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## Surge in FDI reflects growing confidence in Kuwait

*Kuwait's strategic location, and the significant untapped potential in various sectors of the economy, can attract investment by foreign entities and local investors. This includes the construction, real estate, transport and logistics sectors, and in the hydrocarbon ecosystem.*

By Reaven D'Souza  
Executive Managing Editor

The latest World Investment Report (WIR) 2024, shows that foreign direct investment (FDI) to Kuwait increased significantly in 2023, growing from \$758 million in 2022 to \$2.1 billion last year. This surge in capital flow by 177 percent, albeit from a low base, is all the more impressive given that the WIR 2024, paints an otherwise dismaying picture of global FDI flows in 2023.

The latest WIR, which is published annually by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), notes that amid an economic slowdown, rising geopolitical tensions, and climate-related crises, global FDI fell by 2 percent to USD 1.3 trillion in 2023, while capital flows to developing countries dropped by 7 percent to reach \$867 billion.



Many analysts consider the substantial increase in capital flows to Kuwait as a reflection of the growing confidence among global investors and institutions in the economic and political transformations being undertaken in the country. Since taking his constitutional oath in December 2023 as Amir of Kuwait, and even before as the country's Crown Prince since October 2020, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has been giving fresh insight, impetus and direction to Kuwait's economic, social and political growth.

In accordance with the latest directives and guidance of His Highness the Amir, the new government led by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah has been driving an economic and social renaissance in Kuwait. The government has prioritized the implementation of

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Al Muzaini Exchange  
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### TRANSFER TO EGYPT

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# Kuwait, a crown jewel etched in my heart forever

*Looking ahead, the embassy plans to host various events in the second half of this year to commemorate the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations and the 60th anniversary of energy cooperation between Korea and Kuwait. - South Korean Ambassador H.E. Chung Byung-ha*

By Rabih Kalas  
Special to The Times Kuwait

Ahead of bidding adieu to Kuwait, South Korean Ambassador H.E. Chung Byung-ha, reflects on his three-year tenure in this country. He expresses nostalgia over the kindness of friends, his visits to Diwaniya gatherings, and recollects the flavorsome Majboos, and the serene Nuer weather.

In an exclusive interview ahead of his departure, Ambassador Byung-ha, expressed his deep sentiments for Kuwait, its hospitality, cuisines, and its role as an advocate of peace in the region. He also highlighted his efforts to promote Korean culture through various cultural



events and expressed fondness for Kuwaiti hospitality, cuisine, and the country's role as a peace advocate in the Gulf region.

Ambassador Byung-ha, began the interview by telling us how he spent his tenure of more than three years in Kuwait. "It has been a tremendous source of pride and honor to have represented my country, Korea, in Kuwait over the past three years. I have never experienced such profound pride and honor throughout my diplomatic career. During this period, I had

the privilege of meeting many Kuwaiti and other friends.

"Kuwait is known for its ease of social interaction, thanks to the openness of its society to the world. The warm reception in homes and diwanis, where guests are treated with great kindness, is particularly noteworthy. These factors greatly encourage diplomatic activities and initiatives.

"I can confidently say that the diplomatic corps here is very special, united, and supportive, which significantly contributes to promoting cultural and diplomatic life in the country.

"I will miss many aspects of life in Kuwait, such as Kuwaiti foods such as Majboos, the winter rains, and the yellow flowers of the Nuer. I will also greatly miss visiting Diwanis and enjoying Arabic coffee. I am concerned that I won't be able to find Arabic coffee in Seoul. Above all, I will miss the friends in Kuwait who treated me with kindness and warmth."

He noted that during his tenure as ambassador, he had exerted utmost efforts to strengthen relations between Korea and Kuwait in all domains. He added, "At the economic and political levels, bilateral relations between Korea and Kuwait have seen significant development and growth. Mutual understanding and trust between our countries and peoples have also been pivotal in strengthening cooperative ties.

"During my time at the embassy, I dedicated myself to organizing numerous cultural events to introduce and promote Korean culture to the friendly Kuwaiti people.

"Looking ahead, the embassy plans to host various events in the second half of this year to commemorate the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations and the 60th anniversary of energy cooperation between Korea and Kuwait."

"I am also delighted by the increasing interest among Kuwaitis in understanding Korean culture, and I am proud to have served as a bridge enhancing communication between our nations."

"The warm reception and genuine kindness shown by my Kuwaiti friends, particularly during visits to diwanis, have left a deep impression



on me. It's impossible not to hold them dear."

Asked who would be the next Korean ambassador to Kuwait, the incumbent said, "I cannot disclose details at the moment, but the new Korean ambassador, a distinguished diplomat, will arrive soon. I am confident that they will greatly contribute to supporting and strengthening bilateral relations between our two countries."

The ambassador was also full of praise for Kuwait's foreign policy that aimed to address regional and international affairs through diplomacy and discussions. He elaborated, "Kuwait is a peace-loving country and a cornerstone among Gulf nations, significantly contributing to regional and international peace, security, and development through humanitarian aid and efforts to resolve conflicts. I hope Kuwait's stature as a central Gulf state and a hub for humanitarian work continues to grow under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

"Kuwait holds a special place in my heart as

my second home, and I look forward to returning one day to witness further development and prosperity.

Turning to tourism in Korea and highlighting the increasing number of Kuwaitis traveling to his country on personal, leisure, and business visits, the Korean envoy said: "I hope more Kuwaiti citizens will consider visiting South Korea. Those planning to travel to South Korea need to obtain an electronic travel permit (K-ETA) instead of a visa. Currently, the Korean government has temporarily exempted citizens of certain countries from needing a K-ETA, making it an opportune time to visit South Korea."

The Korean ambassador concluded the interview on a personal note by stating, "The experience of working in Kuwait over the past three years will forever be etched in my heart and cherished in my mind. I sincerely thank and express my gratitude to the Kuwaiti people, and although my assignment here has ended, I eagerly anticipate Kuwait's continued development and prosperity. Kuwait holds a special place as my second home, and I hope to visit again one day."

## NCCHT boosts efforts to combat human trafficking

- The country will review its existing legislation and introduce necessary amendments.
- Kuwait will also strengthen its national referral system for human trafficking cases and intensify awareness campaigns for employers.

Following the 12th meeting of the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking (NCCHT) held last week, Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Dr. Muhammad Al-Wasmi, who heads the Committee, stated that

Kuwait is determined to enhance its position in the global fight against human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

Stressing the need for concerted national efforts to fight human trafficking, the minister said that it was important to unite national efforts in this humanitarian field, particularly in reviewing existing national legislation, submitting proposals for necessary amendments, and responding to international questionnaires.

Dr. Al-Wasmi also underlined the importance of effectively implementing the national referral system for human trafficking cases, which

is designed to ensure proper identification, assistance, and protection for victims.

Additionally, he emphasized the need to intensify awareness and educational campaigns among employers to educate them on the rights of workers, and to help prevent exploitative labor practices. The Minister also highlighted the National Committee's role in monitoring the ongoing campaign being conducted by the Ministry of Interior against residency law violators. Following the deadline for violators to amend their residency status or leave the country, the Interior Ministry has been apprehending and deporting violators.

Dr. Al-Wasmi stated that the meeting of the National Committee reflected Kuwait's unwavering efforts to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling in all forms.

He urged all representatives of affiliated

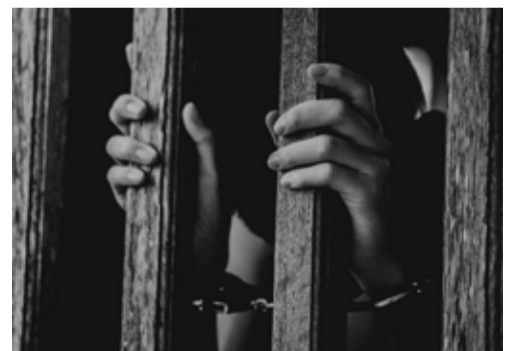
entities to expedite the completion of the project that focuses on developing robust mechanisms for reporting human trafficking crimes.

The new reporting mechanisms aim to achieve several goals, including raising recognition among authorities about the seriousness of these crimes, and ensuring that they will maintain the confidentiality of informants who bravely come forward with information. This focus on confidentiality is crucial to encourage people to report suspicious activity.

The development of these reporting mechanisms is being guided by international standards that prioritize the protection and care of victims of human trafficking.

Furthermore, they ensure that law enforcement agencies have the tools and resources to handle these cases effectively.

The National Committee for Combating



Human Trafficking is a crucial government entity established in February 2018 by a Cabinet decision. The committee is mandated to create a Kuwait free from human trafficking and migrant smuggling. They also aim to raise public awareness of the dangers associated with these crimes.

While the new mechanisms are being developed, Kuwaiti citizens and residents are encouraged to continue reporting human trafficking crimes through existing channels, including a dedicated hotline (25589696) and an email address ath@moi.gov.kw



## Egypt, Kuwait forge exemplary decades-long partnership

*H. E. Osama Shaltout, the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Kuwait said, since the independence of Kuwait until the present time, there has been firm solidarity between the two countries.*

### The Times Kuwait Report

H. E. Osama Shaltout, the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Kuwait said, "The relationship between Kuwait and Egypt is witnessing positive growth and development at all political, military, humanitarian, economic, cultural, and popular levels," expressing "appreciation for the great role that the State of Kuwait has played in providing humanitarian aid to Gaza, whether through sending aid or medical convoys."

"We celebrate the glorious revolution on Egypt's 72nd anniversary, and my participation in the National Day is conclusive evidence of the close connection between our peoples and our distinguished relationship in all fields," said Dr. Mahmoud Boushahri, the Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy and the Minister of State for Housing Affairs.



Dr. Mahmoud Boushahri, the Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy and the Minister of State for Housing Affairs, expressed his joy at the Egyptian Embassy's participation in the National Day on July 23. In a press statement during the celebration held by the Egyptian Embassy on Monday, attended by officials, diplomats, and public figures, he said, "We celebrate the glorious revolution on its 72nd anniversary, and my participation is conclusive evidence of the close connection between our peoples and our distinguished relationship in all fields."

For his part, His Excellency Osama Shaltout, the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the country, described the relationship between Egypt and Kuwait as "exemplary and based on a foundation of mutual trust and support that extends for decades." In a speech he delivered during the occasion, he stressed that "since the independence of Kuwait until the present time, there has been firm solidarity between the two countries." This is currently reflected in various aspects of joint cooperation in the sectors of investment, trade, energy, infrastructure, health care, education, culture, and tourism.

Ambassador Shaltout said, "This relationship culminated in the state visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh

Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Egypt on April 30 and May 1 of this year, where he was received by President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and decorated with the highest Egyptian honor, the Nile Necklace, in a way that embodies the bilateral relationship between the two countries and the strong respect and appreciation between the leaderships of the two brotherly nations."

He continued, "During that visit, a joint statement was issued by the two countries addressing the positions of both Cairo and Kuwait on various issues, demonstrating the alignment and mutual coordination between them. Perhaps the most prominent of these issues is the Palestinian cause, which represents the pulse of the Arab and Islamic world and suffers from the absence of human conscience and the silence of the international community. The two countries always stress the need to stop the brutal Israeli aggression against the defenseless Palestinian people by adhering to the Security Council's ceasefire resolution and the binding decisions issued by the International Court of Justice to stop military operations in Rafah. They emphasize the need for the occupation authorities to allow humanitarian aid to reach Palestinian citizens in Gaza and to implement the two-state solution by establishing the Palestinian state on the borders of June 4, 1967."

The Egyptian ambassador stressed that "the relationship between the two countries is witnessing positive growth and development at all political, military, humanitarian, economic, cultural, and popular levels," expressing "appreciation for the great role that the State of Kuwait has played in providing humanitarian aid to Gaza, whether through sending aid or medical convoys. We also express our appreciation for the support provided by the State of Kuwait to UNRWA."

The ambassador pointed out that his country is "confident that Egyptian-Kuwaiti relations will continue to develop positively in terms of coordination at the bilateral level and within various international and regional organizations, and on various issues in the context of advancing the unified positions and visions of the two countries, our Arab region, and our Islamic surroundings, based on the principles and rules of international law and the Charter of the United Nations on the international agenda."

The Egyptian ambassador said, "We meet today to commemorate the seventy-second anniversary of a pivotal moment in the history of Egypt—the July 23 Revolution—as that day bears witness to the determination of the Egyptian

people to chart their own path away from foreign interference and internal conflicts. In this context, we recall some of the most important principles of that great revolution: social justice, equality among citizens, and national dignity, stressing that this revolution represented the beginning of a new era for the Arab Republic of Egypt. The Egyptian state also renewed its pledge to preserve these principles with the June 30 revolution, which moved Egypt from one state to another, from chaos to order, and from anxiety to safety. State institutions were stabilized,

terrorism was eliminated, and problems and crises were solved one after another under the wise leadership of President El-Sisi."

He continued, "As we celebrate this historic day, Egypt continues to work toward achieving development goals by promoting industrial and agricultural growth, developing services, improving the citizens' livelihoods, and fostering good foreign relations with all partners based on respect for the principles and rules of international law. This includes cooperation with partners to achieve development goals,

foremost among them being the State of Kuwait, with which the Arab Republic of Egypt shares a deep-rooted bond throughout history."

In a statement on the sidelines of the ceremony, the ambassador further said, "We are determined to complete the process of development and construction. Egypt is a peace-loving country, and Kuwait is as well. Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations are rooted in the depths of history—relations of one destiny, one history, and identical visions on all international and regional issues of common interest."

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# Kuwaiti alumni of Australian colleges enrich bilateral relations

*On the fiftieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and Kuwait, Tim Watts, Australia's Assistant Foreign Minister, emphasized their commitment to strengthening food supply chains and delivering high-quality ingredients to Kuwait.*



## The Times Kuwait Report

**E**mbassy of Australia hosted a celebration on 31 June at the Jumeirah Hotel to honor Kuwaiti graduates from Australian colleges. The event was held under the patronage of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah and in the presence of a large number of Australian university alumni. In a televised address to the gathering, Australian Assistant Foreign Minister Tim Watts lauded the strong bilateral relations between Australia and Kuwait, which began on 1 July 1974.

He expressed pride in Australian graduates and the hundreds of Kuwaiti students who earn international qualifications in Australia annually.

He noted that this underpins broad cooperation between our universities and research institutions, particularly in scientific and medical research. These people-to-people ties foster enduring bonds between our two countries. He pointed out that over the past 22 years, more than 1,400 Kuwaiti students have graduated from prestigious Australian universities, with hundreds more Kuwaitis choosing to study in Australia annually.

Addressing His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the people of Kuwait on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and Kuwait, Watts noted that Australia has always been a preferred food supplier

for Kuwait, strengthening food supply chains and providing Kuwaitis with the best quality ingredients to fill their plates and tables. He said, "You have probably already tasted the best that Australia has to offer, from the wheat used in your bread to the meat in Machboos." These deep connections continue to grow. He also pointed out that Kuwaiti investments in Australia support our transition to clean energy, citing investments in the Perry Bank Phase II wind farm and battery storage in my state of Victoria.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador of Australia, H.E Melissa Kelly, affirmed that over the past fifty years, Australian-Kuwaiti relations have witnessed strengthened ties in the areas of food security, trade, investment, and education.

On the 50th anniversary of our bilateral relations, we celebrate Kuwaitis who are "Australians by degree," for having graduated from world-class Australian universities. She added that there is no better ambassador for Australian-Kuwaiti relations than Kuwaiti students who have had a rich and influential educational experience in Australia.

"Your significant contributions have shaped both Australian and Kuwaiti society," she told the graduates. "Your achievements extend beyond formal diplomatic relations and underscore the deep-rooted connections between our communities. They highlight the fundamental value of education for all, a value that we are immensely proud to share between Australia and Kuwait."

## Oil, power and water projects worth billions on the anvil



**K**uwait Oil Company (KOC) and the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy (MEW) are reported to be readying tender documents for the bidding process of major projects worth billions of dinars that seek to boost the country's oil, power and water production capacities.

In what is seen as a major undertaking, KOC is set to launch a billion dinar oil exploration project in the north of the country, as part of Kuwait's plans to significantly increase its oil production capacity.

The project, which will be divided into nine separate packages, including one for the acquisition of specialized drilling rigs needed to explore the northern fields. Companies interested in the project will be expected to provide both the drilling rigs and the manpower to operate the equipment.

This initiative is part of a broader strategy to raise Kuwait's oil production to 4 million barrels per day by 2035, from the current production capacity of around 2.9 million barrels per day, and an interim goal of reaching 3.2 million barrels per day by 2025 or 2026.

This exploration and development project is expected to be a stepping stone within a larger project plan to be unveiled in the coming months. The comprehensive plan will encompass various upstream and downstream projects, alongside petrochemical facilities.

Meanwhile the MEW, in association with the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Project (KAPP), has provided an update on its North Al-Zour

Phase 2 and 3 Integrated Water and Power Plant (IWPP) project, with the earlier qualified bidders being given a three-month extension to submit their bids. The previously scheduled deadline for bids on 30 June has now been extended to 30 September.

When operationalized, the North Al-Zour Phase 2 and 3 is expected to bring on line a power generation capacity of 2,700 megawatts and a desalination capacity of 120 million imperial gallons per day. Upon commissioning, both plants are anticipated to operate for 25 years, exporting their production to the electricity grid and water transmission network through a power transmission and water purchase agreement (PPA) established with the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

Located roughly 100 kilometers south of Kuwait City, the project will neighbor the existing North Al-Zour 1 power and desalination plant to the west and the Al-Zour South power station area to the north. The North Al-Zour 2 and 3, will utilize a mix of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and high-pressure natural gas (HPG) as its primary fuel source, with gas oil as a backup option.

Initially intended as bundled projects, the North Al-Zour 2 and 3 and Khairan 1 projects will now be procured as separate independent power and water contracts. The development and operation contract for the Khairan 1 IWPP, boasting a power generation capacity of 1,800 megawatts and a desalination capacity of 33 million gallons per day, will be tendered later in 2024.

## Google Cloud to open office as part of strategic alliance with Kuwait

**G**oogle Cloud is said to have completed all necessary procedures and obtained the required commercial and legal licenses to open its office in the country within the next two months.

Opening of the office will mark a significant expansion for Google in Kuwait. Though the launch of Google Cloud in Kuwait will come under the umbrella of Law No. 116 of 2013 on promotion of foreign investment and its executive regulations, the company will operate directly with the Kuwaiti government, bypassing a local intermediary.

The company has already assembled a team to manage its office and oversee its multi-billion dollar contracts with the government. These contracts focus on driving digital and technological transformation across all state agencies and aligns with Google Cloud's strategic alliance with the Kuwaiti government. The alliance aims

to develop a comprehensive roadmap for a digital transformation program encompassing government agencies and major state-owned enterprises.

The Kuwaiti government will leverage Google Cloud's expertise in data, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence to fulfill its commitment to digital transformation as a national priority. The collaboration will enable initiatives such as digitizing citizen services, enhancing government employee productivity, and implementing digital transformation projects in healthcare, education, disaster recovery, and smart living

among others. Google Cloud established a local Kuwaiti company named 'Google Cloud Services Company', in May 2023, which is fully owned by Google Europe, Middle East and Africa Unlimited and operates in accordance with Kuwait's Foreign Direct Investment Promotion Law.



## Civil Service Commission adopts facial recognition for staff attendance



**T**he Civil Service Commission has announced a new initiative utilizing facial recognition technology for employee attendance and departure.

The announcement was made through the Civil Service Commission's official X-account.

They stated that the implementation is underway, adhering to a prior Cabinet decision regarding the use of facial recognition for the same purpose.

# Nepal seeks Kuwaiti investments in diverse fields

H. E. Ghana Shyam Lamsal, the Nepal Ambassador to the country, said they are currently working on bringing skilled workers, including nurses and doctors to Kuwait.

## The Times Kuwait Report

Ambassador of Nepal H.E. Ghana Shyam Lamsal, affirmed that there were numerous investment opportunities for Kuwaiti investors and entrepreneurs in Nepal, and highlighted several government's policies that facilitate investments in his country.

In a media statement issued on the sidelines of an investment promotion ceremony, the ambassador noted that more than 100,000 Nepalis are currently working in Kuwait across diverse fields, and the embassy is working on bringing more skilled workers, including nurses and doctors, to Kuwait. Disclosing that the embassy is currently holding discussions on this matter with the competent authorities in Kuwait, the ambassador noted that currently there are many nurses employed in private sector hospitals across Kuwait.

Emphasizing that Kuwait's trade exchange and investments in Nepal are at present very limited,



Ambassador Lamsal highlighted the numerous opportunities for investment that exist in Nepal, including in the country's carpet industry, food and agricultural materials, as well as tourism, information technology, and the energy sector. He also pointed out that Nepal ranks as the world's second-largest exporter of water, following Brazil.



Underscoring the various facilities available to foreign investors in Nepal, the ambassador explained that Nepal allows unrestricted money movement, and that the country recently embarked on a firm investment policy. The new policy reviews eight major investment-related laws and introduces a simplified policy for comprehensive services to facilitate new investors.

The government's strategic focus extends to vital sectors such as energy, ICT, tourism, infrastructure development, and others. Notably, Nepal has made great strides in energy exports and is now selling electricity to neighboring India, thus promoting regional economic integration. He added that India and China are currently the largest investors in the country.

Ambassador Lamsal also stated that there

are two direct flights from Kuwait to his country daily via Kuwait Airways and Al-Jazeera. He noted that Kuwaiti citizens can obtain a visa online or on arrival at the airport, and that about 1,000 Kuwaitis visited his country in 2023, with the numbers on the rise.

Elaborating on the tourism potential of Nepal, the ambassador noted that his country's appeal lies in its stunning geography, ranging from the lush tropical plains of the Terai to the highlands of the world's highest peaks, including Mount Everest, or 'Sagarmatha' as it is known in Nepal.

The country's geographical diversity is only matched by its cultural richness, characterized by more than 100 ethnic groups, each with unique traditions, languages, and arts. Nepal's ideal religious tolerance is a beacon of harmony, where diverse religions coexist peacefully.

## LuLu launches Happiness Loyalty Rewards Program

LuLu has launched its new Happiness Loyalty Rewards Program, allowing shoppers to register and earn points every time they shop at any LuLu outlet.

**Instant discounts:** Members can unlock exclusive deals and discounts, with instant savings on every purchase and access to special member prices.

**Earn points:** Shoppers can earn points on every transaction, with additional bonus points available on a wide selection of Happiness products.

**Exclusive offers:** The program also offers an array of benefits through partnerships, providing members with the best value deals on all their needs. More exciting offers are set to be introduced soon.

To join the Happiness Loyalty Rewards Program, shoppers can simply scan the QR code or click the link for free membership



at: <https://happiness.luluhypermarket.com/happinessForm?storeId=3205>.

## French School of Kuwait holds graduation ceremony for class of 2024



The "Lycée Français de Koweït" (LFK) held its annual graduation ceremony of the high school students for the 2023-2024 academic year on Sunday 23rd June, under the patronage of the French Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Claire Le Flécher. The ceremony was graced by the presence of the school owners Mrs. Mona Al-Khalid and Dr. Fahad Al-Rashed.

The Cultural Advisor to the French Embassy Mr. Benoît Cathala also was present along with the parents of the students, the teachers and the members of the LFK team, notable dignitaries and the media. Her Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of France gave a speech on the occasion congratulating the students on their success.

Mr. Attias, the school principal, also gave a speech congratulating the graduating students,

and thanking their parents for their proactive role and efforts in supporting their children. He also thanked the school academic body and the administration at the French School of Kuwait for their valuable efforts in the implementation of the French school system.

The Baccalaureate Degree is a very important milestone in the lives of students of the French education system and the French educational program. This degree opens the doors to the students for acceptance at any university or institution of higher education anywhere in the world. During this ceremony, the graduating students presented a cultural performance, and had brief individual introductions and presentations about themselves.

The graduates later took commemorative photos with their families and with their teachers.

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# Two-month window opens for transfer of domestic workers to private sector

- Domestic workers can now transfer to the private sector after meeting certain conditions. The new regulations are in effect from July 14, 2024 to September 12, 2024.
- The transfer must be approved by the current employer.
- The worker must have resided with the current employer for at least one year.
- A transfer fee of 50 dinars will be charged, plus an additional 10 dinars for each year of service.

First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Youssef has issued a decision regulating the transfer of domestic workers to the private sector.

The decision outlines the eligibility criteria, transfer fees, and

relevant legal considerations.

The decision includes the following articles and regulations:

**Article 1:** It is permissible to transfer domestic workers to work in the private sector, subject to the following conditions:

Approval of the employer under whom the domestic worker is registered.

The domestic worker must have resided for one year with the employer under whom the worker is registered.

A fee of 50 dinars will be charged for the transfer, in addition to a fee of 10 dinars for each year of service.

**Article 2:** The provisions of clause 9 of Article 1 of Ministerial Decision No. 57/A for the year 2016, referred to herein, shall be suspended.

The work on Article 10 of the administrative decision No. 842 for the year 2015, referred to herein, shall be suspended for the period of validity of this decision.

**Article 3:** This decision shall be effective from 14 July 2024 until



12 September 2024, and shall be published in the Official Gazette. It also will also inform competent authorities on implementing its provisions.

## Thousands of Nepalis return home during amnesty period

Raj Malla  
Special to The Times Kuwait

Following the conclusion of Kuwait's recent amnesty program aimed at regularizing the status of undocumented residents, approximately 3,000 Nepalese nationals have obtained travel permits, according to Nepali Embassy.

The amnesty period, which ran from 17 March to 30 June, allowed illegal residents to either rectify their status or return home without penalty. "We are pleased to announce that around 3,000 Nepali citizens have availed themselves of travel documents during the amnesty period," stated Nepali Embassy's Information Officer, Premraj Gautam.

While not all exit permit holders have left Kuwait yet, reports suggest that a significant number have already



departed. Kuwaiti immigration authorities have confirmed the departure of many participants, easing concerns over

their compliance with the amnesty terms.

However, challenges persist for some individuals who missed the amnesty deadline or were unaware of their illegal status. "Many Nepalis find themselves in a precarious situation due to misinformation or unawareness of their illegal status," added Gautam.

The Kuwaiti government's latest amnesty report reveals that a total of 35,000 immigrants took advantage of the opportunity, while an estimated 85,000 others remain undocumented. In response, Kuwait has intensified its efforts to crackdown on illegal residents and has warned of permanent deportation for those caught after the 1 June enforcement deadline.

The Nepali Embassy continues to assist its citizens in navigating the legal complexities and ensuring they are aware of the latest developments concerning immigration regulations in Kuwait.

## MNSS and Toyota launch the all-new Land Cruiser Prado

Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Esr. Co (MNSS) and Toyota announced the launch of the all-new Land Cruiser Prado in Kuwait, a vehicle whose unrivaled off-road capabilities have been honed across more than 70 years and 190 countries.

The event was attended by Martin Aherne Senior Business Director Toyota Group Sales, Theo Kruger General Manager of Toyota retail sales, Bader Faisal Al Sayer Head of Toyota Marketing, along with the representatives from press and media.

Since its debut in 1951, the Land Cruiser has proven its ability to excel in even the harshest environments. The Land Cruiser Prado, introduced to the Land Cruiser family in 1985, then brought the unparalleled performance of previous models in a more compact, lightweight package.

Speaking on the occasion, Bader Faisal Al Sayer said "The Toyota Land Cruiser family of vehicles has always undergone development and innovation so that our customers can enjoy distinctive driving experiences with exceptional specifications that give them real and safe driving pleasure on all roads".

"The Prado series is considered the jewel among the Land Cruiser four-wheel drive vehicles that are characterized by attractive appearance as well as strong performance thanks to superior driving systems and



advanced technologies that make everyone who drives the Prado feel safe and reassured" added Bader Al Sayer.

Keita Moritsu, the chief engineer in charge of development, said: "Toyota aims at providing 'Mobility for all' and 'Happiness for all.' What can the Land Cruiser do for that? I believe it is to embody 'Producing happiness for all' in a more diverse daily life through providing 'mobility' in places that only the Land Cruiser can let you go and come back safe. This is the role that the Land Cruiser has always played — and I believe that should never change."

Nobuyuki Takemura, chief representative,

Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, commented: "We are thrilled to unveil the all-new Land Cruiser Prado to our ever-growing Middle East fan base. We thank our customers in the region and beyond for their continuous support and look forward to working hand-in-hand with them to create 'ever-better cars' that surpass their expectations."

The all-new Land Cruiser Prado is built on the body-on-frame Toyota New Global Architecture GA-F platform, which offers a 50 percent increase in frame rigidity and a 30 percent increase in overall rigidity for superior

handling and a comfortable, stable ride both on and off-road. This platform upholds Toyota's traditional values of build quality and safety while delivering an enjoyable driving experience.

The new vehicle's all-terrain support systems also make it one of the most technically advanced, safe, pleasurable and easy-to-use four-wheel drive vehicles in the region. With a total of six modes, including a new 'Auto' mode the vehicle enhances Multi-Terrain Select capabilities by adjusting to various road conditions that further enhance its off-road prowess.

Striking a balance between rugged durability and enhanced convenience and comfort, the new Land Cruiser Prado's cabin is also equipped with a range of advanced features, including wireless charging for smartphones, a 12.3-inch touchscreen multimedia system with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility, a 12.3-inch full graphic color meter, a color head-up display (HUD), and a dual-zone automatic air conditioning system with rear AC vents.

Safety remains a top priority for the all-new Land Cruiser Prado, which comes with an advanced safety system, complemented by Toyota Safety Sense, an advanced safety technology package that includes a Pre-Collision System (PCS) which reacts to sudden use of the throttle in low-speed driving; and Emergency Steering Assist. In addition, the all-new Land Cruiser Prado features a comprehensive array of safety features, such as 8 SRS airbags, including side-curtain airbags for all three rows,

Available in 10 distinctive exterior colors, the all-new Land Cruiser Prado allows customers to express their individuality. The vehicle also comes equipped with a choice of two 18-inch alloy wheel designs: one that offers better off-road performance, while the other expresses functional beauty and practicality.





# Kuwaiti European relations highlight depth, distinction of ties

*Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya expresses delight in attending the European Union Mission's ceremony marking five years since the opening of their embassy in Kuwait.*

## The Times Kuwait Report

Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya expressed happiness participating in the ceremony held by the European Union mission in Kuwait to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the opening of the European Union Embassy in the country.

Minister Yahya praised the depth of Kuwaiti-European relations, describing them as distinguished and developed. On the issue of the Schengen file, the foreign minister said that the file is currently under consideration by the European side, and now that the European elections are over we are expecting a resolution on this soon. He added, "I am also informed that the Schengen file is receiving special attention from the special envoy of the European Union for Gulf countries."

Speaking on the occasion, the European Union Special Representative for the Gulf Region, Luigi Di Maio, stated that since the opening of the European Union mission, EU-Kuwait relations

have grown steadily and in line with the strategic framework for the Gulf region, which was adopted by the European Union in May 2022.

He affirmed that the existence of an embassy or full representation is a vital tool for regular and fruitful exchange and communication, which reflects mutual trust. "There is a need for dear friends, during unrest and crises, and we are fortunate to be able to rely on our Kuwaiti partner, who plays a unique role in the region and beyond, especially in the context of tensions and major crises in our regions", said the EU Special Representative.

He added, "The relationship between Kuwait and the European Union encompasses many diverse topics, ranging from the economy and trade to relations between peoples and regional security." Di Maio also referred to the visit of the EU High Representative, Josep Borrell, to Kuwait upon assuming office, and his meetings with the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister on several occasions. He quoted the High Representative as saying that "Kuwait is a close and reliable friend of the European Union".

Last week marked the third visit by the EU Special Representative for the Gulf region to Kuwait. Since assuming the post last year, he has been working closely with all relevant parties, including his Kuwaiti counterparts, to implement concrete projects based on the five core elements of his office's tasks — trade and investment, energy and communications, regional security, people-to-people communication, and the institutional relationship between the EU and the GCC.

"Regarding the relationship between our youth, who are the future of our partnership, we organized the first joint training between young diplomats from the GCC countries and the European Union in Belgium last May. I would like to thank the Kuwaiti authorities for sending distinguished representatives, Nour and Abdulaziz, to this program," said Di Maio.

He added, "We want to strengthen bilateral relations between our young diplomats, and we will start discussions on possible projects related to new cooperation between the College of Europe, established in 1949 and based in Bruges, and the Sheikh Saud Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute here in Kuwait."

He also spoke of efforts to resume negotiations on the EU-GCC Free Trade Agreement, and added, "We are ready to work on alternative formulas in order to unlock the great potential of our relationship."

On the issue of the Schengen file, he stated, "We are fully aware of the strong expectations here in Kuwait regarding the facilitation of visa procedures. The timing and approach to this matter will be determined by the newly elected European Parliament and the new Commission. Please rest assured of my commitment to this

crucial topic for our cooperation."

For her part, European Union Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Anne Koistinen, said, "It has been five years since then-Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and Federica Mogherini, the then-High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union, opened the EU Mission in Kuwait on 14 July 2019."

She added, "During these five years, the friendship between the EU and Kuwait has strengthened significantly. High-level contacts between Kuwait and the EU have increased, and I am proud that we have closely collaborated with Kuwaiti authorities and society on a wide range of common interests. These include green transformation, environmental protection, trade and investment, economic diversification, security, counterterrorism, human rights, women's empowerment, international development, humanitarian aid, combating disinformation, and other important topics."

The EU ambassador praised the support of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kuwaiti government, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in achieving these accomplishments. She stated, "We also appreciate the distinguished support of our partners and friends in Kuwaiti society, as this support has been essential for our work in Kuwait."

"The EU mission in Kuwait looks forward to closely collaborating with the Kuwaiti government and all sectors of Kuwaiti society to further strengthen the robust EU-Kuwait partnership," the ambassador added.



## AmCham Kuwait's Women in Business Focus Group Hosts its 2nd 2024 Diversity & Inclusion Diwaniya

The American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) Kuwait's Women in Business Focus Group hosted their second Diversity & Inclusion Diwaniya of 2024. The event featured a dynamic discussion on capacity building and mentorship best practices, with notable attendees including several leading professionals, NGOs and industry experts.

Dr. Arezou Harraf opened the event by emphasizing the importance of developing impactful initiatives through the series of Diwanis. The discussion explored how to synergize mentor-mentee relationships and identify skill gaps to ensure effective mentorship. Dr. Harraf highlighted the need for mentors who complement the mentee's skill set and strategic positioning within organizations.

Participants from the UNDP discussed the organization's mentorship programs with the private sector and the importance of value-added relationships. The U.S. Embassy's representatives also shared the State Department's approach to mentorship amidst the unique challenges of a hybrid work structure. Finally, private sector entities highlighted their flash mentorship program aimed at providing access to higher-level executives.

The discussion concluded with action items to

enhance mentorship programs. Clear criteria for mentor-mentee matching based on career stage, goals, and skill needs should be established, with the potential implementation of assessments to ensure compatibility. Training sessions for both mentors and mentees are essential to clarify expectations and best practices. Structured programs with defined timelines and agendas will maintain focus and progress, supported by digital platforms for analytics and data collection. Increasing awareness of mentorship resources within organizations and through partnerships with NGOs, embassies, or professional networks will expand access, especially for underrepresented groups. Regular evaluation and iteration of mentorship programs based on feedback will ensure sustainability and effectiveness. Distinguishing between mentorship and coaching, and adapting programs to fit cultural and organizational contexts, are also crucial for success.

Dr. Harraf concluded the Diwaniya by reiterating the need for measurable initiatives and continuous improvement to ensure mentorship programs lead to tangible outcomes. The event underscored the importance of mentorship in career development and organizational growth, setting the stage for future impactful discussions.

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# French Ambassador launches 'Sorbonne Society in Kuwait'

*The initiative will strengthen academic and cultural relations between Kuwait and France, marking a historic moment for all lovers of French culture and education.*

## The Times Kuwait Report

H.E. Claire Le Flécher, French Ambassador to Kuwait, inaugurated the "Sorbonne Society in Kuwait" in the presence of honorary president Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Al-Nasser, association founder Dr. Bashayer Al-Majid, Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Sadiq Marafi, and several accredited ambassadors and diplomats. The event celebrated the university's longstanding presence in Kuwait.

Al-Nasser emphasized that "this event marks a significant milestone in bolstering academic and cultural bonds between Kuwait and France, and stands as a historic moment for all enthusiasts of French culture and education."

He expressed gratitude to Dr. Bashayer Al-Majid for initiating the Sorbonne Society in Kuwait and to all contributors to the project, stating, "Your dedication and enthusiasm have made today possible. I extend my thanks to our colleagues and friends who supported this initiative wholeheartedly."

He added, "I earned a doctorate in political science from Pantheon-Sorbonne University, and the launch of this association holds particular significance for me. My academic journey in France—from learning the French language to obtaining my doctorate—was a wonderful experience marked by academic excellence, intellectual rigor, and cultural enrichment. The years spent in Bordeaux, Besançon, Strasbourg, and finally in Paris allowed me to appreciate the beauty and vitality of these cities, as well as the richness and diversity of the French university system. These experiences deeply enriched my perspective, shaped my understanding of France and the world, and strengthened my commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom."

He continued, "The Sorbonne, with its rich and ancient heritage, has always been a beacon of knowledge, culture, and critical thinking," emphasizing that "through the inauguration of

this association, we are not only taking a step towards spreading these values in Kuwait, but also opening the door for fruitful intellectual exchange and dynamic academic cooperation. Our goal is to create a space where inquiring minds can meet, exchange ideas, and explore new horizons. The Sorbonne Society in Kuwait will be a hub for dialogue, discovery, and exchange, enriching the knowledge and experiences of each member."

### Strengthening global ties with alumni

Ambassador Le Flécher remarked, "The French government has launched an ambitious initiative aimed at uniting France's alumni networks worldwide, fostering connections between



graduates and their country's economic, cultural, and academic entities. This initiative reflects France's commitment to strengthening ties with its former students globally."

She continued, "The French Institute in Kuwait and the French Embassy have actively supported this endeavor by identifying and assembling French alumni in Kuwait, who cherish fond memories of their educational experiences in France. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Bashayer Al-Majid, a distinguished graduate of Sorbonne University Paris and a Professor of Law at both Oxford

University and Kuwait University, whose vision has brought this ambitious project to fruition."

The French ambassador praised her, saying, "You have shown exceptional dedication to promoting Kuwait internationally, often courageously defending France in challenging media situations. I recall our first meeting two years ago, when you presented your idea of the Sorbonne. Through hard work, perseverance, and conviction, you successfully united efforts and made today's launch of the Sorbonne Society possible. Your collaboration with Sorbonne management in Paris, engagement with French graduates in Kuwait, and coordination with embassy teams had been commendable. I am delighted to recognize

and congratulate you on this significant achievement, which further strengthens the already robust bonds of friendship between France and Kuwait."

The ambassador addressed Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Al-Nasser, saying, "Allow me also to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Al-Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. You are a prominent political figure in Kuwait, a former Foreign Minister, and a recipient of the Legion of Honour. Your esteemed reputation is also highly regarded in France; Jean-Yves Le Drian

continues to speak highly of you to this day."

Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Al-Nasser encouraged everyone to seize all the opportunities offered by the Sorbonne Society of Kuwait, stating, "Engage in activities, participate in discussions, and do not hesitate to present your own ideas and initiatives. As Mary Curie, Nobel laureate and Sorbonne alumna, once said: "We must be persistent and, above all, self-confident... Together, we will build a stimulating and enriching environment."

### Commitment to Francophonie

Ambassador Le Flécher addressed Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Al-Nasser, saying, "You are deeply committed to Francophonie, following in the footsteps of your father, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad. Having studied at several French universities, including Purdue University, Strasbourg, and Panthéon-Sorbonne, your steadfast dedication to French-Kuwaiti relations is a source of invaluable strength and support. When Dr. Bashayer Al-Majid and I approached you to become the Honorary President of the Sorbonne, you accepted with enthusiasm, and for that, I would like to warmly thank you."

In turn, Dr. Bashayer Al-Majid said, "Today, we are launching a unique initiative to forge an academic and cultural link between Kuwait and France. Our goal is to unite professionals from diverse academic backgrounds and fields to promote international cooperation. By combining our expertise, we aim to create opportunities for scientific, cultural, and academic advancement. Through conferences, workshops, and exhibitions, we will provide platforms for exchanging ideas and showcasing collaborative endeavors."

"This association will serve as a vital hub for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Let us embrace a spirit of cooperation, and I am confident that the Sorbonne Society will flourish as a center of knowledge and progress," she continued.

## Kuwait comes second in the Gulf 'As most affordable City'

Numbeo, a leading global database on living costs, ranked Kuwait as the second most affordable Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) city after Muscat in its cost of living index for the first half of 2024. According to media reports, Kuwait was ranked 118th globally with a score of 43.3 points.

The Cost of Living Index, published every six months, is a relative index that measures consumer prices in 139 countries worldwide, covering groceries, restaurants, transportation, and utilities, but excluding accommodation expenses like rent or mortgage.

Regarding the most expensive Gulf cities, Dubai ranked first, followed by Abu Dhabi, then Doha, Riyadh, Jeddah, Kuwait, and Muscat. On the other hand, Kuwait ranked fifth in the Gulf in terms of rental rates, following Dubai, Doha, Abu Dhabi, and



Riyadh, while, in terms of restaurant prices, the country ranked fourth in the Gulf, following Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Doha.

In the Purchasing Power Index, Kuwait outperformed Dubai but placed fifth in the Gulf after Abu Dhabi, Doha, Riyadh, and Jeddah. This index measures relative purchasing power in New York City based on average net salary, with New York serving as the benchmark for comparison by Numbeo.

In the Quality of Living Index, Kuwait City ranked last in the Gulf and 113th globally, scoring 134.9 points. Abu Dhabi topped the list in the Gulf, followed by Muscat, then Doha, Dubai, Riyadh, Jeddah, and Kuwait.

Regarding property price-to-income levels, Kuwait was the most expensive in the Gulf, followed by Abu Dhabi, Doha, Dubai, Muscat, Jeddah, and Riyadh.



# Kuwait achieves record gas production

*Production at Kuwait Oil Company's gas fields has surpassed the 600 million cubic feet per day (MMcfd) mark, demonstrating Kuwait's dedication to its energy goals. This success paves the way for the country's ambitious plans to further increase production in the coming years to reach 780 MMcfd in 2024-2025, and 900 MMcfd by 2025-2026, as well as reach the milestone target of 1 billion MMcfd in the future.*

Kuwait has achieved a significant milestone in its energy sector by exceeding its natural gas production target for 2023-2024. This achievement highlights the country's commitment to energy security and its efforts to reduce reliance on imported gas and eventually become a net exporter of gas.

Production at Kuwait Oil Company's gas fields has surpassed the 600 million cubic feet per day (MMcfd) mark, demonstrating Kuwait's dedication to its energy goals. This success paves the way for the country's ambitious plans to further increase production in the coming years to reach 780 MMcfd in 2024-2025, and 900 MMcfd by 2025-2026, as well as reach the milestone target of 1 billion MMcfd in the future.

Several factors are expected to contribute to achieving the ambitious gas production targets, including the development of new gas fields and the implementation of advanced production technologies, as well as contributions from Kuwait's stake in the offshore Al-Durra gas field — a joint venture with Saudi Arabia, which is anticipated to reach 500 MMcfd upon commencement of production.

Kuwait possesses a significant advantage in its gas production. The country's gas is extracted alongside high-quality light oil, making it highly competitive in the global market. The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) blends this light oil with Kuwait Export Crude (KEC) to further enhance its value. Kuwait's plans to double its natural gas production, particularly focusing on shale gas, will have a positive impact on the local economy, as it will



enable the country to use its gas reserves effectively to address economic challenges and unlock new revenue streams through export. Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) is also aiming to capitalize on the rising global demand for gas, following the sanctions imposed on Russian gas, which has created a shortfall in European energy imports

Kuwait boasts the largest Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) import facility in the Middle East. This strategic infrastructure allows the country to participate in the global gas market, supporting its economic goals and reinforcing its clean energy transition plans. The facility has the capacity to receive a staggering 22 million

tons of gas annually, a remarkable amount equivalent to twice the consumption of the entire Arab region.

The implementation of the Jurassic Production 4 and 5 projects by Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) in the Raudhatain and Umm Niqa fields played a critical role in achieving the company's gas production targets. Operations at these state-of-the-art facilities, commenced earlier this year, adding a significant 320 MMcfd of associated gas and 100,000 barrels per day (bpd) of light oil to the national output.

Natural gas exists in two primary forms: associated gas and free gas. Free gas, unlike its associated counterpart, is found dissolved in rock formations within the reservoir and contains minimal amounts of oil. Extracting free gas presents a unique challenge due to the extreme depths and demanding conditions of the reservoirs. To overcome these challenges, KOC employs a team of highly skilled professionals and utilizes specialized equipment along with cutting-edge technology. Currently, KOC drills an average of 22 to 23 free gas wells annually, with over 100 active wells already in operation.

Gas production in Kuwait benefits from its association with high-quality light oil, which is highly sought after in the global market due to its premium pricing. The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) strategically blends this light oil with Kuwait Export Crude (KEC) to enhance its overall purity and value. This blended crude oil becomes even more desirable for refineries worldwide.

## Diabetes mortality rate in Kuwait double global average

*The total number of deaths from diabetes in 2021 increased by 35 percent compared to 2017, with the majority occurring in the age group of 60 years and older, totaling 424 cases.*

A recent report by the Audit Bureau of Performance Control Department highlighted that Kuwait's diabetes-related mortality rate stands at seven percent, surpassing the global average of three percent.

The annual report on the effectiveness of efforts to reduce diabetes spread in Kuwait revealed that Kuwait also ranked second among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in terms of mortality rate.

Oman had the highest mortality rate among GCC states at eight percent, followed by Kuwait at seven percent, Qatar at six percent, the UAE at five percent, Saudi Arabia at three percent, and Bahrain at two percent.

The report indicated that the total number of deaths from diabetes in 2021 increased by 35 percent compared to 2017, with the majority occurring in the age group of 60 years and older, totaling 424 cases. The report also highlighted an annual rise in the number of school-age children diagnosed with diabetes overall. Statistics

revealed that more than 50 percent of those diagnosed with type-2 diabetes also suffered from morbid obesity.

The report recommended that relevant authorities issue laws and legislation aimed at reducing risk factors for chronic non-communicable diseases, enhancing health awareness and education across all



age groups, as well as encouraging regular screenings for early detection of diabetes and its complications. Other suggestions by the Bureau include raising the prices of tobacco and sugar-sweetened beverages, establishing covered and utilized sports halls in Ministry of Education schools, and creating designated cycling lanes in residential areas."

## Alarm system on buildings to be linked to Kuwait Fire Force

In a new directive, the Kuwait Fire Force has mandated that fire alarm systems in buildings be linked to the country's firefighting operations center. Announcing this, Major-General Khaled Fahd, the acting-chief of the Kuwait Fire Force, stated that the project is aimed at safeguarding lives and property of people, and will be implemented following a comprehensive study of its technical, legal, and administrative aspects by Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef, the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior. Failure by owners to comply with the project "will result in legal accountability," said the Major-General

Elaborating on the project, Major-General Fahd said that a specialized team from the Kuwait Fire Force will depart on Tuesday for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) "to review the fire system implemented in UAE buildings and learn its technical aspects for implementation in Kuwait."

"The project will commence with buildings of special importance, such as airports, hospitals, large hotels, and commercial complexes, along with significant government structures like ministries and courthouse complexes, and venues hosting gatherings such as wedding halls. Subsequently, it will be extended to investment, commercial, industrial, and sports facilities, adhering to specific standards, and is expected to initially encompass 50,000 buildings," explained Major-General Fahd.



The project involves linking special alarm panels in buildings with the Operations Center of the Fire Force, which would enable the discovery and identification of faults or malfunctions within the buildings, explained the Major-General. He also expressed hope that the comprehensive study of the project will conclude soon, enabling implementation to commence next year.

He added that the alert signal will be transmitted via the panel connected from the building to the fire force center using the 5G network or any newer network chosen by the technical engineers. On receiving the signal, fire force staff will confirm the accuracy of the report "within 120 seconds" and accordingly dispatch the required response mechanism to the incident location, regardless of its nature, whether fire-related or otherwise. He further stated that the signs to be installed in private buildings will be at the expense of the owners.

## Government adopts online 'open door' policy for citizens

Government has adopted an 'open door' policy in line with guidelines by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to further boost interaction and build confidence between state officials and the citizens and improve public services.

In addition to the removal of physical bureaucratic barriers faced by citizens in voicing their complaints directly to higher authorities, the online 'open-policy' system will enable nationals to easily request meetings with top officials through the government's 'Tawasul System', available on the official 'Sahel' application.

The cabinet, during a session held recently stressed on the need "to open the doors for citizens seeking to work out transactions at the ministries and other government authorities." The digital service is designed to enable citizens to present queries and complaints quickly, boosting transparency and confidence

between the nationals and the government.

Amer Al-Ajmi, the head of the local affairs sector and the government official spokesperson, said in a media statement last week that the open door policy is in line with instructions by Their



Highnesses the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad AlSabah.

He added that the government, through this mechanism, is seeking to bolster the confidence with the masses by creating a transparent medium for facilitating and speeding up solutions to diverse issues. The service, which aims to cut red-tape, will enable citizens to deal with all ministries involved in utilities and public services. Meetings could be requested with ministers, deputies or undersecretaries, Al-Ajmi explained, indicating that duration of the meeting and other relevant terms can be set by each department.

Ministries have already declared that they are accessible via the online service and a number of ministers have given instructions to tackle hurdles facing citizens while processing transactions at the state department.



## Mango Festival highlights robust Pakistani-Kuwaiti trade ties

*H.E. Malik Muhammad Farooq, the Pakistani ambassador to Kuwait, reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening food security cooperation with Kuwait, aiming to achieve this by providing a diverse range of food products, including fruits, meat, and livestock.*

The recent Mango Festival organized by the Pakistani Embassy, in coordination with mango exporters from Pakistan, showcased the robust trade relations between Kuwait and Pakistan. This event, held at The Avenues mall in Kuwait, highlighted the growing popularity of Pakistani products among Kuwaiti citizens and residents, while also promoting food security cooperation between the two countries.

Speaking on the occasion to media personnel, Ambassador of Pakistan, H.E. Malik Muhammad Farooq, emphasized the positive developments in bilateral trade. He pointed out that the non-oil trade volume between the two countries reached a promising USD 590 million in 2023, signifying a steady upward trend.

Ambassador Farooq reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening food security cooperation with Kuwait, aiming to achieve this by providing a diverse range of food products, including fruits, meat, and livestock. He also commended the success of the recent Pakistani-Kuwait Joint Economic Cooperation



Committee meeting, which underscored the shared desire to expand and deepen ties across various sectors.

Echoing this sentiment, Khaled Al-Yaseen, Deputy Assistant

Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs, echoed Ambassador Farooq's sentiments and expressed Kuwait's appreciation for the strong and developing relations with Pakistan. He highlighted the Kuwaiti leadership's keenness to foster cooperation in all domains.

Al-Yaseen reiterated Kuwait's satisfaction with the fruitful outcomes of the Joint Economic Cooperation Committee meeting, emphasizing the shared aspiration to further enhance bilateral relations on all fronts.

For her part, Dr. Ameera Al-Hassan, director of the UN-Habitat Office for Kuwait and the Gulf Countries, lauded the Mango Festival for its contribution in underlining the importance of mangoes in promoting a healthy lifestyle due to their rich nutritional benefits.

Dr. Al-Hassan also emphasized the ongoing collaboration between UN-Habitat, the Kuwaiti government, and partner embassies, which aims to promote public health, ensure access to high-quality products, and create a supportive environment for mental well-being.

## Surge in FDI reflects growing confidence in Kuwait

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

stalled development plans, programs, and reforms, with the focus being on the country's economic and social growth, as well as the continued welfare of citizens.

The government's commitment to reforms and to the country's economic and social development were reiterated last week at the Cabinet's regular weekly meeting headed by His Highness the Prime Minister. During the meeting, the Cabinet assigned the Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf, to present the finance ministry's perspectives on the reforms needed to ensure the financial sustainability of the state and maximize its non-oil revenues.

The Cabinet also set up a committee, headed by the Minister of Finance and including the Minister of Public Works, the Minister of Commerce and Industry, and the Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, to prepare a draft government plan of action and set priorities and review the key initiatives of the plan to be implemented according to a clear timetable.

The formation of the committee comes in light of the government's commitment to implementing the directives of His Highness the Amir on achieving national aspirations, and ensuring sustainable development for the country and its people. Adherence to the perspicacious directions of Kuwait's leadership becomes all the more important given the prevailing sluggish world economy, and expectations of only a mild growth in global GDP this year.

A recent report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Kuwait's potential growth noted that the economy is projected to contract by a further 1.4 percent in 2024, with oil production falling by another 4.3 percent due to the need to comply with the quota cut mandated by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies in January. Meanwhile, the non-oil sector is expected to expand by 2.0 percent as domestic demand growth picks up.

Economic analysts point out that although Kuwait has a large wealth fund, a low debt-to-GDP ratio and surplus budgets when oil prices

are high, the massive annual public sector spending on wages and subsidies results in a situation that rapidly turns for the worse during periods of extended low oil prices. The oft-repeated scenario of fiscal constraints during oil price declines underlines the criticality of diversifying the hydrocarbon-reliant economy and boosting the non-oil sector.

However, diversifying the economy and promoting the non-oil sector would require the government to introduce insightful initiatives and interventions aimed at stimulating the economy, decreasing public sector dominance of the market, increasing private sector participation in projects and development, and incentivizing companies to provide meaningful job opportunities for nationals.



Encouraging the private sector to engage in non-oil activities and in creating employment for citizens would necessitate enhancing the skills and capabilities of young nationals so as to enable them to participate productively in the labor market. Economic diversification also calls for the government to create a business and investment ecosystem that attracts foreign direct investment to the country.

As the UN investment report made clear, the challenging global investment climate in 2024, fueled by geopolitical crises, protectionist

policies, fragmenting trade networks, and regional realignments, is disrupting the world economy, undermining stability and predictability of global investment flows, and exacerbating an already sluggish international FDI flow. Under these prevailing conditions, countries, both developing and developed, will have to work extra hard to lure foreign investments.

While the WIR 2024 points to an overall challenging prospect for international FDI flows this year, it also adds that under the right global economic conditions, modest growth for the year remains a possibility. Some of the positive economic initiatives needed to revive global investment flows include an uptick in economic growth, as well as an easing of

financing conditions and investment facilitation efforts in national policies of countries and in international agreements.

The report also adds that while many developing countries will continue to struggle to attract foreign investments into sectors that are vital to their sustainable development this year, there are signs that investments are growing in several global value chain-intensive manufacturing sectors, especially in regions and countries with strong fiscal stability, good governance and easy access to major markets.

In this regard, Kuwait's strategic location, and the significant untapped potential in various sectors of the economy, can attract investment by foreign entities and local investors. This includes the construction, real estate, transport and logistics sectors, and in the hydrocarbon ecosystem. In addition, Kuwait's Vision 2035 development plan calls for major investments from public and private sectors in several strategic industries.

Among the industries chalked for potential foreign investment in Vision 2035 are information and communications technology, renewable energy, electricity and water, tourism, healthcare and education. Vision 2035 also calls for public private partnerships in development of the mega Northern City project, the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, and several green-field residential cities across the country.

Kuwait's lack of FDI in the past had been largely blamed on the country's inherent challenges, including its overreliance on oil, high levels of bureaucracy, and a complex legal system that made for a less-than-friendly business and investment environment. In particular the political landscape that led to instability of governments and hindered implementation of necessary economic and financial reforms was a downer that drove away many international investors.

However, since His Highness the Amir has taken over the reins of the country, and the new government has moved swiftly to prioritize and implement economic and social development, there has been a marked shift in perceptions about Kuwait's investment potential. In addition to the country's sizable external assets and robust financial stability, the major incentive for increased interest among investors in Kuwait is the prevailing political stability.

The recent untangling of the perpetual political gridlock, which stymied economic, fiscal and structural reforms in the past, is being seen as a significant draw for global investors to Kuwait. The government's ability to introduce necessary reforms in a timely manner, irrespective of the economic and social pinches that some of these reforms may entail, will determine how global FDI flows to Kuwait in future.

# Municipal Council allocates sites for workers' cities in Kuwait

*The council prepares to convene an emergency meeting to seek suitable solutions, contingent upon the relevant authorities moving forward with implementing the proposals for establishing these cities.*

A number of members of the Municipal Council confirmed that the council has played its role in solving the problem of workers' cities. According to a report by Al Rai newspaper, the council has allocated several sites and handed them over to the relevant government agencies in Kuwait.

The members told Al Rai newspaper that the council is ready to hold an emergency meeting to discuss this matter and find appropriate solutions for it, on the condition that the relevant authorities move to implement the proposals related to establishing these cities.

Khaled Mufleh Al-Mutairi, the Vice Chairman of the Municipal Council, emphasized that the council was clear and determined to solve the problem of workers' housing by allocating many suitable sites for the establishment of workers' cities and housing.

He called on the relevant government agencies to quickly complete the proposed workers' cities, as they will significantly contribute to solving many of the problems related to workers' housing in investment housing, as well as bachelors' housing in private and model housing areas.

Al-Mutairi said, "We have warned many times in the past about the Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh problem, describing it as a time bomb. We may also witness an incident similar to the Mangaf fire if we do not implement the solutions proposed by the committees formed to address the conditions of this area."

For his part, member Fahd Al-Abduljader emphasized that the Council will not hesitate to take any action necessary to solve the problem of workers' housing to protect lives, even if it requires holding an emergency meeting.



He noted that "the problem is not only in the regulations or laws, but in the implementation.

In turn, member Walid Al-Dagher explained that the role of the Council is to allocate land for workers' housing, which it has already done. A number of sites have been allocated and handed over to the relevant authorities.

Member Fahad Al-Khenin called for the necessity for the Council to address the issue of workers' cities and to provide all necessary health and living requirements for these cities. He emphasized that these cities should be a model befitting Kuwait, far from the slums that tarnish the reputation of Kuwait and its people.

For his part, member Abdullah Al-Anzi said that the council has an important role in studying privatization requests, specifically with regard to integrated workers' cities. He emphasized the need to study these requests and assess the extent to which the party requesting the privatization adheres to all conditions that serve humanity.

He pointed out that workers' cities must be developed in a way that reduces pressure on investment and commercial housing, some of which may be located in violation of the laws.

## Last chance for a Golden investment opportunity

# Greece's golden visa property market

*The Greek Golden Visa Program is Europe's most successful and affordable, offering visa-free Schengen travel within five months of application. Holders can maintain the visa for life and qualify for citizenship under specific conditions.*

Katerina-Athena Piperigos, Founder & CEO of "The Greek Project," a boutique Greek real estate and bespoke travel agency, discusses why now is the opportune moment to invest in Greece for permanent residency.

The Greek Golden Visa Program is considered the most successful and affordable residence-by-investment program in Europe. Successful applicants and their families benefit from visa-free travel to Europe's Schengen Area within approximately five months of applying. Once



Katerina-Athena Piperigos  
Founder & CEO of 'Greek Project'

Specializing in Greek real estate 'sales, rentals, renovations', residency solutions, bespoke travel, and events, we are dedicated to turning your dreams of investing, living, traveling, and celebrating in Greece into reality.

Whether you're looking to reside in Greece, invest in exquisite properties, navigate the residency process, curate personalized travel experiences, or host unforgettable events, The Greek Project partners with the best to combine local expertise with unparalleled service, ensuring every detail is flawlessly executed.

Considering that timing is crucial to invest before the golden visa property investment doubles, at 'The Greek Project', we ensure you receive up-to-date and trustworthy legal advice. We provide a selection of excellent property investments, schedule and book your trip to Greece, and organize property viewings on your behalf. We guide you through the entire purchasing and golden visa application process from A to Z. For any inquiries, you can contact the company directly via email at [kap@thegreek-project.com](mailto:kap@thegreek-project.com) or find it on its new Instagram page [@thegreekproject.co](https://www.instagram.com/thegreekproject.co).

Having started this journey into Greek investments while being based in Kuwait, "we understand the Middle Eastern clientele and make sure to provide an experience tailored to their wants and needs," says Katerina-Athena Piperigos.

"Kuwait was a stepping stone to understanding the Middle Eastern mentality, which is actually very close in many aspects to the Greek one and the company's goal is to be your trustworthy partner in Greece," he added.

### Golden Visa: What you need to know

Currently, investors may still apply under the current EUR 250,000 minimum threshold, provided they select a property in certain regions, make a 10% deposit by August 31, 2024, and finalize the investment by December 31, 2024. After this period, the cost of the Greece Golden Visa Program is set to rise from the current minimum investment of EUR 250,000 to a minimum of EUR 400,000, or EUR 800,000



in regions where it currently stands at EUR 500,000.

The revised law specifically increases the minimum investment threshold to 800,000 euros for Athens, Thessaloniki, Mykonos, Santorini, and Greek islands with a population exceeding 3,100. For all other regions in Greece, the minimum investment will remain at 400,000 euros.

### Why invest in Greece?

Local and foreign investors have recognized Greece's incredible potential, viewing it as the next big thing. As a European Union member state, Greece remains the economic hub of Southeast Europe—an ideal gateway to the Middle East, Western Europe, and North Africa, and an emerging logistics hub for the entire region.

Greece is, without a doubt, one of the most beautiful countries in the world. With a Mediterranean climate that prevails throughout

the year, unique cultural and historical significance, amazing cuisine, friendly people, and excellent facilities and infrastructure, Greece is a destination for all four seasons.

Moreover, Greece boasts a rapidly growing economy, with attractive opportunities across multiple sectors. The government's efforts to foster a business-friendly environment, coupled with the country's vast potential, have opened new frontiers, attracting investors from around the globe, including the Gulf region. Large-scale investments such as "The Ellenikon" in the Athens Riviera—one of Europe's largest ongoing projects—are already underway, setting the stage for consistent growth across various sectors in the next decade.

*For inquiries, you can contact the company directly via email at [kap@thegreek-project.com](mailto:kap@thegreek-project.com) or find it on its new Instagram page [@thegreekproject.co](https://www.instagram.com/thegreekproject.co)*

the golden visa is obtained, it can be maintained for a lifetime, and citizenship may be applied for under certain conditions.

In light of recent governmental announcements regarding Greece's Golden Visa Program, the minimum investment threshold is set to nearly double starting August 31, 2024. Therefore, timing is crucial to act before the new regulations take effect!

"This is where we come in," said Mrs. Piperigos. "At 'The Greek Project,' we strive to provide our clients with a holistic and timely experience."

# Paris gears up for the greatest show on earth

*Olympic torch relay through Paris packed with events and highlights*

By Jean-Baptiste Gurliat

In less than a week before the opening ceremony of the XXXIII Summer Olympics, branded as Paris 2024, the passage of the Olympic flame through Paris on 14 and 15 July will mark the start of the celebrations. Its route will be packed with events and highlights.

After crossing an ocean, climbing mountains and meeting countless extraordinary people, the world's most famous torch will finally arrive in Paris. The journey begins on 14 July, a significant date as it coincides with Bastille Day, from the iconic Champs-Élysées roundabout.

From the very first steps, the celebration will be a constant companion to the flame. On the steps of the Petit Palais, the group D.I.V.A., four opera singers accompanied by a string quartet, will perform famous French operas in a festive and unconventional way.

The torch will then head towards the city center, winding its way through the Saint-Germain-des-Prés district (6th arrondissement) to the sound of its famous jazz, with singer and guitarist Thomas Curbillon setting the rhythm. It will stop at the Panthéon (5th arrondissement), where choreographer Yoann Bourgeois will present a 'tailor-made performance around a moving circular stage'. Still in the 5th arrondissement, the torch will stop at the Institute of the Arab World, where the artist Zepha will lead a collaborative artwork based on the meeting of alphabets, before visiting the healing Notre-Dame Cathedral.

The flame will then cross the Marais district, where it will be greeted by a giant drag bingo hosted by Mademoiselle Kiss. It will then head to the Place de la Bastille for an open-air dance class organized by the Paris Opera for 200 amateur participants. The day will end at 11pm at the Hôtel de Ville with a night vigil open to the public.

The following morning, the flame will leave the Porte de la Chapelle arena, the only venue built within the city limits for the Games. The square, named Alice Milliat in honor of the pioneering sportswoman, will host an exhibition of portraits of female athletes by Clémence Gouy.

The journey then leads to the iconic Montmartre, where around forty dancers will perform 'Murmurations', a work by choreographer Sadeck Berrabah, on the steps of the Sacré-Cœur. A stop at the Moulin Rouge would not be complete without a



French cancan.

Later in the day, the flame will take part in a village festival in Butte-aux-Cailles, followed

by a performance of 'Danse Vertikale' at the open-air Museum of Street Art (13th arrondissement), and then a parade of Asian,

Brazilian and Malian percussion and dance in Belleville. The route will end with a big concert on the Place de la République.

## Economic Impacts of Olympic and Paralympic Games

As the countdown to the XXXIII Olympic Games continues, the question of their potential impact is becoming more pressing. While the full impact will only be measurable after the event, lessons can be learned from the 2023 Rugby World Cup, the most recent major international sporting event to be hosted by Paris and by France.

During the Rugby World Cup, more than 420,000 international visitors stayed in France for an average of ten days. A staggering 98 percent of those surveyed said they were satisfied with their stay in Paris and 80 percent said they intended to return. This positive experience is reflected in the economic impact of the event, which generated spending of €1.8 billion. Of this, €585 million was spent on tourism, with 39



percent benefiting cities and regions outside the host cities. In Paris alone, foreign visitors contributed €102 million in spending during this period.

An interesting aspect of the study is its

focus on the environmental footprint, noting that the carbon emissions of the Rugby World Cup were three times lower than those of UEFA Euro 2016. This reduction was largely due to the use of existing infrastructure — a strategy that will also be used for the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games, with 95 percent of the venues being either existing or temporary structures.

Beyond the tangible financial and environmental impacts, there are also intangible benefits to be considered, such as the positive impact on inclusion, employment and health. These aspects, although initially difficult to quantify, are being methodically assessed through a sophisticated evaluation process. This methodology is already reported to be yielding promising results.

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Tel : 24814404, 24810109  
Email : editorial@timeskuwait.com  
Printed in: Al Khat Printing Press Co.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Right Industrial Policy is a Knowledge Policy



Tano Santos and Luigi Zingales

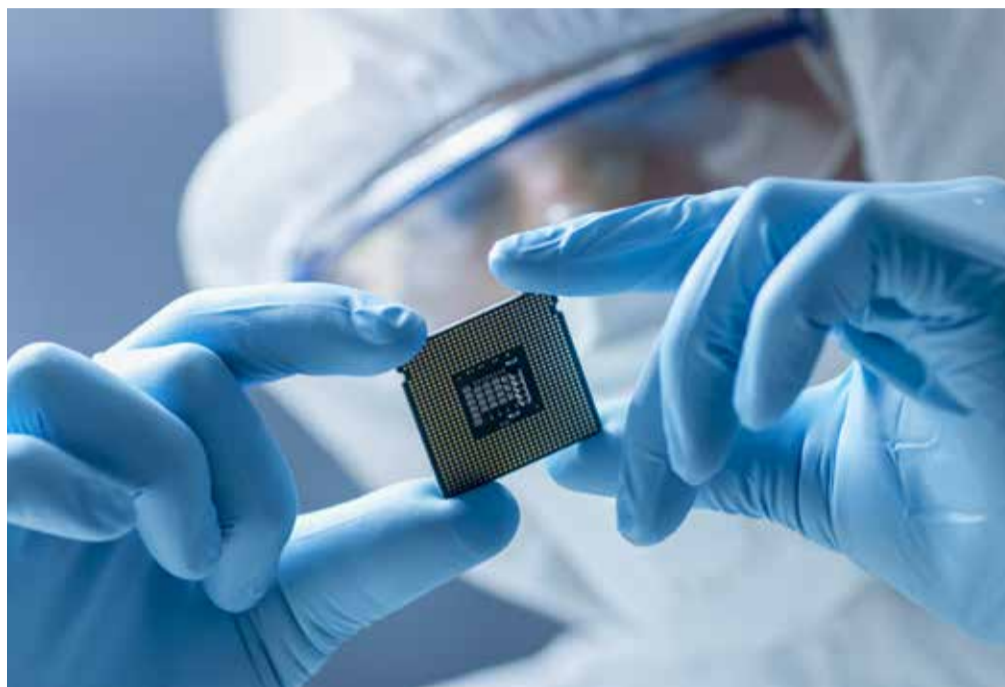
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Industrial policy is back in vogue. After decades of eschewing the use of market-shaping policy tools like tariffs and subsidies, many Western governments have embraced them, spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chains, and by broader fears about Chinese technological and commercial dominance, which could cost the West countless well-paying jobs. If these efforts are to succeed, however, an emphasis on knowledge is crucial.

Industrial policy has a poor track record in the West. When postwar governments tried it, they usually failed to achieve their goals, because they supported industries with no viable path to profitability. By the 1970s and 1980s, they abandoned industrial policy altogether. But if we view industrial policy as knowledge policy, its comeback can succeed.

An effective knowledge policy would focus less on creation of knowledge than on its diffusion. While innovation is clearly valuable, it is also expensive and challenging, requiring



physical infrastructure was in ruins, their stock of knowledge was intact. Both countries had a cohort of engineers, doctors, scientists, and managers capable of absorbing, spreading, applying, and building upon the advanced knowledge brought by occupying American forces.

Recognizing the value of such knowledge transfers, one might ask why the state needs to get involved. The answer is that knowledge diffusion is the quintessential externality. When an individual or a firm invests in knowledge, it typically captures only a fraction of the returns: knowledge acquisition often brings far higher social returns than private gains. This explains why the state has long supported and incentivized knowledge production, such as by creating a patent system and strengthening education.

An effective knowledge policy must include both domestic and international components. On the domestic front, it requires a targeted education policy, subsidies encouraging local actors to import knowledge, and a flexible intellectual property (IP) framework, which strikes the right balance between motivating innovation and encouraging its diffusion. Countries that are far from the technological frontier are better off with lax IP regimes, such as the one that enabled India to build a thriving pharmaceutical industry. (Membership in the World Trade Organization has since driven India to adhere to stricter rules.)

In a geopolitically fragmented world, such domestic measures must be complemented by free-trade zones to facilitate knowledge-sharing among partner countries. These zones would allow for specialization in some areas, but not in all. Economists' obsession with comparative advantage notwithstanding, this is not necessarily a bad thing. After all, a country at the technological frontier — or close enough that it can continue to absorb new knowledge — is likely to be a more productive and prosperous economic partner.

When it comes to importing technology, countries should erect barriers only in sectors where catch-up is both achievable and desirable (the same sectors where direct subsidies might also be justified). In this sense, the United States and the European Union have much better reasons to invest in strengthening their domestic semiconductor industries than India, which is so far behind in this area that any resources spent on catching up are probably wasted.

But even the US risks failing to achieve its semiconductor ambitions, unless it also implements an education policy that

encourages the study of engineering. Taiwan leads the world in semiconductor production thanks not only to its vast knowhow, but also to its appropriately educated workforce.

However, even for an economy with the right capabilities, if too many of its peers are trying to catch up in the same area, the costs of the strategy will rise, and the probability of success will drop. This brings us to another reason why free-trade zones are useful: they can facilitate policy coordination, at least among allies. India would be far more willing to abandon its semiconductor ambitions if it knew it could rely on a steady supply from a trusted partner.

To be sure, that partner might make demands of its own; say, for India to strengthen its IP enforcement, which would be very costly. But, in today's tense and divided world, such trade-offs are practically inevitable. A sensible knowledge policy must recognize the constraints under which allies operate.

Western governments are bringing back industrial policy at a particularly fraught moment. Strategic considerations cannot be ignored, as they were during the decades when globalization was progressing rapidly, and Pax Americana remained firmly in place. Instead, leaders must rise to the challenge and devise sophisticated industrial-military strategies, including knowledge policies that account for a wide range of risks, objectives, and pressures.

“An effective knowledge policy includes both domestic and international components. On the domestic front, it requires a targeted education policy, subsidies encouraging local import of knowledge, and a flexible IP framework.”

a particular combination of conditions that is often difficult to ensure. Not every country can realistically aspire to be a technological frontier. But a country does not have to produce cutting-edge innovations of its own to be able to reap the benefits (including higher productive capacity, greater wealth, and stronger military capabilities) of new processes, methods, and ideas produced elsewhere.

Knowledge diffusion, which depends on both access to knowledge and the ability to absorb it, is the key to a prosperous society. The German and Japanese economies recovered rapidly after World War II largely because, while their

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# Thought “ for the week

The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken.

— Samuel Johnson

## RECIPE

# Vegetable Parda Biryani



Biryani is a popular dish in many cuisines of India like the Awadhi cuisine, Mughlai cuisine and the Hyderabad Deccani cuisine. Various varieties of vegetarian and non-vegetarian biryani exist and amongst them is a less popular version called the 'dum-cooked' Parda Biryani. The biryani is first 'dum-cooked', which essentially means it is cooked over a slow fire. It generally involves placing the biryani rice, vegetables, or meat along with sufficient water and flavorsome spices in a clay pot, sealing the pot with rolled-out dough and cooking over a slow fire. The aromas of different spices are absorbed by the rice, making it absolutely flavourful and aromatic. The process is long but the results are totally worth it.

**Total time:** 1 hour  
**Serving:** 5 people

### Ingredients:

#### For saffron milk:

- 2 tbsp heated milk
- 2 pinches saffron
- For biryani rice:
- 1 ½ cups basmati rice
- 2 cardamom pods, 1 star anise, 3 cloves, 1 bay leaf
- 1 tsp salt
- 3 cups water (amount of water may vary depending on the kind of basmati rice)

#### For parda:

- 2 cup wheat flour
- ¼ tsp salt
- 2 tbsp oil
- ¾ cup water
- For vegetable masala and layering the biryani:
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 tbsp ghee
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1 big onion slice
- Whole spices (3 cardamom, 1 inch cinnamon stick, 1 star anise, 1 bay leaf)
- 1 tsp finely chopped green chili
- 1 cup paneer cubes
- 1 cup cauliflower florets (fried or blanched)
- 1 cup mix vegetable (green peas, french beans, carrots)
- 1 large tomato puree
- ¼ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tbsp Kashmiri red chili powder
- 1 tbsp coriander powder
- 1 tbsp biryani masala
- ½ cup plain yogurt, whisked
- 1/2 cup browned onions (baristo)
- ½ cup chopped mint
- 2 tbsp chopped coriander leaves
- ¼ cup water (for cooking the masala)



Chef Chhaya Thakker

- 1 tbsp kewra essence (extract of kewra plant leaves)
- 1 tbsp ghee (to top the biryani)

### Instructions:

- Preheat the oven
- Wash, drain and cook the rice in water with salt, 3 cardamom, 1 inch cinnamon stick, and bay leaf till 80 percent don.
- Drain the rice, discard whole spices and spread rice in a plate to cool
- Heat 2 tablespoons of milk and add 2 pinches of saffron threads and let it soak for 30 minutes.
- Knead the dough, not very tight, not very loose. It should be soft and firm. Set aside
- Heat oil and ghee in a heavy-bottom pot
- Add cumin seeds, saute till they change color
- Add onion slices, ginger-garlic paste, cardamom, clove, bayleaf, cinnamon, star anise and saute for a while
- Add the tomato puree and ¼ cup water, and saute till oil separates
- Add chili paste, turmeric powder, chili powder, coriander powder, biryani masala, salt and yogurt, and saute for 5 minutes
- Add the vegetable-mix, paneer, cauliflower, and saute well
- Add 1/2 cup water and cook the mixture for 5-7 minutes
- Add a few mint leaves and coriander and transfer drained rice into it
  - Add kewra essence and mix well
  - Turn off flame
  - Dust flour on a board and roll out a big naan roti
  - Do not roll too thin or the parda will break
  - Spread a spoon of oil in a round tin
  - Fold the naan roti and place it in the tin
  - Cover the tin with roti, slightly press the edges
  - For the first layer, add 3 spoons of biryani rice along with browned onions, a few coriander and mint leaves. Spread 2 big spoons of vegetables gravy over the rice.
  - For the second layer, spread 3 spoons of biryani rice, sprinkle brown onions, coriander and mint leaves, and sprinkle 2 spoons of saffron milk and 3 spoons of vegetable gravy.
  - For the third layer, add the biryani rice, fried onions and coriander, and mint leaves, sprinkle with saffron milk and 1 tbsp.ghee

### Sealing parda:

- Slightly stretch the dough and cover all the sides.
- Seal properly without any gaps or holes. Cover and slightly press it.
- Spread a spoon of oil on the top.
- Parda biryani dum process:
- Keep it in the preheated oven and bake for 15 minutes
- To serve:
- Shift the parda biryani carefully onto a plate
- Cut the parda and enjoy the biryani
- Serve with gravy, raita, papad, and pickle.
- Dip a piece of roti in the gravy and serve along with biryani rice

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

## LIFESTYLE



# A Unique Culinary Art Experience with Seven Paintings



By Hermoine Macura-Noble  
Special to The Times Kuwait

Dubai, a city synonymous with luxury and innovation, continuously redefines the boundaries of hospitality and dining. Amidst its towering skyscrapers and sprawling malls lies a hidden gem that merges the world of art and gastronomy in a unique, immersive experience—Seven Paintings. This exquisite dining venue offers more than just a meal; it presents a feast for the senses, where culinary artistry meets visual splendor. Guests have the opportunity

to search, curate, paint and unveil each course and dish before consuming it.

The brainchild of visionary restaurateurs and renowned chefs, this dining concept is an ode to the artistic spirit. Each dining experience is meticulously crafted around seven original paintings by world-famous artists, with each painting serving as the inspiration for a corresponding course. This interplay between art and cuisine creates a symbiotic relationship, where each dish not only complements but also amplifies the aesthetic and emotional essence of the artwork.



Upon entering Seven Paintings, guests are enveloped in an atmosphere of elegance and sophistication. The interiors are designed to resemble an art gallery, with the walls adorned by the seven focal paintings. Soft lighting accentuates the colors and textures of the artworks, while also creating an intimate dining environment. The dining tables are strategically placed to offer unobstructed views of the paintings, ensuring that every guest can fully appreciate the visual artistry on display.

The dining experience is a curated journey, where each of the seven courses is unveiled in tandem with its corresponding painting. The appetizer begins with a Monet-inspired Masterpiece and Claude Monet's vibrant use of color and light. The opening course features a delicate seafood dish, showcasing a medley of flavors and hues that mimic Monet's water lilies. Next is a salad which is based on Vincent van Gogh's swirling skies and bold color palette reflected in a salad that combines vibrant vegetables, edible flowers, and a tangy citrus dressing, evoking the artist's expressive brushstrokes. Salvador Dalí's surrealism is brought to life in a richly flavored, multi-layered soup, with unexpected ingredients and playful presentations that challenge the boundaries of traditional cuisine.

The main course is inspired by Leonardo da Vinci and combines classical techniques with innovative flavors. The dish is a modern interpretation of timeless culinary traditions, reflecting Da Vinci's blend of art and science. Concluding the meal, a selection of petit fours inspired by Damien Hirst offers a contemporary twist, with bold flavors and modernist presentations that leave a lasting impression.

Dining at Seven Paintings is more than just enjoying a meal; it's an immersive experience that engages all the senses. As each course is served, the waitstaff provides a brief narrative on the painting and its artist, enriching the dining experience with cultural and artistic insights. Live classical music subtly enhances the ambiance, providing a serene and sophisticated backdrop to the evening.

Seven Paintings also offers exclusive events and private dining options, allowing guests to enjoy this unique experience in an intimate setting. Whether it's a special celebration or a corporate event, the venue provides a bespoke dining experience tailored to the guests' preferences.

### Hermoine Macura-Noble

The first Australian English speaking News Anchor in the Middle East. She is also the Author of Faces of the Middle East and Founder of US-based 501c3 charity – The House of Rest which helps to ease the suffering of victims of war. For more from our Contributing Editor, you can follow her on Instagram, @hello\_hermoine

# BRI could become the new BMI

Scientists are turning to a novel way to calculate obesity using a system known as the Body Roundness Index (BRI), which they claim is a more accurate measurement than Body Mass Index (BMI). The new international study, headed by scientists at Montclair University and other research institutions in the United States and Germany, found that a higher BRI was associated with an increased risk of death from any cause.

The large retrospective study, involving nearly 33,000 US adults, is not only another research that confirms the growing obesity epidemic in the United States, but also an indicator of a potential new tool in the fight against obesity. The researchers behind the study conclude that the BRI is a tool

that is almost as easy to perform as BMI, but offers a more accurate assessment of body composition and health risks.

The new findings provide compelling evidence for the application of BRI as a noninvasive and easy to obtain screening tool for estimation of mortality risk and identification of high-risk individuals. The innovative concept could be incorporated into public health practices provided it receives consistent validation from other independent studies on BRI.

Data from the large cohort of nearly 33,000 American adults was taken from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) database — a self-reported survey that assesses the health and nutrition of Americans. Researchers looked at a 20-year period of NHANES data between 1999-2018. The average age of cohort members was 46 years old. Half of the group was women.

Then, using BRI which is a slightly more complex body measurement than BMI, they assessed one major outcome: all-cause mortality. The major finding was that the mortality risk associated with BRI score was



'U-shaped'. A U-shaped curve, as its name suggests, shows high risk at either end of a given spectrum, and lower risk in the middle.

In this case, individuals with a BRI below and above the normal range were at greater risk of death from any cause. Meanwhile those in the middle, in the normal range, had the lowest risk. Individuals with a BRI less than 3.4 had a 25 percent increased mortality risk compared to the normal range, while those with a BRI of 6.9 had 49 percent increased risk. Researchers also documented a steady increase in average BRI over the 20 year period from 4.8 to 5.62. The trend was more obvious within certain groups, including women, and the elderly.

The Body Roundness Index is similar to the Body Mass Index, but relies on more anthropometric variables. The index uses height, weight, waist circumference, and sometimes hip circumference for its calculation. The BRI, which was first proposed in 2013, is a more direct measure of central adiposity, which strongly correlates with metabolic diseases like type 2 diabetes.

The researchers explained their findings by noting that similar to BMI, the Body Roundness Index has to do with geometry. Using the

necessary variables, you create an image of a circle, but the circle could be more egg-shaped, cylindrical, or maybe totally round. It uses the concept of 'eccentricity', which describes how round (like a circle) or narrow (like an ellipse) something is. It represents a number between zero, for a perfect circle, and one, which is closest to straight.

However, with BMI you are actually using just two measurements — weight and height. In the Body Roundness Index, you are also using other measurements to capture the geometric shape. That BRI number can then be used to make a more accurate calculation of body composition. The closer to zero, the rounder your body, and the greater the risk of all-cause mortality.

BMI is a simple measurement of body size based on your height and weight that has been used for decades as a general health assessment. Your BMI is a crude measurement of whether or not you fall into a healthy weight range. However, the measurement is far from perfect: for example, it does not distinguish between muscle and fat; so an individual with obesity could very likely have the same BMI as, say, a bodybuilder.

On the other hand, BRI could offer a new method of assessing body composition and health risk in a manner that is still simple to perform but offers a more accurate assessment. To perform a BRI test, you just need a few measurements. In fact, if you are curious about your own BRI, you can even plug them into an online calculator such as the one found at <https://webfce.com/bri-calculator/>. However, you need to keep in mind that BRI is still a novel technique that needs further validation, so it is far from commonplace today.

## Sugar substitute linked to increased risk of heart attack

Artificial sweeteners are often marketed as a healthier alternative to natural sugar and are popular with many people looking for a safer substitute to sugar. But growing evidence suggests that they may harm multiple body systems.

A new study by researchers at Cleveland Clinic in the United States has found that xylitol, a popular zero-calorie sugar substitute used in processed foods like peanut butter, chewing gum, baked goods, and candies, could be linked to a greater risk of cardiovascular diseases (CVD), including heart attack and stroke.

Cardiovascular disease includes heart disease, heart attack, stroke, heart failure, abnormal heart rhythm such as atrial fibrillation or AFib, and heart valve problems. High blood pressure is also a type of cardiovascular disease, as well as a major risk factor for heart disease



and stroke. According to the World Health Organization, CVDs are the leading cause of death globally, taking an estimated 17.9 million lives each year.

Another report by the American Heart Association (AHA), notes that more than 61 percent of American adults are expected to have some type of CVD by 2050, with the trend being driven by an older, more diverse population and a large increase in risk factors such as high blood pressure and obesity. Considering the growth in elderly population, as well as the existence of risk factors such as obesity, are prevalent in many other countries, the expected increase in CVD rate could very likely be applicable to other parts of the world.

Xylitol is found in small amounts in many fruits and vegetables and is therefore considered natural, and is usually processed from trees like birch or from a plant fiber called xylan. Humans even produce small quantities of it via normal

metabolism. Xylitol has a similar sweetness as regular sugar but contains 40 percent fewer calories — 2.4 calories per gram compared to 4 calories per gram for regular sugar — so it is considered a weight-loss friendly sweetener.

Xylitol's glycemic index (GI) — a measure of how quickly a food raises blood sugar — is also only 7, whereas it is 60-70 in regular sugar. However, since xylitol is a refined sweetener, it does not contain any vitamins, minerals or protein, and is considered to provide empty calories. As such, it is usually found in many supposedly healthier sugar-free alternatives such as in sugar-free chewing gums, candies, mints, diabetes-friendly foods and oral-care products.

The Food and Drug Administration in the United States has classified Xylitol as a 'Generally Recognized as Safe' (GRAS) product, indicating that the substance is currently thought to be harmless. Researchers behind the new study hope their finding will serve as a calling for new regulatory guidelines to improve labeling mandates and remove sugar substitutes like xylitol from GRAS status

The study also surmised that sugar substitutes may impair clotting activity. For their study, the researchers analyzed blood samples of over 3,000 people who were being assessed for heart disease. They found that, over a 3-year period, people with the highest levels of xylitol in their blood had double the risk of heart attack, stroke, and death compared to those with the lowest levels.

The researchers surmised that there could be a receptor on our platelets that responds and interacts with sugar alcohols like xylitol, increasing the clumping ability of platelets in the bloodstream, and, as a result, increase the risk of clotting in the brain and heart, which could trigger cardiovascular events such as a heart attack or stroke. However, the researchers caution that their findings are from an observational study and hence does not decisively prove that xylitol directly causes cardiovascular problems.

The new study underlines the need for further research on the health-risk aspects of sugar substitutes such as xylitol, as well as to better understand the impact of their consumption, especially at varying doses, on cardiovascular function. Meanwhile, healthcare experts are recommending limiting the use of sugar substitutes until their health implications are fully studied and understood.

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