapidly changing traveller expectations, technology and an increasingly complex global business environment. For ITL World, the fifth consecutive title represents more than an award - it is recognition of the company's ability to continually evolve while staying firmly focused on the people and businesses it serves.

The World Travel Awards is among the travel industry's most recognised global award platforms, celebrating organisations and professionals that demonstrate leadership and achievement across the travel and tourism ecosystem. The 2026 ceremony in the UAE brought together prominent names from across the international & regional travel, tourism and hospitality sectors.

33RD ANNUAL WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS

For ITL World, the recognition in Kuwait is particularly significant, marking five successive years of industry acknowledgement in a market where the company has built deep relationships and a strong understanding of the evolving needs of corporate and individual travellers.

Dr Siddeek Ahmed, Chairman & Managing Director, ITL World, said: "Five consecutive wins is an extraordinary milestone, and one that we do not take for granted. An award can recognise a moment, but five years of recognition reflects consistency, trust and the ability to keep evolving. This achievement belongs to our people, our clients and our partners who have been an integral part of this journey. We are proud of what we have built and even more determined about where we are going next."

The company's evolution has been driven by its belief that travel management is no longer simply about arranging journeys. It is about understanding businesses, anticipating requirements, creating efficiencies and using technology to make every stage of the travel experience more connected and seamless.

Rafeeq Mohammed, Chief Executive Officer, ITL World, said:

"The travel landscape has changed significantly over the years, and so have we. Our focus has never been on standing still after achieving success. It has been about asking what comes next, what our clients will need tomorrow and how we can deliver it better. The fifth consecutive World Travel Award is a strong endorsement of that approach. It gives us momentum to continue investing in technology, talent, partnerships and new ways of delivering value."

Najida Abdulla
Director, ITL World Kuwait

At the heart of ITL World's continued success in Kuwait is its team, whose local market knowledge and understanding of client requirements have helped the company build long-standing relationships across corporate and leisure travel.

Najida Abdulla, Director, ITL World Kuwait, said:

"Five consecutive titles are not achieved through one initiative or one successful year. They are built through several customer interactions, countless journeys and a team that remains committed to getting things right every day. We have built strong relationships in Kuwait by listening to our clients, understanding their requirements and constantly looking for ways to deliver better. This recognition is a celebration of that collective effort, and it gives us even greater motivation to raise the bar."

Cambodia and Kuwait seek new momentum in bilateral ties

Ambassador H.E. Chhay Makara highlights trade, investment, food security and tourism as key areas for expanded cooperation

The Times Kuwait Report

Cambodia and Kuwait are looking to inject fresh momentum into their longstanding bilateral relationship by expanding cooperation in trade, investment, food security, tourism, education and other areas, according to Cambodian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Kuwait, H.E. Chhay Makara.

The ambassador, who formally presented his credentials to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on 8 September 2026, said he was honored to represent Cambodia in Kuwait and reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening the bonds of friendship and advancing mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.

> Conveying greetings from His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni, the Cambodian Government and people, Ambassador Makara expressed his country's warm wishes to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and the people of Kuwait.

Conveying greetings from His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni, the Cambodian Government and people, Ambassador Makara expressed his country's warm wishes to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and the people of Kuwait.

He also wished Kuwait continued prosperity and said Cambodia hoped the relationship between the two countries would continue to flourish in a spirit of solidarity and mutual respect.

32 years of diplomatic relations

The ambassador noted that July 2026 marked the 32nd anniversary of diplomatic relations between Cambodia and Kuwait, describing the partnership as one built on mutual trust, respect and shared aspirations.

Bilateral relations have developed through high-level exchanges and a series of agreements and memoranda of understanding covering politics, trade, investment, tourism and other areas.

Among the significant milestones were the visits in 2008 and 2009 by then Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and then Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen.

More recently, Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Moha Bovor Thipadei Hun Manet met with Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah in May 2025 on the sidelines of the ASEAN-GCC and ASEAN-GCC-China Summits in Kuala Lumpur. The meeting, Ambassador Makara said, reaffirmed the shared commitment to friendship and cooperation. Today, bilateral relations encompass trade, investment, education, tourism and people-to-people exchanges.

Political and trade consultations

Looking ahead, Cambodia and Kuwait are exploring the possibility of co-chairing the Second Political Consultations and the Second Meeting of the Joint Trade Committee, with the meetings expected later this year and in early 2027.

According to the ambassador, these engagements could provide fresh momentum to bilateral ties by strengthening political trust, identifying new trade and investment opportunities and establishing a more dynamic framework for economic cooperation.

The meetings would also provide an opportunity for both sides to examine practical areas where existing relations can be translated into greater commercial and institutional cooperation.

Food security and investment opportunities

Food security is emerging as one of the potential areas for closer economic cooperation between the two countries. Ambassador Makara pointed to the complementarity between Kuwait's energy resources and Cambodia's agricultural strengths, saying these provide a strong foundation for cooperation in food security and trade.

Cambodia's access to regional and international markets through the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), together with free trade agreements with China, Korea and the United Arab Emirates, offers additional opportunities for investors, he said.

The ambassador also highlighted Cambodia's new investment law as an important factor in opening further opportunities for Kuwaiti investors. He said Cambodia was ready to work with Kuwait to develop mutually beneficial partnerships and expressed confidence that greater economic engagement could contribute to shared prosperity.

Cambodia welcomes Kuwaiti tourists

Tourism is another area where Cambodia is seeking stronger engagement with Kuwait. Inviting Kuwaitis to visit what he described as the "Kingdom of Wonder," Ambassador Makara highlighted Cambodia's historic temples, cultural traditions and natural landscapes.

He also pointed to the growing importance of green tourism and sustainable travel, saying visitors can enjoy memorable experiences while contributing to environmental sustainability.

In an effort to make the destination more accessible to visitors from the Gulf, Cambodia is improving access to halal food, prayer facilities and culturally sensitive services at airports, hotels and major tourist destinations. These measures, he said, are intended to create a more welcoming environment for Kuwaiti visitors.

Cambodia backs Kuwait Vision 2035

Ambassador Makara also expressed Cambodia's support for Kuwait's development ambitions under Kuwait Vision 2035, describing it as a forward-looking roadmap focused on innovation, sustainability and prosperity.

He said Cambodia was ready to contribute to the realization of the vision through expanded bilateral cooperation. "By joining forces under this vision, we can achieve our shared goals of peace and progress," the ambassador said, reaffirming Cambodia's commitment to maintaining strong and enduring relations with Kuwait.

As Cambodia and Kuwait approach a new phase of bilateral engagement, the planned political and trade consultations could provide an opportunity to build on more than three decades of diplomatic relations and translate the longstanding friendship between the two countries into broader economic, tourism and people-to-people partnerships.

Kuwait-India Ties Enter New Strategic Phase

Ambassador Meshaal Al-Shamali highlights expanding cooperation in defence, investment, healthcare, technology and energy

Kuwait and India are entering a new phase in their bilateral relationship, with both countries looking to translate their strategic partnership into expanded cooperation across defence, investment, healthcare, technology, infrastructure, renewable energy and food security.

Kuwait's Ambassador to India, H.E. Meshaal Al-Shamali, said the relationship is gaining fresh momentum, with greater opportunities emerging for trade, investment and cooperation between the two countries.

The partnership was elevated to a strategic partnership during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kuwait in December 2024 the first visit by an Indian prime minister to Kuwait in 43 years. The visit resulted in agreements covering areas including defence, culture and sports.

Defence cooperation expands

Defence is emerging as an important area of the new partnership. Bilateral cooperation covers military training, joint exercises, technical expertise, defence research and development, logistics and counter-terrorism.

The two countries' Joint Defence Committee, which met in New Delhi in August, agreed to strengthen military training and exchange expertise in defence industries and military medicine. Ambassador Al-Shamali also pointed to potential cooperation in areas including defence manufacturing, radar, surveillance and reconnaissance systems.

Investment and business opportunities

Kuwait is seeking to attract more Indian companies, investors and skilled professionals, particularly in infrastructure, manufacturing, tourism, healthcare and renewable energy.

The ambassador said Indian companies are being encouraged to participate directly in the Kuwaiti market and major government projects, while Kuwait is also looking to increase its investments in India.

India remains a key trading partner for Kuwait, while Kuwait continues to play an important role in India's energy security, supplying around 5 percent of India's energy requirements through oil and gas, according to the ambassador.

One million Indians in Kuwait

The large Indian community remains a central pillar of bilateral relations. Around one million Indians live in Kuwait, making them the country's

largest expatriate community.

According to Al-Shamali, Indians account for around 21 percent of Kuwait's population and 30 percent of its workforce, with professionals contributing across healthcare, medicine, nursing, engineering, construction and education.

Indian doctors and nurses are particularly prominent, representing approximately one-third of the medical and nursing workforce in Kuwaiti healthcare facilities, he said. The two countries also maintain a 2021 agreement on domestic workers, which sets out provisions relating to workers' rights and the responsibilities of employers and employees.

Tourism and trade links

People-to-people ties are also supported by growing travel between the two countries. More than 11,000 tourist visas were issued to Kuwaiti citizens travelling to India from the beginning of 2024 through the first half of 2025, alongside nearly 656 e-visas.

The ambassador noted that tourism from Kuwait to India was affected in 2026 by regional tensions. Meanwhile, the launch of GCC-India free trade negotiations in 2026 could create additional opportunities for trade and investment between India and the Gulf states.

65 years of diplomatic relations

The year 2026 marks 65 years of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and India, which were formally established in 1961. The historical relationship, however, extends back more than six centuries through commercial, maritime and social links.

As Kuwait and India move beyond the establishment of their strategic partnership, the focus is increasingly shifting toward practical cooperation, with investment, energy, defence, healthcare, technology and the Indian community expected to remain key pillars of the relationship.

CBK Assets Rise to KD8.6 Billion at End-August

Foreign currency and precious metal reserves stand at KD8.41 billion

The total assets of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) reached approximately KD8.6 billion at the end of August, reflecting the strength of the country's monetary and financial position.

According to the latest figures, the CBK's foreign currency and precious metal reserves stood at around KD8.41 billion at the end of August.

The reserves represent an important component of Kuwait's financial buffers and support the country's monetary stability and ability to meet external payment obligations.

Reserves remain key financial buffer

Foreign currency reserves held by the central bank include liquid foreign assets and other reserve components maintained to support Kuwait's financial system and currency stability.

The level of reserves is closely monitored as an indicator of the country's external financial position and the central bank's capacity to respond to market and economic developments.

Monetary stability

The latest figures come as Kuwait continues to maintain the Kuwaiti dinar's stability, supported by the CBK's monetary policy framework and its management of the country's foreign reserves.

The central bank regularly publishes data covering its assets, reserves and other financial indicators as part of its ongoing disclosure of Kuwait's monetary and financial position. The August figures underline the sizeable financial resources maintained by the CBK and their role in supporting the stability of Kuwait's economy and financial system.

Map does not change the land, what changes is the way the world sees it

The map does not change the geography of the Earth through coercive decisions. Instead, it can open the way toward reshaping how geographical knowledge is established and represented in the digital sphere and, ultimately, how the world understands itself.

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

There are decisions adopted by the United Nations that may initially appear to be nothing more than technical details. Yet, over time, some reveal themselves as the starting point for profound transformations in the way the world is governed and knowledge is shaped.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution under the title "Correcting the Map to Restore Balance to Global Cartographic Representation." On the surface, the resolution addresses the transition from traditional maps, such as the Mercator projection, which exaggerates the size of countries in the northern regions, to more accurate forms of representation.

Yet its deeper significance extends beyond geography into a fundamental legal and humanitarian question: Are the official tools through which the world presents itself to its peoples accurate and neutral, or do they carry historical legacies that require reconsideration?

Who Stands Behind the Resolution?

The initiative was driven diplomatically by Togo, on behalf of the African Group, with the support of the African Union. It secured the support of 164 countries, while one country, the United States, voted against it and six countries abstained.

The key to the resolution's broad success lies in the soundness of its procedural framework and its respect for national sovereignty. The resolution did not redraw borders, transfer territory or undermine sovereign rights.

Instead, it focused on the cognitive and educational dimension by encouraging schools and digital platforms to use maps that represent geographical areas more accurately and fairly. This approach paved the way for broad international consensus.

How Can a "Non-Binding" Resolution Become an International Standard?

Although the General Assembly resolutions do not possess the same binding force as the Security Council resolutions, the history of international law demonstrates that international rules can evolve through gradual accumulation.

An international resolution may not immediately alter reality, but it can change the "normative language" through which the world discusses and understands that reality.

The next challenge lies in mapping in the age of artificial intelligence. The map that was once displayed on a classroom wall has now become embedded in navigation applications such as GPS, search engines and artificial intelligence models.

Therefore, the coming challenge is no longer simply, "How do we draw a paper map?" but rather, "How do we ensure that digital systems and artificial intelligence present the world accurately and impartially, without distortion or misleading representations?"

Why Do States Turn to the General Assembly or the Security Council?

The choice between the two forums depends on the legal nature of the issue and the strategic objective pursued by the state initiating the process.

First: Resorting to the General Assembly

The General Assembly may be described as the "international parliament," bringing together all United Nations Member States on an equal basis. States may turn to the General Assembly in order to avoid the constraints imposed by the veto, thereby seeking to build broad international consensus that reflects the collective global conscience.

This is achieved primarily through the adoption of recommendations that are not legally binding, but which may nevertheless carry significant political and moral influence.

Over the long term, such resolutions can contribute to the formation of opinio juris, the belief that a particular practice is legally required, which may, through sustained state practice and acceptance, contribute to the development of customary international law and provide material for consideration by courts and states.

Second: Resorting to the Security Council

The Security Council represents the path of enforcement and binding international action. It bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

States may turn to the Security Council when they seek binding measures under Chapter VII, including sanctions and, where legally authorized, the use of force. The Council may also address regional and military disputes when there is a direct threat to international peace and security or an act of aggression.

Security Council decisions adopted within its binding authority are obligatory for UN Member States. However, this route is inherently more confrontational and remains vulnerable to paralysis because of the veto.

It would therefore not normally be the appropriate mechanism for establishing primarily educational or epistemic principles, such as the choice of cartographic projections.

A Strategic and Legal Choice

The decision by the African Group to pursue the issue of "correcting the map" through the General Assembly was a legally sound and strategically calculated choice. The objective was not to impose sanctions or exercise coercive power, but rather to change global perception and establish a new normative standard for geographical representation.

The map does not change the geography of the Earth through coercive decisions. Instead, it can open the way toward reshaping how geographical knowledge is established and represented in the digital sphere and, ultimately, how the world understands itself.

In the age of artificial intelligence, the map is no longer merely a physical representation of territory. It has become part of the infrastructure through which information is produced, interpreted and disseminated.

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

Kuwait Reaffirms Commitment to Human Rights and Dignity

Ministry of Social Affairs highlights care for elderly as South Africa calls for action to uphold Mandela's legacy

The Times Kuwait Report

Kuwait has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting human rights and preserving human dignity, stressing the importance of care, protection and support for people at every stage of life.

The message was delivered by Dr. Jassim Al-Kandari, Director of the General Department of Social Welfare at the Ministry of Social Affairs, during a ceremony marking Nelson Mandela International Day at the Department of Elderly Care. The event was attended by ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps.

Al-Kandari said the occasion provided an opportunity to reflect on the humanitarian principles associated with the late South African President Nelson Mandela, particularly tolerance, justice, human dignity, peace and service to humanity.

He stressed that respect for human beings and the protection of their dignity are shared responsibilities that transcend borders and cultural differences.

Focus on elderly care

Al-Kandari highlighted Kuwait's attention to the elderly, noting their contributions, experience and role in building society. He said the country seeks to ensure that older people enjoy a secure and dignified life, while preserving their status, role and active participation in society.

He added that elderly care extends beyond providing services and must include respect for individuals, recognition of their contributions, protection of their dignity and empowerment.

Creating an environment where older people can continue contributing through their experience and expertise is also an important part of this responsibility, he said.

South Africa calls for action

South African Chargé d'Affaires Sibongile Ngobeni praised cooperation between Kuwait's Ministry of Social Affairs and the Department of Elderly Care in organizing the event at the Farah Center for Specialized Care and Rehabilitation of the Elderly.

Ngobeni said Kuwait and South Africa share values including respect for human dignity, solidarity, social development and concern for human well-being. She emphasized the importance of cooperation among governments, diplomatic missions, institutions and communities in addressing social challenges and building more inclusive societies.

Ngobeni said the most meaningful way to honour Mandela was through action and service, rather than words alone. She pointed out that making a positive difference does not necessarily require substantial resources and can begin with giving time, empathy, skills and personal support to people in need.

Mandela devoted 67 years to public service and the struggle for justice, equality and human dignity, she noted, linking his legacy to the '67 Minutes' initiative, which encourages individuals and institutions to dedicate 67 minutes to serving others.

The event also highlighted how shared humanitarian values can strengthen understanding and cooperation between different societies and cultures.

Kuwait Cabinet Approves Amendments to Public Tenders Law

The Cabinet has approved amendments to the Public Tenders Law aimed at simplifying procedures, accelerating government procurement and enhancing transparency in the tendering process.

The amendments form part of the government's efforts to streamline public procurement procedures and improve the efficiency of government contracts.

The changes are expected to reduce procedural delays and facilitate faster decision-making in the awarding of government tenders, while maintaining the regulatory safeguards governing public procurement.

The revised provisions also seek to improve the overall framework for government contracting and create a more efficient environment for companies participating in public tenders. The Cabinet's decision comes as Kuwait continues efforts to modernize government procedures and strengthen the efficiency and transparency of public-sector operations.

The amendments will take effect in accordance with the applicable legal and regulatory procedures following their formal issuance and publication.

901,800 Kuwaitis and Residents Outside Kuwait's Labour Force

"Expatriates account for the overwhelming majority of Kuwait's active workforce, while students form the largest group outside the labour force."

The Times Kuwait Report

Nearly 902,000 people in Kuwait are classified as being outside the labour force, accounting for around 17 percent of the country's total population, according to official population and labour data.

The figure of 901,819 people includes 523,146 Kuwaitis and 378,673 expatriates. The data covers people aged 15 and above who are not employed and are not actively seeking work.

Students make up largest group

Students aged 15 and above represent the largest category among those outside the labour force, numbering 532,553. Kuwaiti students account for 310,450, while expatriate students number 222,103.

The figures include 153,701 Kuwaiti male students and 156,749 female students, alongside 105,199 expatriate males and 116,904 expatriate females.

Retirees form second-largest category

The data shows that 192,556 people receiving retirement income are outside the labour force. Kuwaitis account for the overwhelming majority of this category, with 185,918 citizens, compared with 6,638 expatriates. Among Kuwaiti retirees, the figures include 102,271 men and 83,647 women. Another significant category comprises women engaged in household duties, with 176,710 people classified outside the labour force. Kuwaiti women account for 26,778, while expatriate women make up the vast majority, at 149,932.

KEY FIGURES

901,819
People outside the labour force

523,146
Kuwaiti citizens

378,673
Expatriates

532,553
Students aged 15 and above

36,898
Total unemployed

Expatriates dominate active workforce

While more than 900,000 people are outside the labour force, Kuwait's active labour market remains heavily dependent on expatriate workers. The total labour force is estimated at around 3.3 million people, including approximately 495,697 Kuwaitis and 2.8 million expatriates. The number of employed people stands at approximately 3.264 million, comprising around 463,900 Kuwaitis and 2.8 million expatriates.

Unemployment at 36,898

Official figures put the number of unemployed people at 36,898. Kuwaiti citizens account for 31,794 of the unemployed, while expatriates account for 5,104. The figures provide a snapshot of Kuwait's labour-market structure, highlighting the different economic-status profiles of citizens and expatriates and the significant share of the population outside the workforce because of education, retirement or household responsibilities.

EPA Intensifies Air Quality Monitoring Amid High Temperatures and Dust

Environmental authority monitors air quality around the clock as weather conditions raise concerns over dust and pollutants

The Environment Public Authority (EPA) is intensifying its monitoring of air quality across Kuwait amid high temperatures and recurring dust conditions, with readings from monitoring stations being tracked at frequent intervals.

The authority's air-quality monitoring network provides continuous data on atmospheric conditions and pollutant levels, allowing officials to follow changes in air quality and identify areas affected by elevated dust or pollution levels.

Monitoring becomes particularly important during periods of high temperatures, strong winds and dust storms, which can cause a rapid deterioration in air quality and increase airborne particulate matter.

The EPA's monitoring system measures key air pollutants and environmental indicators through stations distributed across Kuwait. The data helps authorities assess prevailing conditions and provide information on air quality.

Dust remains a key concern

Dust and suspended particulate matter can significantly affect visibility and air quality, particularly during periods of strong winds. Weather conditions that lift dust from exposed areas can lead to increased concentrations of fine and coarse particles in the atmosphere. Such conditions can be especially concerning for people with respiratory sensitivities.

The EPA's continuous monitoring allows changes in pollutant concentrations to be detected more quickly, supporting environmental assessment and public awareness.

Continuous monitoring

The authority's monitoring network forms part of Kuwait's wider environmental surveillance system, providing updated information on air conditions across different areas. Residents are advised to follow official weather and environmental updates during periods of dusty weather and to take appropriate precautions when air quality deteriorates.

The intensified monitoring comes as Kuwait continues to experience high summer temperatures and periodic dusty conditions, making regular assessment of air quality an important part of environmental and public-health preparedness.

Education Ministry Begins Phased Termination of 7,019 Expatriate Teachers

Move forms part of staffing overhaul to address 33,268-teacher surplus and save KD42 million annually

The Ministry of Education has begun the first phase of a plan to reduce surplus teaching staff, with the services of 7,019 expatriate teachers from Arab and other nationalities set to be terminated.

The move is part of a broader strategy to align teaching staff with the actual requirements of schools while giving greater priority to qualified Kuwaiti teachers and gradually increasing Kuwaitization in specializations where sufficient national talent is available.

Education Minister Jalal Al-Tabtabai has directed the relevant departments to implement the first phase of the plan. According to the ministry, the measure is expected to reduce the annual salary bill by approximately KD42 million.

Ministry identifies 33,268-teacher surplus

A ministry study has identified a surplus of approximately 33,268 teachers across Kuwaiti and contracted teaching staff in several specializations. The ministry said the surplus will be addressed gradually, based on the staffing requirements of individual specializations and schools. Future recruitment will increasingly be linked to actual vacancies and staffing needs. Expatriate teachers will continue to be recruited in fields where there are not enough qualified Kuwaiti candidates.

78% of affected teachers are women

Of the 7,019 teachers included in the first phase, 5,468 are female teachers, representing around 78 percent of those affected. Male teachers account for 1,551, or approximately 22 percent.

Physical education and Islamic education are among the specializations with the largest numbers included in the first phase. Seniority of appointment was also among the criteria used to determine the teachers affected.

The ministry said affected teachers will be notified through the government's Sahel application, in accordance with approved administrative and legal procedures. It also stressed that the rights of affected employees would be addressed in accordance with applicable regulations.

Kuwaitis make up 70.6% of teaching workforce

The Education Ministry currently employs approximately 91,761 male and female teachers, excluding supervisory staff. Kuwaiti teachers account for around 70.6 percent of the teaching workforce. Gulf teachers and teachers classified as illegal residents represent approximately 10.1 percent, while teachers from Arab and other nationalities account for about 19.3 percent.

The ministry said the staffing review is intended to bring teacher numbers more closely in line with actual school requirements while ensuring that recruitment continues in areas where qualified Kuwaiti candidates remain insufficient.

The phased approach is expected to continue as the ministry reviews staffing requirements across different educational specializations.

Pride in Own Culture, Unity in a Shared Future

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

Since arriving in Kuwait, I have been deeply impressed by the unique character of this society where different civilizations interact and coexist in harmony. Here, time-honored Arab traditions meet cultures from around the world, with different languages, cuisines and lifestyles shaping the vibrant rhythms of everyday life. More importantly, when the country is confronted with difficulties and challenges, people are able to put aside their differences, find common ground and look out for each other to weather the storm together. This spirit of embracing cultural diversity while cherishing their shared home is what makes Kuwait so remarkable.

Likewise, China presents its own vibrant picture, where diverse cultures blend and coexist, and multiple ethnic groups prosper together.

China is a big family composed of 56 ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has its own distinctive language, costume, music, diet and festivals, all of which contribute to the defining hallmark of Chinese culture — unity in diversity. Today, from the Uyghur dance to the Tibetan costume, from the Mongolian diet to the Dai festivals, all are alive in the everyday life of Chinese people.

As a matter of fact, over the long course of more than 5,000 years of Chinese civilization, all ethnic groups of China have, through their exchanges, interactions and integration, jointly created the splendid Chinese culture and forged the great national spirit. They have come together as one community with a shared future, characterized by blood ties, common beliefs, shared culture, interdependent economy and close emotional ties.

Fine traditional culture of every ethnic group is an integral part of Chinese culture. China attaches great importance to protecting and developing the best of all traditional ethnic cultures. To this end, China has created a harmonious and inclusive environment for the coexistence, mutual learning and shared development of all ethnic groups, and incorporated its effective theory and practice into the legislation, so that people of various ethnic groups are united as one, like seeds of a pomegranate sticking together. In July 2026, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Promoting Ethnic Solidarity and Progress entered into force.

It is the first law to explain, from a legal perspective, core concepts such as "advancing the building of the Chinese national community". It also provides for the "respect for and protection of the learning and use of ethnic minority languages and scripts", and underscores the importance to "promote mutual learning and integration among all ethnic cultures and encourage ethnic groups to admire each other's fine traditional culture and learn each other's languages and scripts". The law will provide strong support for efforts to carry forward the fine traditional cultures of all ethnic groups, promote interaction, communication, and integration among them, and further enrich and develop the Chinese culture.

Solidarity and common progress of all ethnic groups, and their shared prosperity and development, are the lifeblood, strength and hope of the Chinese nation. The Chinese government is committed to achieving the shared development of all ethnic groups.

From 2012 to 2025, the combined GDP of the five autonomous regions (Inner Mongolia, Xizang, Ningxia, Xinjiang and Guangxi), grew from 3.25 trillion yuan to 8.66 trillion yuan. In 2021, all 420 national-level poverty-stricken counties in ethnic autonomous areas were lifted out of absolute poverty, and 28 ethnic groups with smaller populations were entirely lifted out of poverty.

On delivering prosperity for all ethnic groups, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Promoting Ethnic Solidarity and Progress makes specific requirements regarding support to areas with large ethnic minority populations in deepening reform and opening up across the board, fully aligning with national development strategy and improving their capacity for self-development.

This ensures that all ethnic groups could benefit from the dividends of development on an equal footing. Looking ahead, all ethnic groups of China are marching forward in unity toward the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Though geographically far apart, China and Kuwait share the same conviction that people living on the same land should take pride in their own distinct culture, while standing united for a shared future.

Kuwait moves to overhaul charity rules with tighter oversight and tougher penalties

New 96-article draft law introduces stricter licensing, donation controls, 10-year record keeping and penalties of up to 10 years in prison

Kuwait is preparing a comprehensive overhaul of its laws governing charitable and humanitarian activities, with a proposed decree-law aimed at strengthening transparency, financial oversight and safeguards against the misuse of donations.

The draft legislation, approved by the Cabinet in July, comprises 96 articles across seven chapters and proposes the establishment of a National Center for Charitable and Humanitarian Work to regulate and supervise the sector. It would also establish a Kuwaiti Fund for Humanitarian Work and introduce new rules governing charities, foundations and fundraising campaigns.

Under the proposed law, individuals and organizations would not be permitted to conduct charitable activities or collect donations without the necessary licence and registration. Existing charities would be required to bring their legal status and internal regulations into compliance within three months of the executive regulations being issued. Non-compliant organizations could face dissolution.

Tighter controls on donations

The draft law introduces stricter requirements for collecting, managing and spending donations. Cash donations would require prior authorization, with permits specifying the method of collection and the maximum amount permitted. Funds raised through campaigns would have to be deposited into designated bank accounts at banks supervised by the Central Bank of Kuwait.

Fundraising campaigns would generally need to be approved within 30 days, while emergency campaigns would be subject to a three-day approval period. Charities would also be required to disclose annual budgets, activities and sources of funding, while verifying the identities of donors, beneficiaries and project partners and ensuring that they are not subject to local or international sanctions.

Ten-year record-keeping requirement

The proposed legislation places greater emphasis on financial accountability, requiring charities to retain fundraising and donor records for 10 years. Organizations would also have to submit reports on fundraising proceeds to the National Center within 15 days of a campaign ending. These reports would generally need to be approved by an accredited auditor, subject to exemptions for certain small-scale campaigns.

Transactions suspected of being linked to money laundering or terrorist financing would have to be reported to the Kuwait Financial Intelligence Unit through the National Center.

Stronger protection for donors and beneficiaries

The draft law classifies donor and beneficiary information as confidential and restricts its disclosure except where required to implement the law, ordered by a court or investigative authority, or authorized by the individual concerned.

Additional protections would apply to children receiving assistance. Their personal information could not be disclosed, while photographing or recording children for fundraising purposes would require parental or legal guardian consent.

A child's refusal to be photographed would also have to be respected. Images or recordings that could humiliate, exploit or endanger children would be prohibited, as would making assistance conditional on allowing a child to be photographed.

Violations involving children's confidential information, images or recordings could carry penalties of up to five years in prison and fines ranging from KD2,000 to KD5,000.

Tougher penalties for misuse of donations

The proposed law sets out tougher penalties for fraud, unauthorized fundraising and misuse of charitable funds. Misappropriating money raised through a fundraising campaign could result in up to seven years in prison, with the maximum penalty increasing to 10 years in cases involving unlicensed campaigns, impersonation of registered charities or the use of the name of an organization that is no longer legally recognized.

Fines could range from KD10,000 to twice the value of the funds involved, depending on the violation. Organizing, promoting or calling for an unlicensed fundraising campaign could result in up to two years in prison and fines between KD1,000 and KD5,000, with higher penalties in certain cases involving impersonation or unregistered organizations.

Using donations for financial speculation, illegal activities or purposes that promote sectarianism or racism, or threaten national unity, could carry up to five years in prison and fines ranging from KD3,000 to KD10,000.

Recovery of misused donations

The proposed legislation would also provide a mechanism for recovering funds that have been misused. Where a court convicts an individual of misappropriating donations, conducting an unauthorized campaign, violating fundraising regulations or using donations for unauthorized purposes, it could order the funds or their equivalent value to be returned to donors.

If returning the money is not possible, the funds would be transferred to the proposed Kuwaiti Fund for Humanitarian Work for use in charitable and humanitarian activities.

New regulator for charitable sector

The proposed National Center for Charitable and Humanitarian Work would operate as an independent public legal entity under the supervision of the competent minister. Its responsibilities would include licensing and monitoring charitable activities, assessing money-laundering and terrorist-financing risks, developing governance standards and maintaining databases and official records.

The center would also issue a binding code of ethics for charitable and humanitarian activities and coordinate with government authorities to prevent the sector from being exploited for illegal purposes. Until the center's board is established and its operating regulations issued, the Ministry of Social Affairs would carry out its responsibilities.

The proposed legislation would replace Kuwait's 1959 law regulating fundraising for public purposes, establishing a broader framework for the country's charitable and humanitarian sector with greater emphasis on licensing, financial transparency, accountability and protection of donor and beneficiary information.

Mexico Keen to Strengthen Partnership with Kuwait

The Times Kuwait Report

Mexico is keen to further strengthen its partnership with Kuwait and expand cooperation across political, economic, cultural and other areas of mutual interest, Mexican Ambassador to Kuwait Eduardo Patricio Peña Haller has said.

Speaking on the occasion of Mexico's Independence Day, Ambassador Haller reaffirmed Mexico's commitment to strengthening the longstanding bonds of friendship, mutual respect and cooperation between the two countries.

"Mexico and Kuwait share a relationship founded on mutual respect, constructive dialogue and a common commitment to international cooperation," Haller said, adding that Mexico looks forward to continuing to build bridges between the two countries and identifying new opportunities that can benefit their peoples.

Diplomatic relations between Mexico and Kuwait were established in 1975, and have expanded steadily over the past five decades across political, economic, cultural and people-to-people dimensions. The 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations, marked in 2025, provided an opportunity for both countries to highlight the depth of their ties and renew their commitment to closer bilateral

cooperation.

The ambassador said Mexico attaches great importance to its relations with Kuwait and values the country's constructive role in promoting dialogue, peaceful settlement of disputes and international cooperation.

Mexico also remains committed to working closely with Kuwait through the United Nations and other multilateral forums in support of peace, sustainable development, international law and effective multilateralism.

The two countries are also looking to broaden cooperation in new areas. The Embassy has highlighted opportunities linked to the FIFA World Cup 2026, which Mexico is co-hosting with Canada and the United States. Matches will be held in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey.

The tournament, the Embassy said, offers an opportunity to promote cultural exchange, tourism and closer understanding between peoples, while also creating scope for greater cooperation between Mexico and Kuwait in football, youth development, sports training, exchanges of expertise and institutional cooperation.

The Mexican Embassy expressed appreciation to the government and people of Kuwait for their continued friendship, hospitality and support, as well as for the welcoming environment extended to the Mexican community in the country.

Mexico also reaffirmed its determination to deepen the bonds of friendship and cooperation with Kuwait and extended its wishes for the country's continued prosperity, stability and well-being.

Dar Al Muhama Named Exclusive Kuwait Partner for GC Elite Leaders Kuwait 2026

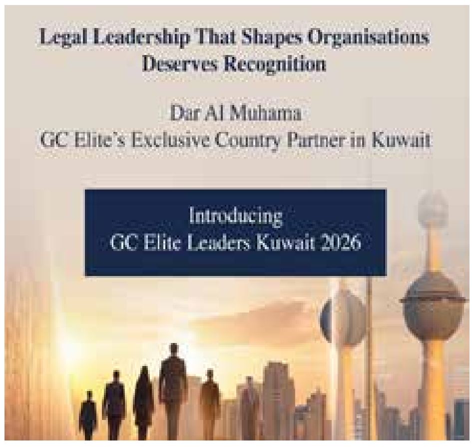
Dar Al Muhama Law Firm has been named the exclusive Kuwait partner for GC Elite Leaders Kuwait 2026, an independent recognition programme highlighting the country's leading in-house legal professionals and their contribution to business and institutional leadership.

The partnership will support the development of the GC Elite programme in Kuwait and strengthen engagement with the country's in-house legal community. GC Elite Leaders Kuwait 2026 will recognise General Counsels, Heads of Legal and senior in-house legal professionals whose leadership and professional contributions have had a meaningful impact on their organisations.

Independent research and assessment

According to the programme, the research and assessment process will be conducted independently by GC Elite, with recognition decisions remaining under its sole responsibility. Dar Al Muhama will support local engagement and facilitate connections with Kuwait's legal and in-house counsel community, while the research, evaluation and selection process will remain independent.

The programme reflects the expanding role of in-house legal teams, whose responsibilities increasingly extend beyond traditional legal advice to include strategic decision-making, risk management, commercial considerations and organisational leadership.



Nominations for GC Elite Leaders Kuwait 2026 are currently open to General Counsels, Heads of Legal and senior in-house legal professionals working in Kuwait.

The nomination deadline is 9 October 2026, with the selected professionals scheduled to be recognised during a special gathering in Kuwait in November.

The initiative is intended to highlight the contribution of Kuwait's in-house legal community while creating greater opportunities for professional engagement and dialogue among legal leaders.

Dar Al Muhama said the partnership represents an opportunity to contribute to a more connected professional community for in-house counsel in Kuwait and encourage broader discussion around the evolving role of legal leadership in business.

Kuwaiti Coast Guard Officer to Receive MAST Honour in Scotland

Captain Ali H. Ashour of the Kuwait Ministry of Interior's Kuwait Coast Guard is set to receive a special honour in Scotland for his contributions to critical infrastructure resilience, evidence-based policy and UK-Kuwait scientific cooperation.

Captain Ashour, a NATO OF-5 officer, will receive a silver salver from Maritime/Air Systems & Technologies (MAST) during its first Focus Forum in Glasgow.

MAST is a UK-based international forum bringing together policymakers, defence and security leaders, senior military commanders, academics and industry representatives to discuss developments across the undersea, surface, air, space and cyber domains.

Recognition for resilience and capability development

The honour recognises Captain Ashour's work in areas including critical infrastructure resilience, evidence-based policy and scientific capacity-building between Kuwait and the United Kingdom.

His research focuses particularly on autonomous transformation, strategic feasibility and future capability development across maritime and critical infrastructure systems. His areas of study include digital twins, artificial intelligence validation, autonomous technologies and the governance of future C5ISR capabilities.

Captain Ashour is also the first non-Commonwealth national selected for a strategic defence research partnership on autonomy involving BAE Systems and the PeriDynamics Research Centre.

His work examines how sovereign technological capabilities can contribute to national continuity and resilience while supporting longer-term economic development.

Strengthening UK-Kuwait cooperation

Major General Martin Smith CB MBE DL, former Head of the Special Boat Service, said Captain Ashour's work reflects the evolving nature of UK-Kuwait and wider UK-GCC defence and security cooperation.

Smith highlighted the growing emphasis on shared capability development, evidence-based capacity building and strategic resilience, while also pointing to Kuwait's investment in human capital.

Captain Ashour has received professional recognition through fellowships with the Royal Institution of Naval Architects, the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology, and the Institution of Engineers in Scotland.

He previously served on the council of the Institution of Engineers in Scotland and contributed to policy discussions covering infrastructure resilience, technological transition and the relationship between energy, transport, communications and national security.

Kuwaitis, Residents Spend Nearly KD6 Million a Day Abroad in July

Kuwaitis and residents spent nearly KD5.9 million a day abroad in July, with the peak summer travel season driving a significant increase in overseas card transactions.

According to official figures from the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), total spending through bank cards at overseas point-of-sale (POS) terminals and ATMs reached approximately KD183.7 million in July, compared to KD129.9 million in June.

The month-on-month increase amounted to around KD53.8 million, or 41.4 percent, highlighting the strong rise in overseas spending during the summer holiday period. On a daily basis, average overseas card spending increased to approximately KD5.93 million in July, compared to around KD4.3 million in June. This represents an increase of nearly KD1.6 million per day.

POS purchases account for bulk of spending

The CBK data showed that most overseas card spending in July was made through direct

purchases at POS terminals. POS transactions totaled approximately KD159.2 million, equivalent to an average daily expenditure of about KD5.14 million during the month.

Meanwhile, cash withdrawals through ATMs outside Kuwait amounted to approximately KD24.5 million, averaging around KD790,000 per day. Overall, the average daily overseas card spending of KD5.93 million comprised approximately KD5.14 million in POS purchases and KD790,000 in ATM withdrawals.

The sharp increase in overseas spending coincided with the peak summer travel season, when large numbers of Kuwaitis and residents traditionally travel abroad for holidays.

A summit shaped by a changing world

The Times Kuwait Report

Leaders of the expanded BRICS grouping met in New Delhi on September 12–13 for the 18th BRICS Summit, with India using its chairmanship to place development, economic resilience, technological cooperation and reform of global institutions at the centre of discussions.

Held under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," the summit comes at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions, conflicts in West Asia and Ukraine, disruptions to global trade and supply chains, and growing debate over the future of the international economic and political order.

The New Delhi gathering also represents an important moment in BRICS' evolution. The grouping, originally established around Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, has expanded substantially in recent years. India's official BRICS 2026 materials list 11 members — Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the UAE — collectively accounting for about 49.5 percent of the world's population, 40 percent of global GDP and 26 percent of global trade.

India's fourth BRICS chairmanship

India assumed the BRICS chairmanship on January 1, 2026, for the fourth time, following earlier chairmanships in 2012, 2016 and 2021. The year also marks two decades since the establishment of BRICS.

Throughout its chairmanship, India has sought to make BRICS more focused on practical cooperation rather than allowing it to become solely a forum for geopolitical positioning. More than 350 meetings and high-level engagements have been conducted across more than 25 Indian cities during the year, covering political and security issues, economic and financial cooperation, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

The Indian presidency has framed the agenda around resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability, with an emphasis on what New Delhi describes as a "Humanity First" approach.

New Delhi Declaration adopted

One of the principal outcomes of the summit has been the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration, covering a broad range of geopolitical, economic, developmental and technological issues.

The declaration reaffirms the BRICS principles of sovereign equality, mutual respect, solidarity, inclusiveness, consensus and cooperation. It also calls for stronger collaboration across the grouping's three traditional areas — political and security cooperation, economic and financial cooperation, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

The declaration comes against the backdrop of major differences among BRICS members on several international conflicts. Nevertheless, members reached agreement on a common text, including language calling for restraint and diplomatic efforts to address the worsening situation in the Middle East.

Middle East crisis dominates geopolitical discussions

The continuing conflict involving Iran and the wider instability in the Middle East has emerged as one of the most difficult issues confronting the expanded BRICS grouping. Iran and the UAE, despite their differing positions and regional interests, signed onto the joint BRICS statement calling for restraint and diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions. The ability of the group to issue a common declaration was significant because the expanded membership brings together countries with increasingly divergent foreign-policy positions.

BRICS leaders expressed serious concern over escalating violence in the Middle East and opposed unilateral measures that they argue have implications for international trade and developing economies. The declaration emphasised dialogue, consultation and diplomatic resolution of disputes.

The Middle East crisis has also acquired an economic dimension for BRICS, particularly because disruptions to energy markets and shipping routes can have consequences far beyond the region. The conflict has already placed pressure on global oil markets and supply chains.

BRICS and the changing global economic order

Economic cooperation remains at the heart of the BRICS agenda. The expanded grouping represents a significant share of global population, economic output and trade, giving its members greater collective weight in debates about global finance and economic governance.

One major area of discussion has been the use of local currencies in trade and investment. Rather than immediately pursuing a common BRICS currency, the New Delhi discussions have focused more heavily on improving cross-border payments, strengthening national payment systems and facilitating settlements in members' own currencies.

The BRICS Payment Task Force is examining ways of integrating national payment mechanisms, while the New Development Bank is being encouraged to expand local-currency financing. This approach reflects the practical difficulties involved in creating a single currency or unified monetary system among economies with very different financial structures, monetary policies and levels of development.

Push for reform of global institutions

Reform of international institutions has been another major priority for India.New Delhi has repeatedly argued that global governance structures established decades ago do not adequately reflect the economic and demographic realities of the 21st century.

At the summit, Modi called for greater representation and reform within the United Nations Security Council and international financial institutions. The broader BRICS position seeks greater participation by developing and emerging economies in global decision-making.

The issue is particularly important for India, which has long campaigned for permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

The BRICS declaration also supports a more representative and reformed multilateral system, linking institutional reform with the broader interests of developing countries.

AI emerges as a major BRICS priority

Artificial intelligence has also moved prominently onto the BRICS agenda. The New Delhi discussions have emphasised the need for AI development that is ethical, inclusive, secure and responsive to the needs of the Global South.

Among the initiatives highlighted during the 2026 chairmanship are a proposed BRICS Digital Public Infrastructure Repository, cooperation in smart manufacturing and the establishment of an India Centre for BRICS Industrial Competencies.

The summit has also highlighted health-sector cooperation, including a proposed training hub network with India's National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) playing a leading role.

Trade, tariffs and sanctions

Trade tensions have also figured prominently in the summit. BRICS members have raised concerns over unilateral tariffs, non-tariff barriers and economic sanctions, arguing that such measures can disrupt international trade and disproportionately affect developing economies.

The New Delhi Declaration expresses opposition to unilateral economic coercive measures and highlights the importance of an open, predictable and rules-based international trading system.

However, BRICS countries do not share identical economic interests. Their trading relationships with the United States, Europe and other major markets vary significantly. This makes consensus on economic policy more complicated than a simple division between BRICS and Western economies.

A more diverse but more complicated BRICS

The expansion of BRICS has significantly increased its geographical reach and economic weight, but it has also made consensus more difficult. The group now includes major energy producers, manufacturing powers, rapidly growing emerging markets and countries facing different geopolitical circumstances.

These differences mean that BRICS is not a conventional military or political alliance. Instead, it functions as a platform where countries with different political systems and foreign-policy priorities attempt to identify areas of common interest. The New Delhi summit has demonstrated both sides of this equation: the members have been able to agree on issues such as development, institutional reform and economic cooperation, while geopolitical disagreements continue to shape negotiations.

Global South at the centre

For India, perhaps the broader objective of the summit is to position BRICS as an important voice for the Global South. The grouping's expansion has increased the number of countries seeking greater influence over global financial institutions, international trade rules, technology governance, climate policy and development financing.

India's presidency has therefore emphasised practical cooperation in areas such as food security, health, climate resilience, technology, education, entrepreneurship and sustainable development. The objective is not simply to create another geopolitical bloc, but to provide developing economies with greater representation and additional mechanisms for cooperation.

A summit shaped by a changing world

The New Delhi BRICS Summit is taking place at a moment when the international system is undergoing significant change. Wars and regional conflicts are disrupting trade and energy markets. Strategic competition between major powers is reshaping global diplomacy. Artificial intelligence is transforming economies and raising new questions about governance. Developing countries are demanding greater representation in institutions that determine global economic and political rules.

Against this backdrop, BRICS is attempting to define what an expanded Global South platform can accomplish. India's 2026 chairmanship has placed the emphasis on resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability, while the New Delhi Declaration provides a broad framework for future collaboration.

Whether BRICS can convert its growing economic and demographic weight into sustained institutional influence will depend largely on its ability to overcome internal differences and translate summit commitments into practical programmes.

For India, the New Delhi summit offers an opportunity to demonstrate that its diplomacy can bridge relationships across competing geopolitical camps while keeping development and the interests of emerging economies at the centre of the conversation.

The 18th BRICS Summit's most important legacy may therefore lie not only in the declarations adopted by its leaders, but in whether the expanded grouping can turn its increasingly diverse membership into effective cooperation on trade, technology, development, energy, climate and global governance.

Thought for the week

"Choose to make a difference instead of choosing to be indifferent today."

Caroline Naoroji

The Artist Behind the Edit: Sandra Devraj's Quiet Rise in British Visual Media

Originally from Kerala, Devraj pursued filmmaking in India before continuing her studies in the United Kingdom. She holds a master's degree in filmmaking from the University for the Creative Arts, where she further developed her approach to visual narrative.

From Trivandrum to London, Sandra Devraj is building a distinctive career in visual storytelling, bringing together filmmaking, editing and cinematography to create stories that extend beyond the frame.

There is a particular kind of artist whose work is often noticed only when it is absent — someone who shapes the rhythm of a story, determines when a moment should linger and decides what the audience sees next.

Sandra Devraj works in that space. Based in London, Devraj has developed her career around post-production and visual storytelling, approaching editing not simply as a technical process but as a creative discipline. Her professional work spans video editing, cinematography, colour grading and art direction.

From Kerala to London

Originally from Kerala, Devraj pursued filmmaking in India before continuing her studies in the United Kingdom. She holds a master's degree in filmmaking from the University for the Creative Arts, where she further developed her approach to visual narrative.

Her journey reflects the increasingly international nature of contemporary visual media, where filmmakers and editors move between independent cinema, advertising, branded content and digital storytelling.

Today, she is associated with Perspective Pictures in London, working across editing, videography and visual content.

Editing as storytelling

For Devraj, the edit is where a film's emotional language begins to take shape. The editor's role extends beyond assembling footage. Decisions about rhythm, pacing, silence, movement and transitions can fundamentally alter how an audience experiences a story.

Her portfolio reflects this versatility, including short films, fashion films, promotional content and cinematography projects. Her work has also included projects connected with brands such as Fujifilm and other commercial productions.

Working across different visual worlds

Devraj's experience has allowed her to move between independent filmmaking and commercial visual production — two environments that demand different approaches but share a dependence on strong visual storytelling.

One of the projects highlighted in her recent professional work is Luvvie, a short film that has been presented at international film festivals. She has also worked on visually demanding branded productions requiring complex

editing and coordination between fast-moving footage and narrative structure.

Her portfolio demonstrates a broader creative interest beyond editing alone. Alongside post-production, she has worked in cinematography and visual direction, reinforcing her identity as a filmmaker and visual artist.

Building a creative identity

Devraj is also a co-founder of The Spectrum Studio, a creative production team working across film, television, brands and social media. The studio describes its work as spanning film production, video editing, line production, music composition, social media and brand strategy.

This wider involvement reflects a growing trend in visual media, where creative professionals increasingly operate across multiple stages of production rather than remaining confined to a single technical role.

For Devraj, that broader perspective appears central to her creative practice.

A quiet rise

Unlike many careers built around visibility and celebrity, editing remains a profession in which much of the most important work happens away from the spotlight. Yet every cut, transition and carefully timed pause contributes to the final story.

From Kerala to the British creative industry, Sandra Devraj's journey illustrates how emerging filmmakers are building international careers by combining technical expertise with a strong personal understanding of visual storytelling.

Her progress may be quiet, but the work behind the edit continues to shape what audiences ultimately see and, more importantly, what they feel.

RECIPE

Gujarati Dal Dhokli

Indian Dal with Dumplings

(A One• Pot Comfort Meal)

When you want soul• warming one• pot meal, just one bowl, deeply satisfying.

A wholesome Gujarati one• pot meal made with soft wheat• flour dhokli pieces simmered in a mildly sweet, tangy and spiced lentil broth. Comforting, flavourful and filling, Dal Dhokli brings the warmth of traditional Gujarati home cooking to the table.

Preparation Time: 20 minutes
Cooking Time: 30 minutes
Total Time: 50 minutes
Serves: 4

Ingredients

***For the Dal:**

1 cup Toor dal
3 cups Water or as required
1 tomato (chopped)
1/4 tsp fenugreek seeds
1/2 tsp. Turmeric powder
1 tsp.Gingerpaste
1 slited green chilly
1/2 tsp. Red chilli powder
1 tsp Coriander• cumin powder
2 tbsp Jaggery
1 tbsp Tamarind pulp
Salt – to taste

***For the Dhokli:**

1 cup Whole wheat flour
1/4 tsp. Turmeric powder
1/2 tsp.Red chilli powder
1/2 tsp. Ajwain
1tbsp.Oil
Salt – to taste
Water – as required

***For Tempering:**

2 tbsp.Oil
1tsp. Mustard seeds
Pinch of fenugreek seeds
Pinch of Asafoetida
few Curry leaves
1• 2 Dry red chilli
1 tbsp. Peanuts (soaked)

***For Garnishing:**

Fresh coriander – chopped
Lemon wedges

Method

***Prepare the Dal:**

• Wash and pressure• cook the toor dal with turmeric,tomato,fenugreek seeds and water until soft.
• Whisk the cooked dal until smooth and add gingerpaste , slited chilly, red chilli powder, coriander• cumin powder, jaggery,tamarind pulp, soaked peanuts and salt.
• Add water to achieve a slightly thin, flowing consistency and bring to a gentle boil.

Chef Chhaya Thakker

***Prepare the Dhokli:**

• Mix wheat flour, turmeric, chilli powder, ajwain, oil and salt.
• Add water gradually and knead into a soft, smooth dough.
• Divide into small portions, roll each portion thin and cut into small square pieces.

***Cook the Dal Dhokli:**

• Bring the dal to a gentle simmer and add the dhokli pieces gradually, stirring gently so they do not stick together.
• Cook uncovered for about 10–12 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the dhokli is cooked through and soft.
• Add a little hot water if the dal becomes too thick.

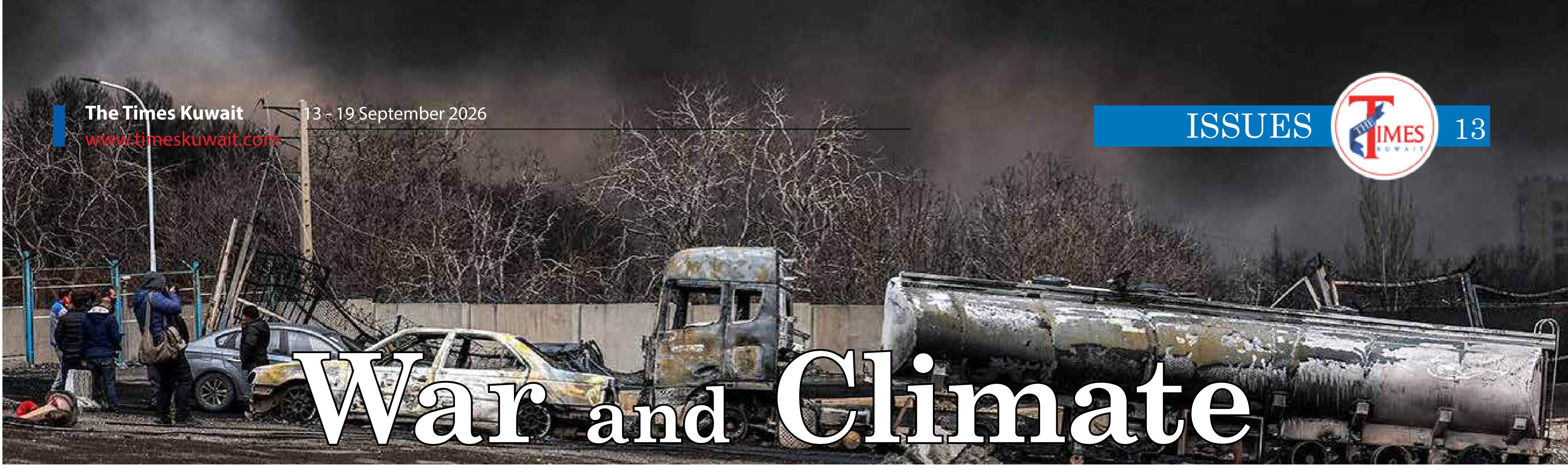
***Finish with Tempering:**

• Heat oil . Add mustard seeds and pinch of Fenugreekseeds.
• Once they crackle, add pinch of asafoetida, curry leaves, dry red chills .
• Pour the tempering over the Dal Dhokli and mix gently.

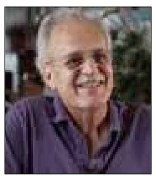
***Serving:**

• Serve hot in a wide bowl with a drizzle of ghee, fresh coriander and a squeeze of lemon or with cooked rice with a side of papad, pickle and dahi.

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



War and Climate

Robert Muggah, Carlos Nobre, Johan Rockström

Robert Muggah, Co-Founder of the Igarapé Institute and the SecDev Group, is a fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy. Carlos Nobre, a senior scientist at the University of São Paulo's Institute for Advanced Study, is Co-Chair of the Science Panel for the Amazon. Johan Rockström, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Professor of Earth System Science at the University of Potsdam, is Co-Chair of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water.

Six months into the Iran war, the standoff in the Strait of Hormuz continues to rattle the global economy. Traders and governments are watching for signs of escalation, while households and companies are paying more for fuel and fearing energy shortages. But the war is also taking a deeper, albeit less visible, environmental toll, driving up carbon dioxide emissions and undermining international cooperation on climate change. And unlike high oil prices, those costs will not disappear when the war ends.

Iran, of course, is just one geopolitical flashpoint. There are currently 65 active state-based armed conflicts worldwide, the highest number since records began in 1946. While the Middle East and Ukraine dominate news headlines, the civil wars in Sudan and Myanmar are still raging. Global military spending rose for the eleventh consecutive year in 2025, reaching nearly \$2.9 trillion. By contrast, official development assistance fell by more than 23% in real terms—the largest annual decline on record.

Meanwhile, the climate crisis continues to escalate. The past three years have been the warmest on record, and every year between 2015 and 2025 ranks among the 11 warmest ever measured. A 2025 report by the Planetary Boundaries Science Lab found that seven of Earth's nine planetary boundaries have been breached, with ocean acidification being the latest to fall outside the safe range. An intensifying El Niño could make matters worse, heating an already exceptionally warm planet and increasing the likelihood of disruptive droughts, floods, and other weather extremes.

Conflict-related emissions remain poorly captured by climate accounting, making it hard to estimate the Iran war's full environmental impact. Military emissions are often reported incompletely, if they are reported at all, and are rarely subject to scrutiny. A 2026 review of 263 separate studies found that more than 90% of emissions linked to military operations and conflicts go unaccounted for. Methods are improving, but estimates still vary depending on what counts as military activity and how damaged infrastructure is assessed.

Earlier this year, an analysis by the Climate and Community Institute estimated that the first 14 days of fighting between the United States, Israel, and Iran generated more than five million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e) emissions, more than Iceland emits in a year. Emissions have continued to rise since then, though there is no comparable estimate for the war as a whole.

The war's carbon bill will keep growing after the fighting stops. Rebuilding damaged roads, homes, and industrial facilities requires producing vast quantities of highly carbon-intensive cement and steel. A 2024 study found that postwar reconstruction can generate an enormous carbon footprint, in some cases rivaling a country's prewar emissions.

Then there is the war's toxic legacy. Strikes on refineries and petrochemical facilities can release sulfur compounds, heavy metals, and other pollutants into the air and water, contaminating soils, aquifers, and coastal ecosystems in a region already suffering from extreme heat and water scarcity. Smoke plumes may disappear from satellite images within days, but the contamination can last for generations.

The war's indirect effects may be even more damaging. Wars destroy physical assets, but they also change the calculations behind energy policy. When established routes become unreliable, governments and companies turn to supplies they consider secure and politically manageable, even if that means dirtier fuels.

In this respect, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz marks a turning point. Shipping through the waterway has been severely curtailed since the war began on February 28 and was effectively halted again in early July, creating what the International Energy Agency described as the "largest supply disruption in the history of the global oil market." Oil prices climbed above \$110 a barrel. The short-lived ceasefire between the US and Iran briefly reopened the Strait and brought prices down, but since it broke down and the negotiation window expired, shipping has been disrupted again and global energy markets have come under renewed pressure.

The Resistible Pull of King Coal

Even though a single naval incident can now trigger a global energy crisis almost overnight, governments and markets are still banking on reliable fossil-fuel supplies. In July, for example, the US Energy Information Administration projected that Brent prices would fall to \$74 in the third quarter; days later, renewed US strikes rendered that forecast obsolete.

Fearing energy shortages, many governments are responding to the crisis by leaning more heavily on fossil fuels. Coal plants scheduled to close may now stay open, mothballed capacity could be restored, and emergency gas contracts may end up becoming permanent.

Signs of this fossil-fuel resurgence are already visible. Several countries have increased coal generation or delayed plant closures in recent months, echoing the scramble for fossil fuels that followed Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. By May, 109 countries had announced energy-related measures in response to the war. Nearly 20 governments introduced structural measures to improve efficiency or accelerate electrification, but most of these interventions were aimed at conserving fuel and shielding consumers. While some measures may help cushion the shock, they also risk locking in the very dependencies that caused the crisis in the first place.

Notably, this is the first major oil crisis in which there are mass-market clean alternatives. The crisis may make coal and natural gas more attractive in the short term, but over time it could also erode confidence in imported fossil fuels and strengthen the political and economic case for electrification.

This is not to suggest that the transition to clean energy will be smooth sailing. Batteries, solar panels, and wind turbines all depend on critical minerals produced and processed through highly concentrated global supply chains. According to one recent estimate, the full implementation of China's rare-earth export controls could put \$6.5 trillion in annual downstream production outside China at risk.

Some of these vulnerabilities are often overlooked in energy-policy debates, as they involve little-known inputs like sulfur and sulfuric acid, which are essential to the production of phosphate fertilizer and to processing copper, cobalt, and nickel. The Middle East produces around one-quarter of the world's sulfur, and nearly half of all seaborne supply passes through the Strait of Hormuz. Recent disruptions have already led China to curb sulfuric acid exports, raising costs across both mineral and fertilizer supply chains.

With electrification and food production also exposed to concentrated supply chains and maritime chokepoints, speed has become crucial. While an LNG terminal or a thermal power plant can take years to complete, rooftop solar, batteries, and efficiency upgrades can be deployed much faster.

Clean energy, however, is still constrained by high financing costs, permitting delays, inadequate grids, and concentrated supply chains. Even so, solar panels and batteries can be installed piece by piece without waiting for a single large project to come online.

Strengthening domestic manufacturing could help address some of these problems, but producing every mineral and component at home would be prohibitively expensive and unrealistic. Rather than seeking self-sufficiency, countries should build diversified supply chains that can survive the loss of one supplier without seizing up.

Alternatives to oil also come with their own environmental costs. Consider biofuels. When oil and gas prices rise, corn, palm oil, soy, and sugar become more attractive, since they can be easily integrated into existing fuel systems. But clearing carbon-rich forests to make room for fuel crops can create an emission debt that would take decades to pay off. Moreover, increased biofuel demand does not necessarily translate into higher crop prices. How much farmers actually stand to gain depends on government mandates, refining capacity, and commodity markets. And when crop prices do rise, so does the value of farmland, making forest clearing even more lucrative.

The Iran war is already forcing that trade-off. Governments grappling with a fuel-price crisis tend to cut budgets, and environmental agencies rarely have the necessary political muscle to protect theirs. That creates room for land grabbing and illegal logging, which criminal organizations are quick to exploit.

Another vulnerability is food production. Though the effects of displacing farmers and disrupting cultivation can take months, even years, to manifest, the Iran war has sped up the process by throwing commodity markets into chaos. Disruptions to sulfuric acid and natural-gas shipments from the Gulf, for example, are already raising costs for import-dependent farmers.

The World Bank expects its fertilizer price index to rise by more than 30% in 2026, reflecting higher input costs, biofuel demand, and the Hormuz crisis. Poorer countries, where farmers have less access to credit and governments have fewer resources to cushion price shocks, will be hit the hardest.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine showed how quickly a war in one part of the world can jeopardize food security in another. The war in Iran is now hitting the same, already strained supply chains. A fertilizer shortage that delays planting may not get as much media attention as a missile strike, but its consequences can be even more devastating and longer-lasting.

Climate Diplomacy in the Crosshairs

Instead of strengthening emission-reduction plans or protecting forests, governments are focused on containing energy prices and securing fuel supplies. It's not difficult to see why: climate policies are a hard-enough sell without households and companies complaining about surging fuel costs. Climate diplomacy is among the easiest things to put off.

As worsening droughts dry out rivers and fuel wildfires across Europe and North America, the timing could hardly be worse. Last year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Belém ended without adopting roadmaps to shift away from fossil fuels or halt and reverse deforestation. The Brazilian presidency subsequently launched both initiatives outside the formal COP30 agreement, but those efforts must now compete with a war that is consuming diplomatic attention and public money.

Yet the consequences of delaying decarbonization are no longer hypothetical. Every year that fossil-fuel use rises and forests continue to disappear puts more pressure on the climate system, increasing the risk of further ice-sheet loss, weaker ocean circulation, more erratic rainfall, and severe damage to vital ecosystems.

Like all wars, the Iran war will eventually end. Shipping will resume, reconstruction contracts will be signed, and the world's attention will move on. But carbon-intensive infrastructure built in response to an energy shock can remain in place for decades, while damaged ecosystems may never fully recover.

Although the war has made climate negotiations more difficult, geopolitical turmoil need not derail the energy transition. Embracing biofuels and returning to coal are policy choices, and governments can choose not to sacrifice the Amazon to keep fuel prices down.

Avoiding that outcome requires clear guardrails. Any decision to keep coal plants running should have an expiry date, and emergency gas purchases shouldn't lock countries into decades of supply they may not want. Environmental enforcement should be protected from emergency budget cuts. And when reconstruction gets underway, it should favor lower-carbon materials.

These measures must be paired with public investment, as energy shocks tend to turn climate policies into political liabilities. Governments will need to cushion the blow, but relief should go to lower-income households instead of subsidizing electricity across the board. They must also invest in measures that permanently reduce demand, including decentralized clean power and better public transit.

Renewables are already starting to reduce dependence on contested borders and dangerous sea lanes. Global renewable power capacity reached a record 5,149 gigawatts last year, with 692 gigawatts added in 2025 alone. Renewables accounted for 85.6% of all new power capacity and now comprise almost half of installed global generating capacity, though the world is far off track from the goal of tripling renewable capacity by 2030.

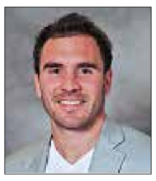
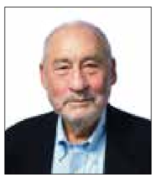
These figures measure capacity rather than generation, but they show how quickly power systems are changing. Renewables do not make countries immune to crisis. Grids can be attacked or fail, and much of the equipment they rely on moves through global supply chains. What they do reduce is exposure to imported fuels.

The Iran war has made the security benefits of clean energy hard to ignore. After all, domestically generated solar and wind power cannot be blockaded at a strait halfway around the world. Yet efforts to reduce oil dependence can create new vulnerabilities. Renewed pressure on tropical forests from increased biofuel demand shows what happens when ecosystems are treated as expendable.

Energy security and climate security are not the same thing, but they now reinforce each other. Restarting coal plants or finding safer oil suppliers would do little to protect the world from future energy or environmental shocks. The only durable course is to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels while building clean-energy systems that are more diverse, decentralized, and resilient.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

The Program Redesign the IMF Needs

Martín Guzmán, Joseph E. Stiglitz
Martín Guzmán, a former minister of economy of Argentina, is a professor at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University and a member of the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences and of the Jubilee Commission at the Vatican. Joseph E. Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate in economics, is a former chief economist of the World Bank, a former chair of the US President's Council of Economic Advisers, University Professor at Columbia University, and the author, most recently, of The Road to Freedom: Economics and the Good Society (W. W. Norton & Company, Allen Lane, 2024).

The International Monetary Fund is conducting a Review of Program Design and Conditionality, its first major evaluation since 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic. With so many countries suffering from macroeconomic imbalances and debt distress that are severely weakening their development prospects, the IMF guidelines for program design, while always important, are more salient than ever.

The IMF review should address at least three critical features of IMF program design—with a view to reforming all of them.

The first is policy conditionality. IMF financing is supposed to play a stabilizing role, meaning that it should enable countercyclical macroeconomic policies in countries that do not have access to other sources of financing. It should never be used to meet payments on unsustainable debt.

The IMF's own rules establish that, in order to access Fund resources, a country's debt must be sustainable, or else the country must commit to efforts to restore debt sustainability through debt restructuring. The IMF's policy on lending into arrears allows the Fund to lend while a country is in arrears to other creditors, thereby facilitating the restructuring process.

What we should not see is IMF financing supporting programs that include contractionary fiscal policies—for example, cuts to investment in public infrastructure, education, and health—while the government continues repaying debts to the private sector or to other creditors that refuse to provide financing to roll over those debts. This has become a worrying pattern in many developing countries, as explained last year in the Vatican's Jubilee Report for Pope Francis. In some recent years, multilateral financing for developing countries seems to have supported an outflow of funds to the private sector, rather than an expansion of domestic investment.

IMF-financed programs should also prevent future destabilizing capital movements. When left unregulated, these flows tend to be procyclical in developing economies, in turn fueling exchange-rate volatility and uncertainty, thereby undermining investment. And IMF lending should never be used to finance capital flight. There is a clear role for capital-account regulations that discourage speculative carry-trade flows and prevent the misuse of IMF financing during the stabilization period.

The second feature of program design concerns contingency plans. Programs are based on baseline assumptions, but reality is uncertain, and there can be significant deviations from those assumptions—all the more so in a global environment that has become highly unpredictable.

Program design should protect critical investments for medium-term growth—which is essential to ensure long-term stabilization and avoid the trap of successive IMF programs aimed merely at refinancing debt to the Fund. Investments in knowledge and infrastructure, in particular, have frequently borne a disproportionate share of the cuts when programs are adjusted after failing to meet their baseline projections.

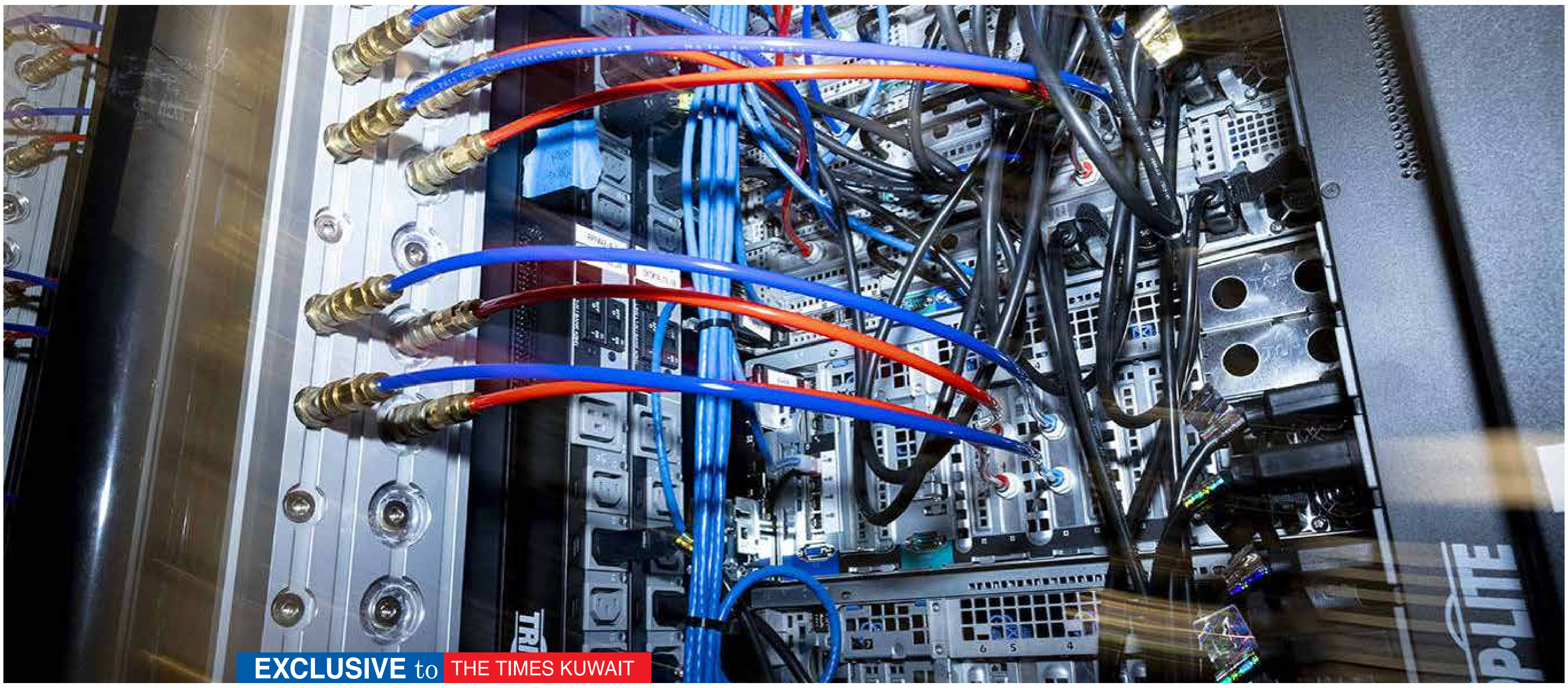
There should be contingency plans for such circumstances. While a significant number of IMF programs have not been as "successful" as hoped, programs can fall short of their goals for many reasons, including a failure of implementation, flaws in the model underlying the program, or a new adverse shock. The contingency plans need to reflect the source of the failure.

omes to contingency plans, the Fund should be particularly sensitive to policies and procedures that undermine democratic processes and accountability—including anything that smacks of a lack of transparency and full disclosure. For example, the Fund should not reach deals with a country—say, Bolivia, to cite a potentially relevant upcoming case—and announce only the policies under the baseline scenario, while signing a confidentiality side letter as part of the agreement with the government stipulating an increase in the value-added tax in the event of fiscal underperformance.

The third feature of program design that the Fund must address is ownership. This is a critical criterion for IMF exceptional-access lending—that is, lending above certain limits. IMF loans bind successive governments and even generations. Ownership should mean genuinely broad political and social support, not merely the incumbent government's assent, or even commitment, to implement the agreed-upon policies. After all, the government's agreement may be based on a calculus of its own survival, rather than the country's long-run well-being. We have seen cases where politics has seemed to influence lenders as well, even the IMF.

One possible criterion of ownership would be parliamentary approval of the agreement reached between a government and the IMF. In an era marked by democratic backsliding, transparency, public accountability, and ownership are especially important today.

Ultimately, the IMF's success should be judged by the impact of its financing programs on distressed debtors' stabilization and economic recovery, and on the well-being of the population, including those in poverty. The purpose of IMF programs must always be to improve countries' social and economic indicators, not to avert the adverse effects of a short-term default on other creditors—and even less to influence domestic electoral outcomes.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Who Controls the Data Controls the Future

Bijan Burnard
CEO of D-AI and Lattice Inc.

In March, Iranian drones targeted three Amazon Web Services facilities in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, hitting two directly and nearly hitting the third. It was the first time a commercial data center had been a military target, yet almost nobody outside specialist circles noticed. They should have. The servers holding a country's data, and the chips running the AI models on which its economy increasingly leans, are no longer background infrastructure. They are as strategic as ports or power grids—and just as exposed.

For most of the last decade, data was something companies mined, and AI was something companies sold—both regulated at the margins through privacy law, if they were regulated at all. This framing no longer works. AI now sits inside finance, defense, health care, and public administration, and it runs on two things most governments do not actually control: the data that train it and the compute that processes it. Countries that ignore this will find their futures being decided in boardrooms where they have no seat.

Many governments have taken note. Global spending on "sovereign AI" will reportedly surpass $100 billion this year. Over the last several months, Canada, France, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates have rolled out national compute funds and GPU allocations. The European Union has gone further, treating sovereign AI infrastructure almost as doctrine, which has meant backing Gaia-X to build out European data infrastructure and financing projects like Mistral AI's new data center outside Paris.

On paper, this looks like sensible diversification away from a handful of American and Chinese firms. In practice, it risks creating something more brittle: a patchwork of national fortresses, each self-sufficient and none capable of talking to the others. Part of the problem is that "AI sovereignty" encompasses at least three things, and most governments are only working on one.

Data residency—keeping citizens' data within national borders—is the oldest of the three, the easiest to legislate, and the one most policy actually addresses. Compute sovereignty—who owns the chips and data centers doing the processing—is more difficult: a country can wall off its data, but it loses control if those data are processed on infrastructure someone else owns. Governance sovereignty—the ability to set the rules AI systems have to follow, rather than importing whatever standard the country hosting the dominant developers happens to set—is the one almost nobody talks about.

> *While AI is becoming increasingly central to finance, defense, health care, and public administration, it depends on resources most governments do not control: the data used to train it and the compute that processes it. Unless this changes, countries will remain subject to decisions made in boardrooms they cannot influence.*

A fragmented regulatory landscape doesn't help any of this. Roughly 90 countries now have some kind of national AI strategy; at least 33 have passed binding legislation. But the approaches often clash. The EU's AI Act, whose main provisions became applicable last month, carries penalties of up to €35 million ($40.6 million) or 7% of the offender's total global annual turnover. The United States' AI Action Plan takes the opposite approach, treating deregulation itself as a competitive edge. China's Global AI Governance Action Plan offers cooperation on AI governance with developing economies, but on Chinese terms.

The Council of Europe's Framework Convention on AI—the first binding international AI treaty—represents real progress, but its enforcement is modest next to the scale of what it's meant to govern. Coordination beyond that has barely started. The UN's Independent International Scientific Panel on AI has warned of a "race to the bottom," with jurisdictions competing to offer the most permissive rules rather than the safest ones. Companies running high-risk AI deployments are already shopping for the softest jurisdiction.

Genuine AI sovereignty requires four things, none of which is complicated in concept. Start by putting AI data infrastructure in the same legal category as power grids, with someone clearly on the hook for physical and digital security.

Next, countries building sovereign compute need shared interoperability standards, not just national champions—Gaia-X's work on data portability is a useful template. A hospital in Lagos or a ministry in Warsaw ought to be able to verify that a system meets baseline safety requirements, regardless of whose infrastructure it's running on.

Oversight needs teeth: audit rights, mandatory incident reporting, and licensing for the handful of frontier models capable of touching critical infrastructure or financial stability. These models should be treated more like nuclear material than ordinary software.

The world also needs a real mechanism to stop AI sovereignty from turning into just another axis of inequality.

That $100 billion investment in sovereign compute is happening almost entirely in rich countries. Pooled regional compute, financed and governed jointly by smaller countries, would deliver better results than each of them trying to go it alone.

None of this requires a grand global treaty. The components of a governance framework—including the EU AI Act, the Council of Europe convention, Gaia-X, and the UN's scientific panel—already exist. The scaffolding connecting them is missing, though, and building that takes deliberate work. Every year it is delayed, the infrastructure gets bigger and harder to reconfigure. Nobody pouring billions of dollars into data centers and GPUs is waiting around for governance to catch up.

The strikes on those AWS facilities in the Gulf sent a message (whether or not anyone intended it): The infrastructure underpinning a growing share of consequential decisions—who gets a loan, which patients get flagged for treatment, which factories keep running—sits in buildings most governments do not control and cannot fully protect. Data sovereignty, compute sovereignty, and governance sovereignty are not conference-room abstractions. They are the precondition for a future shaped by countries' own citizens—not whoever happens to own the servers.

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.

AI Could Make Governments Slower

Sami Mahroum
Founder and CEO of Spark X, previously held posts at INSEAD, the OECD, and Nesta.

AI-generated writing has become ubiquitous since ChatGPT's release in 2022, and institutions are struggling to keep up. Nowhere is the pressure more evident than in the courts. In the United States, the share of federal lawsuits filed without a lawyer rose from an 11% average in 2005–22 to 16.8% in 2025, with researchers linking the surge to the advent of AI. The same study found that the share of federal civil complaints containing machine-written text rose from 1% in 2023 to 18% today.

In July, the US Government Accountability Office warned that the Internal Revenue Service risks being swamped by AI-generated public comments on tax regulations. Because large language models can generate virtually unlimited variations on the same text, it noted, nearly identical comments are increasingly difficult to detect.

Research funders are being similarly inundated. Applications for grants across 12 funding organizations in the United Kingdom and Europe have risen by 57% since 2022, fueled by a surge in AI-assisted submissions.

In response to the flood of AI-generated writing, governments have begun automating their end of the process. An OECD survey of 58 national tax authorities found that 69% were using AI in 2023, up from just 9% in 2016. As AI's capabilities have advanced, so have its uses, with tax authorities now relying on the technology to support analytical work and case selection, improve taxpayer services and correspondence through virtual assistants, and automate high-volume, repetitive tasks.

But greater capacity invites greater demand. A government agency that can process twice as many public comments may soon find itself receiving twice as many. The safety researcher David Woods calls this the law of stretched systems: when a system is pushed to the limits of its capacity, each improvement is quickly exploited to operate at greater scale. Woods pairs that concept with what he calls "the substitution myth," which holds that automation simply replaces human workers when, in practice, it changes the nature of the work and often creates more of it.

Human oversight, however, cannot be scaled as easily. The European Union's AI Act requires high-risk systems to be designed so that "natural persons" can effectively oversee them. EU data protection law also gives individuals the right not to be subject to decisions based solely on automated processing.

Nor can companies and organizations satisfy these requirements by putting a human at the end of the process. In its 2023 SCHUFA ruling, which concerned automated credit ratings, the European Court of Justice held that what matters is whether the final decision depends on the automated assessment, even if a human formally retains decision-making authority. A signature that merely ratifies an automated decision does not amount to meaningful oversight.

Put these two forces together, and a bottleneck emerges. Everything upstream of the responsible person—search, sorting, drafting, checking, routing—gets faster, while the person does not. The deluge of AI-generated content boosts demand for human judgment, but the rate at which decisions can be made remains unchanged.

A recent engineering study illustrates the problem. Modeling nuclear reactor licensing, the authors compared today's manual process with two automated alternatives. They found that the projected timeline even for the more integrated automated systems—roughly 15 months—did not change even as the assumed capabilities of AI improved from conversative to optimistic.The bottleneck was the queue of senior reviewers responsible for final approvals on the most complex cases, who could complete only about three a day. Making the machines twice as capable, in other words, would do little to speed up the review process.

Governments have so far used AI for searching documents, summarizing cases, sorting comments, and drafting correspondence. These are natural tasks for AI because they can be automated without delegating consequential decisions to machines. But when decision-making capacity does not expand at the same rate, automation merely shifts the bottleneck rather than removing it, potentially even making it worse.

The alternative is not to let machines decide, which the law prohibits in certain cases and which is generally unwise, but to use them to reduce the cognitive burden of reaching a decision while leaving the judgment itself to a human.

British psychologist Alan Baddeley's model of working memory offers a useful way to think about this. Some parts of our working memory hold and process verbal and visual information, while another part, which Baddeley calls "the central executive," directs and allocates our limited attention. AI can already read, organize, compare, and present information, but deciding what deserves attention and exercising judgment remain distinctly human functions.

The goal of AI adoption, then, should be to make it easier for public officials to make decisions by developing tools that identify trade-offs and uncertainties, present competing arguments fairly, and acknowledge their own limitations. Alas, such a system is harder to build than a summarization tool and makes for a less impressive sales pitch, since its output would look more like better briefs than an excuse to eliminate entire departments.

This problem is not new. In 1983, cognitive psychologist Lisanne Bainbridge warned of the "ironies of automation": as machines take the easier cases, humans are left with the difficult ones. While Bainbridge was writing about industrial process-control systems, the same logic applies to AI. Government agencies measure applications processed, cases closed, response times, and, increasingly, tasks automated. They don't measure how much more decision-makers are being asked to handle.

The more work AI models can process, the more they leave for humans to decide. Unless governments account for this imbalance, they may discover that they have automated everything but gained little.