



**LOCAL**  
Kuwait marks first anniversary of His Highness the Amir's leadership

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## Migrants Day: Honoring Contributions, Protecting Rights of Migrants

*The report underscores the urgency of managing migration better. The goal of policymakers should be to strengthen the match of migrants' skills with the demand in destination societies, while protecting refugees and reducing the need for distressed movements. The report provides a framework for policymakers on how to do this.*

By Sheikha Suhaila Al-Sabah  
Managing Editor

Migration is a global reality. There are an estimated 281 million international migrants worldwide, and the majority of migrants travel, live and work in a safe, orderly and regular manner. Nonetheless, migration undeniably affects our countries, communities, migrants and their families in very different and sometimes unpredictable ways.

International Migrants Day (IMD) on 18 December is a powerful advocacy tool that provides an opportunity to raise awareness on issues related to migrants, educate the public on benefits to the community from the contributions of migrants, and to mobilize political will and resources to address migration in all its dimensions. It is also an occasion to reinforce the



achievements of humanity and celebrate the resilience of migrants.

The World Development Report 2023 by the World Bank notes that in the coming decades, the share of working-age adults will drop sharply in many countries. For instance, Spain, with a population of 47 million, is projected to shrink by more than one third by 2100, with those above age 65 increasing from 20 percent to 39 percent of the population. Countries like Mexico, Thailand, Tunisia and Türkiye may soon need more foreign workers because their population is no longer growing.

Beyond this demographic shift, the forces driving migration are also changing, making cross-border movements more diverse and complex. Today, destination and origin countries span all income levels, with many countries, both sending and receiving migrants.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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# Kuwait marks first anniversary of His Highness the Amir's leadership

On 17 December, Kuwait marked the first anniversary of His Highness the Amir's ascension as the 17th ruler of the State of Kuwait.

On 16 December 2023, the Council of Ministers met following the announcement of the death of the late Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, may God rest his soul. During the meeting, the Council called on His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to be appointed as the Amir of the country, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and Article 4 of Law No. 4 of 1964 regarding the inheritance of the emirate.

The appointment of His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the Amir of Kuwait was based on his wisdom, sincerity, and dedication, ensuring the security and stability of Kuwait.

On 20 December 2023, His Highness took over the reins of government with the commitment to continue the legacy of his esteemed predecessors in ushering in an era of achievement, leadership, and hope for the prosperous future of Kuwait.

His Highness the Amir began his public life in 1960 by joining the Ministry of Interior. In his more than six decades of public service he held key security and military positions at the Ministry of Interior and the National Guard before being appointed Crown Prince. He also accompanied the esteemed rulers of Kuwait or represented them in many official visits and missions.

His Highness the Amir was born in Kuwait in 1940 and received his education at the Mubarakiya School, the first regular school in Kuwait. He later joined Hendon Police College in the United Kingdom to study police science and graduated in 1960.

He joined the Ministry of Interior and served in various roles, eventually becoming the head



of General Investigations with the rank of colonel until 1980. His Highness is regarded as the founder of the State Security Service and played a major role in its development.

On 17 April 2004, His Highness was appointed Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG), during his tenure as the Deputy Chief, the KNG underwent significant changes that enhanced the institution's ability to carry out its duties in defending the homeland and maintaining security. He was appointed Crown Prince through an Amiri decree on 7 October, 2020.

Over the past 12 months, the country, under His Highness's leadership, has witnessed numerous achievements in various fields, in line with his directives. These efforts are aimed at enhancing Kuwait's leading role both regionally and internationally, and enabling the country to face challenges and drive development in all areas.

His Highness the Amir has consistently emphasized his commitment to advancing the progress and prosperity of Kuwait, protecting its interests, and safeguarding the welfare of its people. He has underscored the importance of preserving national unity, respecting and enforcing the law, combating all forms of corruption, and fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of citizens who look towards a brighter future.

Local issues have received His Highness's greatest attention during his first year of leadership, focusing on the needs, concerns, and aspirations of citizens. He has actively listened to their opinions and ideas, encouraging them to contribute to the nation's unity and security, and to work together toward ensuring its continued development and prosperity.

Complementing Kuwait's efforts to strengthen Gulf ties, His Highness has visited all GCC states this year. He began with a state visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 30 January, followed by a state visit to the Sultanate of Oman on 6 February. A state visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain on 13 February, was followed by a state visit to Qatar on 19 February, and a state visit to the United Arab Emirates on 5 March.

Under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, Kuwait hosted the 45th session of the Supreme Council for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf on 1 December. This session reflected the unity of the Gulf, the strength of the union, and its cohesion, with the goal of strengthening joint Gulf action, addressing regional and international challenges, and broadening cooperation to meet the aspirations of the Gulf peoples and achieve their goals.

His Highness the Amir continued to follow Kuwait's approach in maintaining a leading role in relations with brotherly and friendly countries,

addressing common issues, and upholding regional and international commitments. On several occasions, His Highness has emphasized his dedication to strengthening constructive cooperation with Arab countries to resolve regional issues, especially the Palestinian cause, while preserving Arab unity, sovereignty, and independence.

To further strengthen Kuwaiti-Arab relations, His Highness visited the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on 23 April for a state visit, followed by a state visit to the Arab Republic of Egypt on 30 April. During these visits, he discussed with the leaderships of both countries issues of mutual interest, as well as regional and international developments.

In his discussions with countries worldwide, His Highness outlined Kuwait's long-standing approach, which includes respecting the sovereignty of nations, refraining from interfering in their internal affairs, adhering to international legitimacy, maintaining global peace and security, and resolving disputes through dialogue and peaceful means.

On 7 May, His Highness visited Turkey for a state visit, during which six agreements were signed in various fields. On 12 May, he received Antonio Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General and on 11 September, he met Charles Michel, the European Council President, in addition to receiving numerous officials from Arab and international countries.

The march of goodness, reconstruction, and development in the country continues under the wise leadership of His Highness, following the path set by his esteemed predecessors, to build upon their contributions in shaping the country's history of goodness and giving, elevating its glory, raising its flag, and enhancing its status regionally, and internationally.

## AI, critical to the future of Kuwait's ICT sector



Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital services play a significant role in shaping business and daily life at local, regional, and global levels, and the technology is critical to the future of Information and communication Technology (ICT), said Dr. Walid Al-Hasawi, representative of the Board of Directors of the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA).

He explained that AI technology represents a critical transformation in human life and is the bright future of the ICT sector, contributing to faster work, increased productivity, and reduced errors and risks. Al-Hasawi also highlighted the importance of the impact of artificial intelligence in enhancing the performance of both government and private institutions in Kuwait and the GCC countries.

Dr. Al-Hasawi made the comments while delivering a speech at the opening of the third session of the 'International forum on Artificial Intelligence and Digitization' which was held at the Radisson Blu Hotel on 17 December. The two-day forum, held under the theme 'Crisis Management, Innovation, and the Future of Technology', was organized under the patronage of the Minister of State for Communications

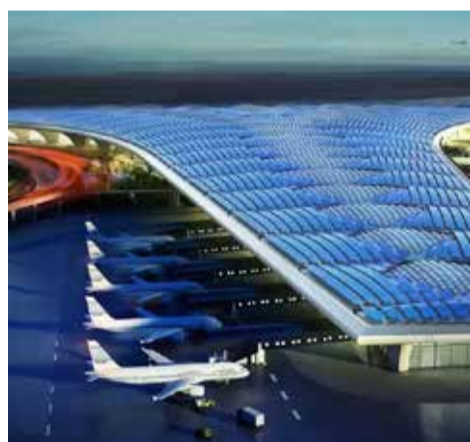
Affairs, Omar Al-Omar. The event coincided with the activities of the 'Gulf Conference on Modern Archiving and Document Management'.

For his part, Ambassador of South Korea, H.E. Park Chong-suk, stated that he is honored to attend the prestigious forum that brings together pioneers, innovators, and decision-makers to explore the transformative potential of artificial intelligence and digital transformation.

The Korean ambassador added that the forum, held under the generous patronage of the Government of the State of Kuwait, reflects the country's commitment to developing technology, enhancing innovation, and achieving sustainable development in line with 'Kuwait Vision 2035'.

In turn, Saadeh Hijazi, senior director of Northern Gulf Region at Fortinet, a global leader in cybersecurity, said that currently we are witnessing tremendous development in modern technologies, which have become part of our personal lives.

Information is constantly being transmitted and stored on the Internet. But with this digital revolution, threats to information security are increasing, so cybersecurity has become an indispensable necessity and a guarantee for the stability of our digital systems.



## Work on T2 Project at KIA to be expedited

Minister of Public Works, Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, reaffirmed the government's commitment to completing the new second terminal (T2) project on schedule, by using all available resources and providing necessary support to ensure successful completion and operation of all services and infrastructure associated with the project.

In a statement issued on behalf of the minister, the Ministry of Public Works stated that Minister Al-Mashaan made the remarks following a meeting chaired by her to review the latest developments and expedite the progress of the T2 Project.

The meeting, which aimed to advance the implementation and executive stages of the project, was attended by the head of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation, Sheikh Hamoud Al-Sabah, and representatives from the Ministry of Interior.

Al-Mashaan stated that the purpose of the meeting was to review the progress of the new airport project, identify any challenges it faces,

and work to overcome them. She highlighted that the new airport is one of the ambitious national projects aimed at developing and modernizing the country's infrastructure, aligning with the vision of 'New Kuwait 2035'.

Importantly, Al-Mashaan emphasized the need for swift completion of all work to the required quality and efficiency, adhering to the approved technical specifications and schedule. She stressed the importance of close coordination with Civil Aviation in ensuring successful execution.

Al-Mashaan added that the new airport will play a crucial role in transforming Kuwait into a regional and international financial and commercial hub, attracting investment.

She stressed the government's strong commitment to developing the infrastructure of the air transport sector in the country, adopting the best international standards in the civil aviation industry.

She noted that among the key elements of Package 3 of the T2 project, which complement Packages 1 and 2, are the 'food equipment building, the technical support center, including a security point for personnel and cargo, a waste disposal area, service tunnels at the air terminal, and corridors and aircraft parking'.

Furthermore, the project contractor has undertaken earthwork for excavations in both the food equipment building and the tunnels according to the contract's requirements. Obstacles in the project have been addressed in cooperation with the relevant authorities, including the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Electricity and Water, and other concerned entities.

The Ministry stated that the materials used, equipment, and specialized companies provided by the contractor are being approved in coordination with the contract consultant, the supervisory body within the Ministry, and relevant government agencies.

# Sports, Health Ministries sign MoU to promote healthy lifestyles

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed last week by Undersecretary at the Ministry of Health, Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, who represented the Office of Health Cities, and Director General of the General Authority for Sports, Bashar Abdullah signed, to implement a national strategy for healthy cities and strengthen cooperation between the two public entities.

Additionally, the MoU seeks to support joint programs that promote awareness of the importance of healthy living, and encourage sports and physical activity throughout the community. The two parties also agreed to form a joint technical team to ensure continuous coordination.

The joint team will determine the methodology and action plans to implement agreed programs and initiatives, focusing on enhancing movement and physical activity across healthy cities and health governorates. Moreover, the technical team will oversee the implementation of awareness



campaigns and programs aimed at promoting the culture of sports and the importance of physical activity as a lifestyle.

The terms of the agreement also include the implementation of community sports events in collaboration with various educational sectors in both the public and private sectors. This collaboration will involve the participation of relevant authorities to promote physical activity and healthy living within the community.

Stakeholders will also be engaged in activities and programs that contribute to improving the quality of life and promoting healthy lifestyles among individuals.

The two sides also discussed the exchange of available experiences to support effective planning of sports projects and initiatives, as well as informed decision-making.

The Ministry of Health noted that this partnership is a crucial step toward achieving the objectives of both parties, as physical activity and sports have a positive impact on promoting individual health and community development.

The MoU also represents efforts to activate the role of healthy cities as an effective platform for promoting health and well-being. It focuses on consolidating the principle of 'health for all' and embodying the slogan 'healthy mind in a healthy body'. More importantly, it also aims to transform the strategic plans of both parties into concrete projects that contribute to achieving shared national goals.

## EU to collaborate with Kuwait on sustainability, worker welfare

European Union Ambassador H.E. Anne Koistinen, emphasized the importance of collaboration with Kuwait on promoting worker sustainability and welfare. In this regard, she highlighted the efforts by EU states to coordinate with academic institutions in Kuwait, including the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, to promote worker sustainability and welfare.

The ambassador made the remarks while opening the 'First World Conference on Environment and Industrial Health: Towards a Sustainable Future', organized by the Department of Environmental Health at the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training.

Stating that the EU is a leader in achieving sustainability and protecting public health, she added that the Union is ready to support efforts, share experiences and expertise, and promote innovation, while ensuring that economic growth aligns with environmental and social well-being. She stressed that the EU's approach focuses on economic growth, environmental sustainability, and human health. "By addressing these issues holistically, we enable the establishment

of industries that are not only competitive but also ethical, flexible, and comprehensive," said the EU envoy. For his part, Dr. Badr Al-Khalaf, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences and Chairman of the Supreme Committee of the Conference, stated that the health and well-being of individuals are closely linked to vital resources from the environment, economy, and development.

Pointing to the significance of production and consumption sectors in countries, he noted that while these sectors are essential, they also contribute negatively to environmental systems in one way or another. Therefore, it is crucial to achieve a balance between them to ensure a sustainable environmental and developmental future.

He emphasized that this conference aims to address some of the concepts related to this vision by bringing together a group of experts and specialists from Kuwait's public and private sectors, as well as academics from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in addition to representatives from prestigious universities around the world, volunteer teams to enhance academic expertise.

## Kuwait Police serve as role model in security

Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah affirmed that Kuwait Police serve as a role model in security, traffic and humanitarian efforts within a system that strives to protect the country.

In a press release, issued by the Ministry of Interior, Sheikh Fahad stated, in a statement on the occasion of the Arab Police Day, which falls on December 18th each year, that the role played by police forces is respected and appreciated.

He added that they presented the highest levels of dedication and loyalty in fulfilling their national duties, pointing out their firm commitment to confront violators that threaten the country's stability. Sheikh Fahad expressed his appreciation to the police forces for their efforts, driven by national and humanitarian values in facing threats.

He also reminded them of their responsibility to work for the stability, security, and safety of Kuwait, under the care of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, and His Highness the Prime Minister.



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# AIESEC Kuwait wins prestigious Middle-East award for Youth Speak Forum

*"This achievement is a testament to the dedication of youth in Kuwait, proving their potential to lead impactful change within two years of resumption post-COVID." – Maysoon Al-Attar, President of AIESEC in Kuwait*



AIESEC in Kuwait was accorded a regional award at the Middle East and Africa Summit 2024 which took place in Al-Ain Al-Sokhna, Egypt in November.

The award recognized the passion and efforts of youth in Kuwait in executing AIESEC in Kuwait's second successful large event, the Youth Speak Forum, which was held in May this year. This marks the first-ever award for AIESEC in Kuwait.

AIESEC is the world's largest youth-led, non-governmental and not-for-profit organization that provides young people with opportunities for leadership development. The organization focuses on empowering young people to address key social issues and drive impactful change. The Youth Speak Forum was first introduced in 2016 following the launch of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and is a global initiative powered by AIESEC.

This year's forum in Kuwait was a dynamic platform hosting more than 100 youth individuals and experts, united under the common purpose of encouraging youth to speak up and take action on sustainability and the causes they care about. Over the course of this two-day forum, 27 spaces and impactful sessions were led by 20 renowned experts, supported by 15 dedicated

partners, delivered in 16 hours, to over 100 engaged youth participants.

Youth Speak Forum is part of a three-step program. First, the 'Youth Speak Survey' gathers insights from youth around the country, about the issues they are currently facing and care about. Based on these findings, the forum's theme and agenda is then aligned with those issues and linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). After the forum concludes, the solutions and projects created during the event are implemented as 'Youth Speak Projects' by AIESEC and the youth who devised them.

The following winning project ideas from Youth Speak Forum, designed as impactful solutions were created and presented by the delegates. These projects will now move forward to implementation:

**Quality Education:** A transformative initiative aimed at improving access to inclusive and equitable education, empowering communities with lifelong learning opportunities.

**Trash to Treasure:** A sustainability-driven project focused on recycling and upcycling waste materials into valuable products, fostering a circular economy and reducing environmental impact.

**Green Heroes:** A community-based

movement advocating for environmental preservation through awareness campaigns, tree-planting drives, and sustainable living practices.

**EmpowerUp:** A social empowerment project designed to equip youth and women with essential skills and resources for self-sufficiency and leadership development.

**ElectroTransit:** An innovative solution promoting eco-friendly urban mobility by integrating electric transportation systems to reduce carbon emissions and enhance sustainable urban living.

Building on this momentum and connecting to the topic of sustainability, AIESEC in Kuwait organized Kuwait's first-ever World's Largest Lesson, on an additional optional day after the Youth Speak Forum. In just one hour, this initiative engaged over 600 students across 28 classes with over 30 facilitators, in two schools making an extraordinary impact on youth education and awareness about the SDGs.

"AIESEC in Kuwait is incredibly honored to receive this regional award and recognition, as it is proof of the potential of youth in Kuwait" said Maysoon Al-Attar, president of AIESEC in Kuwait. "This achievement would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our

partners, who have shared our vision for youth empowerment and contributed to making the Youth Speak Forum a resounding success."

The award is a testament to the dedication of AIESEC in Kuwait's team and the invaluable partnerships that helped bring Kuwait's first Youth Speak Forum to life. Educational institutions, businesses, and community organizations collaborated to provide resources, expertise, and mentorship. This collective effort fostered dialogue on pressing challenges and innovative solutions aligned with the SDGs, amplifying youth voices and promoting proactive social engagement.

AIESEC in Kuwait extended its heartfelt gratitude to all who supported both the Youth Speak Forum and this remarkable regional award. Together, they have laid the foundation for continued success, inspiring youth leadership and social change within Kuwait and beyond.

Looking ahead, AIESEC in Kuwait remains committed to peace and fulfilment of humankind's potential, by empowering young people and expanding its initiatives to inspire more youth across the country. The team eagerly anticipates working with partners to foster a culture of leadership and action, aiming to make an even greater impact in the years to come.

## LuLu Kuwait joins British Embassy in celebrating 125 years of UK-Kuwait relations



LuLu Kuwait Director, Mr. Muhammed Haris, had the honor of attending a prestigious reception hosted by the British Embassy to commemorate the 125th anniversary of official diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and the State of Kuwait.

The event was graced by the esteemed presence of His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Edward, and Her Excellency Belinda Lewis, the British Ambassador to Kuwait. This milestone celebration reflects the depth of the strong

and enduring relations between the two nations, including in defense and military cooperation, showcasing a legacy of trust and mutual respect.

We are honored to have participated in this remarkable ceremony, a testament to 125 years of friendship and partnership between Kuwait and the UK. LuLu Kuwait proudly supports this enduring relationship through our extensive range of imported products from our sourcing center in Birmingham, UK, bringing our customers the finest British quality and tradition.



## Kuwait could face egg crisis if exports not curbed

Musab Al-Mulla, President of the Federation of Consumer Cooperative Societies, urged the Ministry of Trade, Commerce, and Industry to halt egg exports to ensure the continued availability of this essential commodity at the set price in cooperative associations, preventing a potential shortage on store shelves.

Al-Mulla said in a press statement, "It has been noted that some egg companies failed to supply more than fifty cooperatives with the required quantities, claiming there is no stock available, despite the fact that central markets

are well-stocked with the commodity, along with large quantities intended for export at the expense of the local consumer."

Al-Mulla also pointed out, "This crisis recurs annually during this period under the pretext of insufficient quantities, often due to the export practices of some companies." He warned these companies against failing to cooperate and called for the opening of direct imports of eggs.

He stressed that the Federation of Consumer Cooperative Societies "will not allow consumers to be affected by the shortage of essential goods like eggs."

# High rate of obesity in Kuwait cause for serious concern

*The obesity rate among children aged 5 to 19 in Kuwait, ranging from 23 to 26.9%, is a growing concern that threatens the health of future generations. Obesity has become a major health issue in Kuwait, with 77% of the population overweight and 40% obese, making it the highest in the Arab world.*

Latest health data reveals that over 77 percent of the population in Kuwait are overweight, and 40 percent suffer from obesity. This alarmingly high figure makes Kuwait the country with the highest obesity rate in the Arab world, as well as among the top states with the highest obesity numbers in the world.

The severity of the issue and its potential to impact future generations is underlined by the fact that besides 77.9 percent of people in Kuwait being overweight, the obesity rate among children and adolescents between the ages of 5 and 19 ranges from 23 to 26.9 percent. The increasing obesity rate among children is particularly distressing, as it poses a significant threat to the health of future generations.

Overweight and obesity are defined as abnormal or excessive fat deposits in the body that pose a health risk. According to the World

Health Organization (WHO) A body mass index (BMI) over 25 is considered overweight, and over 30 is obese. An estimated five million noncommunicable disease (NCD) deaths were caused by higher-than-optimal BMI in 2019.

Several factors contribute to the rising obesity rates in Kuwait, including a lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, and the impact of genetic factors. A sedentary lifestyle and poor dietary choices have played a major role in this crisis. While genetics can account for up to 50 percent of obesity risk, lifestyle factors such as inactivity and unhealthy eating habits remain the leading contributors.

Countries like Japan have succeeded in tackling obesity, with an obesity rate of just four percent. This success is attributed to cultural practices, such as shokuiku (food education), which promotes healthy eating habits and



physical activity from an early age.

In Kuwait, there is an urgent need for physical education and nutrition education to be made a priority in school curriculum. Currently, public schools in the country allocate only two physical education classes per week at the primary level and one class at the middle and secondary levels.

The Ministry of Health has stressed the need to increase these hours to help combat chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension, which are closely linked to inactivity. Physical education should not be viewed merely as a sports lesson but as an essential life skill. By effectively integrating it with nutritional education, we can reduce obesity rates and achieve positive health outcomes.

There is a clear need to increase awareness on the dangers of being overweight and obese among the population, especially children. People have to take their health into their own hands and engage in having better health awareness, making healthier food choices and eating habits, as well as participating in regular exercise. Children and youngsters in particular have to adopt better health options into their lifestyle.

## OAPEC to restructure and rename as AEO

Member states of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) signed, during their 113th ministerial meeting held on 15 December in Kuwait, a decision to restructure the organization, redraft its establishment agreement, develop its work, and change its name to the Arab Energy Organization (AEO).

During the opening of the meeting, Eng. Saad Al-Kaabi, Qatari Minister of State for Energy Affairs, Managing Director, and CEO of Qatar Energy, and Chairman of the current session of the OAPEC Council of Ministers, expressed his hope that the meeting would result in the best decisions to support the organization's work and achieve the desired goals.

Following the conclusion of the meeting, the Secretary-General of the organization, Eng. Jamal Al-Loughani, explained that the meeting was important and historic for the organization as it involved discussions on restructuring, re-examining its objectives, and amending some of its legal documents. This process



followed an extensive study over the past year and a recommendation submitted by the organization's Executive Office to the OAPEC Council of Ministers.

Al-Loughani continued by saying that a recommendation was approved and a decision was issued by the Council of Ministers for initial approval to amend some articles of the founding agreement, with the condition that these amendments be referred to the governments of the

member states for official approval by the higher authorities.

As a principle or idea, there is now a green light to proceed with the restructuring process and review the organization's objectives so that it encompasses all types of energy. The name of OAPEC will be changed to the Arab Energy Organization (AEO), reflecting that objectives and interests now encompass all types of energy.

Al-Loughani congratulated all member states on this achievement, and it is the responsibility of member states to complete the second part of the restructuring study, implement all the initiatives developed by the global consultant, and fully complete the process of developing the organization.

A statement issued by the General Secretariat of the Organization noted that the decision to restructure the organization and redraft its establishment agreement allows the General Secretariat to continue its efforts in developing the organization's activities and operations. This followed the approval of the first phase of the project, which included the proposed amendments to the organization's establishment agreement.

It was noted that the proposed substantive amendments to the agreement will come into effect upon completion of the approval process according to the regulatory procedures of each member state. The Secretariat explained that the decision to restructure the organization, redraft its establishment agreement, develop its work, and change its name was based on a proposal submitted by Saudi Arabia. Importantly, the Secretariat indicated that implementing the decision required conducting a thorough study and comprehensive assessment of the developments and challenges faced by the energy sector at the national, regional, and global levels, particularly in recent years.

The rapid transformations in the energy sector necessitated a review and development of the organization's activities and objectives to encompass all areas related to and included in the energy sector.



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# ATC: Prioritizing client value, remaining ahead of technology curve

*"We take great pride in our work, and ATC has actively participated in several local megaprojects such as the Maternity Hospital, Kuwait Cancer Control Center, Farwaniya Hospital, and Jahra Hospital."*

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The Business Year recently spoke with the CEO of Advanced Technology Company (ATC), Ghassan Mamlouk to learn more about the company and its future plans. ATC operates in the healthcare and environmental sectors in Kuwait, and is known for its extensive range of healthcare products and services, covering diverse areas such as laboratory services, diagnostic imaging, and medical equipment.

We began by asking him to highlight some of the strategies and initiatives behind the success and rapid expansion of ATC, a leader in providing healthcare solutions that meet 95 percent of the needs of hospitals in Kuwait.

Since 1981, ATC has expanded by adapting to market needs, prioritizing client value, and leading in technology. Our strategy involves diversifying services, strengthening partnerships, and leveraging government investments, driving our significant progress.

**How does the company stay competitive and innovative in each of these specialized segments?**

At ATC, we have always let our firm commitment to service excellence guide us. To stay relevant in a fast-paced world, we continually reinvent ourselves and our offerings. Not only does this keep us at the forefront of technological advancements,

but also solidifies our position as a market leader in healthcare solutions. In addition, we work on keeping our portfolio diverse, and thus, cutting-edge, by expanding our agencies and distributorships to cater to evolving market needs.

**Can you elaborate on the unique ways ATC ensures excellence in customer satisfaction?**

One of ATC's foundational pillars is our customer-centric approach. This is why we have a dedicated Customer Success Team, who are our unsung heroes. They play the vital role of not only understanding the needs and challenges of our clients and their needs, but actually going above and beyond to exceed their expectations. This unmatched commitment extends beyond meeting basic requirements to ensuring every solution prioritizes patient comfort and well-being.

**ATC has participated in local megaprojects. Can you provide an example of a significant megaproject and the challenges and opportunities it presented?**

We take great pride in our work, and ATC has actively participated in several local megaprojects such as the Maternity Hospital, Kuwait Cancer Control Center, Farwaniya Hospital, and Jahra Hospital. Among these, Jahra Hospital stands out as a significant milestone for us. We have supplied an impressive 1,234 in-patient beds for this project, marking the largest bed supply for any hospital in the region. Since this was a vast undertaking, our successful approach to the challenge has opened up unparalleled opportunities to showcase our capacity and commitment to the healthcare sector.

**What are the company's strategies for maintaining financial stability and growth?**

Our continuous renewal and commitment to staying ahead of the technology curve empower us to anticipate market needs, fluctuations, and innovations. By consistently updating our strategies and portfolio, we remain resilient and ensure steady growth, even in the face of economic shifts.

**What role does a highly skilled workforce play in maintaining the company's position as a leader in the healthcare distribution and marketing sector in Kuwait?**

We think of ATC as one big family, and our talent is our biggest asset. We place a lot of emphasis on continuous learning and development to make sure the team is always up to date with the latest knowledge and skills. This commitment to employee development not only helps us retain good talent, but also reinforces our position as an industry leader in healthcare distribution in Kuwait.

**Looking ahead, could you share some of the key future goals and strategic priorities that ATC has set for itself in the healthcare and related industries?**

We have set some ambitious goals for the company, and I am keen to see the team reach those targets. We are currently focused on exploring healthcare verticals, enhancing our understanding and service offerings for our clients.

Apart from that, our top priorities include investing in emerging technologies and elevating our already excellent customer service offerings. Our vision for the future is for ATC to be synonymous with excellence



in healthcare solutions, both within Kuwait and in the GCC as well.

**Ghassan Mamlouk** is CEO of Advanced Technology Company (ATC) in Kuwait, which operates in the healthcare and environmental sectors in Kuwait. Having assumed his current position in 2003, Mamlouk joined ATC in 1989, charting his personal growth with that of the organization. Previously, he has held the roles of Commercial Director and General Manager at ATC. Mamlouk has been a key contributor to the company's success, with ATC first being listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange in 2007 under his able leadership. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Central Florida.

## NBTC successfully completes project to dismantle PIC Fertilizer plant



NBTC Group celebrated a significant milestone with the successful completion of the PIC Fertilizer Plant Dismantling Project on 18 December, at Safir Hotels and Resorts, Fintas.

The project is notable as the first-ever large-scale dismantling initiative undertaken in Kuwait, marking a historic accomplishment in the country's industrial landscape.

The project, which spanned over 30 months, involved the dismantling of two ammonia plants, three urea plants, and associated utility facilities, totaling 55,000 tons of assets spread across 2.4 square kilometers. This accomplishment highlights NBTC's expertise and capabilities in executing large-scale and complex projects.

The highlight of the event was the presence of Governor of Ahmadi, Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah, who graciously attended and

honored the occasion.

The event commenced with a warm welcome from Ben Paul (JCDO), followed by the Kuwait National Anthem and a project introductory speech delivered by the General Manager of Operations at NBTC Prince John Mathew.

The NBTC Chairman, Mohammed N. Al-Baddah, and Managing Director, K.G. Abraham addressed the gathering.

Mr. Abraham delivered an inspiring overview of NBTC's journey from its inception to its current stature as a major industry leader with over 30,000 employees across Kuwait, UAE, KSA, India, Qatar, and Bahrain. He emphasized the significant support provided by PIC throughout the entire project.

On the other hand, the Ahmadi Governor, along with the Chairman and Managing Director

of NBTC, presented a memento to PIC as a token of appreciation for their invaluable support throughout the project.

Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah then presented appreciation mementos to 32 of the project's best performers, recognizing NBTC's remarkable contribution to Kuwait's industrial landscape.

Deputy CEO of Manufacturing and Marketing at PIC, Hamd Dhakkeel Badhah, delivered an engaging speech, commending NBTC's unwavering commitment and exceptional execution. He praised the team for surpassing expectations by completing the project ahead of schedule and overcoming significant challenges, including the transfer of 46,000 tons of materials within just three months.

Moreover, the event also featured speeches

from Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) managers, including Fares Saud Al Fares, Rashid Al Ajmi, Husain Al Fadhli, and Ahmed Abdul Ameer Abbas. Dignitaries from PIC, KNPC, KOC, KIPIC, Equate, Gulf Bank, Commercial Bank, and the Ministry of Interior. Department heads, DMDs, other members of the management team, and NBTC staff also participated in the luncheon session. The program concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks by Manikandan, Project Manager, acknowledging the support and dedication of all stakeholders involved in making this project a resounding success.

This achievement underscores NBTC's commitment to excellence and reflects the company's core value of 'One Team, One Family' signifying collective spirit and dedication of all involved in making the project a grand success.



## Ambassador lauds deep-rooted Bahrain Kuwait relations

*His Excellency Salah Ali Al-Malki praised the deep, long-standing relations between Kuwait and Bahrain during a ceremony marking Bahrain's 53rd National Day, highlighting the ongoing support from both countries' leaderships.*

### The Times Kuwait Report

Ambassador of Bahrain H.E. Salah Ali Al-Malki, said that the bilateral cooperation between his country and Kuwait continues to grow and integrate at all levels, bringing mutual benefits and development to both countries and their peoples. The ambassador made this comment during a celebratory ceremony held by the Embassy of Bahrain to commemorate the 53rd anniversary of Bahrain's National Day and the 25th anniversary of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's assumption of the throne.

The event was attended by Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, and Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, as well as a large gathering of diplomats, senior officials, dignitaries and special invitees.

Ambassador Al-Malki praised the strength and depth of the long-standing brotherly relations between Bahrain and Kuwait, highlighting the continuous and significant support they receive from the leaderships of both countries. He emphasized the ongoing efforts to enhance joint cooperation for the benefit and

interests of both nations and their peoples.

He added that his country is taking firm steps towards achieving the objectives of its foreign policy, which are based on well-defined principles and values of balance, moderation, and cooperation. These principles enshrine the values of dialogue

and human coexistence, strengthen international cooperation, promote sustainable peace, continue efforts to achieve sustainable development, protect human rights and freedoms, and preserve the environment, all of which play a crucial role in reinforcing the Kingdom's status on the international stage.

## Kuwait University among top universities in the Arab World

League of Arab States announced on 19 December, the results of the Arab University Ranking for 2024 in cooperation with the Association of Arab Universities. The results placed Kuwait University in 30th spot out of a list that included 180 Arab universities.

The announcement was made at a press conference held by the Assistant Secretary-General for Social Affairs at the University, Dr. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, and the Secretary-General of the Association of Arab Universities, Dr. Amr Ezzat.

King Saud University in Saudi Arabia topped the list, followed by Cairo University, then the United Arab Emirates University, with the University of Sharjah coming in fourth place.

King Khalid University from Saudi Arabia came in fifth place, Ain Shams University in sixth place, followed by Mansoura University in seventh, Alexandria University in eighth, Taif University in ninth, and Tunis El Manar University in tenth place.

Dr. Ezzat mentioned that 373 universities from 16 Arab countries applied for the ranking, and 180 of them completed the classification requirements.

These included 48 universities from Egypt, 41 from Iraq, 17 from Yemen, 17 from Jordan, 12 from Libya, 10 from

Saudi Arabia, 7 from Palestine, 6 from Algeria, 6 from Tunisia, 5 from the UAE, 4 from Syria, 2 from Somalia, 2 from Lebanon, 1 from Kuwait, 1 from Bahrain, and 1 from Morocco.

Dr. Ezzat added that this classification is not just about numbers or rankings, but rather reflects the tireless efforts of universities to provide distinguished education and scientific research. He considered the classification as a tool for measuring academic and educational performance and highlighting the strengths and opportunities available to develop educational and research institutions.

He added that in recent years, a remarkable progress was witnessed in the level of education and scientific research in the Arab world, with many Arab universities achieving distinguished accomplishments on both academic and research fronts.

Dr. Ezzat stated that the classification criteria are based on evaluating advanced Arab universities according to four main axes: education, learning, creativity, leadership, innovation, international and local cooperation, and community service.



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# Bangladesh celebrates Armed Forces Day

## The Times Kuwait Report

Kuwait does not forget the sacrifices and contributions of Bangladeshi forces in the "liberation" of Kuwait. The head of the National Military Service Authority, Major General Ahmed Al-Shanfa, stressed the depth and strength of relations between Kuwait and Bangladesh, indicating that this is "confirmed by Bangladesh's participation in the international coalition to liberate Kuwait from the brutal Iraqi invasion."

This came in a speech delivered by Major General Al-Shanfa, on behalf of the Deputy Chief of General Staff of the Army, Major General Pilot Sabah Al-Jaber, at a celebration held by the Bangladesh Embassy on the occasion of the 53rd anniversary of the Bangladesh Armed Forces Day. Al-Shanfa said: "On this occasion, we do not forget the sacrifices and efforts made by the

Bangladeshi Armed Forces in liberating Kuwait," noting that the relationship between the two countries has been characterized by respect and affection since Kuwait recognized the Republic of Bangladesh on November 4, 1973, and cooperation continues between the two countries in all fields and sectors, as a number of agreements and memoranda of understanding have been signed in several fields, the last of which was in 2022, appreciating the work of the Bangladeshi military mission in Kuwait and its participation with Kuwaiti forces at the technical and security levels.

He pointed out that defense cooperation continued to grow at several levels, and included meetings at the level of defense officials to explore and seek to develop and enhance cooperation in various professional military fields, exchange of expertise and logistical

cooperation, and that the two countries seek to preserve the security of their peoples and the sovereignty of their territories, and adhere to the same defense principles, and they hope to continue to contribute to maintaining international security, stability and prosperity.

For his part, the Military Attaché, Brigadier General Sergeant Karim Chowdhury, stated that the Bangladesh Armed Forces are undergoing modernization under the "Force Goal 2030", stressing that they are professional forces, which Bangladesh is proud of as one of the largest troop contributing countries under the banner of the United Nations for world peace.

He pointed out that according to a bilateral agreement, the Bangladeshi military contingent has been deployed in Kuwait since 1991 and supports the Kuwaiti Armed Forces, by actively participating in constructive and

developmental works in Kuwait.

He stressed that the Armed Forces Day "has special significance, not only for the personnel of the Bangladesh Armed Forces, but also for our people, as it signifies the utmost importance of comradeship, solidarity and bonding in arms, to fight the enemy collectively".

For his part, the Ambassador of Bangladesh to the country, Major General Syed Tariq Hossain, said that "Kuwait has a special place in the hearts of the people of Bangladesh, and the ties between the two countries are inseparable, as we have been linked historically".

He expressed his deep gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad and the Government of Kuwait for strengthening the excellent relations between the two countries, expressing his hope to raise this long-standing friendly relationship to higher levels.

## New project to boost rainwater drainage efficiency across Kuwait

Sources at the Ministry of Public Works disclosed that the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport is gearing up to launch a new project to enhance the efficiency of rainwater drainage networks in various areas across Kuwait.

The 12-month project, scheduled to be launched as a public tender on January 5, 2025, will adopt international engineering solutions to improve the efficiency of rainwater drainage networks in existing residential areas.



According to sources, the project aims to enhance drainage performance, increase network capacity, and provide advanced services to residents. Priority will be given to ensuring the regular discharge of rainwater, minimizing water accumulation, and maintaining the quality of rainwater discharged into independent networks. Additionally, it will address critical areas that have experienced rainwater pooling in recent years.

The scope of work includes the construction of rainwater collection tanks along network tracks, the replacement of pipe sections and sewers to boost performance, improvements to rainwater outlets connected to the sea to mitigate the impact of high tide on flow rates during rainfall, and the application of global engineering solutions to expand network capacity while preserving infrastructure and quality of life.

## 'Fire Department' suggests fire prevention precautionary measures during camping

*Brigadier General Mohammed Al-Gharib underscored the critical need to take into account fire prevention and safety measures during Kuwait's upcoming camping season for 2024-2025, aimed to protect lives and prevent accidents.*

The Director of the Public Relations and Information Department of the General Fire Force, Brigadier General Mohammed Al-Gharib, confirmed on Wednesday, 18 December, the need to take into account fire prevention and safety measures during Kuwait's camping season for 2024-2025.

Brigadier General Al-Gharib told KUNA that the safety requirements include ensuring there is sufficient spacing, with at least 5 to 6 meters between the tents, and a minimum of 10 meters between the tents, the kitchen, or the electric generator. Furthermore, Brigadier General Al-Gharib highlighted the importance of ensuring the safety of electrical extensions inside the tent, stressing the need not to use damaged or exposed wires and to extend them according to the safety requirements approved by the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

Brigadier General Al-Gharib stressed the importance of establishing camps away from high-pressure electricity towers and prohibited areas such as military installations and oil fields. He also advised choosing safe, elevated locations to avoid potential floods following rains, along with taking necessary precautionary measures in this regard.

In terms of exercising caution, Brigadier General Al-Gharib warned against the use of wooden floors inside tents due to safety concerns. He also emphasized the importance of having a sufficient number of exits in proportion to the size of the tent and advised against using charcoal in indoor spaces, whether in the tent or at home.

Brigadier General Al-Gharib stressed the importance of ensuring that coals are completely ignited and taking into account proper ventilation if it is necessary to use coal in enclosed spaces to prevent suffocation incidents. He also advised taking out the coal cycle before going to sleep and ensuring that it is properly extinguished in a safe place.

Moreover, Brigadier General Al-Gharib appealed to parents to closely monitor their children and prevent them from tampering with various heat sources. He stressed the importance of having fire protection equipment such as extinguishers, fire blankets, and first aid kits readily available inside the tent.

Brigadier General Al-Gharib stated that the General Fire Force, represented by the Department of Public Relations and Information, is committed to reminding the public of some guidelines and controls related to the safety of desert camps. This effort aims to protect lives and property, and to avoid violations and mistakes that could lead to fires and accidents.

Importantly, Brigadier General Al-Gharib highlighted that the Fire Force's Public Relations Department is actively organizing awareness campaigns for visitors to the land and camps.

The department is also conducting field visits in coordination with



relevant authorities across various camp sites, farms, and security points. The aim is to engage the public through various awareness activities, distribute safety equipment, and provide fire prevention materials. This initiative helps familiarize people with safety procedures in camps, starting from the selection of suitable locations for camping.

Brigadier General Al-Gharib urged both citizens and residents to strictly adhere to safety procedures, whether at home, in camps, or elsewhere. He emphasized the importance of acquiring and maintaining fire protection means, as well as training those who use them to ensure they are familiar with the methods of use and maintenance.

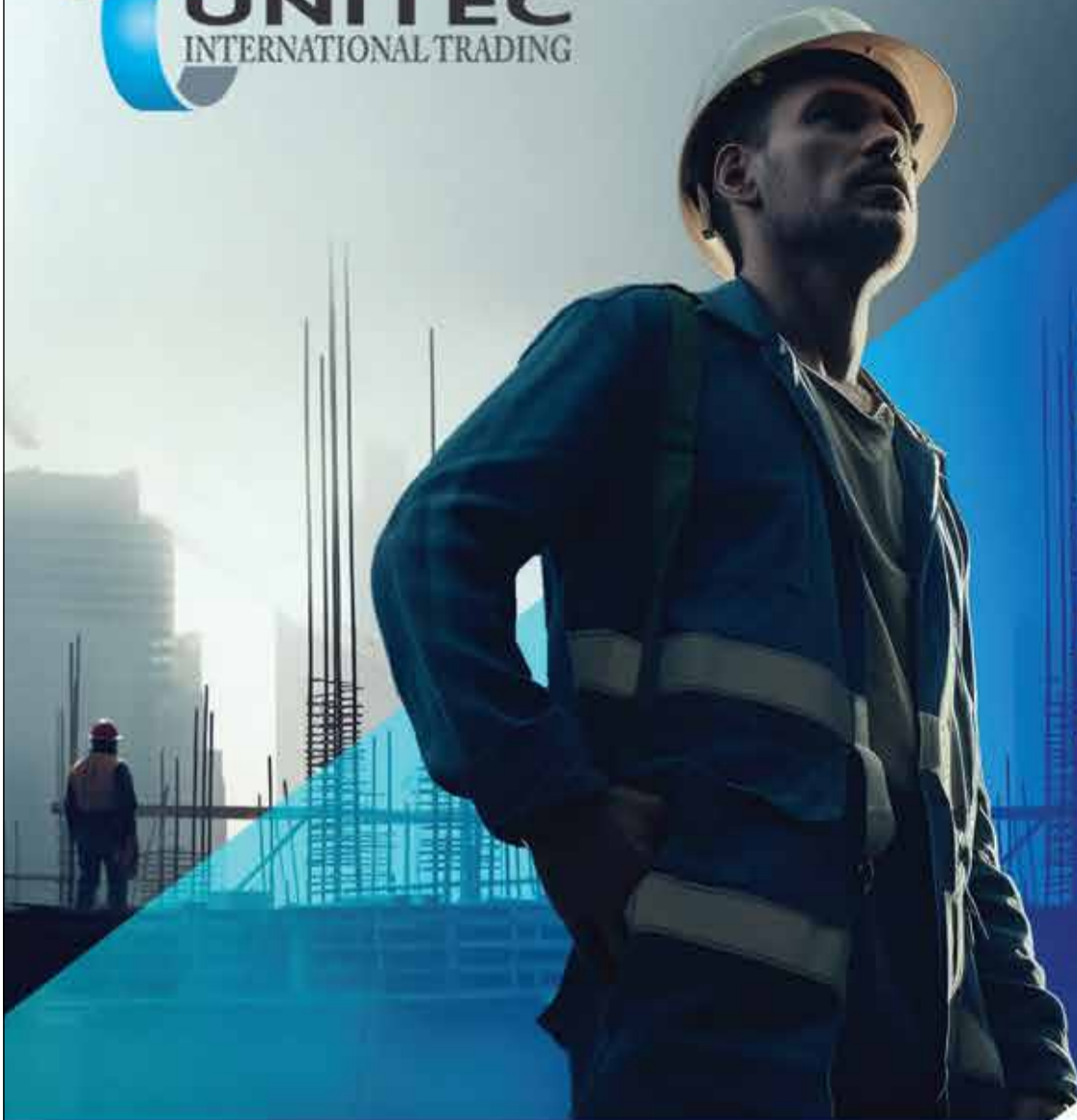
It's noteworthy that Brigadier General Al-Gharib pointed to a statistic issued by the General Fire Force, which showed that from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, there were a total of 59 fire accidents caused by placing a heat source near combustible materials such as coal and heaters.

Brigadier General Al-Gharib stated that incidents of placing a heat source near flammable materials, such as coal, resulted in 31 accidents in the residential sector and 13 in other places like tents, totaling 44 accidents. What's more is that Brigadier General Al-Gharib indicated that there were 11 accidents involving placing a heat source near flammable materials such as; a fireplace in residential areas, and 4 incidents in other places like tents, totaling 15 accidents.

Regarding the percentage of fires from January 1, 2024, to November 30, Brigadier General Al-Gharib stated that the number of fire incidents involving placing a thermal source near flammable materials (coal-heater) reached 33 accidents.

These included 22 in residential areas and 8 in other places like tents, totaling 30 accidents. Additionally, there were 3 fires caused by the use of a fireplace in the residential sector.





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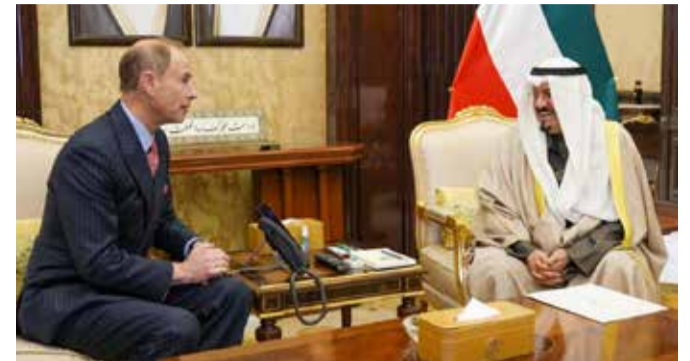
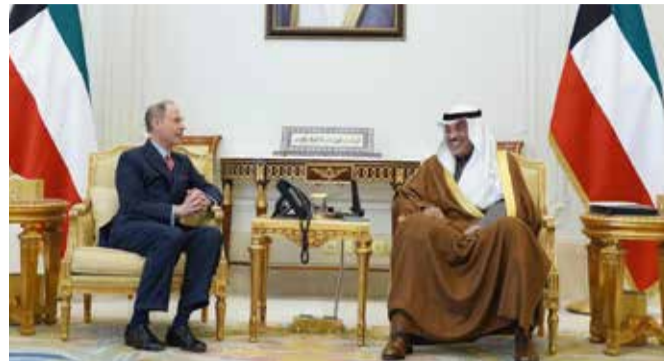
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# Duke of Edinburgh visit highlights 125 years of Kuwait-UK diplomatic relations



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on 17 December the Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh of the United Kingdom, and his accompanying delegation who arrived in the country earlier in the day on an official two-day visit.

The Duke of Edinburgh handed His Highness the Amir a written message from the UK King Charles III dealing with means of boosting further the deep-rooted and historic relations bonding the State of Kuwait and the UK. The message also included an invitation to His Highness the Amir to visit the UK.

For his part, His Highness the Amir asked Prince Edward to relay his greetings to King Charles, his wishes for him to enjoy good health and for the UK people to experience further progress and prosperity.

During his visit, the Duke also met with His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, reflecting the special ties between the UK's Royal and Kuwait's Ruling Families.

Attending a lunch hosted by His Highness the Crown Prince on Tuesday at Bayan Palace, Prince Edward discussed the national vision of Kuwait and the role that partners such as the UK could

play in realizing this.

Upon leaving Bayan Palace, The Duke visited the Dickson House Cultural Center— home to a number of British Political Agents throughout the early decades of UK-Kuwait diplomatic relations. During a private tour, he learnt about the building's significant role in the shared history of the two nations, and the renovation project of the house undertaken by the National Council for Culture Arts and Letters.

The Duke then joined a reception hosted in his honour at the British Embassy where he met with guests, including those involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for young people, and many different groups who work hard to enhance bilateral relations and support the British community in Kuwait.

The Duke's visit closed with an evening



reminiscent of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's trip to the iconic Kuwait Towers during her 1979 State Visit. At a dinner hosted by Chief of the Accompanying Mission of Honor and Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, the prince met with representatives of various youth entities and young leaders in Kuwait, including several recipients of the Kuwait Award for Youth Excellence and Creativity. A passionate advocate of enabling young people to fulfil their potential, The Duke discussed opportunities to forge even stronger links between young people in Kuwait and the UK.

Speaking at the reception hosted in his honor, Prince Edward stated: "I am delighted to visit Kuwait for the first time as our two countries continue celebrations to mark 125 years of official

diplomatic relations and prepare to mark 250 years of trading ties in 2025. Our cooperation covers a range of areas including defence, with the UK coming to Kuwait's aid during the First Gulf War and continuing close collaboration in this space to this day; and in education, which is an area of particular interest to me as patron of the Duke of Edinburgh Award my Late Father, Prince Philip, started.

That being said, our relationship is at its very heart about the links between our two peoples, our shared values, and our mutual respect for one another's cultures. This is what has bound us together in the past and what makes me confident that our two countries will enjoy many more years of close, friendly partnership."

British Ambassador H.E Belinda Lewis, added: "The Duke's visit was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the warm and historic ties between the UK and Kuwait, underpinned by the longstanding friendship between our respective Royal and Ruling Families. It was an honor to meet the leadership of Kuwait, and also to hear from some inspiring young people about their contribution to society. Our visit to Dickson House brought our diplomatic history to life while the garden reception was a chance to acknowledge many different groups who work hard to enhance our bilateral relations and support the British community in Kuwait.

## Migrants Day: Honoring Contributions, Protecting Rights of Migrants

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The number of refugees nearly tripled over the last decade. Climate change threatens to fuel more migration. So far, most climate-driven movements were within countries, but about 40 percent of the world's population live in places highly exposed to climate impacts.

Current approaches not only fail to maximize the potential development gains of migration, they also cause great suffering for people moving in distress. About 2.5 percent of the world's population—184 million people, including 37 million refugees—now live outside their country of nationality. The largest share—43 percent—lives in developing countries.

The report underscores the urgency of managing migration better. The goal of policymakers should be to strengthen the match of migrants' skills with the demand in destination societies, while protecting refugees and reducing the need for distressed movements. The report provides a framework for policymakers on how to do this.

"This World Development Report proposes a simple but powerful framework to aid the making of migration and refugee policy," said Indermit Gill, Chief Economist of the World Bank Group and Senior Vice President for Development Economics. "It tells us when such policies can be made unilaterally by destination countries, when they are better made plurilaterally by destination, transit and origin countries, and when they must be considered a multilateral responsibility."

Origin countries should make labor migration an explicit part of their development strategy. They should lower remittance costs, facilitate knowledge transfers from their diaspora, build skills that are in high demand globally so that

citizens can get better jobs if they migrate, mitigate the adverse effects of 'brain drain', protect their nationals while abroad, and support them upon return.

Destination countries should encourage migration where the skills migrants bring are in high demand, facilitate their inclusion, and address social impacts that raise concerns among their citizens. They should let refugees move, get jobs, and access national services wherever they are available.

International cooperation is essential to make migration a strong force for development. Bilateral cooperation can strengthen the match of migrants' skills with the needs of destination societies. Multilateral efforts are needed to share the costs of refugee-hosting and to address distressed migration. Voices that are underrepresented in the migration debate must be heard: this includes developing countries, the private sector and other stakeholders, and migrants and refugees themselves.

People on the move are powerful drivers for development in both their origin and destination countries, as workers, students, entrepreneurs, family members, artists, and much more. Migrants often maintain strong connections to their home countries while embracing their new communities, where they bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and skill.

If managed well, mobility can be a cornerstone of sustainable development, prosperity and progress. Unlocking migration's potential is key to accelerating efforts to meet the significant challenges of the 2030 Agenda articulated during the Sustainable Development Goal summit in New York in September 2023, for the benefit of all. There is an urgent need for the international community to provide people-centred and

evidence-based solutions for people to remain in their communities, and for those who want to or must move.

The COP28 summit in Dubai in 2023 provided the opportunity for the International Organization of Migration (IOM), the UN migration agency, to advocate again for the impact of climate change on migrants to be a central part of this discussion. Promoting equal and inclusive partnerships with migrants, women, persons with disabilities and communities, while emphasizing the role of youth, is now more critical than ever.

Migrants and displaced people represent some of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in society. Migrants have proven to be a source of prosperity, innovation, and sustainable development to countries of origin, transit, and host countries. On 19 September 2016, Heads of State and Government came together at the global level within the UN General Assembly to discuss issues related to migration and refugees.

In adopting the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, 193 UN Member States recognized the need for a comprehensive approach to human mobility and enhanced cooperation at the global level. They committed to elaborate and adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

The GCM-- the first-ever intergovernmentally negotiated UN agreement on a common approach to managing international migration, which UN member states endorsed at the 60th plenary session of the UN General Assembly in September 2018—offers the opportunity and guidance to actualize human mobility and seize the opportunities it presents.

No state can manage migration effectively and sustainably in isolation. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is an

effective tool for States to discuss how best to address challenges to human mobility without compromising the human rights of people and states' sovereignty.

On this International Migrants Day, and every day, IOM reaffirms its commitment to promoting a humane and orderly management of migration for the benefit of all, including the communities of origin, transit, and destination. The IOM defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.

The International Organization of Migration aims to position migration as one of the solutions to global challenges, such as adapting to the impacts of climate change or providing better economic opportunities for communities. The IMD theme for 2024 is: Honouring the Contributions of Migrants and Respecting their Rights. Migration is a global phenomenon driven by many forces. These start with aspirations for dignity, safety and peace. The decision to leave home is always extreme, and, too often, the beginning of a dangerous, sometimes fatal journey.

International Migrants Day provides us with an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the contributions of millions of migrants worldwide. Every person can make a difference. Every person can be an agent of change. Together, our collective actions today, will prepare us for a better tomorrow.

[Courtesy of World Bank, International Organization for Migration]

# Gust University Library hosts 'Korea Corner'

Embassy of the Republic of Korea and Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), jointly held an opening ceremony for the 'Korea Corner' in the GUST library.

The ceremony was addressed by Ambassador of Korea H.E. Park Chong-suk, and Professor Bassam Alameddine, President of GUST. The event was also attended by Korean Embassy staff, members of the Korean community in Kuwait, as well as deans, faculties, and students from GUST.

The Korea Corner is an initiative that is fully supported and founded by the Korea Foundation (KF) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

Across 75 countries, around 120 Korea Corners have served as a gateway for understanding Korean culture in major universities and libraries. They provide Korean items such as books, exhibits, and traditional handicrafts to promote cultural exchange and appreciation.

The ceremony, held on the heels of the '2024 Korean Street Food Festival' on 28 November at GUST University, marks another significant step in strengthening the ties between the Korean Embassy and GUST University, and by extension between Kuwait and South Korea.



## IOM appeals for funds to support evolving migration dynamics

International Organization for Migration (IOM) has launched its Global Appeal for 2025, aiming to raise US\$8.2 billion to support over one hundred million people worldwide. Aligned with IOM's Strategic Plan (2024-2028), the initiative focuses on adapting to evolving migration dynamics and humanitarian needs with agility and foresight.

The appeal is structured around three strategic objectives—Saving lives and protecting people on

the move; driving solutions for displacement; and facilitating pathways for regular migration.

Emphasising the importance of the fund appeal, IOM Chief of Mission in Kuwait, Mazen AboulHosn stated: "The Global Appeal 2025 is a testament to our commitment to addressing the complex challenges of migration and displacement. Today, we are celebrating International Migrants Day. This day gives us a special opportunity to spotlight the invaluable contributions of millions of migrants around the world. It's also a day to highlight the increasingly complex environment in which migration occurs." He added, "With the

support of our partners, including countries like Kuwait, we can make a significant impact on the lives of millions of people in need." Migrants play critical roles in labor markets, filling skill gaps, driving innovation and entrepreneurship, boosting economic growth, and providing a lifeline to families and communities back home, driving development.

The Global Appeal 2025 is a comprehensive strategy designed to mobilize resources effectively and ensure that IOM can respond proactively to global migration challenges.



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# World Needs Ocean-Based Climate Solutions



**Ilana Seid**

*Ilana Seid is Palau's Ambassador to the United Nations, Sherpa Co-Chair of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, and Co-Chair of the Steering Committee for the Blue Economy and Finance Forum.*



Following the recent 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku, we are confronted with one pressing question: What's next? With countries set to submit early next year their updated nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the 2015 Paris climate agreement, the world has an opportunity – and a responsibility – to take transformative action to address the climate crisis. The ocean must be central to this effort.

Nobody understands this better than small island developing states (SIDS) like Palau. For us, climate policy is not some abstract debate about hypothetical future risks; it is a fight for survival. Already, coral reefs are undergoing bleaching; storms are becoming increasingly frequent and

destructive; and droughts are undermining food security. Rising sea levels threaten not just our land, but also our culture, our way of life, and our very existence.

To date, international support for climate action has fallen far short of meeting developing countries' needs. SIDS collectively receive less than 2% of global climate finance, even as they

oversee 30% of the world's territorial waters. It is a striking imbalance, especially given the ocean's enormous untapped potential to help mitigate climate change.

The ocean is our planet's largest carbon sink, absorbing 25% of all carbon dioxide emissions and a staggering 90% of the excess heat generated by a warming atmosphere. According to a 2023 report, ocean-based climate solutions can get us as much as 35% closer to our emissions-reduction targets for 2050, on a pathway that limits the global temperature increase to 1.5° Celsius. And mitigating climate change is just the beginning; a healthy ocean plays a pivotal role in creating sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable communities worldwide.

Consider nature-based solutions like the restoration of mangroves, seagrasses, and coral reefs. Beyond sequestering carbon, these ecosystems act as natural defenses against rising seas and extreme weather, and they form the basis of local livelihoods. In Palau, marine protected areas safeguard biodiversity, support sustainable fisheries, and bolster the tourism industry.

So far, the ocean – including the ecosystems it supports – has largely been treated as an afterthought in global climate strategies, sidelined in favor of more visible priorities like renewable energy and curbs on emissions. The High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy has revealed that many of its member countries – which together govern half the world's territorial oceans – have yet to integrate the ocean fully into their NDCs.

This omission represents a vital opportunity, which countries should seize as they prepare their NDC submissions before the February deadline. Putting the ocean at the center of our climate strategies would transform it from a silent victim of global warming into an active force for mitigation and resilience-building.

The Blue Economy and Finance Forum takes place in June, one of the "special events" that will set the stage for the third UN Ocean Conference in Nice. The BEFF aims to unlock financing for ocean-based solutions, particularly biodiversity-positive investments that simultaneously support economic development and climate goals. But, as we saw at COP29, public budgets are already stretched thin. Mobilizing private capital alongside public investment is thus essential to drive meaningful change.

To understand why, look no further than the shipping industry, which emits more carbon than all but six countries. Critical pieces of the net-zero puzzle are already in place for the industry. Shipping companies are planning their low-carbon transitions. The technologies they need – in particular, "green fuels" like green methanol and ammonia – have been developed.

And producers are ready to increase output, while continuing to innovate. And yet scaling up production has proved difficult, because investors still view crucial green technologies as too risky.

This mismatch between ambition and funding underscores the need for creative financing solutions, such as government-backed guarantees or blended-finance instruments. Fortunately, the New Collective Quantified Goal on climate finance, agreed at COP29, offers an opportunity to set ambitious targets and leverage innovative mechanisms to unlock private investment at scale.

Despite its disappointments, COP29 delivered another reason for cautious optimism: the discussions taken there reflected growing recognition that ocean action is climate action. This idea, which began gaining traction in 2019

“ Putting the ocean at the center of our climate strategies would transform it from a silent victim of global warming into an active force for mitigation and resilience-building. ”

during the Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue at COP25, has evolved into a powerful movement. As a result, momentum is building behind ocean-based climate solutions.

But harnessing this momentum to deliver measurable action – such as the introduction of more marine protected areas covering mangroves and seagrass meadows or scaling up the decarbonization of the shipping industry – will require collaboration across sectors and borders. And it will require far more financing. As we look ahead to the BEFF and beyond, we must make one thing crystal clear: investing in the ocean is investing in our collective future.



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# Digital Financial Inclusion Strengthens Climate Resilience



**Ellen Jackowski**  
Chief Sustainability Officer at Mastercard.

A group of economists came together earlier this year to complete the largest analysis of hurricanes' economic effects on the United States to date. One of the most striking findings was that businesses with only a brick-and-mortar presence that were in a hurricane's path suffered a 56 percent drop in sales for roughly three weeks, whereas those with an online presence experienced a far shallower decline of just 23 percent.

The clear takeaway is that nearly every business—from a hardware store in North Carolina to a corner shop in Nairobi—can strengthen its resilience to climate change by joining the digital economy.

The global effort to counteract climate change has expanded rapidly in recent years. The energy and automotive industries are overhauling supply chains to boost uptake of clean technologies. Governments are implementing policies to accelerate the green transition, from the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism to the United States' Inflation Reduction Act.

But measures to promote digital and financial inclusion—the critical work of providing internet access to left-behind communities, bank accounts to workers, and digital tools to entrepreneurs—are often missing in the fight against global warming. The report



on the impact of hurricanes, conducted by the World Bank, the Sustainable and Green Finance Institute, and the Mastercard Economics Institute, illustrates why integrating these measures into climate action plans would have a powerful effect.

More than one billion unbanked people live in the most climate-vulnerable countries, and improving their access to digital banking and payment services would make them and their communities more resilient to both economic and climate shocks. Following a natural disaster, households could more easily receive relief funds through digital money transfers, and businesses could continue selling to their customers online.

This represents a clear opportunity, especially for fintechs and nonprofits, to create more products and services at the intersection of climate resilience and digital inclusion. One good example is the social enterprise Abalobi, an Earthshot Prize finalist in 2023. Abalobi created an app that small-scale fishers can use to input catches, showing exactly where they are fishing.

The app addresses two problems. First, it provides invaluable data to governments and scientists about who is fishing sustainably and who is not. Second, small-scale fishers often sell through middlemen who pay low prices, which forces them to reel in as much as they can to make a living. But by using the app's digital marketplace, these fishers can connect directly with restaurants and other buyers, enabling them to sell their catch for higher prices. This allows them to fish more selectively, in turn reducing the strain on marine life.

Yo! Pay Agric, powered by Mastercard Community Pass, likewise enables smallholder farmers to connect

with regional buyers through their farmer cooperative organizations, bypassing middlemen and earning them higher prices for their crops. Transaction data from these sales can be used by farmers to establish their creditworthiness, making it easier for them to secure loans to invest in seeds, fertilizer, and clean-energy solutions such as solar-powered farm equipment. Digital and financial inclusion must become a core pillar of future climate efforts, with a focus on reducing the number of unbanked individuals and building digital infrastructure in climate-vulnerable communities. To that end, private companies, governments, and nonprofits need to work together to create innovative solutions,

including products like Abalobi and Yo! Pay. This approach would help local users improve their financial health while simultaneously promoting resilience.

Climate change and poverty are intertwined: we cannot effectively tackle one without addressing the other. Digital tools and access to financial services cannot stop climate-related disasters, but they can make it easier for people to recover from these shocks. Strengthening the financial resilience of the most climate-vulnerable households benefits local communities, while also benefiting the entire global economy.

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# Arm position affects blood pressure readings

*Blood pressure readings are an important part of preventative health care as it may signal underlying health issues. Having too high blood pressure (hypertension), or too low blood pressure (hypotension), could indicate potential health risks.*

**B**lood pressure is the force of the blood pushing against the artery walls, as it gets pumped from the heart into the blood vessels through the rhythmic constriction or relaxation of the heart muscles during heartbeats. The size and elasticity of the artery walls also affect blood pressure. The increased pressure on the artery wall caused by the constriction of the heart muscle is referred to as systolic pressure. Conversely, when the heart muscles relax, the pressure on the arterial walls decreases, and is referred to as diastolic pressure.

The blood pressure recorded using a sphygmomanometer, also called a blood pressure cuff, registers both systolic and diastolic pressure. The systolic number is usually displayed before or above the diastolic number in a blood pressure reading. For example, a reading of 120/80 means a systolic pressure of 120 and a diastolic pressure of 80.

Blood pressure readings are an important part of preventative health care as it may signal underlying health issues. Having too high blood pressure (hypertension), or too low blood pressure (hypotension), could indicate potential health risks. Abnormal high or low blood pressure can also lead to complications such as heart disease, stroke, organ issues, and dementia.

Since high blood pressure usually has no symptoms, the only way to know is by taking a blood pressure check. Accurate blood pressure measurement is essential for the diagnosis and treatment of hypertension, and is key to efforts aimed at prevention of cardiovascular diseases.

A new study by doctors at John Hopkins University in the United States found that certain commonly used arm positions for blood pressure readings may result in inaccurately high readings and misdiagnosis of high blood pressure. There are guidelines on the proper patient preparatory steps and positions to be followed prior to taking a blood pressure reading.



But direct observations and surveys have established that many healthcare providers do not adhere to these guidelines, either because the steps involved take time or require additional resources to comply with.

Direct observations and research conducted on compliance with blood pressure guidelines show that blood pressure is frequently measured with the arm resting in the lap or hanging at the side. In a bid to simplify blood pressure measurement, doctors behind the new study explored how important arm support and position was to blood pressure measurement accuracy.

For their study, the researchers recruited 133 adult participants ages 18 to 80. Participants were randomly assigned to sets of triplicate blood pressure measurements with their arm positioned in one of three ways when the

reading was taken — arm supported on a desk, arm supported on their lap, or an unsupported arm hanging at their side.

At the study's conclusion, researchers found that systolic blood pressure readings for participants who supported their arms on their laps were overestimated by about 4 mmHg (millimeter of mercury, the unit used to measure blood pressure) while readings for those positioning their arms unsupported by their sides had an overestimated systolic blood pressure by almost 7 mmHg.

The doctors explained that when the arm is either in the lap or at the side, the blood vessels in the arm are at a greater vertical distance from the heart. Gravity increases the pressure in these blood vessels.

It also is harder for the blood to return to the heart when the arm is lower than the heart;

to compensate for this, and improve blood return, the blood vessels in the arm constrict. In addition, when the arm is unsupported, the muscle is not fully at rest and contracts. All of these body responses lead to a higher blood pressure reading.

The study team said that while they expected to find a difference in blood pressure readings between the different arm positions, they were surprised by the magnitude of the difference. While the 4 or 7 mmHg difference in measurement may not seem like a big difference, that is enough to push someone's blood pressure categorization into a higher level.

Misdiagnosing high blood pressure can lead to serious health consequences, with overestimation of blood pressure, and overdiagnosis of hypertension, potentially leading to prescription for new medications that the patient may not actually need. Misdiagnosing high blood pressure can also lead to unnecessary treatment and medication, which can cause side effects. For example, people who are misdiagnosed with high blood pressure and given medication could develop hypotension.

The researchers said they hoped their findings would alert health care providers and patients alike to the importance of arm position and support on blood pressure measurement. They recommended that the room where blood pressure is being measured should be set up in such a way that there is a chair with a back support positioned next to a table or desk that is the appropriate height for the arm to rest with the mid-cuff at mid-heart level.

The team added that while this may take an investment in time and resources to ensure the blood pressure measurement setting is set up for proper measurement, the return on the investment has the potential to be significant. Especially in terms of better patient care with fewer misdiagnoses, as well as in saving time and money for patients and medical facilities.

## Activating brain cells using light

**P**arkinson's disease, which affects more than eight million people worldwide and leads to nearly 350,000 deaths annually is a progressive neurological disorder that causes nerve cells (neurons) in parts of the brain to weaken resulting in symptoms affecting muscle control, balance, movement, and mental health.

As the cause of Parkinson's is not known, there is no cure for the disease. Doctors can at best recommend therapies and medications to reduce the symptoms, or if these fail, then resort to invasive surgical procedures such as deep brain stimulations.

Scientists at the University of Rochester in the United States now say that they have developed a noninvasive method using bioluminescent optogenetics (BL-OG) that harnesses light to activate neurons in the brain. The ability to regulate brain activation non-invasively could transform current treatments for Parkinson's disease, as well as other neurological conditions such as dystonia (involuntary muscle contractions), and essential tremor disorder (rhythmic shaking of hands).

The advantage of the new technique is that it can create brain activation without the use of any implanted device in the brain to deliver the light stimulation. The scientists

behind the non-invasive process used optogenetics—an established research technique that uses light to activate or inactivate cells in the brain—along with bioluminescence—the chemical reaction that releases energy in the form of light, as seen in fireflies and other organisms that emit light.

The bioluminescence provides the light that optogenetics needs to render stimulation to the nerve cells. One further element needed to complete the BL-OG process was the organic substance known as luciferin, which when combined with bioluminescence, creates light that activates the optogenetics and modulates cellular response in the brain.

With all elements in place, the researchers moved the BL-OG into a predetermined brain region in mice. They then injected luciferin through a vein in the animal's tail to activate the targeted cells in the brain. They found that BL-OG effects occur rapidly in the brain, but that these effects could be controlled by scaling the dosage of the luciferin in the animal.

"The advantage of the new technique is that it can create brain activation without inserting any cable or other devices that could cause infection or have other



undesired effects. Another potential feature is that it could provide insight into how the brain works by tracking the neuromodulation effects of BL-OG through the bioluminescent activity.

The researchers said that before standardizing this technique in the lab, and potentially in the clinic, it was critical for them to map all the important parameters around using it. The latest findings now allow them to fine-tune the desired effects of BL-OG based on need and requirements.



# Uzbekistan supports exporters

*Export is a driver of the economy, enabling production growth, job creation, and GDP increase. Therefore, every country strives to support businesses seeking to expand their exports to foreign markets. This article discusses the comprehensive measures of direct support for exporters in Uzbekistan.*

Export support in the country is carried out systematically, strictly adhering to the goal set in the "Uzbekistan - 2030" Strategy – to increase the share of the private sector in exports to 60 percent.

Here are a few key figures: from 2017 to 2023, Uzbekistan's total export volume reached \$120 billion. In 2023, the export volume amounted to \$24 billion, a 64% increase compared to 2017.

Over the past six years, Uzbekistan's export geography has expanded to 33 new countries, increasing the number of foreign markets to 115. For the first time, Uzbek products entered the markets of countries such as Peru, Panama, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Albania, Serbia, Finland, Luxembourg, and others.

In recent years, the national export support system has focused on engaging entrepreneurial entities in export activities.

For instance, while about 3,000 local companies joined export activities last year, from January to October this year, 2,450 enterprises entered foreign markets for the first time, exporting products worth \$1 billion.

**Another element of the comprehensive approach is the creation of a favorable regulatory environment.**

In recent years, important regulatory changes have been implemented in Uzbekistan to simplify and stimulate export activities.

Specifically, these include the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures for the Implementation of Tasks Set in the Fourth Open Dialogue Between the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Entrepreneurs" dated August 30, 2024, aimed at supporting small and medium-sized businesses and improving financial conditions for entrepreneurs. Now, banks can issue unsecured microcredits of up to 300 million sums (about \$24,000), expanding access to capital. Tax incentives have been introduced for catering enterprises, including a 50% reduction in profit tax from 2025 to 2028, and partial VAT refunds for cashless transactions. The VAT refund procedure for exporters based on customs data has been simplified, facilitating export development and reducing administrative barriers.

The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures to Accelerate the Development of the Factoring Services Market" dated August 12, 2024, accelerates the development of the factoring services market in the country. It expands opportunities for non-bank credit organizations to engage in factoring, as well as extending operations with financial claims, including refinancing and working with foreign currency. The Decree also includes the creation of an electronic platform for automating the processing of applications and document checks, integrated with state systems. These measures help improve the availability of factoring services for businesses, enhance liquidity, and simplify trade and financial processes in the country.

The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures to Further Enhance the Role of Entrepreneurial Associations in the Development of Foreign Trade and Regional Industry" dated March 14, 2024, aims to strengthen the role of entrepreneurial associations in the development of foreign trade and regional industry. The document provides for the support and stimulation of exports and industrial production through instruments of the JSC "Trade Development Company", creation of technoparks, improvement of infrastructure, and expansion of financial instruments for entrepreneurs. It includes measures to strengthen partnerships between the government and the private sector to



increase competitiveness in international markets and improve domestic industrial policy.

The Decree of President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Additional Measures to Ensure Food Security in the Republic" dated February 16, 2024, is aimed at enhancing food security in the country. The Decree includes measures to support domestic food producers through concessional loans, subsidies, and tax incentives for expanding the production and processing of agricultural products. Furthermore, special emphasis is placed on stimulating food exports, including financial support through the Trade Promotion Fund and simplifying certification processes. These steps will help improve product quality and competitiveness in foreign markets, as well as ensure the stability of the domestic food market.

The Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated February 29, 2024, establishes measures to regulate



the export of fruits and vegetables. The document introduces measures to improve the control and regulation of foreign trade in agricultural products, including creating effective mechanisms to ensure high product quality, compliance with sanitary standards, and norms. The Resolution aims to increase the competitiveness of Uzbek fruit and vegetable products in international markets, as well as improve logistics and coordination of export supplies.

The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. RP-39 "On Measures for the Implementation of the

Business Sustainability Rating System" dated January 23, 2024, is aimed at introducing a business sustainability rating system in the country. The primary objective is to create a system for evaluating business organizations based on key indicators such as profitability, tax compliance, financial stability, and other factors affecting business sustainability. Depending on the sustainability level, businesses will be classified into categories with high, medium, or low ratings, which will impact their access to benefits and subsidies. Special support measures, including tax incentives and accelerated VAT refunds, are provided for businesses with high ratings. This system also includes mechanisms for appealing assessment results and monitoring business performance, which should enhance transparency and build trust between businesses and the government.

**As noted earlier, this work is carried out systematically: strategic goals and objectives have been set, and a regulatory**

**framework has been formed.**

**Specific practical measures have been implemented to enhance the export potential of the country through active support of export-oriented enterprises.**

Thus, Uzbekistan has introduced a mechanism for providing practical financial support to exporters, including:

- implementation of international standards and certification,
- registration of national products abroad,
- participation in international exhibitions and fairs,
- conducting presentations, advertising

campaigns, and promoting national products and brands in promising markets.

Furthermore, according to the Presidential Resolution of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated March 15, 2024, "On Measures to Further Enhance the Role of Entrepreneurial Associations in the Development of Foreign Trade and Regional Industry", the Export Promotion Agency was transformed into JSC "Trade Development Company". The primary tasks of the new organization are to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of state financial support measures for foreign economic activity participants based on the Business Sustainability Rating, as well as ensuring the delivery of state funds to enterprises exporting high-value-added products and exploring new markets.

The Company also provides informational and consultative support to businesses on transport logistics, certification, standardization, quality control, tax and customs administration, and implements the "Made in Uzbekistan" program to promote national brands and products abroad. It participates in organizing and financing national, industry, and regional exhibitions and fairs.

The Company takes active measures to financially support exporters, including providing compensation for insurance premiums when using insurance services, implementing international standardization and certification systems, and registering national products and brands.

It compensates part of transport expenses, expenses related to the implementation of reporting based on international standards, opening and maintaining trading houses and warehouses, conducting advertising campaigns, expenses for attracting qualified designers, technologists, marketers, quality controllers, and agronomists, promoting prestigious international brands, and implementing international standards.

Commercial banks are allocated resources to finance pre-export and export-related trade operations.

**Along with direct financial support mechanisms for local exporters, the government improves access to foreign trade networks and takes measures to facilitate entry into leading global markets.**

On April 10, 2021, Uzbekistan gained the status of a beneficiary country of the "GSP+" system. This system provides preferential customs tariffs on goods exported by developing countries to the European Union and covers over 6,200 types of goods, including industrial products and some agricultural goods. In 2023, goods worth \$426 million were exported under the "GSP+" system.

The main growth in exports to Europe was driven by increased supplies of various products, such as ready-made knitted garments (up 104%, +\$1.1 million), urea (109%, +\$2.2 million), ammonium nitrate (173%, +\$3.9 million), copper products (3-fold increase, +\$14 million), petroleum and gas products (111%, +\$4 million), and cellulose (141%, +\$2.3 million).

In 2023, support was provided to 235 exporting companies, which implemented 575 international standards and certificates, such as "ISO", "Global GAP", "Organic", "GOTS", "REACH", "LWG", "GRS", "RSC", and "SEDEX". The total value of this support amounted to 39.3 billion sums, enabling Uzbek products to be exported to 7 major European markets: France, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Germany, Belgium, and Romania.

In general, the ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan to support exports provide a strong forecast for reaching the targeted volumes set in the National Strategy by 2030.

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