



**LOCAL**  
 Kuwait opens visas for all nationalities **2**

**LOCAL**  
 Amended traffic law imposes stiff penalties for traffic offences **5**

**TRAVEL**  
 Meissen: Visiting Germany's Porcelain Legacy **9**

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# Empowering school leaders, ensuring quality education

By Reaven D'Souza  
 Executive Managing Editor

Quality education is key to achievements in life and work. Good education develops critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, and equips individuals to comprehend, navigate, and address issues that matter to their lives, as well as opens opportunities to attain their social and financial goals. Quality education also helps broaden outlooks and contribute to developing sustainable, equitable and inclusive societies.

In addition, quality education is key to equip youth for the world of tomorrow, and to shape generations aware of their responsibility to protect and preserve the planet and its biodiversity. The International Day of Education, observed annually on 24 January, inspires us to reflect on this significant power of education to create knowledgeable societies that contribute to the productive, innovative, sustainable and peaceful development of communities and nations worldwide.



Given this criticality of education to overall holistic development of individuals and nations, it is alarming that more than 250 million children worldwide are currently out of school, and millions more are leaving school without the basic literacy and numeracy skills to rise in a rapidly evolving world. The inability of global educational systems to provide quality learning opportunities to all, is highlighted in the latest Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report released by the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) last October.

The report examines the role of good leadership in advancing educational progress, through their ability to inspire and motivate their teams to achieve goals, to encourage stakeholder engagement, and

to establish a culture of continuous improvement. The report also monitors progress on the fourth UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4), which calls for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, and promoting learning opportunities for all by 2030.

The UN report finds that unless we invest in effective educational leadership and catalyze the pace of progress on SDG 4, more than 84 million children and youth could be left out of school, and over 300 million students would be denied the basic literacy and numeracy skills they need to succeed in life. This educational shortfall could contribute to further deepening inequality and poverty worldwide by 2030.

CONTINUED on PAGE 6

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# Kuwait opens visas for all nationalities

*Brigadier Hamad Al-Ruwaih said the process for granting tourist visas at border ports for Gulf residents is simplified, with some transactions taking one minute and others up to 24 hours due to security checks.*

Kuwait has opened its door to visitors from all over the world and everyone is welcome to visit Kuwait, provided they adhere to the rules and regulations set by the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs.

Revealing this new openness to visitors, Director of the Special Services Department in the Residency Affairs Sector at the Ministry of Interior (Mol), Brigadier Hamad Al-Ruwaih, stated: "Kuwait is now open to anyone wishing to visit, which was not the case in the past. Today, we are open to the world, and anyone can apply for a visa, whether for tourism or in connection with residents who wish to bring their families. This is facilitated according to the conditions for visiting or joining family members."

He added that the new residence law has streamlined visa processes for tourism, commercial, and family visits, making it easier for visitors. However, he clarified that this broad welcome of visitors to Kuwait was not applicable to citizens of Israel and they would continue to be banned from entering Kuwait.

On the diplomatic front, the Mol officer explained that the Department of Special Services "specializes in handling the transactions of diplomatic bodies and embassies within the country. These transactions are governed by agreements between countries and are subject to different fees accordingly." He added that his department was also responsible for issuing



government visas. Elaborating on the speed in delivering visas to eligible applicants, Al-Ruwaih stated that the department processes transactions either in person or online through the government 'Sahel' application, in addition to a dedicated platform for receiving transactions. Processing times range from as little as one minute to a maximum of 24 hours, as some cases require heightened security audits.

He highlighted that those eligible for an e-visa and wishing to visit Kuwait must apply through the Kuwait e-Visa website. The application is then reviewed according to specific regulations, and the visa is approved or rejected accordingly. Al-

Ruwaih also pointed out that tourist visas can be granted at border ports for residents of Gulf countries working in approved professions. The visa covers the applicant and their family. For citizens of 52 countries, visas can also be obtained directly upon arrival at the airport under this mechanism.

Al-Ruwaih emphasized that the new residence law has significantly reduced the chaos and violations that were previously common. These issues had led to frequent breaches of residence regulations by both visitors and residents, resulting in financial penalties and deportations.

He stated, "Since the introduction of tourist,

commercial, and family visas, we have ensured compliance with the law for both visitors and sponsors. Violators face fines and binding legal measures, including deportation and a permanent ban on re-entry into Kuwait."

Emphasizing that the influx of expatriates through the newly opened visa channels has made it necessary for the state to impose high fines on certain violations to ensure legal compliance, Al-Ruwaih said that these fines for visa violations have come into effect from 5 January, of this year. "We do not aim to collect fines," he said, "but we want visitors and residents to respect and abide by the law without violating it."

Brigadier General Al-Ruwaih highlighted that some fines can reach up to a maximum of KD2,000. He explained, "For example, failure to report the birth of a newborn used to previously incur a fine of KD2 per day and was capped at a maximum of KD600. The new law now stipulates that the fine, which starts at KD2 per day for the first month, will go up to KD4 per day during the second month of non-reporting, and escalate further if the unreported period exceeds four months, which could then lead to the accumulation of a severe penalty. Regarding domestic labor violations, he noted that the fines remain unchanged, with a maximum penalty of up to KD600."

He concluded by noting that website for visa applications to Kuwait is at: <https://kuwaitvisa.moi.gov.kw/>



## Grand Hyper brings exclusive deals to the 'Ya Hala Kuwait' shopping festival

As part of the 'Ya Hala' Kuwait Shopping Festival, the Grand Hyper logo was officially launched at the Egaila Grand Hyper Outlet. The event featured Saad Al Hamad unveiling the new logo. This marks the first time authorities have introduced such an engaging shopping festival in Kuwait.

Grand Hyper has announced numerous offers and eye-catching prize schemes as part of the 'Ya Hala Kuwait' Shopping Festival. Magnificent prizes have been introduced for the 70-day-long festival. Customers can participate in this exciting opportunity by filling out a coupon received for every KD 10 purchase and depositing it in the boxes placed in various stores. Prizes worth \$7.7 million, including 120 luxury cars and \$1 million in cash, await the lucky winners.

Regional Director Ayub Kacheri announced



that various art programs have been organized at different Grand Hyper branches as part of the 'Ya Hala Kuwait' celebration. CEO Muhammad Suneer, DRO Tahsir Ali, COO Muhammad Aslam, and representatives of Matt Management were present at the logo launch ceremony.

## Cabinet issues law to amend public service fees

Decree-Law No. 1 of 2025, which was published in the official gazette, Al-Kuwait Al-Youm, addresses fees and financial costs for using public facilities and services.

The new law also stipulates the cancellation of Law No. 79 of 1995 and any of its provisions contrary to the new law.

The explanatory memorandum of Decree-Law No. 1 of 2025 on fees and financial costs for the use of public facilities and services states that, due to continuous economic and social changes and the need for the state to be flexible in managing financial resources and providing public services sustainably, it is necessary to abolish Law No. 79 of 1995.

This will help regulate the demand for services, based on the principle of good management of public facilities, while increasing the flexibility of government ministries and departments to develop their own mechanisms for pricing public services and fees. Social justice will be considered, with no harm to the minimum living standard.

Law No.1 of 2025 mandates a review of fees by the relevant authorities, with adjustments based on service cost and benefits, while ensuring social justice and preserving the general subsistence minimum.

Article two of the new law states that "each entity shall determine the fees and costs for

the use of public facilities and services through a decision by the competent authority of each entity, in accordance with the governing law, after approval by the Council of Ministers."

The explanatory memorandum added that, in the event of the law's cancellation, the fees subject to it will be studied and analyzed



by the concerned authorities and re-priced according to the cost of service and benefit. This will be done through a decision by the competent authority in accordance with its law and after being presented to the Council of Ministers.

The new law adds that the ministers, each in their respective areas, shall implement this decree-law, which shall take effect from the date of its publication in the official gazette.

## Power, water projects to be expedited to meet demand growth

Council of Ministers has expressed strong support to the projects being undertaken by the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy (MEWRE) that are aimed at enhancing utility supplies to meet the present and future needs of the country.

The Cabinet's supportive stance came following the allocation of over KD1.77 billion for 18 projects that seek to enhance supplies from Kuwait's electricity and water

sectors, with a five-year timeline set for completion by 2030.

Ministry sources have confirmed that several projects are already underway and many more are in the pipeline and will be opened soon for bidding by local and international companies and consortiums. The timeline for completing the new electricity, water, and renewable energy projects is set to the end of 2030,

The largest project being undertaken

by the MEWRE currently is the first phase of the supply, installation, operation, and maintenance of combined cycle gas turbine units with a 3,600 MW output. The project, located south of the country in the Nuwaiseeb area, has been budgeted KD950 million.

Another major project being developed by the MEWRE is the implementation of the fourth phase of the supply, installation, operation, and maintenance of a joint cycle

gas turbine unit at the Sabiya power plant in Jahra governorate. The project, valued at KD267 million is projected to increase electrical energy capacity by 900 MW.

In a related development, the MEWRE has allocated KD100 million for the installation of smart meters across all regions of Kuwait, and initiated a project to purchase renewable energy from third parties at a cost of KD1.35 million, which is expected to be completed during the current year.

# Social spending high in Kuwait outcomes fall short of expectations

Amid ongoing directives from the Council of Ministers to reform the economy and accelerate infrastructure, housing, and development projects, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has urged Kuwait to take immediate and decisive action in managing public finances.

ESCWA warned that the window for implementing critical reforms is shrinking rapidly and emphasized the need for swift measures to address current challenges, ensure long-term fiscal stability, and adopt its ten recommendations aimed at steering Kuwait towards a more integrated, equitable, and sustainable economy, according to Al Jarida newspaper.

ESCWA stated in its report released last week and titled, 'Social Spending, Spending Efficiency, and Financial Sustainability: Strategies to Rebalance Kuwait's Budget', that Kuwait is at a critical juncture in its economic trajectory. The country faces significant challenges in financial sustainability and the efficiency of social spending.

The report noted that public spending in Kuwait constitutes 50 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), significantly higher than the global average of 37 percent, but the management of this spending remains inefficient, with Kuwait scoring 0.54 on the efficiency index for social spending, compared to a global average of 0.74.



It highlighted that improving spending efficiency to meet the global average could result in financial savings of KD6.8 billion, equivalent to approximately 27 percent of the state's public spending for 2023/2024.

The report identified issues in the equitable distribution of government transfers to individuals, noting that wealthier households currently benefit from 22 percent of total transfers due

to the lack of effective targeting mechanisms. It recommended reallocating these transfers to middle- and low-income families, which would free up significant financial resources to be directed towards the most critical development sectors.

ESCWA called for the implementation of broad financial reforms to bolster Kuwait's economy, emphasizing economic diversification through the strengthening of non-oil sectors and support for the private sector. It also stressed the importance of enhancing mechanisms for collecting non-oil revenues, adopting performance-based budgeting, and utilizing digital platforms to improve transparency and efficiency.

The report underscored the need to develop public services, particularly by investing in preventive healthcare and modernizing medical infrastructure. It also recommended improving education through teacher training, curriculum development, and expanding research initiatives to support long-term economic and social goals.

Finally, ESCWA emphasized aligning Kuwait's financial strategy with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve long-term economic stability. Implementing these reforms could enhance Kuwait's rankings in global indices, such as the Human Development Index and the SDG Index, positioning the country to better achieve its economic and developmental aspirations.

## Kuwait launches new initiative to document, protect perennial trees

The Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources has approved an initiative proposed by activists Saad Al-Hayyan and Nasser Al-Hadian to protect perennial trees by assigning identification codes, documenting their numbers, locations, and ages, and linking them to relevant authorities.

The authority also approved the initiative to expand the Al-Sudairat to its original boundaries, on the condition that design plans for the project are submitted to the authority for review and approval according to the specified terms and conditions before work begins.



In this context, environmental activist Saad Al-Hayan told the newspaper that "numbering perennial trees in the country will help improve Kuwait's environmental performance index." He explained that "this initiative will include numbering perennial trees across all regions, following a specific mechanism and statistical method to

estimate the approximate age of each tree, utilizing research bodies and creating a website to share information about these trees, their stories, and other relevant details."

He added that "expanding the Al-Sudairat will encourage the return of wildlife that previously inhabited and nested in the area, such as catbirds, certain pigeon species, and land rabbits, which will further enhance Kuwait's global environmental indicators, transforming it from a hot oven into an



## Peshawar Zalmi, Kuwait Cricket Official partner to nurture global talent

Peshawar Zalmi and Kuwait Cricket Official have signed a historic memorandum of understanding (MoU) to support the next generation of sporting talent, offering aspiring athletes opportunities to shine on the global stage. This historic partnership introduces an exciting exchange program, offering talented cricketers remarkable opportunities to refine their skills and pursue greater ambitions in cricket and beyond.

A promotional banner for Republic Day. At the top, it features the 'MUGHAL MAHAL' logo with the tagline 'Everyone's First Choice' and 'SINCE 1965', alongside the Arabic text 'مغل محل' and 'الاختيار الأول للجميع'. The background shows a faint illustration of the Taj Mahal. A large, stylized 'Happy Republic Day' message is written in gold and green. Below it, the text 'Wishing you a happy' is visible. At the bottom, it says 'Republic Day' and 'Let us honor the brave souls who fought for our freedom and continue to uphold the values of justice, equality and liberty that define our great nation.' The website 'www.mughalmahal.com' and social media handle '@mughalmahalkuwait' are listed, along with the phone number 'Call: 1800 188'.



# Music Diplomacy: American Jazz Band Brings Soulful Music to Kuwait

By Shouq Al Mulla  
Special to The Times Kuwait

A jazz music performance of the Aurora Nealand Jazz Quintet band was organised by the Public Diplomacy Section of the US Embassy on 19 January at the Yarmouk Cultural Center.

The chief guest, US Ambassador H.E. Karen Sasahara extended her heartfelt gratitude to Sabah Al Rayes for facilitating this performance and for his continued support for music, stating that this musical performance stands as

testament to enduring friendship and cultural exchange between the two countries.

The musical was performed by band-founder Aurora Nealand, an American saxophonist, clarinetist, singer and composer and her band who traveled all the way from New Orleans to play their captivating soulful melodies to delight the Kuwaiti audience, and showcase the versatility and beauty of jazz music. They are set to perform yet another musical in Bayt Abdullah Hospice for Children on 21 January at 6 pm.

Jazz originated in the early 20th century

in the United States, emerging in the vibrant port city of New Orleans, Louisiana where African, Caribbean and European musical influences collided to create a new, dynamic sound that celebrated both individual creativity and communal experience. Today, jazz is not just a music genre, but rather is a global phenomenon, embraced by cultures all around the globe.

Music has always played a significant role in diplomacy, serving as a tool to foster understanding, build bridges, and promote peace between nations. On 27 September

2023, the US Department of State launched the Global Music Diplomacy Initiative, which builds on existing music diplomacy efforts and delivers upon the bipartisan Promoting Peace, Education, and Cultural Exchange.

In a world often divided by political and cultural differences, music is more than just entertainment, it is a universal language that transcends the barriers of culture, language, and geography and serves as a reminder of our shared humanity, ensuring that the universal language of harmony continues to inspire future generations.

## 'Spread the Word' campaign aims to raise awareness on fake tickets



By P.N.J. Kumar  
CEO of Caesars Travel Group – Kuwait and India  
Special to The Times Kuwait

The increase in incidents of fake airline tickets being issued to passengers has become an issue of growing concern in the travel industry. These counterfeit tickets, created using sophisticated online tools, closely resemble real airline tickets and can easily trick passengers.

Many passengers unknowingly hold these fake tickets, only to be denied check-in at airports because the tickets have no valid confirmation or seat assignments. Often, these passengers are deceived by untrustworthy travel agents or middlemen who claim to assist with ticket bookings and defraud passengers of their money.

As a result, travelers lose their hard-earned money, and their entire travel plans are disrupted. They are forced to buy new tickets, often at higher prices due to limited availability, especially as the departure date approaches. The previous fake tickets are non-refundable, as they are not recorded in the airline's system.

According to airport authorities in Kuwait, this issue is becoming increasingly common, with many passengers presenting fake tickets—either fabricated to look like original ones or simply reservations that were later canceled, leaving no confirmed bookings in the system.

This issue should be taken seriously, as reputed travel agents are often accused of fraud due to passengers mistakenly believing that travel agents are knowingly involved in creating fake tickets. This creates distrust within the travel industry and makes it harder for customers to feel confident about their travel arrangements.

To some extent, a few unprofessional travel

agents are involved, but it depends on the type of agents you approach, as the credibility, especially of some 'seasonal agents', are always in question. This is why it is important to 'Know Your Source' when buying a ticket. Reputable booking platforms are far less likely to sell fake tickets compared to lesser-known agencies or individual sellers. One of the main reasons for the rise in fake tickets is the shift towards electronic tickets, which complicates the situation, as it has become very easy for anyone to create fake documentation.

With the challenge of fake tickets growing, it is crucial to educate passengers on ways to avoid becoming victims of these scams, and the racket operating behind the scenes to cheat them.

As travel becomes more digitized, distinguishing between a genuine ticket and a fake one is becoming increasingly tricky. So, how can passengers avoid fake tickets? There are several telltale signs to look out for, and certain best practices that passengers can employ, to avoid becoming victims of fake ticket scams:

- Never approach any freelancer or middleman for your airline tickets.
- Freelancers or middlemen may offer tickets at huge discounts compared to the prevailing market fare, but do not fall into these traps. Remember, if the price is too low to be true; it usually is not.
- Offering such large discounts is itself a red flag. While there may be a narrow fare difference between travel agents, huge discounts should raise suspicion, as they often indicate an attempt to grab your money. While you may be tempted to cut costs or secure travel arrangements, using fraudulent documents can lead to serious legal trouble.
- Once you make a reservation with a travel agent, make sure to get a customized ticket copy from them (the ticket should always have the travel agent's monogram with a complete address).
- Always be aware that those attempting to cheat you may include their own or someone else's contact number on the fake booking/ticket. Ensure that your own contact number is inserted in the booking.

- Make sure the travel agent staff who issued the ticket includes the airline's telephone number on the ticket and booking reference (PNR).
- Counter-check with the airline to confirm whether the booking is active. You should do this on the same day the ticket is purchased, or at least by the next day. This will ensure that you have a live and confirmed booking for your travel. Do not wait until the day before your travel date to call the airline, as it may be more difficult to resolve last-minute issues.
- When you call the airline, make sure to confirm two things: 1) Is the booking confirmed? 2) Have the tickets been issued?
- Travelers can also verify the legitimacy of the ticket using the PNR on the airline's official website, as calling the airline can sometimes be difficult due to long wait times.
- Many airlines now use dynamic QR codes on their e-tickets. These codes change frequently and are linked to a specific flight itinerary, making it nearly impossible for counterfeiters to copy.
- Mobile App Verification: Many airlines offer mobile apps with real-time ticket verification features. You can scan your ticket using the airline's database for peace of mind before heading to the airport.
- Never give the ticket money to a middleman, freelancer, or even a travel agent's staff. A staff member may also be involved in cheating you. This is why, we emphasize, do not pay money to staff—always pay directly to the travel agency, preferably to an official cashier or the relevant authority.
- If possible, visit the travel agent in person to collect your ticket. Ensure you receive a receipt for the money paid. This serves as evidence of your ticket purchase. Without it, you have no claim to the money paid.
- If you cannot visit the travel agent in person, request the ticket copy via WhatsApp or email along with the payment link details to settle the payment.



- Do not send money to any personal account of a staff member or middleman; always pay directly to the travel agent's account.
- Check with your bank account to confirm that the money has been transferred to the travel agent.
- Finally, after confirming the payment has been transferred to the travel agent, contact them to send you a copy of the receipt for your records. (If possible, collect the original receipt.)

If you are able to complete the above cycle, you can avoid, to a certain extent, unknowingly purchasing fake tickets that could cause substantial financial losses, denial of boarding, and disruption to your entire travel plans. Additionally, you may have to spend extra money to buy new tickets.

Not only are airline fake tickets a concern, but visa applications are also often scrutinized, and using fake flight documents could result in permanent denial of entry to a country. This is not just a minor inconvenience; it could affect future travel plans to other nations that share immigration information.

Moreover, many travel insurance policies explicitly exclude coverage for losses incurred due to illegal activities, including the use of fake tickets. So, not only could you face legal trouble, but you might also bear the financial burden of any problems arising from these fraudulent documents.

At Caesars Travel Group, we are launching a public awareness campaign, 'Spread the Word' to warn travelers about the dangers of buying tickets from unofficial sources. These campaigns emphasize the importance of "How to Avoid Travel Scams, Buying Fake Tickets, etc." We have explained the details above, as the ease of creating and distributing fake tickets is increasing. Therefore, it is essential for travelers to exercise caution and follow the above guidelines to avoid the financial burden and protect their travels as safely as possible.

# Amended traffic law imposes stiff penalties for traffic offences

New traffic regulations announced on 19 January through Decree-Law 5/2025, amends several provisions of Traffic Law 67/1976, and will come into force within three months of its publication in the official gazette, Al-Kuwait Al-Youm.

Some of the articles that have been amended in new law include:

**Article 6:** Issuance or renewal of a license is conditional to obtaining vehicle insurance. Minister of Interior will release the rules, terms, the insurance fees, and cases where the insurance companies pay compensation for the accident upon settlement.

**Article 8:** Each motorized vehicle must bear two plates, provided by the relevant traffic authorities. One plate must be affixed in the front of the vehicle and the other at the rear. For trailers and semi-trailers, only one plate is required, which must be affixed to the rear of the vehicle.

The plates must always remain visible, and their information must be clearly legible. It is prohibited to alter the location of the plates, use them on a different vehicle, or replace or modify their information or design. The plates must be visible, not blurred and fixed.

**Article 14:** Minister of Interior may, by decree, limit the number of motor vehicles authorized by the General Directorate of Traffic, except for private vehicles belonging to citizens. The article also establishes tariffs for taxi and transportation services of all types.

**Article 22:** No person is permitted to learn to drive motorized vehicles without first obtaining a learning permit from the General Directorate of Traffic.

**Article 24:** A driving license granted for the first time may be withdrawn if the holder commits two violations specified under Articles 33 or 38 during the first year. The first-time driver whose license is withdrawn can apply for a new license only after four months of the withdrawal of the first one, and they may be required to complete an awareness course or undergo re-testing if deemed necessary by the General Directorate of Traffic.

**Article 33:** Without prejudice to the measures outlined in this law or any harsher penalties prescribed by other laws, any individual shall face imprisonment of up to three months, a



fine between KD150 and KD300, or both for the following:

- Driving the vehicle without the knowledge of the owner or a person who has the license
- Driving a vehicle without proper attention, thereby endangering the lives or property of the driver, passengers, or third parties.
- Not providing policemen with the driving license and the vehicle's papers
- Parking on sidewalks or on pedestrian crossings
- Parking on the highways at night without turning on the blinking lights
- Performing repairs on a vehicle damaged in an accident without written authorization from the competent authority of the Ministry of Interior.
- Engaging in behavior that violates public morals while inside a vehicle.
- Providing false information or documentation with the intent to obtain a vehicle operating license, driving license, or any other permit, or to issue a copy or replacement for any of them.
- Failing to yield to government vehicles such as police, ambulances, firefighting

units, civil defense vehicles, official convoys and their affiliated vehicles when their sirens are active, or following them for the purpose of bypassing other vehicles on the road.

- Driving on the shoulder of the road.
- Using mobile communication devices or any other handheld devices, or being otherwise distracted while driving.
- Driving a vehicle that emits harsh noises, thick smoke, or offensive odors; carries volatile, flammable, or harmful materials; or has unbalanced or defective components such as tires, posing a danger to road users.
- Fleeing or attempting to escape after causing a traffic accident that damages public or private property.

In addition the article stipulates that a driver shall be subject to imprisonment for a period of more than one year but not exceeding three years, a fine ranging from KD600 to KD1,000 dinars, or both for the following violations:

- Running a red traffic light.
- Driving a vehicle recklessly or negligently, endangering lives or property.
- Organizing or participating in

unauthorized motor vehicle races, violating the conditions of a permit for a race, or gathering vehicles for reckless or negligent use that endangers lives or property.

- Exceeding the speed limit.
- Driving vehicles or motorbikes outside their designated areas.
- Driving in the opposite direction of traffic on highways or Ring Roads.
- Driving a vehicle with no number plate or a damaged one with blurred figures;
- Driving a vehicle without a driving license; with a license that does not authorize operation of that vehicle; or while the license is suspended or withdrawn.
- Using motorized vehicles for transporting passengers for a fare without proper authorization.
- Parking in spaces designated for disabled persons.

**Article 38:** Without prejudice to the measures prescribed in this law or any harsher penalty under other laws:

- Anyone who drives or attempts to drive a vehicle under the influence of intoxicating beverages, drugs, psychotropic substances, or medications that explicitly warn against driving, or any other substance impairing natural faculties, shall be punished by imprisonment for a period ranging between one and two years, a fine ranging between KD1000 and KD3000, or both.
- If the offense results in an accident causing damage to public or third-party property, the penalty shall be imprisonment for a period ranging between one and three years, a fine ranging between KD2000 and KD3000, or both.
- If the offense results in an accident causing injury or death, the penalty shall be imprisonment for a period ranging between two and five years, a fine ranging between KD2000 and KD5000 dinars, or both.
- The court shall order the withdrawal of the driving license for a period ranging between one and three years. In the case of repeat offenses, the court may extend the withdrawal period to between three and five years.

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# Diabetes a common chronic disorder in Kuwait, globally



**D**iabetes is a chronic and common disease not only in Kuwait, but also across the world, and is the main cause of serious health complications, said Minister of Health Ahmad Al-Awadhi.

The minister's remarks came while delivering the keynote address at the First International Dasman Diabetes Summit (IDDS), organized by Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI) in Kuwait last week. The minister warned that diabetes causes, inter alia, heart and arterial diseases, heart and strokes, vision loss, and kidney failure.

Underlining the significance of this conference to discussing all matters pertinent to diabetes, he hoped that the event would come up with findings that could positively affect the level of health services and promote scientific bonds between Kuwait and advanced world centers.

He considered the three-day conference a scientific platform for a galaxy of local and world scholars and experts to explore the latest scientific and research advancement of diabetes, along with prevention and innovative techniques. In his address to the gathering on the occasion,

Acting Director-General of Dasman Diabetes Institute, Dr. Faisal Al-Refai said the conference, which attracted more than 400 Kuwaiti, Gulf and world doctors, scholars and specialists, highlighted diabetes as a chronic and common disease not only in Kuwait but across the entire world.

He added that it was also an exceptional opportunity for specialists and experts, along with relevant bodies, to communicate and share knowledge and promote cooperation in medical care, noting that one in five Kuwaitis suffers from diabetes.

## Kuwait, Mongolia sign agreement to enhance bilateral air transport

**O**n the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Mongolia, a new legal framework was established through the signing of an 'Services Agreement' that facilitates among others the launch of direct flights between the two countries. Air for opening of direct flights between Mongolia and Kuwait by signing on the "Air service agreement" between the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the State of Kuwait on January 19, 2025.

The Air service agreement was signed on 19 January by Mongolia's State Secretary of the Ministry of Road and Transport Batbold Sandagdorj, who is on a visit to Kuwait, and from the Kuwaiti side by the President of the General-Directorate of Civil Aviation Sheikh Humoud Mubarak H. Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The signing ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of Mongolia H.E. Sergelen Purev, the Director General of the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation, Duaij Khalaf Alotaibi, and a number

of senior officials from both sides. This agreement creates an opportunity for air carriers of the two countries to operate direct and commercial flights, and will serve as a stopover point for new flight routes not only to other countries in the region, but also to Europe. The agreement is also of significant economic importance, as it will increase passenger traffic, promote tourism, and enhance trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Specifically, it will ease the logistics of meat exports from Mongolia to Kuwait, making the export process more constant and efficient.

Following the signing of the agreement the visiting Mongolian official held discussion with Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Sabah on bilateral matters related to air services and transport.

During the meeting, Mr. Sandagdorj noted that the road and transport sector plays an important role in cooperation between the two countries, as it serves as the foundation for expanding and developing cooperation in many sectors such as



trade, economy, tourism, culture, and education. He also expressed interest in launching direct flights between the two countries at the earliest convenience.

In his remarks on the occasion, Ambassador Sergelen said that the Kuwaiti side has proposed an intergovernmental agreement to exempt visa requirements for holders of all types of passports and requested his support for finalizing this agreement soon.

The ambassador also expressed his satisfaction with the finalization of the Air Services Agreement, and stressed that it would enhance trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. He added that the two sides are also working on organizing high-level bilateral visits as part of the

50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. He concluded by extending his sincere gratitude to the relevant Kuwaiti institutions and experts who supported in concluding this important agreement.

For his part, Sheikh Hamoud Mubarak Al-Sabah, expressed his readiness and support for opening of direct flights, and committed to organize urgent meetings with relevant organizations such as Kuwait Airways and Al-Jazeera Airways to study the possibilities. He also revealed that the aviation authority was working closely with the relevant Kuwaiti authorities to finalize the visa waiver agreement between the two countries, which aims to exempt holders of all types of passports from visa requirements.

## Empowering school leaders, ensuring quality education

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The report also explores the visions of good leadership, practices that lead to improved education outcomes, and the impact of external social, cultural, and governance factors on effective leadership. In this regard, the GEM report emphasizes the criticality of developing strong educational leadership to drive progress towards SDG 4, and improve learning outcomes through quality education.

Effective educational leadership is also vital in providing vision, direction, and guidance for educational institutions, as well as promoting positive change that fosters a conducive learning environment and enhances overall quality of education. Despite this need for effective, empowered school leaders, only half of school principals globally receive training in core areas like teaching, collaboration, and personnel development.

The urgent need to invest in training and empowering dedicated school leaders cannot be overstressed, as this forms the core of reversing current educational challenges. Without effective leaders in education we risk condemning millions of children to a life of illiteracy and mediocre educational outcomes. Educational leaders, in the context of schools and learning institutions include administrators, principals, teachers, and others in the community directly involved with schools.

At the system level, leaders in education include government officials working as education district officers, supervisors or policy planners. At the societal level, the leaders involved include ministers of education, legislators and other stakeholders who help shape education goals, including education researchers, civil society organizations and the media.

In Kuwait, there are many dedicated school principals, district managers and education

ministers, committed to improving educational processes and outcomes. However, it is at the legislative level that the educational ball appears to have been dropped in the past. Use of influence in educational appointments, interference in the educational processes and policies, and appeasements to ease pressure in parliament have all taken a toll on the quality of education delivered previously.

Although education in Kuwait is compulsory for all students up to intermediate level, and free for nationals from primary all the way to higher education, these factors are not reflected in educational outcomes. In addition, despite allocating a relatively high 6 percent of its GDP

on education, this outlay on education has not translated into improving quality of learning and teaching in the country.

A recent report by the World Bank titled 'Learning Poverty Brief (2024)' found that 51 percent of children in Kuwait at late primary age are not proficient in reading. While this is 2 percentage points lower [better] than the average for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, it is 30 percentage points higher [worse] than the average for high income countries.

Additionally, an earlier report that assessed the quality of educational output in Kuwait found that

a child leaving after 12 years of formal schooling learns the equivalent of only 7.4 years, meaning that children lose more than 4 years of schooling due to poor learning outcomes. To put this shortfall in perspective, a high-school graduate in Kuwait learns the equivalent of a middle-school graduate in Singapore.

In a welcome move, the Cabinet headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdulla Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has indicated its commitment to change the status quo, and has made reforming and enhancing education a key plank of its development strategy. Newly appointed Minister of Education, Jalal Al-Tabtabei, and his immediate predecessor and current Minister of Higher

Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Nader Al-Jalal, now face the challenging task of redressing past anomalies, and leading the country to a renaissance in learning.

Following his appointment in October last year, Minister Al-Tabtabei held a meeting with Assistant Under Secretaries at the ministry, where he stressed the need to focus on qualifying, training and supporting teachers and educational leaders to enhance educational outcomes. He added that the rapid technological advancements, and profound political, economic, and social transformations globally, made it vital to

reformulate Kuwait's education system to equip students for tomorrow's world. The importance of enabling educational leaders was also reiterated by Minister Al-Jalal, who said that school leaders including teachers play a vital role in the country's renaissance, and in achieving Kuwait's vision of a knowledge-based sustainable society. He added that teachers are leaders, role models, and knowledge providers who enable students to face present and future challenges,

Al-Jalal indicated that it was through dedicated leaders in teaching that, "minds are shaped, capabilities are augmented, talents are refined, and ambitions realized". He emphasized that Kuwait remains committed to investing in the professional development of teachers and school leaders, and improving the work environment, so as to enhance the educational process and quality of education in the country.

The emphasis on teachers and educational leaders was also underlined by the Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay. In his foreword to the 2024-25 GEM report, Azoulay stated that educational leaders are catalysts for change, they bring out the best in teachers and are instrumental in improving learning outcomes. He called for a shift from hierarchical, centralized education systems to more inclusive leadership that engages principals, teachers, parents, student representatives, and community members.

Azoulay noted that while many leaders in education are passionate about their work and dedicated to making a difference on the ground, rigid systems and political interference prevent them from striving for excellence.

He added, "By enabling and empowering school leaders to fulfill their potential, we can bring new energy into educational systems, inspire younger generations, and help build a sustainable shared vision that calls for inclusive and quality education for all."

“Effective educational leadership is also vital in providing vision, direction, and guidance for educational institutions, as well as promoting positive change that fosters a conducive learning environment and enhances overall quality of education. Despite this need for effective, empowered school leaders, only half of school principals globally receive training in core areas like teaching, collaboration, and personnel development.”

# Canada, Kuwait share commitment to global peace, humanitarian efforts

*The 60th anniversary celebration at the National Library highlighted Kuwait-Canada's strong historical ties, fruitful cooperation, and shared commitment to the UN Charter, international law, and human rights.*



## The Times Kuwait Report

**E**mbassy of Canada celebrated the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and Kuwait with a lively event hosted at the National Library of Kuwait last week. Attending the event was the Ambassador of Canada, H. E. Aliya Mawani, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry, Nawaf Abdullatif Sulaiman Al-Ahmed, and Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Literature (NCCAL) Dr. Mohammed Al-Jassar, along with special invitees and media personnel.

In her address to the gathering, Ambassador Mawani said the 60 years of diplomatic relations between Canada and Kuwait reflect the strength and enduring nature of their bilateral relationship. The robust relations also mirror the shared commitment of both nations to enhance global security and stability and strengthen bilateral cooperation, as well as pursue humanitarian efforts.

She added, "The 60th anniversary of our diplomatic relations comes at a time of change and transformation in both our countries and the world. This period is marked by polarization

and uncertainty, yet it also coincides with both nations assuming key leadership roles. Canada is the President of the Group of Seven, while Kuwait is the President of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Capital of Arab Culture and Media for 2025. These positions provide platforms for us, as partners and members of the global community, to further our shared commitments.

"Canada and Kuwait favor a collective approach to solving problems. We firmly believe that more can be achieved together, and this has been the essence of our diplomatic relations since the official establishment of ties on 27 April 1965. This is further reinforced by Canada's role in Kuwait's liberation, where about 4,500 of our troops participated. Today, Kuwait is an important partner in Canada's defense and security, having hosted a base for the Canadian Armed Forces since 2011. Kuwait also plays a crucial role in security, stability, and humanitarian engagement throughout the region."

The Canadian ambassador highlighted that the launch of the day "marks the beginning of an anniversary program of events and activities that will take place throughout 2025. These events will focus on communication

and emphasize key aspects of the relationship, including cultural exchange, cooperation in healthcare, education, information and communication technology, sports, and food. Canada is known for its high-quality products and sustainable agricultural practices from coast to coast, and people in Kuwait know good food, making it an ideal match."

Ambassador Mawani stated that Kuwait and Canada "are united by a shared history of cooperation, so it is no surprise that our focus this year is on communication. This is beautifully reflected in the logo for the 60th anniversary of our relations, which is inspired by the traditional Sadu weaving—an essential part of Kuwait's heritage. The design incorporates key Canadian and Kuwaiti symbols, reflecting the spirit and diversity of both nations. If you look closely, you will see the Kuwaiti flag and the design of the traditional Al-Aurjan triangle, along with the Canadian maple leaf and the Inukshuk, a statue made of stones used by the indigenous people of the Canadian Arctic as both a navigational tool and a meeting point."

In turn, Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas, Nawaf Al-Ahmed, emphasized Kuwait's commitment to enhancing its relationship with Canada and expanding it to

new horizons. He pointed out that Kuwaiti-Canadian relations are deep-rooted and extend beyond the official framework to include vibrant cultural and tourism exchanges, as evidenced by the increasing number of Kuwaiti tourists visiting Canada.

The 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries provides an opportunity to further highlight the strong historical ties and fruitful cooperation between the two nations, along with shared foreign policy principles such as respect for the United Nations Charter, international law, and human rights, Al Ahmad. He also expressed gratitude for Canada's support during Kuwait's brutal invasion, reflecting its commitment to the values of freedom and justice.

For his part, Secretary-General of NCCAL Mohammad Al-Jassar stressed the depth of Kuwaiti-Canadian relations across various fields. He noted that Kuwait and Canada are collaborating to promote peace both regionally and globally, sharing the same core principles. He also highlighted that Kuwait has consistently championed the values of rapprochement, friendship, and positive partnerships between peoples and has worked diligently to strengthen its relationships with all nations.

## LuLu Hypermarket launches India Utsav 2025



**L**uLu Hypermarket is celebrating the 76th Republic Day of India with the launch of India Utsav 2025, a festival that showcases Indian products and offers special discounts on a range of goods from India.

The grand festival was inaugurated on Thursday, 23 January at the Al-Rai outlet of the hypermarket by Ambassador of India, H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika, in the presence of top LuLu Hypermarket management in Kuwait and a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers of the brand.

In his address to the gathering, Ambassador Swaika highlighted the enduring friendship and trade ties between India and Kuwait. He praised LuLu Hypermarket for its role in promoting Indian products, culture, and heritage through the India Utsav 2025 festival, and for fostering connections between the two nations.

The highlight of India Utsav 2025, which is being held from 22–28 January at all outlets of the hypermarket in Kuwait, is an exciting lineup of exclusive deals on a wide range of Indian products. Shoppers can enjoy special discounts on Indian fruits, vegetables, and groceries, as well as a 25 percent discount on sarees, men's kurta & churidars, allowing everyone to bring a touch of Indian tradition to their wardrobes.

Adding to the excitement of the week-long festival are a range of activities designed to engage and inspire young minds. School students are taking center stage in competitions such as The Great Indian Quiz, Patriotic Song Competition, Indian Ethnic Fashion Show, and an Art Gallery, showcasing their creativity, knowledge, and talent while celebrating India's diversity.

The Great Indian Quiz Competition saw ICSK

Khaitan secured the first prize, with Carmel School Kuwait and United Indian School earning second and third prizes, respectively. In the Indian Patriotic Song Competition, the first prize was proudly clinched by ICSK Khaitan, followed by ICSK Amman in second prize and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Indian Educational School in third.



The Indian Ethnic Fashion Show showcased remarkable creativity, with Delhi Public School claiming the first prize. ICSK Junior and Smart Indian School followed in second and third places.

In the Art Gallery Competition (Junior Category), ICSK Khaitan won the top spot, while Carmel School Kuwait secured both the second and third prizes. In the Senior Category, ICSK Senior emerged as the winner, with ICSK Junior achieving both the second and third prizes.

The India Utsav 2025 celebration is not just an event, it is an experience of India's culture, flavors, and artistry. With tri-coloured displays, fun activities, and unbeatable offers on Indian products throughout the festival, LuLu Hypermarket is inviting families and communities across Kuwait to join in sharing and celebrating the spirit of India at the India Utsav 2025.

# Ananda in the Himalayas

## Sanctuary for the Mind, Body, and Soul



By **Hermoine Macura-Noble**  
Special to *The Times Kuwait*

Enveloped by the tranquil Himalayan foothills, the Ananda Resort is a beacon of holistic wellness and luxury that invites guests to reimagine their health, mindsets and lifestyle. Located near Rishikesh, India's spiritual heart, the award-winning destination spa offers a transformative journey that combines ancient Indian healing traditions with contemporary wellness solutions. Upon arrival at Ananda in the Himalayas, it is easy to see why King Charles, Nicole Kidman and Oprah Winfrey have confirmed the wellness resort as one of the best destination spas in the world.

Spread over 100 acres of pristine forests, Ananda is set in the former Palace Estate of the Maharaja of Tehri-Garhwal, a historical site dating back to 1910. Visited by bygone Kings and Queens over the past century, the property's elegant architecture and serene surroundings immediately lead guests to calmness and serenity. Overlooking the sacred Ganges River, guests are instantly swept away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life as they enter Ananda's gates to enjoy a unique approach to health and wellness using Ayurveda—India's ancient secrets to health and wellness.

"The Himalayas have long been regarded as the birthplace of Ayurveda, and this spiritual significance is woven into the fabric of Ananda's



Ananda's Head of Ayurveda,  
**Dr. Sreelal Sankar**



Chief Operating Officer at Ananda,  
**Mahesh Natarajan**

offerings. The pure air, the healing properties of the natural herbs found in the region, and the majestic views all contribute to a sense of calm and rejuvenation. The connection to nature and the profound silence of the surroundings allows guests to disconnect from their routines and focus on inner healing and reflection," explains Chief Operating Officer at Ananda, Mahesh Natarajan.

Accommodations at Ananda range from cozy rooms with breathtaking views to opulent villas with private pools. Every detail is designed to provide a serene and rejuvenating environment, encouraging guests to unwind and reconnect with themselves. However, it is the highly successful Ayurveda programs that continue to attract guests from across the world. The 5,000-year-old system of natural healing, continues to thrive as a cornerstone of India's wellness traditions. Rooted in the Sanskrit words 'Ayur' (life) and 'Veda' (knowledge), Ayurveda offers holistic treatments designed to balance the mind, body, and spirit.

Today, this ancient practice is recognized globally for its profound benefits and transformative potential. The toll of modern living on human health has led many to look for ancient healing practices such as Ayurveda, which offers a comprehensive, holistic approach that addresses growing concerns many have



living in concrete jungles across the globe.

At its core, Ayurveda is based on the belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the three doshas: Vata (air and space), Pitta (fire and water), and Kapha (water and earth). These doshas govern individual constitution and overall health. Imbalances caused by stress, diet, and environmental changes can lead to physical or emotional ailments. This ancient healing system forms Ananda's philosophy of personalized wellness.

Tailored to address individual health goals such as infertility or weight loss, Ananda's programs are led by experienced practitioners who craft bespoke wellness journeys for each guest which begins with consultations even before their arrival. This customization continues throughout the stay with tailored wellness programs and Ayurvedic treatments, such as Abhyanga (oil massage), which helps to restore balance to the body's doshas. Treatments like Shirodhara (gentle oil pouring on the forehead) are renowned for reducing stress, alleviating insomnia, and promoting mental clarity.

Panchakarma, a comprehensive detoxification program, is particularly popular among guests, as is the Stress Management Program, which is rooted in a holistic and personalized approach to diet and nutrition, emphasizing the profound connection between the mind, body, and gut. Ayurveda recognizes that stress is not just a brain-related issue but also deeply intertwined with gut health, which is why the program features a highly detailed treatment list of Ayurveda body treatments and diet, as well as cupping and acupuncture. Guests can also take part in breathwork courses, which teach breathing techniques to relax the mind and body.



"The Stress Management program at Ananda first addresses the root causes of stress and behavioral patterns influenced by various factors, including genetics, prenatal influences, and life experiences. Ayurveda emphasizes that these elements are reflected in our three dosha types, offering a key to understanding why individuals react in certain ways under stress...The program addresses not only the mental health status but also the physical manifestations of stress. For example, stress and anxiety can lead to physical issues like heart disease, hypertension, and digestive problems, all of which Ayurveda seeks to balance through holistic treatments," shares Ananda's Head of Ayurveda, Dr. Sreelal Sankar.

Ayurveda also utilizes a vast pharmacopeia of herbs, such as ashwagandha, turmeric, and neem. Ananda's doctors prescribe these natural remedies to address various conditions, from boosting immunity to reducing inflammation. "Ayurveda's fundamental principles govern the body's functions and have remained unchanged for thousands of years. This consistency is remarkable, especially considering that these principles have adapted to modern-day challenges such as lifestyle diseases and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ayurveda provides coping mechanisms that continue to be relevant, reinforcing the timeless nature of its wisdom," adds Dr Sankar.

Ananda's unique approach to wellness also extends to the dining table. The retreat's cuisine focuses on locally sourced, fresh, organic ingredients tailored to individual dietary requirements. Chefs expertly prepare meals that delight the palate and nourish the body, aligning with Ayurvedic principles to support health and vitality. Unique offerings like golden

elixir shots at breakfast and a range of herbal teas accompanying every meal are just some of the specialized touches offered at the mountain oasis.

In addition to the ancient healing protocols, many guests are also surprised by the genuine warmth and care of the Ananda staff, who are known for the highest standards of Indian hospitality in the region. Some staff members are also graduates from Ananda's CSR program, which focuses on empowering the local community.

"The Ananda Spa Foundation's academy is a transformative initiative aimed at empowering young people, especially women from underprivileged backgrounds, by providing them with specialized skills in wellness therapies... For some staff, joining the Ananda Spa Foundation's academy was life-changing. They have shared stories of how they were recruited and trained and how this opportunity significantly impacted their lives, providing them with financial independence, a sense of purpose, and a path to further growth within the wellness industry," shares Ananda's General Manager, Aniket Sarkar.

In an era when health is often seen as a commodity to be bought, Ayurveda views health as a way of life—emphasizing balanced living and the prevention of diseases. This approach is especially appealing as more nations invest in healthcare policies prioritizing prevention over cure. For many people who are burnt out



with fast-paced living, Ananda which means 'happiness' in Sanskrit, truly lives up to its name by providing a sanctuary where guests can pause, heal, and transform.

"The growing awareness of modern medicine's limitations and side effects has led people to seek alternatives, and Ayurveda is recognized for its approach of focusing on the root cause rather than the symptom," concludes Dr. Sankar.

**Hermoine Macura-Noble**

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# Meissen

## Visiting Germany's Porcelain Legacy

By Nourah Khan  
Travel Writer  
The Times Kuwait

During my recent visit to Dresden in Germany, I had the opportunity to take a day trip to the charming city of Meissen, which ended up being one of the highlights of my journey to Germany. Nestled along the Elbe River, Meissen is famed for its rich history, picturesque streets, and, of course, its world-renowned porcelain.

The city welcomed me with cobblestone streets and medieval architecture that seemed to transport me back in time. Walking through the old town, I admired the beautifully preserved buildings adorned with intricate facades. The Albrechtsburg Castle, perched high on a hill, offered breathtaking views of the city and the surrounding countryside. Its Gothic charm and historical significance as Germany's oldest castle added depth to the visit.

Strolling through the Marktplatz (market square), I enjoyed the vibrant atmosphere created by local shops, cafés, and the striking Gothic architecture of the Meissen Cathedral. The bells of the Frauenkirche resonated through the square, adding a touch of serenity to the lively surroundings.

My visit to the Meissen porcelain factory was nothing short of magical. As the birthplace of European porcelain, the factory is a living testament to centuries of craftsmanship and innovation.

The factory is renowned for its elaborate artistic masterpieces, including the Swan Service, a 1737 dining set of over 2,000 pieces featuring intricately sculpted swans, shells, and water motifs. Another highlight is the Blue Onion pattern, first introduced in the 18th century and still highly sought after today for its timeless elegance.

Meissen has served illustrious clients, including European royalty, aristocrats, and even prominent modern collectors. Kings, emperors, and global dignitaries have prized Meissen porcelain for its exceptional quality and artistry. The factory's association with luxury is firmly established, with pieces often gifted during state visits or diplomatic events.

Inside the factory, I had the privilege of watching master artisans create porcelain treasures. Their attention to detail and



skill are awe-inspiring, particularly during the painting process, where vibrant patterns and lifelike figurines come to life.

The factory offers ceramic painting workshops to the public, where visitors can try their hand at decorating porcelain pieces. Guided by expert painters, participants learn traditional techniques, creating their own unique keepsakes to take home. The workshops cater to both beginners and experienced artists, making them a delightful experience for all ages.

Meissen porcelain designs range from traditional to contemporary, ensuring there is something to suit every taste.



Classic collections, such as the Blue Onion and Ming Dragon patterns, highlight the factory's historical roots, while modern designs incorporate bold colors and innovative forms.

Some of the products created by craftsmen at the factory include dinnerware sets and tea services; decorative pieces, such as vases, candleholders, and figurines; jewelry crafted from porcelain; and seasonal ornaments and gifts.

While many Meissen pieces are luxury items, the factory shop also offers affordable options for visitors. Small decorative items, such as porcelain ornaments, coasters, and jewelry, can often be purchased at reasonable prices. Additionally, the factory's outlet section features discounted items, including minorly flawed pieces that still showcase Meissen's signature artistry.

Meissen is a city that effortlessly blends history, art, and culture. Its timeless charm, coupled with the unparalleled craftsmanship of workers at its porcelain factory, makes it a must-visit destination for anyone exploring the Dresden area. My day in Meissen left me with a profound appreciation for its artistry and a deep sense of connection to its storied past.

Whether you are an art enthusiast, a history buff, or simply someone who appreciates fine craftsmanship, Meissen has something to offer. From trying your hand at porcelain painting to taking home a piece of history, this city promises unforgettable experiences.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



# Key to Narrowing the Development Gap



**Pascal Lamy, Agnes Kalibata, and Ibrahim Assane Mayaki**

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*Agnes Kalibata, a former Minister of Agriculture of Rwanda, is President of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa.*

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In 2015, United Nations member states unanimously pledged to work toward “peace and prosperity for people and the planet” by meeting 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Although the agenda was unprecedented in its ambition—end hunger, slash inequality, spur economic growth, achieve gender equality, arrest climate change, and ensure access to water, sanitation, and energy—many expected that the world would make significant progress. But the sad, hard truth is that only 12 percent of the SDGs’ 140 measurable targets are heading in the right direction, and more than 30 percent are stalled or moving in reverse.

There is still hope, though. A single sector holds the key to closing half of the outstanding sustainable-development gaps: agri-food systems in Africa. The continent is home to

over half of all people facing extreme poverty, and more than half of those facing acute food insecurity. One in five people in the region suffer from undernourishment, and nearly one in three children are affected by stunting. Africa is also home to around one-fifth of the global agricultural workforce and is projected to become home to 49 percent of migrants displaced by climate shocks by 2050.

Thus, investing in African agri-food systems can have an outsize impact, allowing us to tackle a range of thorny issues—from hunger and poor health to poverty and undereducation—at the scale needed to keep up with the growth of Africa’s population, which is expected to double, to 2.4 billion, by 2050.

The biggest hurdle, of course, is financial. African agri-food systems are seriously underfunded: the sector receives less than 3 percent of global development funds and under 5 percent of total investments in Africa from public, private, and development funding combined. The average

imports are projected to cost the continent \$110 billion annually by 2030. But with targeted capital and sustained attention, this can change. Boosting agricultural productivity would help feed a growing population, reduce import dependency, protect biodiversity, and restore soil health. Greater investments in the sector can secure the livelihoods of 250 million small-scale farmers and address the urgent need for climate resilience in a region disproportionately affected by global warming.

The benefits of investing in African food systems extend far beyond the continent. Africa’s natural carbon sinks will continue to mitigate climate change, but only if they are preserved. And strengthened agricultural systems can stabilize global food supply chains against disruptions caused by pandemics, conflicts, and climate shocks, by helping to rehabilitate the continent’s farmland, 65 percent of which is degraded.

But unlocking global benefits requires

Investors also stand to gain by coupling agri-food investments with investment in infrastructure such as energy, water, and technology, which will transform African agricultural systems into major sources of growth. Hundreds of small and medium-size enterprises are already moving inputs, providing services, and hauling hundreds of millions of metric tons of food between rural and urban areas every day. This is a strong base for investors to build on.

So, what needs to happen next? At the Paris Peace Forum earlier this year, we unveiled the Agricultural Transitions Lab for African Solutions (ATLAS), a permanent platform to advocate for increased investment, align priorities, and promote transparency and accountability in African agri-food systems. Since then, 30 organizations have joined, demonstrating real momentum behind the initiative. Members span from the private sector, including OCP Group and the Boston Consulting Group, development organizations (including AGRA and ONE Campaign) and leading financiers, such as the International Finance Corporation and the French Development Agency (AFD).

At this year’s annual World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, ATLAS is launching the 2x30 Challenge, which calls on leading development funders to commit to doubling total annual investments (from about \$50 billion to \$100 billion) in Africa’s agri-food systems by 2030. To ensure that the additional funding does materialize and has a meaningful impact, it will be tracked through an annual investment barometer.

Increasing investment is a first step toward building more productive, sustainable, and resilient African food systems. Supporting Africa’s farmers is not just an opportunity. It is indispensable to achieving global development goals.

“ African agri-food systems are seriously underfunded: the sector receives less than 3 percent of global development funds and under 5 percent of total investments in Africa from public, private, and development funding combined. ”

African farmer receives less than \$140 per year in total investment, far below comparable figures for India (\$800), Brazil (\$1,800), or Thailand (\$2,000). Some Britons and Americans spend more on coffee in the space of a month.

This chronic underfunding has taken a heavy toll. African agricultural productivity is 60 percent below the global average, and food

global engagement. Fortunately, African agri-food systems represent a compelling business opportunity. Aside from the fact that the continent boasts an increasingly skilled, youthful labor force and much of the world’s remaining arable land, investments in its food systems are 2.5-3 times more effective in raising incomes than those in other sectors.



# Trade Shifts Redefining Economic Development



**Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg and Michele Ruta**

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Global trade is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by three major shifts. New technologies are redefining countries' comparative advantages and the types of goods they produce and export. The revival of activist trade and industrial policies threatens to distort trade flows and provoke retaliatory measures. And escalating tensions risk fragmenting the global economy along geopolitical lines.

The combined force of these shifts can reshape global trade patterns, marking a clear departure from the global economic landscape that defined the past three decades. Although the changing nature of globalization is at the forefront of current policy debates, the focus has primarily been on the needs and priorities of advanced economies. But what are the implications for developing economies?

To answer this question, it is essential to understand the role of trade and globalization in advancing development. Over the past three decades, many developing economies

have pursued an export-led growth model, benefiting from immediate efficiency gains and sustained productivity improvements. Initially, these economies specialized in low-skill, labor-intensive manufacturing, leveraging abundant workforces and investments from advanced economies. Their newfound access to global markets and foreign expertise enabled them to adopt new technologies and achieve economies of scale. As trade-driven manufacturing growth spilled into other sectors, it became a powerful engine of broader economic progress.

Admittedly, development does not happen in a vacuum. The post-1990 surge of export-led growth depended on several critical factors, chief among them technological advances—particularly in information and communication technologies—that paved the way for the emergence of globalized supply chains. With production processes divided across multiple countries and components traded across borders, developing economies were able to capitalize on their comparative advantages by specializing in specific manufacturing tasks.

The second factor was effective policymaking. The embrace of multilateralism, the entry of developing countries into the World Trade Organization, and the minimal use of industrial policy by advanced economies enhanced the predictability and openness of the global trade system. Meanwhile, 'deep' trade agreements served as a mechanism to discourage trade-distorting measures and promote structural reforms.

Lastly, the end of the Cold War ushered in a period of relative geopolitical stability, peace, and predictability. This environment, underpinned by a philosophy that prioritized economic efficiency over national-security concerns and political ideologies, was instrumental in ensuring the smooth functioning of global supply chains.

But conditions have changed, as evidenced by



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diversify supply chains away from geopolitically sensitive locations.

While the short-term effects of geopolitical tensions are the subject of ongoing research, one notable finding from our own work is that they are fundamentally reshaping trade flows. The United States is a case in point. Since the start of the Sino-American trade tensions in 2018, several developing countries have emerged as key suppliers to the US market. This can be attributed to the apparent reconfiguration of global supply chains and, crucially, to the rerouting of Chinese-made intermediate goods through third countries.

That said, trade tensions are not inherently beneficial for developing economies. For starters, the countries that have gained the most from the reallocation of trade flows are not low-income economies on the margins of globalization, but rather those that are already deeply integrated into the global trading system, such as Malaysia, Mexico, and Vietnam.

Moreover, simulations show that the world's fragmentation into competing blocs would hit low-income countries the hardest. Over the past three decades, access to open global markets has created enormous growth opportunities for developing economies. Moving away from this model would disproportionately harm poorer countries that lack the large domestic and regional markets needed to offset the loss of international trade.

To be sure, the new global economic landscape is still taking shape. But it is increasingly clear that the changing nature of globalization will make it harder to replicate the export-driven growth miracles of the past few decades. Addressing the three major trade shifts reshaping our world calls for pragmatic, forward-looking solutions.

technological innovations like robotization, 3D printing, and artificial intelligence, which could have far-reaching and complex implications for economic development. Although the wave of automation fueled by these technologies threatens to displace low-skilled workers, eroding the competitiveness of labor-abundant, low-income economies, it could also enable companies to boost productivity and expand. This, in turn, might increase demand for intermediate inputs and stimulate trade with developing countries.

Perhaps more importantly, technological advances could make services more tradable, unlocking new opportunities for export-led growth but also posing significant challenges for developing economies. Unlike manufacturing, business and IT services require a highly skilled workforce. To transform such service sectors into growth engines, governments will need to invest heavily in training and upskilling workers.

The implications of shifts in policies and geopolitics for global trade are equally complicated. Approximately 20 percent of the industrial policies adopted by developed economies in 2023 were driven by geopolitical and national-security considerations. For example, measures targeting electric vehicles and semiconductors were justified as an effort to



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