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## Market buoyant over government's proactive measures

The report noted that oil GDP is forecast to increase following the June decision by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its non-OPEC allies ((OPEC+)) to gradually ease the voluntary production cuts by some members. This would allow Kuwait to restore 135,000 barrels per day (b/d) at a gradual rate of 11,000 b/d every month from October 2024 to September 2025, which would raise production output to 2.25 million b/d by the end of 2025.

By Reaven D'Souza  
Executive Managing Editor

An Amiri decree issued on 25 August expanded the cabinet with the appointment of four new ministers and the reshuffling of some ministerial portfolios to enhance the functioning of government entities.

The expanded ministerial lineup now has three women ministers with Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, and Minister of Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila, now being joined by Nora Al-Fassam as new Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic



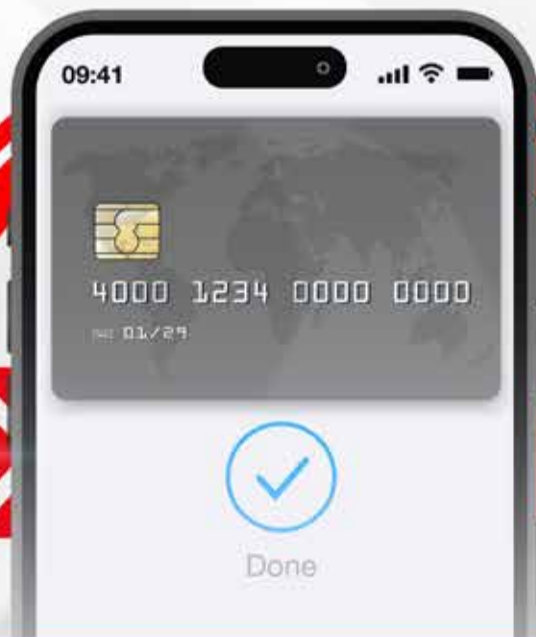
and Investment Affairs. The appointment of Al-Fassam as finance minister makes her only the second female minister to head the finance portfolio since 2005.

Appointment of three women cabinet ministers reflects the leadership's recognition of the crucial role Kuwaiti women play in driving the nation's development and progress. Accelerating the pace of development processes, so as to enable Kuwait to realize its full potential, was said to be a catalyst that led to the decision in early May by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to suspend parliament for a period of four years.

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# Ceremonial reception held to mark EU presidency handover

*Hungary takes over the six-month rotational EU presidency*



## The Times Kuwait Report

A reception was held on 28 August at the residence of Belgian Ambassador H.E. Christian Domes, with the attendance of Hungarian Ambassador H.E. András Szabó, and in the presence of the EU Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Anne Koistinen, to mark the official handover of the six-month rotational European Union Presidency to Hungary.

Welcoming the gathering of diplomats and media Ambassador Domes, spoke at length on the achievements of the Belgian presidency of the EU. The ambassador highlighted the triple objectives during the Belgian presidency, which focused on three main goals — finalizing legislative files before the European Parliament's dissolution, addressing ongoing crises, and preparing the EU for the future.

Elaborating on these objectives, the ambassador said that driving forward legislative work included the BPEU (Belgian Presidency European Union) advancing the EU's political and legislative agenda, as well as finalizing agreements like the Migration and Asylum Pact, European Media Freedom Act, and AI Act. They also reached consensus on 74 additional files across six core priorities — Defending the Rule of Law and Democracy; Strengthening the EU's Competitiveness; Pursuing a Green and Just Transition; Reinforcing Social and Health Agendas; Protecting People and Borders; and Promoting a Global Europe.

Ambassador Domes said that the BPEU also enhanced Europe's defense and preparedness, and bolstered its open strategic autonomy in trade matters. The BPEU

strengthened international partnerships, by taking forward the midterm evaluation of the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument and taking stock of the Global Gateway Strategy's implementation.

He said for the future, the BPEU prepared discussions for the next EU Strategic Agenda through informal councils and other events dedicated to different future-oriented topics. Furthermore, to ensure the EU is future-proof, they prepared a Progress Report on the Future of Europe, to inform the European Council Conclusions on a Roadmap for future work on internal reforms.

In conclusion he noted that at the start of their Presidency, they promised to deliver; and they did. They protected, strengthened, and prepared the EU for today and tomorrow. He also extended best wishes to the upcoming Hungarian Presidency for a successful term.

This was followed by an address from EU Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Anne Koistinen who praised Belgium for a very successful presidency from 1 January to 30 June 2024.

She also praised Belgian cooperation with the EU locally, and said that the 'Team Europe' spirit of the presidency was evident in all their workings. She also took the opportunity to congratulate and extend her best wishes to the Hungarian Ambassador for his country's Presidency of the EU Council over the next six months, and looked forward to working with him

She also expressed deep concern about Gaza, "where a humanitarian catastrophe has been unfolding before our eyes over the past 10 months," adding that the EU will continue to join efforts with Arab partners and those interested in peace to end the war in Gaza

and advance regional de-escalation.

For his part, Ambassador Szabó, told the gathering that Hungary would work as an honest broker, in the spirit of sincere cooperation between member states and institutions, for the peace, security and prosperity of a truly strong Europe. He noted that the Hungarian presidency came at a crucial period when it comes to the institutional cycle.

We are holding the presidency just after the European Parliament elections and we are in the middle of an institutional transition period. In this period, the most important task for the Hungarian presidency is to ensure a smooth institutional transition and to assist the European Parliament (EP) and the European Commission (EC) in the transition process, and to represent the stability and continuity. This is so, as during this period the Council and the Council presidency is the only institution that remains intact. So far, the Hungarian presidency has been successful in achieving this.

He said that in the current international context of multiple challenges, it was vital to improve the productivity and thus the competitiveness of the Union and its member states, and to stimulate growth. In this regard, the adoption of a New European Competitiveness Deal is a key priority of the Hungarian presidency.

Ambassador Szabó pointed out that the reinforcement of European Defence Policy was also on the agenda, and that the ongoing and emerging conflicts on the continent and around the world clearly demonstrate that Europe needed to significantly improve its defense capabilities.

He also emphasized that a consistent and

merit-based Enlargement Policy was one of the most successful policies of the European Union. To preserve this favorable tendency, it was essential to keep enlargement policy merit-based, balanced, and credible. Other priorities on the agenda included Shaping the Future of Cohesion Policy, A farmer-centered EU Agricultural Policy, Addressing Demographic Challenges, and stemming illegal migration.

Regarding the Middle East, he pointed out that the common objective of the EU was to prevent a regional escalation of the conflict, alleviate the suffering of innocent civilians, and resolve the humanitarian crisis. To this end, particular attention is needed for the immediate and safe delivery of humanitarian aid to the civilians in need in Gaza. As another priority, the Hungarian Presidency will strive to ensure the significant role of the EU in the long-term political settlement of the conflict.

The Hungarian Presidency will also support more active cooperation with the Gulf countries by implementing the Joint Communication: A Strategic Partnership with the Gulf. We will strive to enhance EU-GCC relations in the fields of security, counterterrorism, energy and green transition, people-to-people contacts, trade, and investments. The Hungarian Presidency intends to step up EU efforts to restore regional stability and the security of supply chains in the Red Sea region.

In conclusion, Ambassador Szabó welcomed the first summit of its kind between the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council, which will be held on 16 October in Brussels, revealing that his country's Foreign Minister, Peter Szijjártó, will visit Kuwait in this regard on 5 September.

## Electricity demand peaks as temperatures soar

A temperature of 50°C recorded in the afternoon on 27 August led to a surge in power consumption and a consequent heavy load on the national grid, which at 2pm was recorded at 17,640 megawatts — close to the country's available power production.

In anticipation of the increased demand, and aware of the strain the higher load would place on the national powergrid, the leadership at the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy (MEWRE) held an urgent meeting to address the expected surge in demand and to initiate the comprehensive emergency plan developed to address these exigencies.

Emergency response technical teams were immediately placed on high alert and stationed to monitor main and sub-networks of the grid, and backup generators



were primed for ready deployment. The ministry has also implemented scheduled power cuts in some agricultural areas to manage overall consumption, and urged people to reduce consumption during hours of peak demand, from 11am to 5pm.

Despite the preparation and alerts, power outages were reported in parts of the Jabriya area, specifically in Block 8, due to the failure of two sub-feeders at the main substation. The fact that emergency teams were able to quickly restore power, does not mitigate the need for long-term solutions to meet the growing demand for electricity, particularly in light of a growing population, urban expansions, new city developments, and several ongoing infrastructure projects.

Concerns about a repeat of the widespread power outages experienced in June of this year have been rising. The previous outage was attributed to the inability of power generation plants to meet the surge in demand during peak hours, coupled with higher temperatures compared to previous years.

The increased demand for electricity in summer and the limitations of existing power generation units in the country to adequately meet this need is recognized by everyone concerned, including the electricity ministry. However, the fact that we have been experiencing these supply shortfalls for the last many years underlines the inability of MEWRE to address the problem effectively and on a long-term basis.

To its credit, the MEWRE has taken several short-term measures to temporarily address the situation, including expediting the signing of long-overdue maintenance contracts and ordering new mobile power generation units. There are also reports that the ministry is developing a comprehensive four-year crisis management plan to prevent future disruptions.

# Turkish Defence Industry: A story of successful self sufficiency



By H.E. Tuba Nur Sönmez  
Ambassador of Türkiye to Kuwait

As we jubilantly celebrate the 102nd anniversary of our Victory Day, it is a source of immense pride to witness the evolution and achievements of the Turkish military over the last two decades. In this regard, one area particularly stands out: the defence industry.

The evolution of the Turkish defence industry in recent decades under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has become a matter of global attention. Türkiye has shifted from importing many of her defence technologies to becoming one of the world's most prominent exporters in the defence and aerospace industry. With a large number of products in its defence industry portfolio and the significant importance given to R&D and technological advancement, Türkiye has emerged as a competent and trusted global player, with over 2,000 enterprises, SMEs, research institutes, and universities contributing domestically.

Second largest army of NATO: Located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Türkiye is in fact surrounded by many wars, armed conflicts and instabilities, necessitating strong security forces backed by an advanced defence sector to maintain regional

peace and security. As the second largest army of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and one of the biggest defence spenders in the world, Türkiye has developed the capabilities to defend herself while sharing this experience and capacity accumulated over the years with her partners and friends around the world.

Over the years, Türkiye's effort towards ensuring her national security as well as the regional peace while fully abiding by the international law have resulted in unfair treatment by certain countries that are the main exporters of defence industry products to Türkiye. Although achieving an independent and self-sufficient defence industry has always been a national strategy, the arms embargo imposed by these countries provided an accelerator to push for further efforts to meet the needs of the security units with domestic resources.

Independence of the defence industry: Türkiye's advancements in the defence sector have garnered global recognition, particularly in drone warfare, with Turkish drones like the Bayraktar TB-2 playing pivotal roles in international conflicts. Beyond armed drones, Türkiye's defence industry has made significant strides, now possessing the capability to design, produce, modernize, and export a wide array of core conventional arms and equipment. This includes corvettes, fire support systems, unmanned aircraft systems, gliding munitions for drones, joint-direct attack munitions, various land warfare platforms (excluding main battle tanks), grenade launchers, and tactical anti-material rifles, with varying degrees of domestic input.

To name a few, the state-of-the-art AKINCI Unmanned Combat Aerial



Vehicles (UCAVs), ANKA, and the first unmanned fighter jet Bayraktar Kızılelma, along with the Göktürk satellite system, Altay tanks, ATAK and GÖKBAY helicopters, Hürkuş training aircraft, and Fırtına Obus, are just a handful of examples.

Türkiye's defence exports have diversified, reaching over 170 countries, with the industry's project portfolio expanding to include 750 projects by over 1,500 local firms. Despite international challenges, Türkiye's defence spending and industry turnover

have seen steady growth, underscoring its emergence as a formidable player in the global defence market. As a result of efforts toward ensuring the independence of the defence industry over the last decades, Türkiye's foreign military imports decreased from 80 percent in 2004 to around 20 percent in 2023, while arms exports increased by 75 percent from 2018 to 2023 compared to 2013-2017. In 2023, Turkish defence industry exports reached a record-breaking USD5.5 billion.

Supporting defence capabilities

of our friends and allies: We do not consider defence industry cooperation merely a type of foreign trade. Supplying friendly countries with affordable, sophisticated, and durable products and solutions benefits our bilateral ties and fosters greater security partnerships. In recent years, Kuwait has emerged as a prime example of this approach. Kuwait's procurement of Baykar UAVs in 2023 marks the beginning of a new era in the defence sector between Kuwait and Türkiye.

Most importantly, during His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to Türkiye on 7 May of this year, Türkiye and Kuwait signed a Government-to-Government (G2G) deal, the Implementation Protocol on Government-to-Government Defence Industry Procurement Contracts that laid the foundation for further cooperation.

We sincerely believe that the defence sector will be the cornerstone of our brotherly relations with Kuwait.

May Allah Almighty protect Türkiye and Kuwait from all kinds of harm.

## LuLu Hypermarket kicks off post-holiday shopping with exclusive deals



LuLu Hypermarket welcomed customers returning after the summer-break with the 'LuLu Welcome Back' promotion, which launched on 28 August and will run to 3 September, across all outlets of the retailer in Kuwait.

Shoppers were greeted with a wide range of discounts and offers on various product categories. Customers enjoyed up to 50 percent off on essential items like groceries, fruits, vegetables, fish, meat, health and beauty products, and more. The 'LuLu Digital crazy sale' promotion also featured incredible discounts on electronics, mobiles, home appliances, IT and accessories, linen and home furnishing, household items, toys, stationeries, and luggage, among other categories. Shoppers were treated to amazing discounts that were simply too good to miss. The incredible deals were a highlight of the promotion, attracting customers eager to take advantage of the savings.

As the new school year approached, LuLu Hypermarket also introduced exclusive back-to-school offers, catering to the needs of parents and students. LuLu Hypermarket's commitment to providing exceptional value and customer satisfaction was evident throughout the event.

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# Entertainment City relaunch to boost tourism sector

Tourism in Kuwait has suffered due to the lack of government investment in the sector, as well as the absence of a clearly defined and comprehensive tourism strategy. Not surprisingly, over the years, the country has allocated minimal resources to promoting, reviving and expanding the tourism sector.

In 2023, the tourism sector contributed around 6 percent to Kuwait's gross domestic product (GDP), which is the lowest contribution to GDP among the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bloc, and half that of the United Arab Emirates, where tourism contributed 12 percent of the GDP. In contrast, foreign travel from Kuwait to overseas destinations amounted to 12 percent of the GDP.

On the positive side, the low base figure indicates the immense growth potential of tourism in Kuwait. And, in a sign that changes

are on the way, the new government has made development of the tourism sector a key plank in its plans to diversify the oil-dominant economy.

Kuwait's main place of attraction for visitors used to be the Entertainment City, which opened in the early 1980s in an expansive area to the west of Kuwait City. However, lack of investment eventually led to the closure of this site in 2016. The park was demolished in 2020 with a promise to build a new and better facility.

But the arrival of COVID-19 pandemic and prevailing political instability leading to change in successive governments meant that the Entertainment City project was shelved indefinitely. It was only in 2023, with the transfer of the project's management to the Kuwait Investment Authority that the project began its revival process.

The KIA's investment of around KD200



million in the project has accelerated the pace of development and it is now expected to launch within six months. Projections for the project indicate that it has the potential to attract more than 900,000 visitors annually by 2030, and contribute around KD85 billion to the GDP, in addition to providing more than 4,000 job opportunities in the sector by 2035.

The new Entertainment City project is expected to include recreational, water, and outdoor parks, sports facilities, game centers, and various amenities such as restaurants and cafes. It noted that the Sheikh Jaber Center, which features an opera house, and South Al-Sabahiya Park are among the current venues offering entertainment shows in the country.

Kuwait's entertainment sector offerings at present are relatively limited compared to other GCC countries. Some of the main recreational options currently available in Kuwait are usually seasonal, with notable examples being 'Winter Wonderland' and Algecira, the first artificial island in the Gulf. The new Entertainment City project will hopefully provide a significant boost to offerings in the country's tourism sector, and contribute to the government's vision to reduce reliance on oil revenues and develop a more sustainable and diversified economy.

## Over 65,000 residency violators benefitted during amnesty period

More than 65,000 residency violators benefitted from the grace period offered by the government and adjusting their residency status in the country, said Director of the General Department of Residency at the Interior Ministry Brigadier Yousef Al-Ayoub, in a statement to the media last week.

He pointed out that since the end of the amnesty period, which extended for over three months from 14 March to end of June, around 4,650 people were apprehended, most of them from Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh areas.

Brigadier Al-Ayoub also stressed that the interior ministry would continue its efforts to crackdown on residency violators, and that

the violators who were arrested and deported would be unable to return to Kuwait.

In addition, he said that sponsors of residency violators would be subjected to a block and they would be notified through the Sahel application of their sponsored individuals' arrest and subsequent legal procedures against them. He clarified that violators awaiting deportation who had no travel documents would be issued emergency travel papers to leave the country.

The Interior Ministry had intensified its efforts in the last three months to track down residency violators and implement the law on this matter to the fullest extent. The issue of residency violators had an impact on the fabric of society with some individuals seeking illicit activities to make ends meet. The campaign also sends a message to sponsors bringing people into the country and then abandoning them to fend for themselves.

## LuLu Hypermarket supports community giving with 'Donate a Book, Earn Happiness' campaign



LuLu Hypermarket, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, has launched a heartwarming 'Donate a Book, Earn Happiness' campaign to coincide with the back-to-school season.

The campaign aims to encourage customers to donate their pre-loved books, fostering a culture of sharing knowledge and supporting educational needs. From 28 August to 15 September, parents and children can donate school textbooks for 1st to 12th grade at any LuLu Hypermarket outlet in Kuwait.

For every book donated, the generous donor will be rewarded with 1,000 LuLu Happiness

points, which can be redeemed for exciting rewards and discounts.

The donated books will be collected and students who may not have access to necessary textbooks can secure them without any charges or obligations. This aims to ensure that all students have the opportunity to pursue their education without financial constraints.

The region's leading retailer urges customers to participate in this noble cause by donating their pre-loved textbooks. Join LuLu Hypermarket in spreading knowledge, and making a positive impact in the lives of students in Kuwait.

## Kuwait, Qatar sign long-term energy deal

Kuwait and Qatar signed an agreement on 26 August to an energy deal that involves Qatar supplying around three million tons of liquefied natural gas (LNG) annually to Kuwait, over a 15-year period beginning from 2025. The LNG supplies are to fuel power stations in Kuwait, to meet the growing demands for electricity in the country.

The agreement, signed by CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Naser Al-Sabah and his counterpart at Qatar Energy Saad Al-Kaabi, follows a similar 2020 deal with the same figures as part of efforts to meet rising energy demand in Kuwait.

Following the signing ceremony, the CEO of Kuwait's state-owned energy giant said



that these agreements are a testament to the "solidity" of bilateral relations between the two Gulf Arab neighbors, while simultaneously aiming to ensure a perpetual supply of energy in line with "transformative" national strategies.

Praising the long-term partnership between the state-owned firms, Qatar Energy's chief executive expected the deal to be instrumental in bringing Kuwaiti sustainable development goals to fruition, while addressing the needs of the Qatari firm's clientele.

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**Venue:** KCCI Exhibition Hall, Ground Floor, Commercial Area no. 9, Al-Shuhadaa St. Kuwait City, Kuwait  
**Timing:** 10 AM to 2:30 PM on 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024 (Monday & Tuesday).

For setting up B2B meetings, please contact Embassy at  
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**Kuwait, Qatar sign long-term energy deal**

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# Large influx of domestic workers to private sector

*Bassam Al-Shammari, a specialist in domestic workers' affairs stressed the necessity of opening the door to transferring expatriate workers from and to all sectors without restrictions, in a way that restores balance to the labor market and achieves the lofty vision of transforming Kuwait into a global financial and commercial center.*

More than 30,000 domestic workers are reported to have applied to change their residency status from Article 20 (Household worker) to Article 18 (Private sector) since 14 July when the window for this transfer was opened by the Ministry of Interior's General Administration of Residency Affairs.

Labor experts expect that with the deadline for such transfers ending on 12 September, there could be a further surge in transfer applications. The 'Residency Affairs' department is said to be coordinating with the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) to accelerate the pace of transferring workers between the two sectors, before the deadline.

The large number of expatriates applying

for the transfer highlights several factors, including the hope of many household workers to improve their financial and social status by shifting to work in the private sector. The surge in applications also indicates the imbalance in the labor market, with a dearth of workers in several sectors of the economy, especially in the construction sector, which is witnessing rapid growth due to the development of several new residential cities.

The decisions by PAM to tighten the recruitment of workers from abroad, as well as measures to ensure the academic qualification of workers in the private sector tally with their job profiles, have exacerbated the shortage of workers in private sector. Bassam Al-Shammari,



a specialist in domestic workers' affairs said, "The huge number of domestic workers wishing to transfer confirms the imbalance that the labor market has been suffering from, for a long time, amid a scarcity of workers, especially professional and skilled workers."

Al-Shammari appealed to the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef to extend the transfer period by two additional months, or to allow it permanently, similar to neighboring countries that allow it, in order to fill the severe shortage of labor in the private sector.

Restrictive decisions by PAM and the resulting departure of thousands of craftsmen and professional workers from the country is reported to have contributed to encouraging a parallel labor market supplying domestic workers to work illegally in private sector

companies, especially at construction sites. Elaborating on this phenomena, Al-Shammari said that the most prominent positive aspect of the transfer decision is likely to be the reduction of thousands of domestic workers currently working illegally in the private sector.

He added that another important positive aspect of the transfer decision was that it would lead to a decline in cases between sponsors and domestic workers reported as absconding. "This is also likely to reduce the pressure on the government's expatriate shelters where many domestic workers with cases against them have sought refuge," said the labor specialist.

Al-Shammari stressed the necessity of opening the door to transferring expatriate workers from and to all sectors without restrictions, in a way that restores balance to the labor market and achieves the lofty vision of transforming Kuwait into a global financial and commercial center.

On the other hand, Al-Shammari pointed out that the transfer of domestic workers would double the shortage of workers in the domestic worker sector. He called on the relevant government agencies to accelerate the pace of signing memorandum of understandings with countries that are sources of domestic workers, and to start bringing them in as quickly as possible, in anticipation of any emergency that would negatively affect the market.



## NCCAL celebrates 125 years of Kuwait-British relations

National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) organized an exhibition, by Kuwaiti researcher Essa Dashti, commemorating 125 years of Kuwaiti-British trade relations, which displayed a wide variety of items, including archived documents, photos, books and magazines showcasing the strong ties between the two countries.

Attending the weeklong exhibition at the national library, British Ambassador H.E. Belinda Lewis said the exhibition narrates decades of sturdy relations between Kuwait and the United Kingdom. She noted that the two nations worked closely on a variety of fronts including defense, education, culture, with trade and investment relations holding a special importance. The items featured in the exhibition reflect the depth of these long-lasting relations.



Commenting on the occasion, the sponsor of the exhibition, Sheikha Halah Al-Sabah, said that trade relations help bring people together as it paves the way for the exchange of culture and traditions. The exhibition, offering a wide selection of photos of exchanged visits between leaders, is an opportunity for the younger generations to get to know the rich shared history between two, she stated.

For her part, Chief of the National Library, Seham Al-Azmi said the exhibition was the eighth of its kind, with previous exhibitions of Kuwait-British relations covering diplomatic, political, historical and cultural ties between the two countries.

In his remarks on the exhibition, researcher Essa Dashti said that there are some 250 documents on display featuring letters between British commercial consulate and Kuwaiti traders back in 1961, as well as an array of photos and books he collected from various sources

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# UNHCR-Kuwait, Tanmeia to support Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

UNHCR-Kuwait, the UN Refugee Agency in Kuwait, and Tanmeia Foundation, the global charity association for development, have signed a grant agreement to provide shelter, drinking water, and health support to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The agreement was signed by UNHCR Representative in Kuwait, Nisreen Rubaian, and Chairman and General Manager of Tanmeia, Dr. Nasser Al-Ajmi, at the Tanmeia Foundation headquarters in Kuwait City last week.

This agreement is part of the Ramadan fundraising campaign launched by UNHCR in partnership with Tanmeia to support Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The combined sadaqah and zakat donations received by the campaign in 2023 and 2024 are expected to benefit over 60,000 refugee families. These contributions will be used to provide safe drinking water, repair and rehabilitate damaged shelters to enhance their resilience to harsh weather and fires, and implement awareness initiatives to address climate change risks and respond to natural disasters.

Regarding health support, UNHCR and its partners will continue to provide medical supplies, medicines, and public health services in the camps. This will focus on both communicable and non-communicable



diseases, mental health, integrated psychosocial support, primary dental care, physical therapy, and comprehensive laboratory services across ten healthcare facilities.

Expressing her appreciation for Tanmeia's support of UNHCR's humanitarian activities, Ms. Rubaian said, "Our partnership with Tanmeia over the past four years has helped approximately 450,000 Rohingya refugees, reflecting Kuwait's deep humanitarian commitment and its eagerness to assist refugees wherever they are. This also reaffirms Kuwait's role as a global center for humanitarian work."

She added: "With the increasing urgent humanitarian needs of refugees and displaced persons worldwide, now exceeding 120 million people forced to flee due to wars, conflicts, human rights violations, and the impacts of climate change, these sustainable partnerships have become more critical than ever."

For his part, Dr. Al-Ajmi praised the signing of the agreement with UNHCR and said: "The ongoing cooperation between the two sides for nearly four years reflects the mutual trust between them, and we are committed to supporting Rohingya refugees

and their humanitarian cause."

He added: "With substantial support from donors and philanthropists, Tanmeia has succeeded in aiding Rohingya refugees through campaigns organized in partnership with UNHCR. We reiterate our commitment to alleviating the suffering of refugees and displaced people and supporting relevant international entities, especially given the worsening challenges and harsh living conditions. Through our partnership with UNHCR and other reliable entities, we strive to provide basic necessities such as shelter, food, clothing, and medicine to those who need them the most."

As of June 30, 2024, approximately 984,591 Rohingya refugees were registered in Bangladesh. The majority reside in 33 overcrowded camps in the Cox's Bazar area, while the rest live on Bhasan Char Island. Due to the deteriorating security situation, exacerbated by restricted freedom of movement, lack of employment rights, and limited livelihood opportunities, the camps experienced a 180 percent increase in serious security incidents in 2023 compared to 2022. Refugees are facing numerous challenges in meeting their basic needs, including shelter, proper nutrition, hygiene facilities, and livelihood opportunities.

## Finnish firm offers to build power plant in 18 months

A global investor and energy developer from Finland has proposed building a 1,500-megawatt power plant in Kuwait within a record 18 months at no cost to the state through the independent water and power producer (IWPP) model.

The offer by Finland's Wärtsilä Corporation, which has an enviable track-record of completing mega power plants in record time, follows an extensive study it conducted on the benefits and sustainability of Kuwait's electrical system if modern technology is adopted. The proposed technology not only reduces fuel consumption but also decreases carbon emissions and produces electricity at the lowest possible cost to the state.



The estimated cost of KD425 million, which will be borne fully by the Finnish developer, offers significant cost benefits to Kuwait. In addition, the projected cost of electricity production by the Finnish company at around 11 fils per kilowatt — depending on factors such as location and the scope of work, and the extension of electrical and fuel networks — could enable Kuwait to offer electricity at competitive rates to consumers.

Some of the other advantages of the proposed power plant include its ability to use various fuel types, including renewable sources such as solar and green hydrogen, which offers operational flexibility and significant cost savings, as well as stability of the power grid. Minimal downtime for maintenance, as the plant is designed with

separate units, reducing the likelihood of complete service interruptions.

In addition, the ability to quickly meet any sudden increase in power demand, will help to avoid unexpected outages due to increased consumption or the failure of existing power stations. The use of solar energy or other renewable power sources would also eliminate the need for water to continuously cool the system, which is a major advantage in a country such as Kuwait with no viable land or ground water resources.

The ability to use green hydrogen as fuel in the future when it becomes available is also another benefit of the system as it allows for adaptability in future. The fact that the Finnish developer has significant global expertise in energy and renewable energy using advanced technology, as well as the financial capability to build, operate and maintain the system over an extended period of 25 years, will enable Kuwait to divert significant financial outlays for other development projects. The urgency of constructing power generation plants and water production facilities as soon as possible to avoid future power or water shortages, and previous experience of international developers withdrawing their proposals due to the delay in responding to offers by Kuwait, should prompt the current cabinet to respond to the offer decisively and quickly.

Established in 1834, Wärtsilä Corporation, employs over 20,000 people in 80 countries around the world. The Finnish developer has extensive experience in constructing advanced power generating units that can operate on multiple types of fuel, including green hydrogen when it becomes available in the future.

The company currently has multiple ongoing energy projects in Tucson, Arizona; Oroville, California; Texas; Australia; Umm Al-Qura in Saudi Arabia; Musandam in Oman; Germany, and many other countries. The company's total installed capacity to date across 179 countries exceeds 71 GW.

## Six ASEAN countries to introduce multi-country visa system

Thailand is spearheading a proposal to establish a Schengen-like visa system among six Southeast Asian countries. This initiative is designed to build on the success of its recent visa-free travel policies that have already proven effective, with Thailand experiencing a tourism boom, welcoming 28 million tourists in 2023 alone.

The proposed multi-country visa system aims to replicate the seamless border-crossing experience found in Europe's Schengen area, enabling more accessible and efficient travel across Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Vietnam. The collaborative effort is strategically aimed at boosting tourism and enhancing economic connectivity within the region.

The increased accessibility is expected to attract more long-haul and high-spending tourists, thereby raising the average revenue per visitor. The initiative is anticipated to serve as a significant buffer for the economies of these

nations against global economic challenges, including weak export markets and declining manufacturing output.

Thailand's Prime Minister, Srettha Thavisin, has been a key proponent of this initiative, leveraging his commitment to transforming Thailand into a central aviation and logistics hub. Recognizing the success of visa-free travel policies in attracting millions of tourists, Prime Minister Srettha has engaged in extensive dialogues with leaders from the other participating nations.

The proposed Schengen-style single visa is seen as a natural extension of these policies, aimed at further boosting the tourism sector across the ASEAN region. By offering easier travel and more comfortable journeys, both Thailand and Malaysia are particularly keen on capturing a larger share of international tourists, ensuring that the region becomes an even more attractive destination for travelers worldwide.

## KIFF to provide film-industry a platform to showcase talent

Kuwait International Film Festival (KIFF), scheduled to take place from 10-14 November, provides a unique platform for filmmakers and other film-industry professionals to showcase their talent on the international stage.

Submissions to participate in the festival have been opened, with details on the registration process provided at [www.FilmFreeway.com/KIFFestival](http://www.FilmFreeway.com/KIFFestival), with the last date for submission being 9 September. Submission is free and open to film-makers worldwide.

Hosted by the American International University (AIU) in collaboration with Cinescape, the festival features a variety of categories designed to honor excellence in both Arab and international cinema. These include Arab

narrative short films, international narrative short films, Arab documentary short films, Arab feature-length documentaries, Arab feature-length narratives, and international documentary short films.

Diversity of the cinematic genre at KIFF offers filmmakers from regional, Arab and countries around the world the opportunity to gain recognition and connect with a global audience, including industry professionals.

KIFF celebrates the diverse voices and perspectives within the film industry. The festival serves as a hub for filmmakers to network, gain industry insights, and explore potential collaborations that can propel their careers forward.





# Kuwait, Turkey boost ties with defense projects, future cooperation

## The Times Kuwait Report

**T**urkish embassy held a reception at the Marina Hotel last week to celebrate the 102nd anniversary of Victory Day in Turkey. The event was attended by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defence, Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah, and Commander of the Air Defence Force, Major General Khaled Saad, as well as ambassadors and military attachés from embassies of several countries.

In a media statement on the sidelines of the celebration, Sheikh Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah noted that although the security situation in Kuwait is stable, "we aim, through our armed forces and in cooperation with friendly and

brotherly armies, to maintain security in Kuwait".

He added that one of the major military cooperation projects between Kuwait and Turkey involves the acquisition of Bayraktar drones, the establishment of an operational base for these aircraft, and the training of technical crews to operate them. He also noted ongoing discussions about future cooperation between the two countries in various fields.

In her address to the gathering Ambassador of Turkey H.E. Tuba Nur Sönmez, expressed her gratitude to all those present for joining the Victory Day celebration. Giving the context for the Victory Day celebrations, Ambassador Sönmez highlighted the historical significance of the Dumlupinar battle, fought by Turkey 102 years ago, which was a decisive moment in

the Turkish War of Independence and inspired other countries to resist occupation.

She also emphasized the progress made by the Turkish armed forces over the past century, particularly in the last two decades. Significant advancements have been achieved through reforms, technological innovation, and international cooperation. The Turkish military continues to be a strong defense force, actively participating in counter-terrorism efforts and contributing to regional stability.

Strong ties between Turkey and Kuwait were a key focus of the reception, with both countries sharing a similar vision for regional peace and security, she said. The recent visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Turkey and the signing of a

defense purchase agreement between the two governments reflect the growing cooperation, particularly in the defense industry.

The ongoing crisis in Gaza was also addressed, with the international community calling for decisive action to end the violence. Both Turkey and Kuwait reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the Palestinian cause and advocating for a just and lasting peace.

The ambassador concluded her speech by expressing hope that Victory Day will continue to inspire future generations as Turkey progresses toward its goals for 'Turkey's Century'. At the end of the event, a short video was shown, highlighting the strength and modernization of the Turkish Armed Forces.

## Interior Minister reviews efforts to streamline labor market

**F**irst Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al Yousef, last week chaired a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM), praising the efforts of all those working behind the scenes to ensure success of Kuwait's strategic goals in economic and human resource development.

Minister Al-Yousef discussed the work on the meeting agenda, as well as several proposals aimed at developing the labor market and

ensuring its growth and stability. He also said that security campaigns against violators of the residency law and mechanisms for confronting these violations, were key to streamlining the labor market.

He highlighted the immense hard work of everyone in efforts to streamline the labor market. He especially stressed the inspection campaigns by security officials, along with other relevant government agencies, in various governorates at places where laborers were known

to gather, and the arrest of illegal workers.

The Interior and Defense Minister then reviewed the obstacles faced by the PAM and possible solutions for

them. He also directed the attendees to double efforts to improve the quality of services provided to the public and harness technical and human capabilities that can save

time and effort and fully link the concerned parties within a strategic framework in accordance with modern information standards and systems.

## CVDs, cancer main cause of mortality in Kuwait

**A** recent report by Ministry of Health (MoH) shows cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), cancer, and external causes of death have continued to remain the three primary causes of mortality in Kuwait.

With a mortality rate of 79.8 per 100,000 population, cardiovascular diseases, such as heart-attacks, heart-failures, stroke, arrhythmia, and heart-valve problems, emerged as the leading cause of death for both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents, as well as for both genders. Cancer-related deaths followed at a rate of 23.5 per 100,000, and deaths due to external causes were recorded at 15.7 per 100,000. While Kuwaiti nationals experienced a higher mortality rate in CVDs and cancer, non-Kuwaitis accounted for the greater mortality from external causes. However, even among external causes, drowning incidents were more prevalent among Kuwaitis.

The report also showed a significant surge in healthcare costs per individual in the country over the years, increasing from KD398 in 2018 to KD499 in 2022. Incidentally, while the number of outpatient visits to government hospitals grew only marginally from 0.7 percent in 2018 to 0.8 percent in 2022, to reach 3,906,173 individual visits in 2022, emergency surgeries performed in government hospitals decreased to 54.3 percent in 2022, down from 70.8 percent in 2018.

The MoH report highlighted a notable trend in the Kuwaitization of the healthcare sector, with Kuwaiti doctors making up 40.8 percent of the overall healthcare workforce. In dentistry, Kuwaiti practitioners represent a substantial 75.1 percent of the total. On the other hand, the percentage of Kuwaiti nurses in the government healthcare sector remains relatively low at 4.9 percent.

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# Seven in ten people in Kuwait are expatriates

*The statistics showed that the number of Kuwaitis increased to 1,559,925 by the end of June 2024, up from 1,545,781 on January 1, representing a rise of 14,144 over six months, and now constituting 31.7 percent of the total population.*

Latest demographic statistics from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) shows Kuwait's population reaching 4,918,570 by the end of June 2024, increasing by 5,299 from the 4,913,271 individuals on 1 January of this year.

The statistics showed that the number of Kuwaitis increased to 1,559,925 by the end of June 2024, up from 1,545,781 on January 1, representing a rise of 14,144 over six months, and now constituting 31.7 percent of the total population.

Meanwhile, during the same time period, the number of expatriates decreased to 3,358,645 from 3,367,490 on January 1, reflecting a drop of 8,845 individuals, leading to expatriates now representing 68.3 percent of the demography.

The statistics revealed a breakdown percentage of the total population, with Kuwaitis making up 32 percent of the demography, followed by Indians (21%), Egyptians (13%), Bangladeshi (6%), Filipinos (5%), Nepalese, Saudis, Sri Lankans, and Syrians accounting for

3 percent each in the total population. Other nationalities together totaled the remaining 11 percent of the population.

The PACI population data also showed that the total number of workers employed in the public and private sector amounted to 2,178,008, of whom 516,397 were employed in the public sector, representing 24 percent of the total workforce. On the other hand, 1,661,611 individuals, representing 76 percent of the workforce, were employed in the private sector.

The data indicated that employed individuals make up 44 percent of the total population, with Indians representing the largest group at 24.2 percent, followed by Kuwaitis (21.9%), Egyptians (21.7%), Bangladeshi (8.5%), Nepalis (3.9%), Pakistanis (3.2%), Syrians (3%), Filipinos (2.9%), Jordanians (1.4%), Saudis (1.2%), and other nationalities together making up at 8.2 percent of the workforce.

The figures also disclosed that Kuwaitis



constitute the largest percentage of workers in the public sector at 78.31 percent. Percentage of other nationalities in the government sector included, Egyptians (7.21%), Indians (4.36%), Saudis (2.09%), Bangladeshi (1.58%), Pakistanis (1.08%), Syrians (1%), Jordanians (0.71%), and other nationalities accounting for the remaining 3.1 percent of workers in the public sector.

In the private sector, the statistics revealed that Indians have the highest contribution rate

at 30.4 percent, followed by Egyptians (26.6%), Bangladeshi (10.6%), Nepalis (5.1%), Kuwaitis (4.3%), Pakistanis (3.8%), Syrians and Filipinos (3.6 each), Jordanians (1.6%), and Saudis (0.9%). Other nationalities accounted for the remaining 9.9 percent of the private sector workforce.

PACI data also revealed that among household workers, Indians make up the highest percentage at 43.8 percent, followed by Filipinos (21.1%), Sri Lankans (15.4%), Bangladeshi (11.1%), Nepalese (4.5%), Ethiopians (1.2%), Beninese (0.9%), Malians (0.9%), and Indonesians and Malagasy accounting for 0.2 percent of household workers.

Segregating the workforce data based on nationalities reveals that Indians came in first spot accounting for 30 percent of the workers, followed by Kuwaitis and Egyptians, each with 16 percent. Bangladeshi (9%), Filipinos (8%), and Sri Lankans (5%), Nepalese (4%), Syrians and Pakistanis (2% each), and Jordanians (1%). Other nationality workers accounted for the remaining 7 percent of the workforce.

## Market buoyant over government's proactive measures

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Since taking office in mid-May, the newly appointed cabinet led by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, has initiated several proactive measures designed to energize the market and drive the development agenda. Although several much-needed structural and fiscal reforms remain to be enacted, the government has indicated a resolve to implement them at the earliest, given the importance of such reforms to the long-term progress of Kuwait.

The Amiri decision and subsequent proactive measures by the cabinet appears to have had an overall positive impact on the market, with businesses responding favorably to the new political developments. The uptick in economic activities witnessed in various sectors is an indication that the market considers the recent decisive and generally pragmatic measures taken by the government as positive factors that could significantly boost business and economic prospects.

The quarterly economic-insight report published by the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) for second-quarter of 2024 shows that business confidence is currently at historical highs. Besides the government's constructive market policies, a potential interest rate cut by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has fueled optimism, as this could precipitate an increase in demand for goods and services, as well as spur business and consumer credit, boosting economic activity in the months ahead.

Based on latest figures from CBK, consumer spending on cards edged up in the first-half of 2024, rising to 5.9 percent year-on-year. Increased consumer spending is also a sign that the sluggish spending growth seen since 2022 is now abating, and that potentially steadier and higher growth could lie ahead. Moderating inflation picture, with core inflation remaining steady at 3.2 percent for three consecutive months through May, has also invigorated spending, said the NBK report.

Pointing to other factors that buttress market revival, the quarterly report noted that the push to accelerate project activities has

contributed to enlivening market sentiment. After a strong showing in 2023, project awards had slid sharply in early 2024, largely due to then prevailing political instability. But the new government in office has made boosting project activity a key plank in its development plan.

Project awardings over the last few months have climbed to reach around KD1 billion through July. If this momentum is sustained, predictions are that 2024 could witness new highs in project-awardings. According to regional construction industry publication MEED Projects, project awards in Kuwait jumped 444 percent in the second-quarter of 2024 to reach KD688 million.

Among the main projects that made it to the awarding phase were infrastructure work in the South Sabah Al-Ahmad City and the Al-Nayem affordable housing area. The publication also forecast a positive outlook for the second-half of 2024, with around KD6.5 billion worth of potential projects awaiting awarding, including the Az-Zour Independent Water and Power Producer (IWPP) project for Phase 2 and 3 worth KD1.2 billion, and the Al-Khairan IWPP project for KD800 million.

Additionally, other projects on the pipeline for awarding include the Al-Shagaya Renewable Energy Complex project, and the projects by Public Authority for Housing Welfare to expand existing residential cities and develop new ones, as well as the announcement by the Ministry of Public

Works that nine tenders will be floated during fiscal year 2024/25 for work on the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project.

The report noted that oil GDP is forecast to increase following the June decision by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its non-OPEC allies ((OPEC+) to gradually ease the voluntary production cuts by some members. This would allow Kuwait to restore 135,000 barrels per day (b/d) at a gradual rate of 11,000 b/d every month from October 2024 to September 2025, which would raise production output to 2.25 million b/d by the end of 2025.

Non-oil private sector activity in June also witnessed the 17th consecutive month of expansion for local firms, supported by ongoing gains in output and new orders, as well as in employment. While business optimism about the year ahead remains strong, a challenging global economic climate and escalating geopolitical tensions were among factors leading to weaker investor sentiment. This could likely improve if key project activities as well as economic reforms gain momentum.

On 26 August, following their oath-of-office in front of His Highness the Amir, the four newly appointed ministers emphasized their commitment to drive work at their respective ministries to achieve results, and follow the political leadership's directives to meet citizens' aspirations. The ministers have several pressing issues and files that

await their immediate attention, including accelerating the pace of developmental work and digital transformations, filling leadership posts, and empowering national talents.

As the new minister of finance, Nora Al-Fassem faces several tasks that will require her urgent attention. Among others, she will have to complete the government's work program, drive economic reforms, finance the budget deficit, reduce spending on discretionary items, increase non-oil revenues, reevaluate pricing of government properties, goods and services, and approve tax reforms.

The minister will also have to follow up on the measures undertaken by her immediate predecessor at the ministry, Dr. Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf, who pushed for a more prudent medium-term fiscal planning approach. Moreover, Minister Al-Fassem will have to set other objectives to aim for, including diversifying the economy, enhancing non-oil revenues, curbing expenditure by rationalizing spending, and adopting a targeted approach to welfare and subsidy outlays.

With oil continuing to dominate the economy, the lack of income diversification has left Kuwait vulnerable to global oil price fluctuations, and to the gradual global shift to a low-carbon economy. High oil prices in 2024 could provide the financial support to expand the non-oil sector and enact long-awaited economic reforms needed to push the development process forward.

However, market analysts believe that while the government could impose new selective taxes on tobacco and sugary drinks and increase fees on several public services, it is unlikely to enact the value-added-tax (VAT) imposed by other Gulf nations. In the same vein, the passing of a public debt law could be pushed to the next fiscal year (2025/26).

Although financial reforms aimed at reducing the wage bill remain important, it is doubtful to be enacted immediately, with the government instead pressing for increasing employment of nationals in the private sector. Nevertheless, there are hopeful indications that the government is aware of the criticality of transforming the economy from the current rentier model to a more productive one; if not now, then sometime soon.





# French Riviera

## An A-list Summer Destination



By **Giovanna Ragsdale**  
Special to *The Times Kuwait*

The French Riviera, or Cote d'Azur, has long been a playground for the rich and famous. It is a stunning stretch of Mediterranean coastline renowned for its opulent resorts, azure waters, and glamorous lifestyle. With beachside hotels, exotic restaurants, and various cultural endeavors to indulge in, the South of France offers it all. Each year, 11 million visitors travel across the world to dip their toes in the Azuréen waters.

The best place to start your journey is in Nice, the capital of the Riviera — a city that perfectly encapsulates the region's charm. As the plane descends over the sparkling Mediterranean, make sure to take in the breathtaking views of never-ending miles of pristine beaches framed by the verdant hills of the Alpes-Maritimes.

Regarding accommodation, some great places to stay include the iconic Hotel Negresco, a Belle Époque masterpiece overlooking the Promenade des Anglais. The hotel's eclectic art collection and lavish interiors set the tone for our luxurious getaway. Another great choice is the Belle Rives Hôtel, a five-star hotel in the heart of Juan les Pins (a town on the Riviera near Antibes). It offers a trip through the pages of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *Tender Is the Night*, written in its own piano bar.

Yet another grand hotel accommodation is at the Oetker Collection Hotel. Built in 1870 and located on the furthest tip of Cap d'Antibes, in a park of 22,5 acres of trees facing the Mediterranean, the hotel's rich history offers visitors an ideal cultural learning experience while enjoying the peaceful grandeur of the French Riviera at its best.

If you love sightseeing, the best place to start would be Vieux Nice, the historic old town full of narrow, winding streets, bustling markets, colorful buildings, and charming squares. The Cours Saleya market is a sensory delight, with stalls brimming with fresh produce, flowers, and local delicacies.

Another historic place to visit is the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, which combines historic prestige and aristocracy with four hectares of beautiful gardens. Strolling

through the French garden towards the Japanese and Spanish gardens, the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild's gardens offer a cross-cultural journey through its botanic worlds.

'Villa Ephrussi offers a wide variety of historical pieces scattered around the villa; visitors are offered an insight into the 18th century through the baroness' 'remarkable collections and must-see works, such as the table that belonged to Marie Antoinette, drawings by Fragonard, canvases by François Boucher and Jean-Frédéric Schall, hangings from the Royal Manufacture of the Gobelins and magnificent carpets from the Savonnerie, the grandiose painted ceiling of Tiepolo in the Grand Salon and its magnificent recently restored Zephyr,'" says Nathalie Savignard, Administrator, Villa Ephrussi.

The villa also holds special evening events during the summer that pay tribute to the sense of celebration and the love of artists—two values carried by Baroness Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild herself.

For this second edition, Muriel Mayette Holtz and the Academy of Fine Arts invite visitors to enjoy classic, pop, or lyrical music

planned across 14 unique sessions.

Art lovers will also be delighted to travel through Turner's paint strokes at this summer's Grimaldi Forum in Monaco. This year's forum focuses on J.M.W Turner, an English romantic painter of the 18th century, explicitly emphasizing his representation of the world through his landscapes and use of light. This exhibition will hold the most extensive collection of Turner paintings for visitors interested in art, offering art connoisseurs the luxury of immersing themselves entirely into the streams of his water-colored mind.

The French Riviera is a destination that lives up to its reputation, offering a perfect blend of natural beauty, cultural richness, and luxurious indulgence. The enchanting region provides a delightful mix of luxury, culture, and comfort, captivating the hearts of millions of tourists each year. Whether you're looking to relax on the glamorous beaches, explore the charming villages, or indulge in your hotel spa, the South of France promises an unforgettable summer for visitors from all corners of the globe.





# Embark on a 10-day sojourn through northern Albania

*Northern Albania, with its family-friendly atmosphere, offers a captivating blend of natural beauty and cultural heritage, making it an ideal destination for adventurous travelers looking to explore beyond the usual tourist paths.*

**N**orthern Albania, often overlooked compared to its more famous southern regions, boasts a captivating blend of natural beauty and cultural heritage.

This ten-day itinerary explores the area's rugged mountains, tranquil lakes, and traditional villages, offering a deep dive into one of Europe's hidden gems.

With its family-friendly atmosphere, Northern Albania is an ideal destination for adventurous travelers seeking to explore beyond the typical tourist trails.

## Day 1: Puka

The journey begins in Puka, a charming town nestled in the mountains about 150 kilometers (93 miles) from Tirana Airport.

Known as a winter ski destination, Puka transforms into a tranquil retreat during the warmer months. Visitors can enjoy a leisurely walk around the lake in the town center, while children can make the most of the local playground.

Accommodation at the N'Konak Guesthouse provides a warm welcome, complete with a traditional breakfast and a taste of authentic Albanian hospitality.

## Day 2: Lake Komani

A visit to Lake Komani is a must on any Northern Albanian itinerary. Often described as one of the world's most beautiful lake journeys, the best way to experience this natural wonder is via a three-hour ferry ride from Fierze to Komani.

Travelers should check ferry schedules in advance, especially in early spring when timetables can be unpredictable.

For those arriving early in the season, a private boat tour offers a serene alternative, showcasing the lake's clear blue waters and the dramatic snow-capped mountains surrounding it.

Accommodation at Agora Farmhouse provides a perfect base, featuring cozy cabins and exceptional local cuisine made from fresh, local ingredients.

## Days 3 & 4: Theth National Park

No exploration of Northern Albania is complete without a visit to Theth National Park. The drive to the mountain village of Theth, while challenging, offers breathtaking views and a glimpse into Albania's untouched wilderness.



The village itself is steeped in history, featuring sites such as the 400-year-old lock-in tower, which once served as a sanctuary during feuds, and Theth Waterfall, accessible via a scenic hike.

The next day, a hike to the Blue Eye, a stunning natural spring, is highly recommended. Although the hike is challenging and involves some scrambling over rocks, the crystal-clear pool at the end makes it well worth the effort.

Accommodation at Thethi Paradise provides a cozy retreat after a day of adventure, with dinner served at the guesthouse.

## Days 5, 6 & 7: Shkodra

Shkodra, one of Albania's most historic cities, is an essential stop on this itinerary. With its strong Italian influence, Shkodra was part of the Venetian Republic before being surrendered to the Ottomans in 1479.

Visitors can explore Rozafa Castle, a fortress that highlights the shifting influences of power, including a church converted into a mosque. Guided tours are recommended for a deeper understanding of the castle's history.

The city also offers a range of cultural experiences, including the Venetian Art Factory, where visitors can witness the creation of intricate masks, and the Historical Museum, which provides insights into the city's past.

Accommodation at Hotel Tradita offers a traditional Albanian experience, with excellent cuisine and live music on weekends.

## Day 8: Mrizi i Zanave

A visit to Mrizi i Zanave, a working farm that embodies the slow food movement in Albania, is a highlight of this itinerary.

The farm produces all its food on-site or sources it from a network of local farmers. The menu changes seasonally, offering a unique



dining experience with each visit.

Guests can tour the farm's cheese, meat, and wine-making facilities, gaining insight into traditional Albanian food production. The farm also offers various activities for children,

including interactions with the farm animals.

## Days 9 & 10: Kruja

The journey concludes in Kruja, the most touristy spot on the itinerary. Kruja Castle, the center of resistance to the Ottoman invasion in the 15th century, is a must-visit.

The castle complex includes a lookout tower, a medieval church, and two museums: the Historical Museum, which details the role of Albania's national hero, Skanderbeg, and the Ethnographic Museum, which provides a glimpse



into the daily lives of families from that era.

The Kruja bazaar, a single street lined with shops in restored Ottoman-era buildings, offers visitors a chance to purchase traditional Albanian crafts and antiques.

Dining options within the castle complex and the surrounding bazaar are plentiful, with Deal Restaurant providing a perfect spot for a sunset dinner with views of the castle.

For those with additional time, an optional extension to Tirana offers a final taste of Albania's capital before concluding this unforgettable journey through the north.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# AI Revolution Could Lead to Greater Prosperity



**Diane Coyle**

Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge, is the author of *Cogs and Monsters: What Economics Is, and What It Should Be*, and the forthcoming *The Measure of Progress: Counting What Really Matters*.



As global economic growth slows, many hope technological innovation is a potential solution. The International Monetary Fund's latest World Economic Outlook, for example, highlighted the potential of artificial intelligence to boost productivity and GDP. But the report also warns that given the uncertainties surrounding the extent of AI's impact, such forecasts should be approached with a dose of caution. While AI could usher in an era of prosperity, this outcome depends on how these emerging technologies evolve.

The current wave of techno-optimism, along with anxiety about emerging technologies' potential implications for labor markets, can be attributed to the notion that AI is what economists call a "general-purpose technology." Such innovations permeate the entire economy rather than being confined to a single sector.

General-purpose technologies can be divided into two broad categories: those that revolutionized energy, such as the steam engine and electricity, and those that transformed communication, like the printing press and the telephone. Although such innovations often take years, even decades,

markets. But the question remains: Will these sweeping changes translate into faster economic growth?

History offers valuable insights into how these transformations might unfold. One key lesson is that while technological advances often seem incremental and superficial as we experience them, their long-term effects can be sweeping and profound. The contribution of steam power and railways to GDP growth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is surprisingly difficult to quantify, yet there is a reason we refer to that period as the Industrial Revolution. These developments, memorably captured by novelists like Charles Dickens and Émile Zola, affected every aspect of people's daily lives, both at work and at home.

Moreover, technological advances do not always lead to immediate improvements in living standards and may involve tremendous disruption. Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the movable type printing press in the mid-fifteenth century is a prime example. By enabling the Bible to be translated into local languages and making copies affordable for ordinary people, it set the stage for far-reaching social and cultural shifts.

The resulting disruption of monastic control over religious texts fueled the rise of Protestantism, which, in turn, led to a series of brutal religious wars. Max Weber famously argued that the Protestant work ethic lies at the heart of capitalism. Though scholars have challenged this theory, the printing press and the proliferation of affordable books undeniably boosted literacy rates and laid the groundwork for the Enlightenment.

The printing press also played a pivotal role in facilitating the Industrial Revolution, triggering an unprecedented wave of experimentation and fostering a spirit of scientific inquiry. While it may be challenging for academic economists to draw a direct causal link between the printing press and economic growth, it is abundantly clear that without its invention, the world as we know it would not exist.

This suggests that we should temper our expectations about AI's economic impact, at least in the foreseeable future. Although the AI industry itself is poised to grow rapidly, there is little reason to expect that it would

significantly boost GDP growth in the short or medium term.

Moreover, the social and political upheavals caused by the AI revolution could very well eclipse its direct economic impact. While economists have explored AI's potential effects on the job market, and political scientists have examined the destabilizing power of disinformation and deepfakes driven by large language models, information and communication technologies can also affect norms and institutions in subtle but meaningful ways.

Consider, for example, the development of the rail network, which made it easier to transport people and goods, thereby accelerating the growth of densely populated,

economically prosperous cities. Similarly, the advent of television redefined consumer aspirations and challenged established norms about women's participation in the workforce.

To be sure, such changes are inherently unpredictable. But that is all the more reason to think carefully about the kind of society we want to create and how we can harness technology to achieve it. All general-purpose technologies, including electricity and sewage systems, are shaped by political and social debate. Although we cannot reverse or slow the development of AI, leaders and policymakers must ensure that these powerful technologies serve the greater good, whether or not they lead to measurable economic growth.

“Transition to a net-zero economy and the rapid rise of AI are poised to reshape our economies and change how we work, the goods and services we produce and consume, and the structure and dynamics of financial markets”

to realize their full potential, they can lead to a surge in productivity and rapid economic growth.

The world is in the midst of two technological revolutions: the transition to a net-zero economy and the rapid rise of AI and other digital technologies. Together, these revolutions are poised to reshape our economies and change how we work, the goods and services we produce and consume, and the structure and dynamics of financial

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# The Other Proliferation



**Richard Haass**

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Mention 'proliferation' and most people will assume that you are talking about the spread of nuclear weapons. For good reason. Nine countries (China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom) possess them. But many more have the ability and conceivably the motive to produce them. There is also the danger that terrorist groups could obtain one or more of these weapons, enabling them to inflict horrific damage.

This sort of proliferation is often described as "horizontal." The biggest immediate focus remains Iran, which has dramatically reduced the time it would require to develop one or more nuclear devices. An Iran with nuclear weapons might use them, or it might calculate that it could safely coerce or attack Israel or one or more of its Arab neighbors directly, or through one of its proxies, with non-nuclear, conventional weapons.



A nuclear-armed Iran would likely trigger a regional arms race. Several of its neighbors, particularly Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey, might well develop or acquire nuclear weapons of their own. Such a dynamic would further destabilize the world's most troubled and volatile region.

But as important as this scenario is, another type of proliferation now merits attention: vertical proliferation, namely, increases in the

quality and/or quantity of the nuclear arsenals of the nine countries that already possess these weapons. The danger is not only that nuclear weapons might be used in a war but also that the possibility of war would increase by emboldening governments — like Iran in the scenario above — to act more aggressively in pursuit of their geopolitical goals in the belief that they may act with impunity.

The fastest-growing nuclear arsenal in the world today belongs to China. It would appear that China believes that if it can match the US in this realm, it can deter the US from intervening on Taiwan's behalf during any crisis over the island. China is on pace to catch up to the US and Russia in a decade, and is showing no interest either in participating in arms-control talks that would slow down its buildup or placing a ceiling on its capabilities.

Then there is North Korea. Neither economic sanctions nor diplomacy has succeeded in curtailing its nuclear program. North Korea is now thought to possess more than 50 warheads. Some are on missiles with intercontinental range and improving accuracy. Both China and Russia have assisted it, and further Russian assistance is likely given North Korea's provision of weapons to Russia for use in Ukraine.

Again, the question is not only what North Korea might do with its nuclear arsenal. It is not far-fetched to imagine a North Korean attack on South Korea or even Japan using conventional forces, coupled with a nuclear-backed threat to the US not to intervene. It is precisely this possibility that is fueling public pressure in South Korea to develop nuclear weapons, demonstrating that vertical proliferation can trigger horizontal proliferation, especially if countries currently protected by the US come to doubt America's willingness to put itself at risk to defend them.

Russia offers another reason for worry. Russia and the US have the world's two largest nuclear arsenals. Both are constrained by arms-control agreements (the New START Treaty) that limits the number of nuclear warheads that each can deploy to 1,550 — Additional warheads may be kept in storage, though.

The agreement also limits how many launchers (planes, missiles, and submarines) carrying nuclear weapons can be fielded. And the pact also includes various arrangements to facilitate verification so that the two governments can be confident that the other is complying. New START (ratified in 2011 and extended several times since) is due to expire in February 2026. Russia might well refuse to extend the treaty again, possibly because the performance of its armed forces in Ukraine has left it more dependent than ever on its nuclear arsenal. Or it may seek to barter its willingness to continue abiding by the agreement for US concessions on Ukraine.

What worries Washington is not only what Russia might do but also that the US now faces three adversaries with nuclear weapons who

could coordinate their policies and pose a unified nuclear front in a crisis. All this is prompting the US to rethink its own nuclear posture.

In March, the US government reportedly completed its periodic review of its nuclear forces. At a minimum, billions of dollars will be spent on a new generation of bombers, missiles, and submarines. At worst, we could be entering an era of unstructured nuclear competition.

It all adds up to a dangerous moment. The taboo associated with nuclear weapons has grown weaker with time; few were alive when the US used nuclear weapons twice against Japan to hasten World War II's end. Indeed, Russian officials have hinted strongly at their readiness to use nuclear weapons in the context of the war in Ukraine.

Nuclear weapons played a stabilizing role during the Cold War. Arguably, their existence helped keep it cold. But there were only two

“ As important as horizontal proliferation is, another type of proliferation now merits attention: vertical proliferation — increases in the quality and quantity of the nuclear arsenals of the nine countries that already possess these weapons. ”

decision-makers, and each had an inventory that could survive a first strike by the other, enabling it to retaliate in kind, thereby strengthening deterrence. And both sides mostly acted with a degree of caution, lest their competition escalate to direct conflict and precipitate a disastrous nuclear exchange.

Three and a half decades after the Cold War's end, a new world is emerging, one characterized by nuclear arms races, potential new entrants into an ever less exclusive nuclear-weapons club, and a long list of deep disagreements over political arrangements in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. This is not a situation that lends itself to a solution, but at best to effective management. One can only hope the leaders of this era will be up to the challenge.



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# Rethinking Emissions Targets in Developing Countries



**Elisa Belfiori and Yanel Llohis**

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Despite committing to nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in the 2015 Paris climate agreement to limit global warming, countries have struggled to meet their emissions-reduction targets. This is particularly true for developing countries, where pressing economic and political challenges tend to overshadow long-term climate objectives.

Implementing effective climate policy requires a shift in thinking. Climate change is both a negative externality and an inequality problem, raising the question of who should bear the costs of climate action within and between countries. Policymakers should focus more on the complicated tradeoff between economic efficiency and equity to ensure that developing countries do not shoulder the burden of the rich world's historical carbon dioxide emissions, and that measures are in place to safeguard future generations.

Of course, the Paris agreement set clear goals while adhering to the principle of "common

but differentiated responsibilities," which means that all countries are responsible for addressing climate change, but not equally so. But there is still a tendency to focus on uniform targets. Consider the global push for net-zero greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 — a complimentary long-term goal outlined in the Paris agreement, and one with respect to which many developing countries remain far off track.

To achieve this ambitious goal, countries must be able to devise climate policy based on their capabilities and historical responsibilities, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all strategy. Recent research suggests that this would

whether through technological innovations or natural solutions, could be a politically feasible alternative to direct monetary transfers. Enabling each country to monitor its own efforts to absorb carbon could bring the world closer to net-zero emissions while respecting diverse national circumstances.

Emissions in Latin America, for example, are split almost equally between energy, agriculture and livestock, and land use, whereas they are largely energy-related in the United States and Europe. Promoting sustainable agricultural and livestock practices — as opposed to focusing solely on decarbonizing the energy system —

revamping these industries could help it enhance climate mitigation and adaptation — and contribute meaningfully to international goals — while recognizing its economic conditions and development needs.

This year, Argentina began certifying the production of carbon-neutral beef, a program that could reduce emissions if implemented correctly. The country has already started to embrace sustainable practices such as regenerative livestock farming, which increases carbon sequestration, productivity, and profitability by restoring the soil's natural fertility. Moreover, Argentina is among the countries with the highest rates of no-tillage farming. This practice, which also helps store carbon, was used on more than 90 percent of its agricultural land in 2019-20.

Addressing domestic inequality is equally crucial in shaping effective climate policies in Argentina and other developing countries. Ongoing research demonstrates that conventional approaches, including uniform carbon taxes, fail to account for nuanced socioeconomic disparities. Implementing progressive taxation based on income levels or consumption patterns, such as higher taxes for frequent flyers, may yield better outcomes. Regardless, this problem demands innovative policy solutions that mirror the complexity of global climate governance.

Framing climate change as an inequality problem does not require compromising on global goals; rather, it underscores the importance of differentiated targets. Many developing countries remain a long way away from a fully decarbonized energy system. While taking steps toward that end, these countries should be encouraged to implement climate policies that harness innovations and alternative strategies for reducing emissions.

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require net-negative emissions targets for high-income countries, while allowing low-income countries to generate net-positive emissions. Of course, such differentiation is not a free pass: developing countries would still have to reduce GHG emissions. But this approach, embodying the spirit of "common but differentiated responsibilities," better reflects their economic conditions and development needs.

Moreover, financial assistance from developed to developing countries to support climate action has been ineffective, owing mainly to transparency and accountability problems. In this context, the same study finds that carbon sequestration and capture,

could therefore help reduce emissions in the region, as well-managed pastures and soil can increase carbon sequestration. This approach would also align private incentives with social returns by revaluing land and allowing farmers to remain internationally competitive.

The case of Argentina illustrates how improving the sustainability of agriculture and livestock could play a pivotal role in the transition to a green global economy. A series of economic crises, coupled with increasing political volatility, have led the Argentinian government to focus more on immediate problems than climate policy. But given the country's position as a leading food producer,

RECIPE

# Cold Cucumber Soup



This chilled cucumber soup recipe is a delicious summer starter or side dish. Fresh herbs, Greek yogurt, and lemon juice make it bright, creamy, and refreshing. And as a bonus, it provides several health benefits as it is high in several vitamins and minerals. In addition, the large water content in cucumbers helps keep you hydrated in summers, while its soluble fiber content aids in digestion.

Moreover, it is a soup that involves no cooking over a flame, and is easily put together by tossing the ingredients into a blender, pureeing it, and then chilling until it is time to serve. After a few hours in the refrigerator, the cucumber soup will be creamy, cool, bright, and refreshing.

Cold cucumber soup is a perfect lunch on a hot summer day. Enjoy it with a hunk of good crusty bread or focaccia, a slice of avocado toast, or as a simple sandwich. For a heartier meal, serve it as an appetizer with stuffed zucchini boats, grilled vegetable skewers or roasted vegetable pasta..

**Preparation time:** 10 minutes.

**Chilling time:** 3 hour

**Serving:** 6 to 8

**Ingredients:**

- 6 cucumbers, thinly sliced, reserve a few slices for garnish
- 1½ cups yogurt
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro (coriander) leaves
- 2 tbsp olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp fresh mint, plus more for garnish
- 1 garlic clove
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt
- ½ tsp. honey
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Fresh mint or chives, for garnish.

**Instructions:**

Combine the cucumbers, yogurt, cilantro, olive oil, lemon juice, mint, garlic, salt, honey, and several grinds of pepper and blend until smooth. Chill for at least three hours.

Ladle into bowls and drizzle with olive oil. Garnish with the reserved cucumber slices, freshly ground black pepper, and fresh , mint, or chives. Serve cold.



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](mailto:editortimeskuwait@gmail.com)



Chef Chhaya Thakker

# Thought for the week

Freedom is nothing but a chance to be better.

- Albert Camus



## Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy

# Moving up from the weight loss plateau

Hitting a weight loss plateau is really frustrating for anyone looking to lose weight. Everyone who has, at some time or other in their lives, tried to lose weight can understand what I am talking about.

Those who are trying to lose weight often hit a time when the scale will no longer budge, and this becomes really annoying and disappointing. We start to feel guilty and blame ourselves for this condition. But weight loss plateau is common, it can easily be solved.

### Ways to move out of the weight loss plateau

**Change what you are eating:** If you are eating a moderate diet that is high in carbs, try now to eat less carbs and more proteins. If you are used to eating a cheese sandwich in the morning, switch to an omelet for example with no bread. In summary, change the count of your micros and macros.

**Add snacks between your meals:** When you eat small meals at more frequent intervals during the day, you tend to burn more calories, helping you move out of the plateau. Skipping meals will shut down your metabolism, so even if you are not hungry, include some fresh fruits, a bowl of yogurt, three dates, but vary your choices, the whole idea is to vary the foods you take in.

**Alter your calorie intake:** Vary your daily calorie intake. If you are eating 1,000 calories today, take it to 1200 calories tomorrow, 1500 calories the next day, and so on for a week. This can be done if you simply double or divide the portion size of the lunch, add or remove a post workout

shake into the diet, add or remove two additional daily snacks. But do not alter your calories by more or less than 300 calories a day

**Change your workout routine:** If you have been doing the same exercise for a few weeks, try something different. If you have been using the treadmill for a long time, it is time to try the elliptical, rowing, maybe other new machines or simply attend aerobic classes. Your body responds quickly to everything new.

**Add resistance training:** Muscles burn more calories than fat. That is why building muscles is an excellent way to get a higher metabolism. Add some resistance training to your workout, add more weight, more repetitions.

**Drink more water:** Water has a direct impact on metabolism. If you drink almost two liters per day, you simply boost your metabolism. Be sure to drink extra water when you drink coffee and tea to compensate for the water loss, because those two are considered as diuretics.

Last but not least, remember that every person is unique and the body responds differently from one to another. Chill out and relax. Do not become obsessed with your weight. Give your body and mind a break.

Apply the above easy tips and you will notice your weight dropping unexpectedly.



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

# Hot humid days, warm nights increase health risks

*High humidity saturates the air with moisture, so less sweat evaporates into the air. Instead of evaporating and cooling the body, the sweat pools and drips off our bodies, dehydrating us without the benefit of any cooling. In a vicious cycle, dehydration puts an added strain on our heart and blood vessels, and impairs other organs like our kidneys and brain.*

Latest climate reports from international climate monitoring groups show that July 2024 was the hottest month ever recorded since global records began in 1850. It was also the 14th consecutive month in which the temperature record was broken.

More than 60 percent of the world population, or more than five billion people, faced extreme heat during the nine-day period of 16–24 June this year. It was also in June that more than 1,300 pilgrims on the annual Hajj pilgrimage died from heat related illnesses. With hotter and longer periods of high temperatures becoming increasingly commonplace each year, the risks to health have never been higher.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) heat stress is the world's leading cause of weather-related deaths and can exacerbate underlying illnesses including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, mental health conditions, and asthma. Vulnerable cohorts of the population, such as newborns, the very young, pregnant women, and the elderly, as well as those with chronic morbidities, are especially at risk from intense heat.

Most people are aware that exposure to high temperatures can lead to illnesses ranging from heat cramps to heat exhaustion, and that heat strokes can cause serious health consequences. But illnesses from high heat are not limited to the above conditions, and can include heart and lung disease complications, preterm birth and pregnancy complications, kidney stones, and a whole list of other health problems.

In fact, death from a heart attack, and other types of heart conditions, or lung disease are much more common just after a heat wave than death from heat stroke itself. Health experts warn that unless the world seriously addresses the health impacts of higher temperatures arising from climate change, heat-related illnesses, in particular cardiovascular deaths, could more than triple over the next few decades.

When our bodies heat up, blood vessels



close to our skin widen to push more blood to the skin surface to help it cool down. In order to force large amounts of blood toward the skin, our hearts have to pump faster and harder, and less blood flows to our inner organs. But illnesses from heat stress are not just a consequence of our body overheating, it is also the result of the body going into overdrive to maintain its ideal temperature.

The heat from our core dissipates into the air, as long as the air around us is cooler than our body's normal temperature of around 37 C. When air temperatures reach 35 C or warmer, it becomes much harder to release body heat into the air. Over-revving of the body places added strain on our inner organs, including blood vessels, heart, kidneys, and brain. And the longer the body stays in the heightened mode, the higher the risk of slipping into dangerous territory.

Humidity also plays an important role in the well-being of human beings as we are dependent on sweating (perspiration) to regulate our internal body temperature. This is where the body's sweat response becomes

critical. When sweat evaporates, our skin cools down. High relative humidity impairs this heat exchange efficiency by reducing the rate of moisture evaporation from skin surfaces.

High humidity saturates the air with moisture, so less sweat evaporates into the air. Instead of evaporating and cooling the body, the sweat pools and drips off our bodies, dehydrating us without the benefit of any cooling. In a vicious cycle, dehydration puts an added strain on our heart and blood vessels, and impairs other organs like our kidneys and brain.

Relative humidity is the ratio of how much water vapor is in the air, to how much water vapor the air could potentially contain at a given temperature. It varies with the temperature of the air: colder air can contain less vapor, while hotter air can contain more. In hot summer weather, a rise in relative humidity increases the apparent temperature we feel by hindering the evaporation of perspiration from the skin.

The heat index — a measure that combines air temperature and relative humidity— is one way to track how 'hot it feels' beyond what the

room temperature shows. For example, a relative humidity of 75 percent at an air temperature of 32°C would feel like 43°C and increase the risk of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

Combination of high heat and humidity exacerbates health risks for pregnant women, people with chronic conditions, infants, young children, and older adults. Research shows that older adults are more likely to have heat stress at lower temperatures and humidity levels than younger people. Outdoor athletes, outdoor workers, and people without easy access to shelter are also at higher risk.

In many parts of the world, weather pattern aberrations have led to hot days being increasingly accompanied by higher humidity, and this condition persisting well into the night, hampering sleep and increasing health risks. Historically, hot days were broken up by cooler nighttime temperatures that offered a brief respite. However, since records began in 1895, nighttime lows during summers in many places have warmed almost twice as fast as daytime highs.

This is particularly concerning in parts of the country that are not used to these types of conditions. Experts say there are more rapidly warming nights because of global warming and urbanization. The increase in greenhouse gases traps more heat in the atmosphere, while urban areas — often referred to as 'heat islands' — amplify the effects. Concrete, asphalt, and a lack of trees and other vegetation mean cities absorb and retain heat, blanketing the city and causing temperatures to remain high even after sunset.

When long stretches of heat extend beyond daylight hours, there is less time for our body to recuperate overnight. Persistent exposure to heat keeps our bodies functioning in overdrive without enough time to rest, recover, and reset. Heat also reduces the quality of our sleep, which is deleterious to our health. We are only at the tip of the melting iceberg in our understanding of how this new era of heat will impact our health and healthcare systems in future.

## New smart fabric to challenge technological boundaries

Imagine your shirt monitoring your health parameters and then connecting to your smartphone to transmit vital health measurements to your healthcare provider, throughout the day and without any intervention from your side. Or consider clothing that athletes can wear to track their performance in real-time; or even a coat that captures solar energy to keep you warm at night.

Sounds futuristic? But all this and more could soon be a reality with a new fabric technology developed by researchers at the University of Waterloo in the United Kingdom. The research, conducted in collaboration with researchers at the College of Textile Science and Engineering at Jiangnan University in China, showcases the potential of integrating advanced materials such as MXene and conductive polymers with cutting-edge textile technologies to advance smart fabrics for wearable technology.

In addition to health monitoring, tracking movement, or harvesting energy, the new fabric has the potential to convert body heat and solar energy into electricity, potentially enabling continuous operation with no need for an external power source. Various sensors monitoring body temperature, stress, blood pressure, chemical composition, and more can be integrated into the fabric material.

In addition, a promising application for this new fabric is in smart face masks that can track breath temperature and rate and detect chemicals in breath to help identify viruses, lung cancer, and other conditions. The fabric's



multifunctional sensing capabilities and self-powering potential makes it a very versatile product that can be tailored to meet various applications.

Unlike current wearable devices that often depend on external power sources or frequent recharging, the breakthrough research has created a fabric which, besides being able to self-charge from solar energy, is also more stable, durable, and cost-effective than other fabrics on the market. At the heart of the new smart fabric are printed sensors that can continuously monitor, collect, and transmit data over extended periods of time.

When the fabric eventually materializes and becomes readily available, the smart fabric could very well challenge the technological boundaries of various industries.

For instance, the sophisticated signal analysis capabilities of the fabric could make it a game-changer in health monitoring, food and pharmaceutical sector, sports, environmental monitoring, and defense among others. Researchers behind the study say their focus is now on further enhancing the fabric's performance and integrating it with electronic components in collaboration with electrical and computer engineers. Future developments could also include a smartphone app to track and transmit data from the fabric to healthcare professionals, enabling real-time interventions

# Noor Holding collaborating to foster growth, drive innovation

In a recent interview with *The Business Year (TBY)*, Chairman and CEO of Noor Holding, **Abdulwahab Ahmad Alnakib**, emphasized the firm's commitment to driving growth and innovation through strategic collaborations. A globally diversified investment firm with a significant presence in industries such as food, aviation, real estate, technology, and banking, Noor Holding also embraces cutting-edge technologies to refine its investment strategies, identify innovative prospects, and create long-term value, said the CEO.

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**Noor Holding stands out as a Kuwaiti family office that excels in delivering unparalleled investment support. Can you provide more details about the types of asset classes, geographies, and industries in which Noor Holding invests?**

Noor Holding operates in multiple countries, allowing it to access a broader range of investment opportunities and expand its global presence. The firm has successfully collaborated with top-tier venture capital companies globally, particularly in the start-up sector, fostering growth and driving innovation in various industries. One of the notable sectors in which Noor

Holding has a strong presence is the food and catering industry. The firm has established a reputable cloud kitchen group, leveraging technology and efficiency to deliver high-quality food services to customers.

Additionally, Noor Holding has ventured into the aviation industry, specifically in ground handling services, ensuring the seamless operations of airlines and enhancing the overall travel experience. While Noor Holding has diverse investments, it also expresses interest in real estate, technology, and banking sectors. By diversifying its investment portfolio in these areas, the firm aims to capitalize on the potential growth and returns offered by these sectors.

In summary, Noor Holding engages in a wide range of asset classes, geographies, and industries. Through its global presence, collaboration with venture capital firms, and focus on sectors such as food and catering, aviation, real estate, technology, and banking, Noor Holding strives

to deliver value and drive growth in the MENA region and beyond.

**How has Noor Holding's investment strategy evolved over the years, and what factors influence your investment decisions?**

Noor Holding's investment strategy has evolved over the years, guided by a commitment to thorough research and due diligence. The firm carefully assesses each potential investment opportunity, ensuring alignment with its core values and the potential for advantageous results. Noor Holding prioritizes client relationships and seeks opportunities that can benefit both the firm and its clients.

**How does Noor Holding differentiate itself from other investment firms in the country, and what unique value does it offer to its clients?**

Noor Holding differentiates itself from other family offices in Kuwait by operating another family office. The firm acquires percentage stakes in companies it invests in, enabling active participation as a board member rather than a peripheral entity. This approach fosters collaboration, shared goals, and efficient communication, ultimately resulting in comprehensive support for portfolio companies.

Noor Holding's commitment to professionalism, integrity, and positive business relationships further distinguishes it from competitors, generating a loyal and reliable customer base.

**How does Noor Holding stay ahead of market trends and adapt its investment strategies to navigate changing economic conditions?**

Noor Holding recognizes the importance of staying ahead of market trends and adapting investment strategies to navigate changing economic conditions. The firm closely monitors the global financial landscape and leverages its expertise to identify emerging opportunities. By continuously analyzing market dynamics, Noor Holding remains agile, ensuring its clients benefit from timely and informed investment decisions.

**How does Noor Holding embrace and leverage emerging technologies?**

As technology continues to shape the investment landscape, Noor Holding embraces and leverages emerging technologies to enhance its investment strategies. The firm recognizes the value of incorporating technological advancements into its decision-making processes, enabling the identification of innovative investment opportunities, and driving long-term value for its portfolio companies.

**How do you envision the company growing in the coming years?**

Noor Holding is committed to supporting



*Abdulwahab Ahmad Alnakib's entrepreneurial endeavors include co-founding and financing several multi-million-dollar operations, including Yotel. He sits on the board of Miami International Holdings, a company specializing in options exchanges in the US. Under the umbrella of Blue Holding, Alnakib has established and successfully operates Blue Aviation in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and UK. Alnakib previously served on the boards of various renowned local and international public and private companies. Currently, he serves as the Chairman of Capitoria. His professional journey includes roles such as chairman & MD of Al-Deera Holding and chairman & CEO of FASTtelco. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of San Diego.*

Kuwait's Vision 2035 and contributing to the country's economic and societal development. The firm intends to channel funds into various sectors, including technology, education, and aviation, to stimulate growth. Collaborating with industry leaders, Noor Holding aims to promote market transparency, stronger governance, and tighter regulation, fostering a safe and trustworthy investment environment in Kuwait.

The company envisions continued growth and development as it expands its corporate network and strengthens its reputation in international circles. Through its diverse portfolio, commitment to research and due diligence, differentiation from competitors, agility in adapting to market trends, and embrace of emerging technologies, Noor Holding continues to drive value and contribute to the economic and social development of Kuwait.



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