



LOCAL
 No job contract renewal for
 government sector
 expats after 31 March

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LOCAL
 New draft law to
 regulate, promote
 tourism in Kuwait

10

LOCAL
 No, thank you...
 I will not use
 AI to write

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www.timeskuwait.com 250 Fils

Government priorities sync with ESCWA observations

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

The government's plans and policies being implemented currently are the right measures needed to develop a strong and sustainable economy capable of supporting the country's growth and ensuring welfare of citizens now and in the future. These actions also dovetail with the latest observations and suggestions made in a new report on the Kuwaiti economy, by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

The hard-hitting, objective report by ESCWA notes that the economy in Kuwait, which is predominantly reliant on hydrocarbon resources, faces persistent challenges in achieving fiscal sustainability and economic diversification. The slow pace of diversification, the declining share of non-oil revenues in gross domestic product (GDP), and the heavy dependence on oil income, expose



the economy to geopolitical shocks and international oil price volatility. Warning that the window for implementing critical fiscal and structural reforms is shrinking

rapidly, the UN report, which focuses on social spending, stresses that Kuwait must take immediate and decisive action to optimize public spending, increase efficiency, and align

social expenditure with national development priorities. It calls for swift measures to address current challenges in order to ensure long-term fiscal stability and sustainability, and to achieve inclusive, sustainable development.

Since taking office in April 2024, the government headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah, under the directives and wise guidance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Khaled Hamad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, has to its credit been rolling out a series of calibrated fiscal and structural reforms aimed at supporting economic growth and promoting sustainable development.

Recent policies and reforms being enacted by the government have imparted impetus to the implementation of projects in infrastructure, urban development, renewable energy, and tourism, as well as in digitalization of public services.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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No job contract renewal for government sector expats after 31 March

Civil Service Bureau has confirmed that in accordance with Civil Service Council Resolution No 11 of 2017, it will continue enforcing the replacement policy across all government agencies. As a result, any resident holding a non-rare government position will have their contracts terminated as of 31 March, 2025. The Bureau added that this policy does not apply to the children of Kuwaiti women.

In a statement shared through its official account on the 'X' platform, the Civil Service Bureau highlighted that a significant number of



non-Kuwaitis have had their services terminated since the policy's implementation. It also noted that the remaining small percentage of non-Kuwaitis had their contracts renewed at the request of government agencies, but only until 31 March of this year. The temporary extension was aimed at allowing time for the concerned government entities to fill the arising vacancies with qualified Kuwaiti nationals.

The Bureau added that it has been closely monitoring the implementation of the replacement policy across all government agencies, ensuring

that each job group is filled according to the specified percentages by qualified Kuwaiti nationals. The Bureau also emphasized that recruitment of national cadres will be only through the appointment mechanism, which involves registration in the central employment plan.

The Bureau explained that since the implementation of the replacement policy, the services of many non-Kuwaiti employees have been terminated, except for the children of Kuwaiti women, and expatriates working in jobs for which a qualified Kuwaiti replacement is not available.

US Embassy launches revamped visa appointment system

Embassy of the United States is launching a streamlined visa appointment system from 8 February with the aim of making it easier and more convenient to schedule visa interviews, pay application fees online, and access customer support service, all from one integrated online platform.

Starting 8 February, those wishing to begin their visa application can visit the site: ustraveldocs.com—the official website for applying for a US visa and for scheduling interview appointments.

During the transition from February 5 to February 7, 2025, some visa services were unavailable, nevertheless, sources at the embassy clarified that all previously scheduled visa interviews will remain as planned.

LuLu Hypermarket Strengthens Strategic Collaboration with Unilever and Al Bahar on Joint Business Plan 2025

LuLu Hypermarket top management attended in the Joint Business Plan 2025, an exclusive strategic meeting held by Unilever and Mohamed Abdulrahman Al Bahar (Al Bahar-United) at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Kuwait. The meeting served as a key platform for aligning business strategies, fostering deeper collaboration, and exploring innovative solutions to drive retail excellence in the coming year.

With the market landscape evolving rapidly, the discussions focused on strategy, growth ambitions, and competitive positioning in the retail sector. Industry leaders and key decision-makers explored opportunities for expansion, innovation, and strengthening market leadership, emphasizing ways to enhance collaboration, drive sustainable growth, and deliver greater value to customers.

LuLu Hypermarket, known for its commitment to quality and innovation, reaffirmed its dedication to enhancing customer engagement, optimizing retail operations, and driving growth



through strategic partnerships. The collaboration with Unilever and Al Bahar will play a crucial role in introducing exclusive product offerings, launching impactful promotional campaigns, and reinforcing sustainability initiatives in 2025.

By strengthening supply chain efficiencies, expanding product portfolios, and leveraging advanced marketing strategies, the partnership-driven approach underscores Al Bahar United and LuLu Hypermarket's commitment to excellence,

ensuring they remain at the forefront of the retail industry.

As a leading retail brand, LuLu Hypermarket continues to adapt to market transformations and evolving consumer preferences, ensuring customers receive the best in value, quality, and variety. By working closely with global brands and key business partners, LuLu remains at the forefront of retail innovation, setting new industry benchmarks.





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A Journey of artistic excellence

A Retrospective Exhibition of Jafar Islah



The Times Kuwait Report

Contemporary Art Platform (CAP) is holding a landmark retrospective exhibition titled 'A Journey', celebrating the artistic excellence of Jafar Islah, one of Kuwait's most esteemed artists, at the CAP premises in Shuwaikh.

The event, held under the auspices of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), was launched on 4 February in the presence of NCCAL Secretary-General Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar, and in attendance of members of the diplomatic corps and a distinguished gathering of art aficionados.

This special exhibition, curated by CAP and organized as part of its contributions to Kuwait being recognized as the Arab Capital of Culture 2025, is the most comprehensive collection of Islah's works ever assembled, spanning six decades of innovation, cultural dialogue, and artistic mastery.

Featuring rare early works of Jafar from 1965 and 1966 marking the beginning of Islah's illustrious artistic journey, the exhibition offers audiences a rare glimpse into his formative years. It also includes unique archival material that document the evolution of his vision, as well as several pieces being exhibited for the first time. Together, these elements weave a narrative of Islah's profound contributions to contemporary art in Kuwait and beyond.

Jafar Islah's legacy is defined by his exceptional mastery of diverse artistic forms,

including painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, textile art, and more. His works have achieved global recognition, with pieces featured in major museum collections and exhibited internationally.

He has made significant contributions to Kuwait's cultural heritage. One of his most iconic public artworks, 'The Wall of Peace' (1985), is a three-ton marble sculpture located along the seaside near Kuwait Towers, symbolizing his dedication to harmony and unity. In 1991, Islah further enriched Kuwait's cultural landscape by designing a series of postage stamps commemorating Kuwait Independence Day. His work is part of the Arab Fund's collection and is prominently displayed at their headquarters.

CAP has had a strong and enduring relationship with Jafar Islah, which has been integral to the gallery's history. Soon after

its founding, CAP had the honor of hosting Jafar Islah: A Retrospective Exhibition, which featured works spanning 1967 to 2011. That exhibition marked a defining moment for CAP, underscoring its commitment to fostering contemporary art and cultural dialogue in Kuwait. It also reflected CAP's mission to cultivate aesthetic appreciation, establish public spaces for art and thought and support Kuwait's cultural scene.

Islah's artistic vision evolved continuously over his career. His personal qualities - humility, spiritual depth, and an appreciation for human heritage and Eastern civilizations, combined with his extensive knowledge of Islamic and Arab traditions and contemporary Western art movements, allowed him to craft thought-provoking works that transcend time and culture, resonating deeply with diverse audiences.

The exhibition 'A Journey' brings together artworks borrowed from institutions and private collectors in Kuwait and abroad, as well as pieces from the artist's personal collection and CAP's Collection. This exhibition not only offers an unparalleled opportunity to explore the depth and richness of Islah's artistic achievements, but also invites younger



audiences to discover his inspiring creations and long-time admirers to rediscover his profound legacy.

CAP is privileged to celebrate Jafar Islah's enduring contributions to Kuwait's artistic heritage. This exhibition is a tribute to his remarkable career and a testament to the transformative power of art in shaping cultural and social narratives.

The exhibition will stay on view until 23 March 2025.

Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium nominated in 'Best Stadium of the Year' list



StadiumDB.com, one of the world's leading websites dedicated to football stadiums, has launched the 15th iteration of its annual 'Stadium of the Year' competition, to select the best stadium that opened over the past year.

The 'Stadium of the Year 2024' competition witnesses a listing of 23 remarkable stadiums from around the world that were opened in 2024. Kuwait's Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-

Sabah Stadium in Sulaibikhat is among the 23 nominees this year.

The competition's results depend entirely on public votes. Participation in the online competition is free of any cost and open to individuals anywhere in the world. It provides an opportunity for communities and people to rally around their favorite venues and showcase their pride. The voting process, which began on 3 February, is open only until midnight Central European Time on 3 March.

Participating in the competition is quite simple and straight-forward.

Visit <https://stadiumdb.com/competitions/>

stadium_of_the_year_2024

Select your 'top five' stadiums from the list of 23 candidates, by giving 5 star rating to the best stadium, 4 stars to the second and 3, 2 and 1 star ratings respectively. Remember to select five stadiums, otherwise your vote will not be counted.

When you have rated all five stadiums, press the 'Vote' button, and that is it.

Remember it is not always the largest or most expensive stadium that wins—it is the one with the most passionate supporters, so get your friends to join in, but keep in mind that only one vote can be sent from every device.

Mix of Friendship' coffee flavor launched to mark 60 years of Canada-Kuwait relationship

The Times Kuwait Report

Embassy of Canada celebrated 60 years of diplomatic relations with Kuwait with a distinctive initiative billed as 'coffee diplomacy', and held in coordination with the iconic Canadian coffee brand, Tim Hortons.

The event, held at the Canadian brand's outlet in Kuwait last week, witnessed the launch of the 'Mix of Friendship' coffee flavor, which was specially blended and brewed by Tim Hortons to celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.



The 'coffee diplomacy', which was hosted by Canadian Ambassador H.E. Aliya Mawani, saw the participation of a select gathering of coffee lovers and media personnel. Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Ambassador Mawani said that, "Considering coffee is something that people in both countries enjoy as part of their daily lives, we drew up this 'Mix a Friendship' initiative that literally brings the friendship between our people in a cup.



"The 'Mix a Friendship' blend uses traditional Kuwaiti coffee flavors blended with the flavors of a very beloved Canadian brand. We wanted to bring the flavors together in a fun way, so that people can not only talk about official relationships, but they can actually see it and taste it in this coffee. So we can certainly call this new relationship a coffee diplomacy."

She added that the blend of flavors of the two countries, dovetail with the 60th anniversary logo, "where we blended the Sadu style of Kuwaiti weaving with iconic Canadian symbols. So we are really excited to do this collaboration, and we are also happy that the new flavor will be launched at the beginning of Ramadan, the month of synergy, and the time of gatherings of families and friends."

The ambassador also revealed that starting in January 2025, the Canadian Embassy has launched a year-long calendar of events to

celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and to highlight the cultural, commercial and popular ties between Canada and Kuwait.

In response to a question about bilateral relations, Ambassador Mawani stressed that robust relations between the two nations were growing stronger in every field. "We have many Canadian companies active in Kuwait in the food, defence and security sectors, and increasingly in the technological sector, in cybersecurity and artificial intelligence, as well as in the healthcare sector. A memorandum of understanding was recently signed by the relevant health authorities in both countries.. The oil and gas industry is another important area for our two countries, so we have a lot of Canadian activity in the oil and gas fields in Kuwait,"

Regarding strategic ties between Canada and Kuwait, the ambassador recalled that "In the

spring of 2023, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, visited Canada, and met with our Foreign Minister Melanie Jolie. During the meeting a memorandum of understanding on strategic consultations was signed between the two countries.

"One of the things that helped to initiate this strategic consultation was that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Kuwait helped Canada to repatriate around 4,000 Canadians and Afghans from Afghanistan to Canada, with all of them transiting through Kuwait. We thus consider Kuwait a good and permanent friend."

She pointed out that the established strategic consultations allow the two countries to consult with each other on the main developments happening around the world and in the region. "With Kuwait holding the presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) this year and Canada being the chair of the G7 nations, this is an important time for us to share priorities and consult with each other", added the Canadian envoy.

Regarding cultural activities being planned to mark the 60th anniversary, the ambassador said, "We have several cultural activities planned throughout the year, including a concert on 9 February in partnership with the Dar Al Athar and the world-renowned Canadian musician Steve Barakatt, who will host a concert during which he will present a special song to celebrate the 60th anniversary.

"We also have two exhibitions in April and May, with the one in April bringing together the well-known Kuwaiti artist Soraya Al-Baqami and Canadian artist Reda Dost, who has lived in Kuwait for several years. These events highlight the strength and depth of the relationship between our two countries."

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Information Ministry suspends new licenses for e-media

Ministry of Information is reported to have suspended the renewal and issuance of new licenses for online newspapers until the enactment of a new media regulation law, which aims to enforce stricter conditions on obtaining licenses, and establish stringent regulatory oversight over the hundreds of online media accounts currently licensed by the ministry.

On a related note, it is noteworthy that Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, announced last week, during a video presentation on Kuwait's preparations for the launch of "Kuwait, the Capital of Culture and Arab Media 2025", that the ministry is nearing completion of the new media regulation law. Al-

Mutairi also emphasized that the law will strike a balance by safeguarding freedom of expression while ensuring the necessary regulatory framework for the media sector.

Providing further clarification on the suspension of media licences, Assistant Undersecretary for Press, Publishing, and Publications at the Ministry of Information, Lafi Al-Subaie, confirmed that the Ministry has suspended the renewal and issuance of licenses for services, accounts, and websites until the new media regulation law is enacted. The law will outline updated controls and requirements and will be published in the Official Gazette upon its issuance.

Al-Subaie further clarified that the suspension



of license applications will not affect the operations of currently licensed entities. He noted that work is ongoing on the new draft

media regulation law, which Minister Al-Mutairi, recently announced is nearing completion and will be finalized soon.

Moreover, Al-Subaie emphasized that the suspension of licenses is only temporary until the new law is issued. He reassured that licensed websites, services, and accounts will not be affected, as their licenses remain valid until at least next year.

Al-Subaie clarified that the suspension does not apply to personal and non-professional accounts. However, it covers all licenses under Article 5 of the current law, including news agencies, electronic press, news services, websites, digital media, commercial electronic media, advertising services, and more.



Medx Medical Group to map Kuwait's post-pandemic lifestyle changes

Medx Medical Group is set to launch a survey examining the challenges faced by Kuwait's residents and the lifestyle changes post-COVID-19. The Medx management stated that the survey will be conducted at various locations across the country and is expected to be completed within thirty days.

During a press conference on the initiative, which was held on February 1 at Medx auditorium Fahaheel, Mohamed Ali V.P., President and CEO of Medx Medical Group, stated that such studies represent a significant step forward for Kuwait's healthcare sector and will greatly benefit the healthcare professionals

leading the initiative at Medx Medical Group. He further noted that upon completion of

the survey, the report and its findings would be submitted to the Ministry of Health in

Kuwait and other relevant departments. He also expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defense for granting permission to conduct the survey.

The press conference was attended by Medx General Manager Imthiyas Ahammed, Medical Director Dr. Ahmad Hamdy Salah, Assistant Director Dr. Reshith Johnson, Sponsor Jassim Mohammad Aloush Alazmi, Public Relations Officer Hamed Harab Hjal Alotaibi, Operations Head Junais Koyimma, PA Ginze Aju, and Marketing Manager Lama Ibrahim. Medx Nursing Superintendent Aquif Lal provided detailed insights into the survey.



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Tourism a growing field of cooperation between Russia and Kuwait

The Times Kuwait Report

Russian Ambassador H. E. Vladimir Zheltov praised the growth of Russian-Kuwaiti relations across various sectors, and highlighted that tourism is the fastest-growing field of cooperation between the two countries.

Pointing out that Russia, the largest country in the world and one of the world's top tourist destinations, offers a wealth of attractive places to visit for Kuwaiti tourists, the ambassador noted that St. Petersburg, and Sochi, located along the Baltic Sea coast to the south of Moscow are the most popular Russian cities for tourists from the Gulf, especially Kuwait.

Ambassador Zheltov was speaking to the media on the sidelines of an event held to celebrate the second anniversary of direct flights between Moscow and Kuwait City by Jazeera Airways, and to promote the Russian city of Sochi as an attractive destination for travelers from Kuwait.

The ambassador indicated that the introduction of direct flights between Moscow and Kuwait two years ago via Jazeera Airways, has contributed to a significant rise in Kuwaiti tourists visiting Russia, with the number reaching 15,000 last year, which is double the previous years. He added that it has become a common sight to see Gulf tourists, along with their families, strolling through the streets of Moscow. The event was attended by Russian travel companies, authorities from Krasnodar—a major economic hub in southern Russia—and officials from Al Jazeera Airways.

Ambassador Zheltov highlighted that Sochi, a beautiful city on the southern coast of the Black Sea and the largest resort-city in Russia, is renowned for its natural beauty that offers a perfect sea, highlands, and snow-covered mountains. Sochi was also the host-city for the Winter Olympics in 2014, which has further enhanced its popularity as a prime tourist

destination. He noted that there are currently nine weekly flights between Kuwait and Moscow, with Jazeera Airways set to launch two weekly flights to Sochi starting 27 June, with plans to increase the frequency over time. He also revealed that flights between Moscow and Kuwait will begin on 1 May, 2025, and emphasized that travel to Russia has become more accessible with the introduction of electronic visas for Kuwaiti citizens. He also revealed that Russian laws allow foreigners to own real estate in the city.

Pointing out that the flight to Sochi is a quick three-hour journey from Kuwait via Al Jazeera Airways, the Russian Ambassador encouraged Kuwaitis not to miss the chance to explore this beautiful city, which serves as an attractive haven year-round, particularly during the summer months.

Regarding visas to Russia, Ambassador Zheltov highlighted that Kuwaiti citizens can apply for a Russian visa online and receive it within three days, without the need to visit the embassy's consular section. This visa allows a stay of up to 16 days in Russia. For stays longer than 16 days, applicants must visit the consular section to apply for a longer-stay visa that allows them to remain in Russia for up to three months.

On the topic of Russian citizens visiting Kuwait,



Ambassador Zheltov mentioned that while Kuwait offers 53 countries the ability to apply for an entry visa online or upon arrival, Russia is not currently included in this list. However, he noted that discussions are ongoing with Kuwaiti authorities to extend this privilege to Russian nationals.

The ambassador also emphasized the strong security relations between the two countries, noting in particular the recent visit by a Russian security delegation to Kuwait. During the visit, the delegation participated in joint exercises with Kuwaiti Special Forces. In addition, the

Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior regularly organizes a security competition for Special Forces, where teams from various countries compete. Last year, 26 teams took part in the competition, including a team from Russia.

Ambassador Zheltov further stressed that Russia and Kuwait have reached an agreement to hold joint security exercises with the Special Forces, a collaboration that will be held periodically. He reassured that all aspects of this cooperation are progressing positively. Regarding the use of Russian military equipment, he clarified that the agreement solely pertains to the joint security exercises, with no involvement of military equipment.

Speaking about latest developments in bilateral relations, Ambassador Zheltov highlighted that the ongoing exchange of visits between officials from both countries underlined the continued strong ties between the two countries. He referenced the visit of Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya to Moscow, where he met with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, twice last year. He also pointed to Al-Yahya's participation in the Russian-Kuwaiti bilateral dialogue meetings, underscoring the commitment of both nations to enhancing cooperation across various fields.

Health checkup mandatory for individuals seeking to marry

Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi approved the updated executive regulations of Law No. 31 of 2008 regarding medical examinations for individuals wishing to marry. This step aims to enhance the quality of health services, protect public health, and reduce the rates of genetic and infectious diseases.

The new regulation includes several amendments, with the most

notable being the expansion of the medical examination scope to cover all marriage contracts in Kuwait, regardless of whether both parties are Kuwaiti, one is Kuwaiti, or both are non-Kuwaiti. Additionally, the regulation introduces the use of digital applications to streamline some premarital medical examination procedures.

The Ministry of Health stated that the new amendments will take effect from 1 April 2025, following their publication in the Official Gazette.



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U.S. Embassy launches second season of 'You Are the Future of Kuwait' campaign

In honor of Kuwait's National and Liberation Days, the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait proudly launches the second season of its educational campaign, "You Are the Future of Kuwait" (Ento Mustaqbalha).

Running from February 9 to 20, the campaign features a dynamic lineup of events to inspire Kuwaiti youth and support their educational



aspirations. Highlights include educational fairs, expert interviews on studying in the U.S. and student visas, Instagram Live sessions with U.S. universities, private school visits, and more.

"We are thrilled to continue this campaign in 2025, highlighting the achievements of Kuwaiti students who have studied in the U.S.

and showcasing the transformative power of education," said Inga Litvinsky, Cultural Attaché at the U.S. Embassy.

"By offering access to these resources, we hope to inspire Kuwaiti youth to pursue their dreams, broaden their horizons, and contribute to a brighter, sustainable future for Kuwait," added Litvinsky.

The U.S. Embassy remains committed to providing expert consular guidance and support to help students navigate their path to studying in the United States. Outreach efforts will be available both in person and virtually, ensuring that students and their families have the tools they need to embark on their educational journeys.

The U.S. Embassy's Education USA team invites all students and parents to attend the Q8 EduEx Fair at Mishref Fairgrounds (Hall 4A) on February 10 and 11 from 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM and 4:00 PM – 8:00 PM, as well as a U.S. University Fair on February 12 at the Mourjan Ballroom, Crowne Plaza Hotel in Farwaniya from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

Both the events will provide an invaluable opportunity to connect with U.S. university representatives, explore scholarship options, and learn more about the admissions process.

For more information on the campaign and upcoming events, students and parents can contact Education USA advisers at KuwaitCity@EducationUSA.org or visit www.EducationUSA.org.



Rising interest among Japanese students studying Arabic in Kuwait

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri
Founder and CEO, Reconnaissance Research

Founder and CEO of Reconnaissance Research, Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri, recently visited Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) and was captivated by the strong interest among Japanese students in studying Arabic, particularly in Kuwait.

Although students have numerous options across the Middle East, many are drawn specifically to Kuwait. However, with only six to eight spots available each year, the demand significantly surpasses the available opportunities. This enthusiasm highlights Kuwait's unique appeal and suggests a promising avenue for expanding academic collaboration and deepening cultural ties between the two nations.

This also brings to light an important question about how such opportunities are allocated. While Kuwait's Arabic-language scholarship program is designed to be evenly distributed among various countries, it is worth examining whether this approach aligns with the nation's long-term strategic interests.

Academic and cultural exchanges should not be seen as mere diplomatic formalities but rather as strategic investments in relationships that can foster deeper understanding and long-

term collaboration.

Al-Anjeri also had the opportunity to meet graduates of Kuwait's Arabic program who are now serving as informal ambassadors for the country in Japan, sharing their experiences and inspiring more students to pursue their studies in Kuwait. This highlights how educational exchanges can naturally strengthen ties between nations. Such experiences go beyond the classroom, fostering lasting connections that we must actively nurture and sustain for the future.

Importantly, Al-Anjeri's visit reaffirmed the vast opportunity for Kuwait to forge lasting ties with Asia. The faculty, staff, and students at TUFS were remarkable, articulate, engaged, and deeply committed to their studies. Their enthusiasm underscored the significance of fostering meaningful exchanges that go beyond academics, creating connections that have the potential to shape the shared future for generations to come.

To conclude, Al-Anjeri expressed his sincere gratitude to Professor Hiroyuki Aoyama of TUFS for his warm welcome and for facilitating insightful discussions with students. Hiroyuki's dedication to fostering cultural understanding and academic excellence reflects the strength of the bridges that Kuwait and Japan are building between them.

LuLu Exchange Kuwait Celebrates 13 Years of Trust, Innovation and Customer Centricity



LuLu Exchange Kuwait, one of the leading financial services companies in Kuwait, celebrated 13 years of trust, excellence and dedication to financial empowerment. Since their entry into Kuwait in 2012, LuLu Exchange has been committed to delivering seamless and secure financial services earning the trust of customers and the wider expat community. Over the years, LuLu Exchange has introduced cutting-edge digital payment solutions and seamless remittance services, ensuring faster and more secure transactions for its customers. LuLu Money, LuLu Exchange's flagship digital payments

solution, is one of the most widely-used digital payment apps in the region.

To commemorate 13 years, LuLu Exchange has planned a series of activities throughout the month, highlighting appreciation for customers, employees and the community. Long-standing customers who have been with LuLu Exchange since the early days of their journey in Kuwait, will be felicitated. Employees who have been integral to the company's growth will be honoured for their dedication and service.

LuLu Exchange will also organize a Beach Cleaning Drive, building on its commitment to the wider community. Various in-branch activities will add to the celebratory spirit.

Reflecting on the occasion, Mr. Rajesh Rangray, the General Manager at LuLu Exchange Kuwait, stated "Reaching this milestone is evidence of the trust our customers have placed in us and the relentless efforts of our employees. Over the years, we have strived to evolve, innovate and serve the community with integrity. As we move forward, we remain committed to leveraging innovation to enhance customer experiences and support financial inclusion in Kuwait."

LuLu Exchange extends its heartfelt gratitude to Kuwait's government and other officials, its customers, employees and other stakeholders who have played a major role in this journey. As the company looks ahead, it remains steadfast in its mission to enhance financial services and contribute meaningfully to the community. Customers are invited to visit LuLu Exchange branches to participate in the celebrations and experience our latest offerings.



ICAI Kuwait Chapter and KAAA delegation hold talks with Kuwait's Ambassador in India



A delegation from The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) – Kuwait Chapter, led by Chairperson CA Aditya Dhanuka, along with past chairpersons CA Rabin Gonsalves and CA Sriram Gopalakrishnan, and Treasurer CA Umesh Soni, met with His Excellency Meshal Al Shemali, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to India, at the Kuwait Embassy in New Delhi. The Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association (KAAA) was represented by Chairman Mr. Sabah Al Jalawi and Member Mr. Mohammed Al Shuaib.

During the meeting, the delegation held meaningful discussions with His Excellency Meshal Al Shemali, covering a wide range of topics of mutual interest, including bilateral cooperation in finance, accounting, and auditing, as well as opportunities to further strengthen professional ties between Kuwait and India.

The ambassador expressed his appreciation for the collaborative efforts between the KAAA and the ICAI Kuwait Chapter, recognizing their role in promoting professional excellence, knowledge exchange, and capacity building in the financial sector. He also commended the contributions of Indian professionals to Kuwait's economic landscape and emphasized the importance of continued engagement between both organizations.

The ICAI Kuwait Chapter and KAAA reaffirmed their commitment to fostering stronger partnerships, organizing joint initiatives, and advancing financial and auditing standards in the region. The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides looking forward to enhanced cooperation and knowledge sharing in the future.

Kuwait an archeological treasure trove

The ancient narratives stand as a testament to the nation's rich historical and cultural heritage, making Kuwait a pivotal key to unlocking the history of the region and connecting its present to its past.

The land on which modern-day Kuwait sits was once home to people and civilization for thousands of years. This historical and cultural heritage makes Kuwait a pivotal key to unlocking the history of the region and connecting its present to its past.

Kuwait boasts a rich history of archaeological discoveries that showcase the ancient civilizations that settled its land throughout history, and highlights the country's crucial role, strategic location and centrality in facilitating communication and cultural exchange between civilizations. Local media reports note that archaeological missions in Kuwait date back to 1958. The Danish mission, invited by the Kuwaiti government in 1957, which marked a milestone in the exploration of the country, was the first to conduct extensive surveys. Since then, archaeological excavations across Kuwait and its islands have uncovered treasures that place the country on the region's civilizational map, offering insights into cultures, cities, and societies dating back to the late sixth millennium BCE.

Failaka Island, lying 20km off the coast of Kuwait City in the Arabian Gulf, is one of Kuwait's most prominent archaeological sites. Believed to have been settled around 2000 BCE following a fall in sea level, the island has been linked to the Sumerian city-state of Ur during the third millennium. Known as 'Agarum' in ancient Sumerian texts, Failaka is also closely linked to the Dilmun civilization and became a hub for this civilization from the end of the 3rd to the middle of the 1st millennium BCE. Excavations have revealed integrated settlements from the early second millennium BC, including residential areas, a temple, and the ruler's palace, as well as an ancient port believed to be the island's



historic harbor. Over time, Failaka's role evolved, especially under Hellenistic influence following the decline of the Dilmun civilization. Excavations uncovered Hellenistic-era settlements, including a unique castle with observation towers, temples, and a surrounding trench—the only such structure found in the Arabian Gulf region.

The earliest known archaeological discovery on Failaka dates back to 1937 when a stone inscription in Greek was found, reading: "Sotelis, the Athenian citizen, and the soldiers dedicated this to the faithful Zeus Soter, Poseidon, and Artemis."

Archeological reports also focus on another ancient site in Kuwait at Al-Sabiya, located in northern Kuwait on the Tabej Peninsula. International excavations there have uncovered evidence

of civilizations dating back to the Ubaid period (4500–5500 BCE), including settlements with adjacent chambers, burial mounds, and Neolithic stone tools such as arrowheads and axes. Notably, the discovery of a mud model of the oldest known sea boat indicates significant maritime activity and trade with nearby civilizations.

More recent excavations in Tal Al-Bahita, located in Kuwait City, have revealed three-century-old settlements, including ancient neighborhoods with rare artifacts such as coins, pottery, and remains of houses, along with traces of Kuwait's second defensive wall, offering insights into the city's historical development.

The Kazma area has also yielded important discoveries, including remains of settlements, pottery, and coins from the Umayyad and Abbasid eras (8th–9th centuries CE). These findings confirm Kazma's role as a major commercial hub during that time. Additionally, historical records suggest that Kazma was the site of a significant battle between Muslims and Persians in 12 AH (633 CE).

Archaeological surveys further indicate the presence of Islamic-era settlements in Wadi Al-Batin, Umm Al-Aish, and Kazima, which were part of the Basra Hajj route, as well as Akkaz Island. Remains of ancient buildings and fortifications have also been discovered in Jahra and other parts of Kuwait, shedding light on the commercial and agricultural activities of past communities.

More than six decades of archaeological exploration in Kuwait have continued to yield remarkable archeological discoveries, offering deeper insights into the nation's rich civilizational and cultural heritage across the ages.



Indian Heritage brings India's finest fabrics and fashion to Kuwait's biggest shopping festival

Indian Heritage, a renowned destination for authentic Indian craftsmanship in textiles and fashion, is bringing its creativity and innovation to Kuwait's biggest shopping festival, 'Ya Hala.'

From 21 January to 31 March, Indian Heritage will enchant shoppers across Kuwait with a showcase of authentic Indian artistry and elegance in fabrics and handcrafted jewelry and other accessories.



Shoppers can explore the vast collection of finest fabrics and elegant fashion at Souq Safat, The Avenues, Khiran Mall, Sama Mall, and Kuwait Magic Mall. Adding to the excitement and experience of shopping at Indian Heritage, the retailer has recently unveiled a brand-new kiosk at The Avenues Mall, and plans to open yet another new outlet soon at the Warehouse Mall.

The many outlets of Indian Heritage across Kuwait, invite shoppers to indulge in a carefully curated selection of Indian fabrics, elegant dresses, handcrafted jewellery, and artisanal home décor.

With the 'Ya Hala Kuwait Shopping Festival' in full swing, Indian Heritage promises an unforgettable experience. Visit your nearest outlet and be part of this extraordinary shopping festival.



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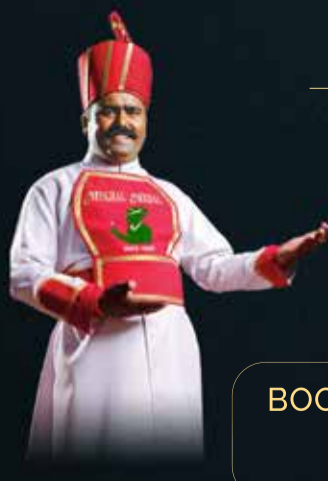
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New draft law to regulate, promote tourism in Kuwait

Ministry of Information, which is mandated to oversee and promote tourism in the country, has in coordination with relevant authorities, prepared a new draft law to regulate tourism in Kuwait. The draft law is in line with the country's drive to promote and support the tourism sector by developing tourism activities, encouraging investment, and fostering growth.

In a letter addressed to the relevant entities, the ministry requested them to study the draft law and submit their comments and suggestions within 10 days.

The law is expected to be submitted to the Council of Ministers once it has been fully reviewed and all comments from the relevant authorities have been taken into consideration.

The draft law includes 38 articles and procedures aimed at promoting entertainment projects, stimulating domestic tourism, and attracting tourists. Among others the draft law stipulates updating the entry visa process under the Foreigners' Residence Law to include tourist visa permits. It also calls for coordination with the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs, as well as relevant authorities, to facilitate the entry of tourists and prepare general policies and strategies for tourism development.

The draft law also outlines measures to enhance income sources, create new job opportunities, and involve the private sector. It aims to provide a modern tourism development model that involves national and foreign investments, attracts capital, promotes tourism projects, and encourages investment. The document also emphasizes attracting international companies to invest in the tourism sector without the need for a local agent.

The draft also focuses on developing diversified tourism products, leveraging the country's varied geographic areas that include among others islands and beaches with the aim of enhancing the variety of attractions for visitors. The measures also include developing



comprehensive plans for tourism promotion, marketing Kuwaiti tourism products globally, creating a domestic tourism market, and increasing tourist arrivals in the country.

A license from the Information Ministry is required to establish, operate, manage, or exploit a hotel or tourist facility, organize tourist festivals, engage in tourism activities, practice tourist guidance, or hold a tourist festival. This must be done in accordance with the provisions of this law and its executive regulations, which will define the types of licenses, their duration, and renewal conditions.

The draft law also includes provisions for classification of tourism and hotel facilities based on international standards and specifications, with the aim of regulating tourism services related to accommodation, entertainment, transportation, and car rental for tourist purposes, all of which would require approval from the relevant authorities.

The draft tasks the concerned minister to issue a decision outlining the technical and administrative requirements and specifications for classification that must be met by hotel

and tourism facilities, tourism activities and festivals, and tourism festival organizing offices. The decision will also specify the necessary qualifications and conditions for employees in these sectors. The classification's validity is tied to the license duration, and the sector may modify the classification degree at any time if there are serious justifications for doing so.

A hotel establishment's license cannot be renewed after its operation ends without obtaining the classification certificate approved by the sector. Hotel and tourism establishments may request a review of their classification degree each January, following the rules and procedures set by the Minister's decision.

Provisions in the draft law provide for regulating the use of state-allocated lands for tourism development in areas and sites related to the tourism product, in compliance with existing laws and regulations governing state lands and real estate. The draft law also calls for the adoption of an annual state plan for hosting festivals, events, exhibitions, and tourism conferences both domestically and internationally, with the aim of organizing

dynamic tourism festivals and entertainment events to attract visitors and generate economic, social, and cultural benefits for Kuwait. The draft law mandates relevant government agencies to plan cities, regions, and state-owned projects while ensuring the preservation of tourist destinations and components. It requires that no projects or development plans be approved if they negatively impact these tourism sites, either temporarily or permanently.

A decision by the competent minister will establish regulations for the management and investment of tourist destinations, ensuring compliance with established procedures. This includes setting the necessary standards and requirements for conducting tourism activities. The minister may issue temporary permits for tourist facilities and activities held on special occasions, holidays, and exhibitions. These permits require a fee ranging from 50 to 500 dinars. The regulations will define the specific guidelines and procedures for issuing such permits.

The Ministry of Information shall coordinate with the Ministry of Interior and relevant authorities to establish a mechanism ensuring the protection of tourist sites, activities, and assets, preventing any encroachments. Additionally, it will handle reports, complaints, and violations related to tourism, taking necessary actions and referring them to the competent authorities.

The concerned minister shall issue a list of violations and administrative penalties applicable to hotel establishments, tourist establishments, activities, and tourist festivals in cases of non-compliance with any provisions of this law. These violations may be settled based on the rules outlined in the regulations.

The Ministry of Information will be responsible for the powers outlined in the draft law, including the preparation of general policies and strategies for tourism development. These strategies aim to invest in available tourism assets, develop their sustainable resources, and align with the state's overall policy.

Government priorities sync with ESCWA observations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Media reports indicate that in the latest move to strengthen fiscal stability, the government is preparing to issue a public debt bill that would allow Kuwait, when deemed necessary, to raise up to KD20 billion through debt instruments in the international debt market over a 50 year period.

Lapse of the previous debt law in 2017 and its non-renewal due to political objections, had hamstrung the ability of governments over the past eight years to fund vital development projects. It had also precipitated economic liquidity crunches in the past and contributed to repeated deficit budgets, including to the general budget for fiscal year 2025-26 submitted to the Cabinet last week.

With expected revenue of KD18.2 billion and expenditure at KD24.5 billion, the budget deficit of KD6.3 billion is nearly 12 percent higher than in fiscal year 2024-25. Nearly 80 percent of government spending in the budget has been allocated for salaries, subsidies and other social support mechanisms. The latest ESCWA report is particularly critical of Kuwait's continued inefficiencies in public spending.

The UN report, aptly titled 'Social spending, expenditure efficiency and fiscal sustainability: Strategies to rebalance the Kuwait budget', critically analyses public spending and mobilization of non-oil revenues in Kuwait. It observes major inefficiencies in resource allocation, including in social spending and public transfers that pose a risk to the country's fiscal sustainability.

The report notes that Kuwait allocated a larger share of its GDP—around 50 percent in 2023—on public expenditure, compared to the global average of 37 percent, and higher than the 41 percent average in high-income countries (HIC). However, most of this public spending—93 percent in fiscal year 2023-24—was allocated to current expenditures, mainly to public sector employee compensation and the purchase of goods and services.

The generous but less efficient public spending is reflected in Kuwait's lower outcomes on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) index, which measures progress towards achieving the 17 SDG goals. Based on the budget for fiscal year 2023-24, the SDG Index shows that public expenditure in Kuwait attained an efficiency score of 0.54 on a scale of 0 to 1—significantly

lower than the global average of 0.74 and HIC average of 0.85.

The ESCWA study pointed out that improving efficiency to the global average level could have saved around KD6.8 billion, equivalent to 27 percent of public expenditure in the 2023-24 budget. These savings could have been redirected to critical sectors, such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare to drive sustainable development.

The UN report is also critical of public spending on education, noting that despite allocating nearly 6 percent of GDP to education—higher than the global average of 3.3 percent—educational outcomes in Kuwait have remained suboptimal. Education spending is primarily directed toward operational costs, such as salaries and facilities, with minimal investment in research, curriculum innovation and digital tools. Addressing these gaps is crucial for building a skilled workforce capable of supporting and participating effectively in the economy.

Turning to the country's subsidy programs, particularly in energy, which consume a significant share of the budget, the report observed that subsidy allocations were regressive in that it disproportionately benefits higher-income groups. The study added that rationalization and improved targeting of subsidies could efficiently enhance equity and reduce fiscal pressure.

Realizing that diversifying the heavily oil-reliant economy is pivotal to achieving the country's ambitious Vision 2035, the Kuwaiti government has over the past eight months been initiating several policies and initiatives focused on promoting non-oil sector growth and attracting foreign investment. The government is also fostering greater private sector engagement in the economy through public-private partnerships in infrastructure, utilities, and urban development projects.

With just a decade remaining to realize the country's ambitious Vision 2035, the authorities have been working to achieve projects and goals outlined in the country's current national development plan 2020-2025. Preparations are also underway for the remaining two contiguous five-year national development plans that lead to the Vision 2035 goal of establishing Kuwait as a regional and international financial and commercial hub.

Kuwait's Vision 2035 aims to foster human development, improve production efficiency, and enhance competitiveness,

under a supportive institutional framework that reinforces national values and preserves social identity, while providing the appropriate infrastructure for a conducive and developed business environment.

Vision 2035 is also designed to work cohesively to achieve the SDGs. The General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPDP) is tasked with monitoring the Kuwait Development Plan's alignment with the SDGs. In its October 2024 report, the General Secretariat highlighted the efforts being directed to support SDGs, including through developing human capital, reforming public administration, and enhancing transparency, accountability, and effectiveness of the government.

To achieve its goals and aspirations of Vision 2035, and to ensure long-term sustainable prosperity of the nation, Kuwait could further align its plans with the recommendations outlined in the ESCWA report to:

- Promote economic diversification and expand non-oil revenues.
- Encourage 'smart' spending to enhance expenditure efficiency and reduce public fund wastage.
- Reform subsidies and universal transfer programs.
- Foster resilient and inclusive economic growth
- Implement education sector reforms to improve the quality of education and reinforce human capital.
- Improve the healthcare system to promote healthier lifestyles.
- Implement performance-based budgeting on a gradual basis to improve the effectiveness of public expenditure.
- Enhance fiscal discipline and transparency
- Leverage data-driven frameworks to enhance public financial management.
- Align spending with the SDGs.

By adopting and adapting the above recommendations, Kuwait can transition to a more inclusive, equitable and resilient economy that syncs with Kuwaiti national development priorities. Moreover, by aligning fiscal policies with the SDGs and prioritizing efficiency, Kuwait can ensure that public spending delivers meaningful outcomes for all citizens.

Czech Embassy spotlights legacy of Czech women trailblazers



By Shouq AlMulla
Special to The Times Kuwait

The Embassy of the Czech Republic is holding an exhibition titled 'Czech Successful Women' to highlight and honor the achievements of remarkable Czech women throughout history.

Organized by the Czech Centres, the exhibition was inaugurated by Ambassador of the Czech Republic H.E. Juraj Chmiel, in the

presence of diplomats and members of the Kuwaiti and Czech communities.

The exhibition showcased inspiring stories of Czech women who have made significant contributions to politics, science, religion, sports, arts, and more. It featured portraits and narratives of renowned figures, including Madeleine Albright, the first female US Secretary of State of Czech origin, along with other pioneering women from various fields.

In his opening remarks, the Czech ambassador emphasized the vital role of women in shaping societies, noting that they often had to overcome numerous obstacles to leave a lasting impact.

He further elaborated, "Today, we pay tribute to the courage, determination, and innovation of Czech women, whose contributions have inspired generations. This exhibition is not just a tribute to their accomplishments but also a reminder of the importance of equality and the

power of dreams, honoring women from the Czech Republic and around the world. May their stories inspire us to break barriers, challenge norms, and create a future of talent that knows no boundaries." The exhibition will remain open to the public every day for two weeks at the Czech Embassy, from 10am to noon, offering visitors an opportunity to explore and be inspired by the stories of resilience, ambition, and success of these women.

Central Bank cancels minimum balance fees imposed on accounts

The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has instructed all banks to halt the practice of charging fees when a customer's account balance falls below a minimum threshold. The new regulatory directive prohibits banks from deducting any fees for accounts that fall below the minimum balance, even if the balance reaches zero, as well as for accounts that lie dormant over a period of time.

In its directive the CBK noted that some banks were charging a dinar while others charged two dinars when the balance in a customer's account fell below KD100, or in

some cases KD200. their account fell below a minimum of account holder's

The Central Bank has also required banks to cancel the five dinar fee previously charged for updating customer data in their branches. This followed the earlier cancellation of the same fee for updating customer data online.

This move is aimed at encouraging customers to keep their data updated according to the "Know Your Customer" (KYC) model. The step also aligns with banks' responsibilities under anti-moneylaundering and terrorist financing regulations, making data updates a shared obligation between banks and customers.

Following the latest fee cancellation, a total of 12 dinars in banking fees have been removed from the list of bank services by CBK., in addition to the KD10 that were



previously canceled. Banks used to collect this fee annually for balance messages, but this service is now provided for free. The removal of these fees is part of the effort by CBK to facilitate access to banking and financial services for all segments of society.

Requiring customers to pay a specific fee for certain services had discouraged them from using these services in the past, such

as when they had to update personal data. Additionally the requirement to maintain a minimum balance pushed many low income people from opening bank accounts, or for others to open supplementary accounts in the name of their children to save on their behalf, as these accounts could fluctuate in balance occasionally.

Promoting financial inclusion has become one of the central banks' most important goals in achieving financial and economic stability. It serves as a way to bring all segments of society under the umbrella of banking support, especially for low- and middle-income individuals who have historically been excluded from easy access to financial services. The rise of financial technology, through mobile and internet technologies, has made it easier and cheaper for people to access these services.

LuLu Hypermarket's 'Happiness Loyalty Program' reaches 6 million members across the GCC!

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offering instant discounts, points on every purchase, and special member-only privileges. With its seamless integration across all LuLu Hypermarkets in the region, the program continues to grow, bringing smiles to millions of shoppers.

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Visit Q8 EduEx and explore amazing opportunities! We look forward to welcoming you to this exciting educational event.

No, thank you...

I will not use AI to write

The desire for the easy and digestible is ruining art

By Samira Jafar
Special to The Times Kuwait

Whenever I tell anyone that I do not use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to write, I get met with a long list of why I am wrong: it is efficient, it helps with research, it streamlines the process, it makes editing easier, etc. I usually simply nod through these conversations, interjecting my opinion occasionally but not to the fullest extent. Why? I don't find a point in arguing about it.

People who are pro-AI are set in their ways, just like I am set in mine. It is a matter of personal preference, with moral arguments made on either side, which in turn is the product of a few different things—how much time is on your hands, what kind of personality you have, and maybe, most importantly, what writing means to you. Thus, this answer will vary depending on who you ask. Some people believe it is fine to use AI for research, but not to actually produce content. Some people believe it is fine to allow AI to produce content for you, from A to Z. Some are completely against it in any way, shape, or form.

A recent debate about AI was sparked amidst the week of Oscar nominations for 2025. The *Brutalist* and *Emilia Perez*, two movies from A24, were both the most nominated films this year. However, both directors admitted to their use of AI. Adrien Brody's Hungarian accent in *The Brutalist* was not on par with what they were expecting; thus, they used AI to fix his accent. AI was used to translate the script of *Emilia Perez* from English to Spanish, which is why, when Zoe Saldana is meant to say, "de nada" (you're welcome), she instead says "bienvenido" (welcome). This is a mistake that even a novice Spanish speaker like me is painfully aware of, and one that disrupts the overall experience of the film, taking you 'out' of the frame to wince at how outlandish it all is.

Despite outcry from film aficionados, Adrien Brody won Best Actor in a Drama at the Golden Globes for his role in *The Brutalist*. Many voiced the same (valid) question: how can someone be the best if they cannot accomplish the job of a good actor, which is to nail an accent that is not your own? Furthermore: why is a film about a tortured artist set against an architectural backdrop that was made by AI and not actual crew members?

People had arguments that were in support of both films, mainly that AI is what allows independent film studios such as A24 (which, is, indeed independent, but is in no way, shape, or form a 'small' or under budgeted studio) to compete with bigger film studios. The whole event seems like we have turned art itself into a joke, which we definitely have. We are merely regurgitating the same argument that has been made against artists since the beginning of time—this is not a real job, you have no real transferable skills, and you will become obsolete in the future.

The future is here, now. Excerpts of ChatGPT prompts are found in self-published contemporary novels. Readers (justifiably) run novels through AI detectors and report back with results. Their points about this are valid; if you are going to ask people for money in exchange for your art, you need to be vocal about the part where it was partially produced with the use of AI. And people are unwilling to pay for it. People have moral qualms against watching it. The vast majority of people are indifferent, but when the stakes are high, you will meet people who are opposed to the use of AI in art.

Do not get me wrong: AI is a very beneficial tool. AI is used to advance new discoveries every day in engineering and medicine. It does, however, also come with its downsides, from environmental to ethical to legal concerns. But aside from the sciences, AI is being pushed onto authors and artists every day. Googling 'self-publishing' will have you leafing through pages of results on how to use AI to write your book.

On Instagram, so many writing workshops are touted as having 'changed the participants' writing skills for the better, only to do some digging and find out it is a completely AI-written course. AI is not just everywhere; it is masquerading as something that it is not. Nowhere on these websites does it say that these courses are AI generated. Authors often do not want to admit to using AI in their novels. Which begs the question: if it is the future, why are you ashamed of it? Why is there no real transparency with what is going on?

There are never-ending debates in the literary space about what using AI means for authorship, intellectualism, and creativity. In Sofie Vlad's article, *Texts Without Authors*:

This debate is happening in part because there are no clear boundaries placed on AI. Whenever we input data into ChatGPT, that data is used to perform a task for someone else, and so forth. Think of it as the equivalent of you telling your friend to keep your secret, and then they tell everyone you know.

So, as a writer, there are questionable ethics surrounding the use of AI. Even when it comes to research, there are difficulties with being able to rely on it and trust it fully. Many times, ChatGPT has incorrectly responded to prompts. This doubles your due diligence as a writer to have to go back and fact check whatever you are writing. This is because ChatGPT does not exist to necessarily give you the 'right' information; in part, the technology is not really sure if the information it is feeding you is right or not. So what we perceive as efficient actually increases the amount of work you need to do.

Furthermore, research is all about the process of writing. Writing, to me, is 'lived work'; not necessarily in the sense that it is factual, but that it is a whole process, that includes seeking out answers, looking at different opinions,



“Capitalism has taught us that quickest and cheapest equates to the best. Capitalism has consumed the ways in which we think, perceive, judge, and work. And AI is being injected into these processes with lightning speed. But we are forgetting the most important facet of capitalism: only a few will 'make' it. Capitalism is not designed to keep space open for everyone.”

Ascribing Literary Meaning in the case of AI, she argues that works written partially by AI should be labeled as 'No Author': "I have identified two main problems with ascribing meaning in the case of AI-generated texts. The first comes with most forms of intentionalism that rely on the presence of an author for a text to acquire meaning. In the case of AI, there is no author to which we can defer. The second problem lies with conventionalism's inability to account for meaning on a metatextual level."

Her argument stems from the fact that when AI produces content, that content is a regurgitation, in part, of all the inputs it has been fed before. Therefore, when an author produces original work, the meaning of that work stems from a thought that is not inherently or always intertextual, because it could be sourced from something internal within the author. In contrast, when AI is used to generate content, that content is always intertextual, which means we cannot contribute authorship to it.

and leaning into a story the way you would if it were real life. This stuck out to me in the 'Acknowledgements' section of *Intermezzo* by Sally Rooney: "The writing of this novel required some research into both the practice of law and the game of chess... I would like to express my gratitude to the Chess Society of Trinity College Dublin and to its members. Their responses to my queries about contemporary competitive chess and tournament formats were truly generous and helpful. Any factual errors remaining in the text concerning law, chess, or any other matter, belong to either the novel's characters or me."

To me, this is the essence of writing. It may take years, but Rooney interjected herself into the essence of what she was writing about. And it does not have to be perfect. No one reads *Intermezzo* looking for factual perfection. But we are looking for art, for humanity, and for lived experiences. So why, then, are we concerning ourselves with what is most efficient, and taking the labor out of a laborious



process? It does not produce anything that is necessarily 'better' or higher quality. In fact, many times, the opposite is true.

Writing is labor. It is a labor of love. Writing is the process through which we feel so many things and jump into the lives of many diverse fictional characters. Research is part of that process. Mistakes are part of that process. When I go online and look at articles about film and music for my short stories, I enjoy the process because it exposes me to so many ideas and artists, I would not have looked for otherwise. When I watch films, I am exposing myself to emotion, colors, and a medium I am not familiar with, which, in turn, helps with my own writing. When I talk to people about their lives hoping they will influence my stories, that comes from a place of humanity.

Capitalism has taught us that quickest and cheapest equates to the best. Capitalism has consumed the ways in which we think, perceive, judge, and work. And AI is being injected into these processes with lightning speed. But we are forgetting the most important facet of capitalism: only a few will 'make' it. Capitalism is not designed to keep space open for everyone.

Writing is a difficult process. Being able to use AI does not mean it will be done well. The over-saturation of authors and writers producing easily digestible content will make that content completely undesirable in the long run. Not everyone can do it well or do it to the point of success.

Back to the point of Adrien Brody: not everyone can be an actor, let alone an actor that gets paid millions of dollars per project. It takes those years of perfecting the accent, doing the research, and putting in the work. There will be ways, in the future, to distinguish between these forms of art.

Lastly, I write because I love it. I want to disconnect from the dystopian world we live in. I do not want to get it done quickly. This is my hobby. We are so discouraged from doing anything these days that does not generate income. I use Canva to create graphics for my Substack posts, but I do not express myself as a graphic designer or call myself one. Writing is a part of me, and I do not want that process to be given to someone (or something) else. Using AI to write, to me, is like having a robot do your knitting for you, when you only took up knitting to relax. This is my perspective because writing is a personal process, and my opinions will be different from yours. That is okay. The key to all of this is transparency, and whether or not that will be solidified or codified in the coming years will be interesting to see.

Samira Jafar is an English instructor at Kuwait University. She is the author of two collections of poetry. You can reach her at @samirawritesstuff on instagram or samirajafar.substack.com

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Germany Needs an Economy that Works for Young People



Dalia Marin

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On 23 February, German voters will elect a new federal parliament, and many expect the country's established political parties to lose ground. In recent elections—for the European Parliament in June and in the East German Länder (federal states) of Saxony, Thuringia, and Brandenburg in September— young voters flocked to the far-right Alternative für Deutschland. In the three eastern states, for example, 31-38 percent of voters under the age of 25 voted for the AfD.

It was a shocking shift: in the 2021 federal election, young Germans largely supported the Greens and the liberal Free Democrats (FDP), which won, respectively, 23 percent and 21 percent of the vote among 18-24 year olds and 21 percent and 15 percent among 25-34 year olds. Building on this success, the Greens and the FDP formed a new government with the Social Democrats. Hopes were high that the Ampelkoalition, or traffic-light coalition, for the three parties' colors, would address the economic concerns of the young voters who helped bring it to power.

That did not happen, and young Germans—like their counterparts across the democratic

of moving up the income scale. Even if the German economy were growing robustly, young people would still be facing one of the lowest rates of social mobility among OECD countries.

Improving young people's economic prospects and increasing social mobility should be a high priority for the next German government. The Harvard economist Raj Chetty has some suggestions for how to go about it. To promote equality of opportunity, which is easier to agree on than redistributing income, Chetty recommends focusing on communities, rather than the individual, as the unit of change. Specifically, he suggests targeting areas where opportunity is lacking. Such an approach accounts for the fact that the chances of a child escaping poverty vary dramatically across places, but also within cities. For example, Chetty's research has shown that moving to a better neighborhood can improve children's prospects significantly, even when families' financial status remains unchanged.

Increasing social mobility, according to Chetty, also requires building social capital through a system of "connected capitalism", in which financial incentives link people who have opportunities with those who lack them. In communities where the rich and poor interact more, people born into poverty are more likely to receive guidance from their wealthier connections on navigating complex decisions, such as where to go to university, and to be inspired to follow similar career paths. One way to reduce class segregation is by providing low-income families with housing vouchers to move to opportunity-rich neighborhoods.

Implementing these ideas and others espoused by Chetty requires a wholesale reorganization of social assistance. In Germany, the different government agencies responsible for affordable housing, employment, and state benefits would need to unite around the common cause of creating opportunity and to devise policy to achieve that goal.

A quarter-century ago, the Harvard political scientist Robert D. Putnam published *Bowling Alone*, which showed how the United States, once a country of joiners, was turning into a country of loners. Americans were not attending church or marrying as often as they had been, and Putnam warned of social isolation's corrosive effect on democracy.

The same trend can be seen in Germany, where feelings of loneliness have increased over the past five years, especially among people under the age of 30. This has surely contributed to the widening political divide between the country's young men, who have grown increasingly conservative, and its young women, who have adopted far more liberal

views. Compounding young people's plight is the fact that almost one in five Germans between the ages of 20 and 34 have no vocational qualification, which often results in below-average earnings.

Like Chetty, Putnam underscored the importance of building "bridging social capital"—

the ties that link people across generations, genders, and incomes. The next German government must focus on improving such ties, which includes promoting community well-being and economic prosperity, to give young people hope for the future and stop their drift toward far-right populism.

“ To promote equality of opportunity, Chetty recommends focusing on communities, rather than the individual, as the unit of change. Specifically, he suggests targeting areas where opportunity is lacking. ”

West—have swung to the right, into the arms of the populist AfD. A 2023 study suggests that the growing appeal of such parties can be explained by zero-sum thinking. The belief that groups gain only if other groups lose is deeply embedded in populism, which sets itself against global elites, the deep state, or foreigners whose success is believed to come at the expense of locals.

The study's authors found that zero-sum thinking tends to prevail when resources are scarce. That is certainly the case in Germany, where the economy has stagnated since the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving young people with limited job prospects and little chance

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Fruits essential to a balanced diabetic diet

Fiber in fruits supports blood sugar control and diabetes management, while the vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants present in many fruits can help promote favorable health outcomes

People with diabetes should always include fruit in a balanced diet, and there is no restriction on which fruits a person should eat, with moderation in servings and portion sizes being the main factor in regulating fruit intake.

However, it is important to keep in mind that some fruit products, such as juices and dried fruit, have a high sugar content. Although avoiding these fruits can help reduce the risk of blood sugar spiking, fruits are also an important source of vitamins, minerals, and fiber that promote overall health.

The fiber in fruits supports blood sugar control and diabetes management, while the vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants present in many fruits can help promote favorable health outcomes. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), part of the United States National Institutes of Health (NIH), recommends that people with diabetes include fruits as part of a balanced diet.

The nutritional content of fruits not only makes them a healthier option than candy and high sugar baked goods, studies have also suggested that including regular servings of fruit in the daily diet could lower the risk of a person developing heart disease and cancer. Below, we look at some of the fruits that a person with diabetes should eat as part of a balanced diet, as well as fruits that can be avoided, and their link to diabetes.

People should not exclude fruit from their diet. In fact, a study in 2017 suggested that eating fruit can actually help prevent type 2 diabetes. The researchers also found that people with diabetes who ate fresh fruit regularly had a lower risk of developing cardiovascular conditions. However, it is important to be aware of the nutritional content of fruits and plan diets accordingly.

Not all fruits are created equal, and some have a significantly higher sugar content than others. High sugar fruits include: watermelons, overly ripe bananas, pineapple

These fruits are still safe for a person with diabetes to eat, and there is no need to exclude



them from the diet, as long as you are aware of their sugar content and plan portion sizes and servings accordingly.

It can be beneficial for people with diabetes to stick to a single serving of fruit at a time and pair fruit with a source of fiber, protein or fat. For example, adding chopped fruits to a porridge of oats in the morning, or pairing berries with Greek yogurt, or apple with almond butter or any other nut butter, can aid blood sugar control and diabetes management.

Fruits are also high in carbohydrates. Although an important macronutrient and essential to overall health, carbohydrates also have a significant impact on blood sugar levels. People wishing to limit their carbohydrate intake should pay attention to their fruit portion sizes to ensure they do not exceed their carbohydrate goals.

In particular, a person following a low-carb diet should identify which carbohydrates they eat that are low in nutrients or unhealthy in other ways and cut those out first. Here is a look at

the carbohydrate content of some fruits per 100 grams: Red grapes and bananas have about 20g of carbohydrates; Fuji apples and mangoes have around 15.3g of carbohydrates; and pineapples have 13g.

Nutritionists point out that when choosing between fresh fruit and fresh fruit juice, it is important to always opt for fresh fruit as it provides more fiber, which helps you feel fuller and can have a better impact on your general health. In comparison, the juicing of fruits removes most of the fiber and concentrates the sugar content, which could quickly raise a person's blood sugar.

When looking to buy fruit juices from store shelves, experts suggest that people watch out for certain phrases on product labels. For example, they should opt for products with labels that say, packed in its juices, unsweetened, no added sugar

One way of replacing processed fruit in the diet is to freeze fresh fruits, such as banana slices,

and mash this frozen fruit after a couple of hours to make healthy ice cream.

People with diabetes can also include dried fruit in their diet, as long as it is not dried with added sugar. Popular dried fruits that may have high sugar content include: dried apricots, pineapple, raisins, and dates. Due to the removal of water in the drying process, dried fruits already have a much higher sugar concentration compared to the same volume of fresh fruits.

One option to have dried fruits is to pair them with nuts, which are a rich source of fats, fiber and protein. All three of these nutrients in nuts are known to slow digestion and can help prevent blood sugar spikes. It is recommended that a person with diabetes should aim to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. The following amounts of fruit constitute one portion:

Small fresh fruit: 2 plums, 2 satsumas, 2 kiwi fruit, 3 apricots, 6 lychees, 7 strawberries, 14 cherries

Medium-sized fresh fruit: 1 apple, 1 banana, 1 pear, 1 orange, 1 nectarine,

Large fresh fruit: half a grapefruit, one 5 cm slice of papaya, two 5 cm slices of mango

Dried fruit: 1 heaped tablespoon (30 g) of raisins, currants, or sultanas, 2 dried figs, 1 handful of banana chips

Canned fruit in natural juice: 2 pear or peach halves, 8 segments of grapefruit

Several studies have shown that consuming whole fruits can help lower the risk of developing diabetes. Moreover, fruits are also high in fiber, nutrients, minerals, vitamins and antioxidants that promote overall health and support blood sugar management.

Although fruits also have a relatively high carbohydrate content, a person with diabetes should look to cut other carbs from their diet and leave fruit as part of their normal dietary routine. In short, people with diabetes can eat, and should include, fruits in their daily diet, provided they do so in moderation.

Heart rate linked to vocalization in infants

The soft murmurs of a baby's first expressions that provide joy and evoke wonder in doting parents, are in fact early signs that the baby's heart is working rhythmically in concert with developing speech.

Researchers at the University of Houston in the United States have postulated from their studies that a baby's first gentle sounds and early attempts at forming words are directly linked to the baby's heart rate. The findings

have implications for understanding language development and potential early indicators of speech and communication disorders.

For infants, producing recognizable speech is more than a thinking process. It is a motor skill that requires them to learn to coordinate multiple muscles of varying function across their body. This coordination is directly linked to ongoing fluctuations in heart rate. The research investigated whether these fluctuations in heart rate coincide with vocal production and word production in 24-month-old babies.

Heart rate naturally fluctuates in all mammals, steadily increasing then decreasing in a rhythmic pattern. The study found that heart rate fluctuations align with the timing and duration of vocalizations. Infants were most likely to make a vocalization when their heart rate fluctuation had reached a local peak (maximum) or local trough (minimum).

The research also found that vocalizations produced at the peak were longer than could

be expected by chance. On the other hand, vocalizations produced just before the trough, while heart rate is decelerating, were more likely to be recognized as a word by naïve listeners.

The researchers measured a total of 2,708 vocalizations emitted by 34 infants between 18 and 27 months of age while the babies played with a caregiver. Infants in this age group typically do not speak whole words yet, and only a small subset (10.3%) of the vocalizations could be reliably identified as words by naïve listeners.

For the study, the team considered the heart rate dynamics of all sounds made by the baby's mouth, be it a laugh, a babble or a coo. Every sound an infant makes helps their brain and body learn how to coordinate with each other, eventually leading to speech.

Scientists point out that as infants grow, their autonomic nervous system—the part of the body that controls autonomic functions like heart rate and breathing—grows and develops. The first few years of life are marked by significant



changes in how the heart and lungs function, and these changes continue throughout life.

The study found that the relationship between recognizable vocalizations and decelerating heart rate may imply that the successful development of speech partially depends on infants experiencing predictable ranges of autonomic activity through development.



Water Retention, a Common Problem

Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy

Water retention is an annoying problem. As a Dietitian and Nutritionist, I have been working with a lot of people and I have seen people losing up to 4 kg in just a week, and all of it from water. So water can actually make up a lot of your excess body weight.



This problem occurs when excess fluid builds up in the body's tissues, leading to bloating, swelling, and discomfort. It can result from hormonal changes, high sodium intake, dehydration, or poor circulation.

Fortunately, science-backed dietary

strategies can help manage and reduce water retention naturally. Try out the strategies below if you suffer from water retention:

Potassium-Rich Foods: Bananas, avocados, and spinach help balance sodium levels and promote fluid balance.

Magnesium-Rich Foods: Nuts, seeds, and dark chocolate support kidney function and reduce bloating.

Diuretic Foods: Cucumber, celery, and asparagus naturally stimulate urination and help flush excess fluids.

Hydrating Foods: Watermelon, oranges, and strawberries keep the body hydrated, preventing fluid retention.

Reduce Sodium Intake: Excess salt leads to fluid retention, so opt for whole, unprocessed foods.

Increase Water Intake: Paradoxically, drinking more water signals the body to release stored fluids.

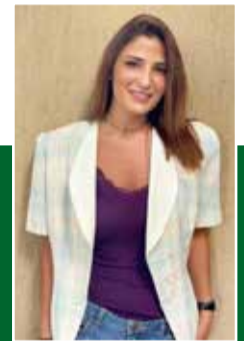
Consume More Protein: Protein helps regulate fluid balance by maintaining oncotic pressure in blood vessels.

Exercise Regularly: Movement improves circulation and lymphatic drainage, reducing swelling. A final tip that will help you some more: Boil a few parsley strips with water and have a morning cup for a week and see its optimal effect.



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Create healthy habits, not restrictions

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



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