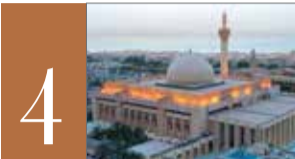


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Empowering Women Empowers Nation

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

For hundreds of years women have fought for their equal rights, opportunities, and freedom. From the suffragists in the early 20th century seeking the right to vote, to today's online activists challenging the male-oriented order, each generation has persistently pushed boundaries, shattered glass-ceilings, and refused to back down. To commemorate centuries of effort by women and to raise awareness on the need for gender-equality and women's empowerment, the world observes International Women's Day (IWD) annually on 8 March.

In Kuwait, under the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the guidance of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the government



has been taking several measured steps aimed at enhancing the role of women, and empowering them to contribute effectively to social, economic, political, and cultural

development of the country.

In line with directives of the leadership, and based on the conviction that progress and growth of Kuwait cannot be achieved without

the active participation and contribution of women, the government, headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, has been initiating policies and plans that prioritize the involvement of women in all spheres, as well as enabling them to realize their full rights.

In the latest move to ensure equal rights for women, Minister of Justice, Nasser Al-Sumait announced in February that the government is considering repealing Article 153 of the 1960 Penal Code. Article 153 grants a reduced sentence for 'men who kill a wife, mother, daughter, or sister caught in adultery'. Abolishing the discriminatory law has been a consistent demand by women's groups and human-rights activists in Kuwait for years. The law has also been a stumbling block for Kuwaiti delegations attending international human- and women-rights talks.

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Capital Markets Authority imposes fines on companies for violations

The violations included failing to conduct ongoing verification of customers and actual beneficiaries, not verifying actual beneficiaries within primary customers when checking national lists, and a deficiency in the company's verification system that failed to identify one of its customers.

Capital Markets Authority's (CMA) Disciplinary Board has imposed financial penalties against multiple companies and their boards of directors, for regulatory violations.

Among the companies against which actions were initiated were the National Industries Company, for failing to comply with disclosure and transparency rules, and the company's failure to disclose the signing of significant credit facility agreements.

Additionally, the company was found to have delayed the disclosure of critical information, including lawsuits and rulings, contract signings, the resignation of the Executive Vice President of Factories, changes to its organizational structure, and other key agreements. The CMA imposed a fine of KD1,000 dinars on the company for each of the two violations it committed.

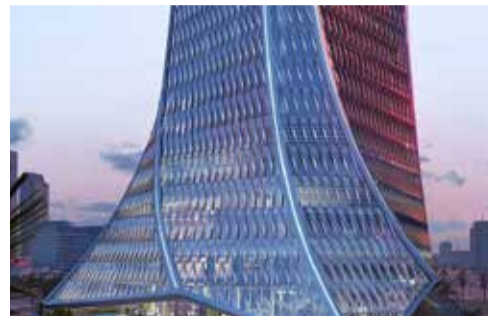
The Disciplinary Board imposed financial penalties on Al Tameer Real Estate Investment Company, along with its Chairman, Board members, Vice Chairman, CEO, CFO, and external auditor. The penalties were issued for violations related to listing regulations, corporate governance, securities activities, and registered persons. The company was fined KD5,000 for its violation, while the Chairman, several board members, the CFO, and the external auditor each received a financial penalty of KD2,000 for their respective violations. Additionally, a financial penalty of 3,000 dinars was imposed on the Vice Chairman and CEO for the violation related to disclosure obligations.

The CMA Disciplinary Board imposed a financial penalty on Wafra International Investment Company for violating the provisions of Book Sixteen of the Executive Regulations of Law No. (7) of 2010 and its amendments. The company was fined KD1,000 for the violation in all its provisions.

Importantly, upon reviewing the company's verification mechanisms for terrorist lists and a selected sample of customers, the Authority found that Wafra International Investment Company had not established adequate policies and procedures to fully comply with the required obligations.

The violations included failing to conduct ongoing verification of customers and actual beneficiaries, not verifying actual beneficiaries within primary customers when checking national lists, and a deficiency in the company's verification system that failed to identify one of its customers. However, the Authority noted that these violations were procedural rather than substantive.

The Council also issued a decision to impose a financial penalty of KD5,000 on Automated Systems Company for violating disclosure and transparency rules. The penalty was due to the company's failure to disclose essential information to the Kuwait Stock Exchange or the Authority regarding the signing of a request form on 28 December 2022. The request, made by the former CEO, was for cloud services valued at KD2.7 million from a foreign company.



The Disciplinary Board has imposed a financial penalty on Kuwait and Middle East Financial Investment Company (KMEFIC) for violating capital adequacy regulations for licensed entities. The Authority's review of KMEFIC's capital adequacy report for the period ending 30 June 2024 revealed that the company's capital adequacy ratio fell below the legally required level. This decline was attributed to the company's purchase of a property on 6 March 2024 through its subsidiaries, leading to a 24 percent decrease in the ratio by the

end of June 2024. The decrease was primarily due to a significant increase in the company's investments, which grew by KD6.2 million during that period.

The decision also included rejecting the plea of inadmissibility of the case, which was based on a previous ruling. A financial penalty of KD5,000 was imposed on KMEFIC for the violation, and the company was instructed to address its qualified regulatory capital to ensure it reaches 100 percent or more of the capital requirements calculated based on risks.

The Board also imposed a financial penalty on Sultan Center Food Products Company, along with its Chairman, Vice Chairman, Board members, CEO, and CFO, for violations of listing and corporate governance regulations. The decision included a financial penalty of KD5,000 imposed on Sultan Center Food Products Company for failing to fulfill its duties in ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the data and information that must be disclosed.

A financial penalty of KD2,000 was imposed on the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and each of the Board members of Sultan Center Food Products Company for their respective violations. Additionally, the company's CEO and Executive Financial Chief were each fined KD3,000 for the violations attributed to them.

Fresh fruits, Iftar delights await at LuLu Hypermarket's 'Ramadan Specials'



LuLu Hypermarket is bringing a full range of Ramadan specials this season, with exclusive offers and discounts across all categories. From fresh fruits to savory iftar snacks, there is something for everyone to make their dining options tasty, nourishing and healthy during the holy month.

This Ramadan, LuLu is offering an impressive variety of fresh fruits, ensuring shoppers can find the best quality produce for their Suhoor and Iftar meals. There are different types of oranges, including Valencia, Navel, and Mandarin, along with juicy watermelons sourced from Oman, India, and Yemen. The selection of grapes is equally impressive, with white, black, red, and globe varieties available.

For apple lovers, LuLu is stocking more than ten different varieties, in addition to premium pomegranates and a wide selection of dates—a Ramadan essential for breaking the fast.

To keep everyone refreshed, LuLu is also

offering a collection of Ramadan-special beverages. Shoppers can enjoy a selection of fresh juices made from seasonal fruits, alongside lassi, a cooling yoghurt-based drink perfect for hot days. Favorite Ramadan beverages like Vimto are available, as well as special Jeera Kanji (rice porridge) and Thari Kanji (semolina porridge), which are popular Indian choices during Iftar.

No Iftar is complete without delicious snacks, and the retailer is making sure there are plenty of options. Exclusive Iftar snack counters have been set up at all LuLu Hypermarket outlets, featuring over 50 varieties of Iftar favorites. From traditional bites to modern twists on classic dishes, there is something to suit every taste.

With fresh produce, refreshing drinks, and mouth-watering Iftar treats, LuLu Hypermarket is the perfect destination for all your Ramadan shopping needs.

State IT entities sign strategic partnership with Microsoft

Kuwait's Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) and the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) signed a strategic partnership agreement with Microsoft Corporation to speed up the digital transformation and enhance the artificial intelligence (AI) applications in Kuwait.

The agreement is expected to transform the country into a regional AI center in keeping with Kuwait Vision 2035, Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Saud Abdul-Aziz Al-Omar said at a press conference following the signing ceremony on 5 March.

"It translates into action the wise instructions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, under careful supervision by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah," the minister noted.

The partnership marks a milestone in leveraging the AI applications in Kuwait to support the government drive for economic diversification, and promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship. The agreement will also contribute to the training of the national workforce in order to build their capacity in information technology and make them better qualified to assume leading positions, Al-Omar pointed out.

The deal envisages launching AI data center, an integrated AI system, center for promoting the digital economy and state service, and center for excellence in cloud auditing.

"The government will provide civil servants with access to the Microsoft 365

Copilot, thus making Kuwait one of the first countries in the region using these solutions which contribute to enhancement of productivity and improvement of the state services," the minister went on.

Al-Omar noted that the launching of cloud auditing centers, the improvement of the digital infrastructure, and fast access to Microsoft services are key factors for attracting global investors and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in Kuwait.



On his part, Microsoft's corporate vice-president for Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa (CEMA) area, Samer Abu-Ltaif, said the partnership with Kuwait will help improve the digital infrastructure of Kuwait, and contribute to economic prosperity and sustainability.

Microsoft is committed to upgrading the cloud infrastructure of Kuwait and helping the state institutions promote innovation and investment, he affirmed. The Corporation will also work with the Kuwaiti government for launching the Cybersphere initiative aiming to enhance cybersecurity at the government sector and guard against cyberattacks, he added.

Hackers use legitimate sites to steal payment card information

Advancements in digital payment technologies have made payment processes simple and rapid, but hackers now appear to be using sophisticated new tactics to take online control of payment cards and manipulate them for their benefit.

Local banks have recently received multiple complaints from customers who fell victim to an unconventional type of bank card hacking. Customers reported that after making purchases on local websites, they were later surprised by unauthorized withdrawals from their accounts—for purchases made from abroad, in particular from Italy, despite them being in Kuwait at the time.

Details reveal that when victims made legitimate payments on a Kuwaiti website, compromised platforms displayed an option for contactless smart payments. However, during the transaction, they were prompted to enter a one-time password (OTP). After doing so, they were informed that the transaction had failed and were asked to retry using their card number, which they did. Days later, they received their purchased items as expected, but were then notified of multiple unauthorized withdrawals from their accounts for purchases made overseas.

Hackers are reportedly manipulating contactless payment requests to capture customers' card data stored on their phones. This stolen information is then used to make unauthorized withdrawals from their accounts, repeatedly draining funds up to the maximum limit of each compromised card.

By the time customers realize their data has been hijacked, hackers have already gained full access to their electronic payment details, allowing them to withdraw funds as if making legitimate transactions from abroad. As a result, customers are forced to request their banks to block the hacked cards. However, banks say the best they can do under these circumstances is make attempts to recover the stolen funds, without any promise of success.

The banks state that customers are responsible for the security of their own card, and point out that the victim entered the OTP willingly, which led to their accounts being compromised. Since the Central Bank of Kuwait functions only as a regulatory body, neither banks nor the central bank are obligated to compensate victims or guarantee refunds.

Correspondent banks, which process the international transactions, have also stated their inability to reverse the payments, as they were completed correctly with the required OTP verification. Consequently, customers bear full responsibility for the theft, while banks are only responsible for attempting, but not guaranteeing, the recovery of stolen funds.

However, the victims argue that they are not responsible for these thefts, claiming that hackers injected malicious code into well-known Kuwaiti websites. This allowed them to copy card data during legitimate



Unlike traditional phishing attacks that use fake or lookalike websites, hackers in this case are infiltrating legitimate websites and using them as a gateway to gain control over customers' smart cards.

Reports indicate that this type of fraud has been ongoing in Kuwait for some time, with no effective solutions implemented by the relevant authorities. While website owners have attempted to patch vulnerabilities through specialized cybersecurity firms, the exact weak points enabling these fraudulent transactions remain unidentified.

Banks advise card owners to set relatively low spending limits on cards used for everyday purchases. If possible, a separate minimum limit can be set specifically for contactless smart card payments. Of course, these limits can be quickly increased if needed. Additionally, a virtual card with a minimum spending limit can be issued and linked to Google Pay, Apple Pay, or Samsung Pay.

Customers are also advised to be extra cautious when asked for data without justification, especially during payments via Google Pay, Apple Pay, or Samsung Pay.

Since withdrawals are made through these services without requiring an OTP, any request for it from another party should raise concern. If you notice any suspicious transactions, you should contact your bank immediately.

transactions. They insist that they followed the correct protocols for using contactless smart payments, which absolves them of any negligence in protecting their data.

Additionally, they discovered from the website owners that their platforms do not officially support payment methods like Apple Pay, Google Pay, or Samsung Pay, despite these options appearing available to customers on the compromised sites.

US State Department names ambassador designate to Kuwait



The United States Department of State has announced Amer Ghalib as ambassador-designate to Kuwait. Ghalib, the incumbent mayor of Hamtramck, Michigan, had worked diligently in President Trump's electoral campaigns in Michigan.

In his remarks on the designation, US President Donald Trump said on his social-media platform 'Truth Social' that he was elated that Ghalib would assume the task as US Ambassador to Kuwait. The US president added that the new ambassador to Kuwait, a Phd holder in medicine, would represent the US with pride in his new mission. Ghalib, 45, born in Yemen, was elected in 2021 as the first Arab mayor in Hamtramck

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Strict regulations on donation collection at mosques during Ramadan

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs has outlined regulations for charitable associations to collect donations in mosques during Ramadan, including using bank deductions and K-Net devices, restricting speeches inside mosques, and ensuring adherence to a specific schedule, with violations reported through the Ministry's services.

Ministry of Islamic Affairs, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs, has announced stringent regulations with regard to collection of donations at mosques by charitable organizations during the holy month of Ramadan.

In an administrative circular issued by Undersecretary Dr. Badr Al-Mutairi, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs outlined 12 key guidelines for collecting donations during Ramadan.

In particular, the circular specifies that all donations collected at mosques should be exclusively through bank deductions and K-Net devices, and representatives of charitable societies are prohibited from speaking inside mosques to avoid disturbing worshippers.

The circular stated that, in line with the annual agreement between the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs regarding donation collection in mosques during Ramadan, the following measures were agreed upon to ensure charitable work is carried out in the most efficient manner.

- Donations may be collected through bank deductions and K-Net devices only.
- The mosque Imam must be notified of the visit by the association representatives through the donation collector authorized by the beneficiary.
- Representatives of charitable associations and entities authorized to collect donations are not permitted to speak inside mosques to give introductory speeches about the association or its projects, in order to avoid disturbing the worshippers.
- Each association shall place portable and independent advertisements, licensed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, at the entrance or along the back wall of the mosque, ensuring they do not distract worshippers in accordance with the fatwa of the Ministry's Fatwa Committee. The association must remove the advertisements at the end of the allocated period.



- It is strictly forbidden to place piggy banks and money boxes in mosques.
- Donation representatives must display their unified IDs, issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs, while inside the mosque.
- The mosque Imam has no right to prevent authorized associations and organizations from collecting donations in the mosque, except in the event of a violation of the announced schedule and instructions issued in this regard.
- Mosque imams are not entitled to collect donations for any charitable project or to issue permits for establishing charitable projects for the benefit of any party.
- In the event of any violations of the previously mentioned rules and regulations, they should be reported through the Ministry of Islamic Affairs' Mosque Services in the "Sahel" program.
- Charitable associations and entities authorized to collect donations must adhere to the special schedule

Finance ministry urges government agencies to settle communication bills

Ministry of Finance has called on several government agencies to promptly settle their outstanding financial dues and debts owed to the Communications and Information Technology Commission.

The finance ministry's directive followed a request by the Communications and Information Technology Commission to the Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Noura Al-Fassam, seeking support in collecting overdue payments from government agencies. The Commission urged the ministry to assist

in ensuring these agencies settle their outstanding financial obligations for the services provided to them. The authority said it had reached out to several government agencies requesting payment of outstanding financial dues. While some agencies responded and settled their payments, others remain in default despite repeated follow-ups.

However, the authority emphasized that, unlike its approach with private-sector companies, it will not resort to cutting off services for government agencies to avoid any potential harm to the public interest.



FDI in Kuwait surges as economic diplomacy takes hold

Figures from the development plan for the 2024-2025 fiscal year show significant progress in the Government Efforts by the government to strengthen Kuwait's regional and international standing in diplomacy and trade has seen significant progress.

The development plan for the 2024-25 fiscal year reveals that the project to encourage investments in the country by activating economic diplomacy is nearing completion, with nearly 87.5 percent of the project completed so far. The entire project is expected to be completed by early next year.

The project aims to enhance Kuwait's image to attract foreign direct investments to Kuwait, by highlighting the country's economic strength, its stable and secure environment, developing trade ties with countries, and coordinating efforts between economic entities in Kuwait and international organizations.

Annual report published by Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority confirms that national efforts in economic diplomacy have led to Kuwait's election as Vice President of the Steering Committee of the International Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), enhancing its role in the international arena through experience-sharing, information exchange, and organizing events to boost investment flows and sustainable economic impact.

Foreign direct investment in Kuwait saw a significant increase of 180 percent during the previous fiscal year, reaching 649 million dinars, compared to 232 million dinars in the previous year.

Kuwait is expected to see the launch of a series of major projects in the coming period, including the northern economic zone project, Mubarak Port, and several residential cities, making it an attractive investment destination for international companies.

Companies from five countries acquired 62.6 percent of foreign direct investments in Kuwait, which amounted to KD1.74 billion by the end of 2024. The Netherlands, accounting for 27.95 percent of the total investments, worth KD500 million came in as the top investor Chinese companies followed in second place, with a share of 12.5 percent of the total investments, valued at KD218.6 million

Companies from the British Virgin Islands ranked third, with 8.4 percent of total investments coming into the country under the Direct Investment Law in recent years. Irish companies ranked fourth, with direct investments totaling KD136.4 million, or 7.8 percent of total direct investments. Canadian companies followed, with a capital investment of about KD103.5 million, accounting for 5.9 percent of the total investments.

Spanish, Turkish, and American companies ranked sixth, seventh, and eighth in terms of foreign investments into the country, with values of 89.1, 65.1, and 62.9 million dinars, respectively.

Continent-wise, the sources of direct investments included approximately 34 countries from various continents, with Europe leading, accounting for about 59.9 percent of total direct investments, followed by Asia with 28.5 percent, North America with 9.5 percent, and Africa with 1.9 percent.

OPEC+ to increase oil production in April



Eight major oil producing countries in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and their non-OPEC allies together known as OPEC+ have announced their decision to increase their scaled-back production starting from 1 April.

Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria, and Oman, reaffirmed on 3 March their decision to voluntarily raise their production as of the start of April, "taking into account the healthy market fundamentals and the positive market outlook". They added that the increase in production was in line with the OPEC+ decision on 5 December, 2024 to proceed with a gradual and flexible return of the 2.2 million barrels per day (mbd) voluntary adjustments starting on 1st April, 2025, while remaining adaptable to evolving conditions,

The statement by OPEC, following their meeting on 3 March, noted: "This gradual

increase may be paused or reversed subject to market conditions. This flexibility will allow the group to continue to support oil market stability". Furthermore, the eight countries reiterated their collective commitment to full conformity with the additional voluntary production adjustments, as agreed under the 53rd Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) meeting on 3 April 2024.

The statement also confirmed the group's intention to fully compensate for any overproduced volumes from January 2024, in accordance with the compensation plans submitted to the OPEC Secretariat, ensuring that all compensations are completed by June 2026. Countries with overproduced volumes have also agreed to submit their updated compensation schedules to the OPEC Secretariat by 17 March 2025 which will be posted on the Secretariat's website.

Victims of undelivered Philippines-bound cargo call for embassy's intervention

By Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Philippine overseas workers in Kuwait urged the Philippine Embassy to provide assistance to victims of undelivered Philippines-bound cargo, not only to recover the cargo, and get the fees paid refunded, but also to file legal action against the owners and workers of the companies involved.

In a series of interviews with the victims, it became quite clear that several Philippine bound cargo companies have failed to deliver the cargo entrusted to them for delivery to the recipients within the delivery schedule stated in the receipts issued by the companies. Some of the complainants stated that many of the boxes have not been delivered until present.

"I have been waiting for the boxes for the past year and half and until today the company has not delivered and has been ignoring my calls", stated Sally, a Filipino domestic worker in Kuwait. Many of the complainants mentioned that some have given up following up on the delivery status of their cargo, as some of these companies have either refused to answer calls and messages, or repeatedly promised to deliver over the past many months. Some of the cargoes have not been delivered for over two years.

"I was informed that the cargo company I entrusted my boxes to, has been sold to a different

owner, and are now reported to be either missing or lost in transit, with the Bureau of Customs failing to locate the cargoes due to the lack of a landing number or a container number. Another Philippine-based cargo company refused to release the boxes to the recipients unless substantial additional amounts were paid to settle the shipping and clearance charges. "These fees were never discussed and I was assured that there will be no charges in the Philippines and now it is a different story," complained Raisa, a Filipina domestic worker. Vilma, a former Filipina worker in Kuwait, disclosed that complaints have been made during the month of January 2024 regarding cargoes sent in June to September 2023, which have not been delivered to date.

She added that a company in the Philippines owns several cargo companies in Kuwait and company names are often changed after collections of fees and boxes have been collected, leaving the complainants scammed. "These companies in Kuwait have different partners in the Philippines thus cargo boxes are distributed in different locations and in most instances claimed lost" added Vilma. One of the cargo companies left the boxes abandoned in warehouses in Davao City, Cebu and Manila.

Victims urge the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait to coordinate with local authorities in Philippines and Kuwait to apprehend these companies as clearly these incidents are scams. "These were



hard earned salaries that companies literally stole from victims and it has to stop," commented Linette, a complainant.

Complainants were informed by Philippine-based companies that many of the cargoes were not released due to non-payment of corresponding fees by Kuwait-based cargo companies resulting in either abandonment due to overdue storage charges.

Migrant Workers Office of the Embassy of the Philippines in Kuwait stated that based on the complaints received, twelve cargo companies in Kuwait with their counterparts in the Philippines have been actively involved in these delays or non-delivery, and that there were numerous requests for assistance on these concerns. The

Office warned Filipino nationals to refrain from sending their boxes to companies who have previous cases and complaints against them, and to trust only those companies that have a good track record on cargo services.

Many of these complainants are domestic workers and have no privileges of day offs, thus several just gave up on filing complaints and following up for results. Many of the cargoes received after months or years stored in warehouses, recipients often complained about missing belongings, destroyed and opened boxes and in some cases stuffed with trash or items which were not their properties.

"These cargo companies often offer low charges with different complementary services, a way to lure clients to send their cargoes through them. Many of the victims are domestic workers who fall prey to these scams. It is best to consider safety, and assurance of cargo deliveries, by reputed companies, rather than to run after the lowest price offered by scam companies," added Vilma.

Till today complainants report about their calls and messages being ignored by the companies, repeated changes in delivery dates that were then not met, or the cargo companies have moved out of their previous locations, or that their contact numbers have been disconnected. Complainants also disclosed that agents of these cargo companies were Philippine nationals.

New Medical City to support healthcare of retirees

The project to build a medical complex to cater to the healthcare of retired citizens by the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) is gathering pace with infrastructure for the power utilities now completed. development of initial infrastructure for the Kuwait Medical City project, which is primarily intended for treating retired citizens.

Civil work for the 132KV power station project to provide electricity to the Medical City project has been completed and handed over to the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy.

The Public Institution for Social Security established the Kuwait Medical City Company



to oversee the study, design, construction, and operation of the medical city project, which aims to provide high-quality healthcare to Kuwaiti retirees and others.

The project, which is located in the Amghara area on a plot of land spanning 860,000 square meters, is estimated to cost KD243 million, with KD50 million allocated in the budget for the

fiscal year 2025-2026 to cover the project's initial obligations.

Design work on the project's infrastructure has also been completed and contractors have submitted quotations for the tender on infrastructure works. The bids are currently being reviewed by the project consultant, KEO.

Main objectives in establishing the Medical City project are to treat Kuwaiti retirees, along with other categories; develop the health sector and its services in Kuwait; activate the role of the private sector in hospital management; and to establish an integrated health city system that focuses on both treatment and prevention.

Other goals of the project include building a hospital and its affiliated facilities based on international standards of quality and management; developing the research sector in medical fields; providing professional and technical jobs for Kuwaitis; and preparing training programs for medical students at Kuwait University.

The project aims to provide high-quality

medical care to retired citizens at the lowest cost to the state and attract patients who seek treatment abroad. The medical city is planned to include a medical sector with a hospital housing 400 beds, with the potential for expansion to 800 beds.

The integrated Medical City project is designed to include five medical centers—a heart and respiratory diseases center, digestive system, urinary tract, kidney disease center, and an orthopedic center. In addition, the planned city will provide various medical services, including outpatient clinics, long-term care, and rehabilitation services. The medical city will also be surrounded by several non-medical units, including residential, commercial, and recreational areas, as well as infrastructure services and green spaces.

The planned schedule for work over the coming years on the Kuwait Medical City project includes inviting consulting offices to design the hospital in July 2025, followed by the evaluation of bids, award, and design process in November 2025.

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Recipes to Revitalize Ramadan Fasting

Most people who are fasting during the holy month of Ramadan partake of only two main meals— during Suhoor and at Iftar. Having foods that are hearty and wholesome during these two meals will ensure that you spend the whole month neither under- nor over-nourished. Here are a few recipes that can also be made ahead, so they are ready for it before the sun rises.



Sweet Potato with Yogurt, Maple Syrup and Nuts

You can bake the potatoes up to five days in advance so that it just takes a few minutes to assemble this hearty meal. The fiber-rich spuds are sure to fill you up, and the dollop of tangy yogurt gives them a boost of protein.

Ingredients:

- 1 sweet potato or yam, scrubbed and dried
- 1/4 cup plain or vanilla yogurt
- 1 tablespoon pure maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons chopped nuts (walnuts, cashews, almonds, etc)

Instructions:

Heat the oven to 190°C. Pierce the sweet potato several times with the tines of a fork. Place the sweet potato inside a loose nest of foil. Bake for around 45 minutes or until tender when pierced with the tip of a paring knife. Remove them from the oven and let them cool enough to handle.

Make-Ahead Tip: Sweet potatoes can be cooked ahead of time and kept refrigerated for about five days.

Serving: Open the sweet potato across the top, pushing the flesh slightly so it rises out of the skin. Spoon on the yogurt, then the syrup. Sprinkle with nuts, and serve.

Curried Egg Salad on Naan

The egg salad can be made up to three days in advance and stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator, so it is just a matter of piling it on the naan and digging in.

Ingredients:

- 6 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons plain Greek yogurt
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon fine salt, plus more for seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/8 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 pieces naan, preferably warmed
- 1 cup loosely packed arugula
- Fresh cilantro leaves, for garnish (optional)



Instructions:

- Place the eggs in a large saucepan or pot so that they sit in a single layer. Add enough cold water to cover the eggs by 1 inch. Bring to a boil uncovered over high heat. Remove from the heat, cover with a lid, and let sit for 10 minutes.
- Meanwhile, mix the yogurt, mayonnaise, cumin, salt, coriander, turmeric, and pepper together in a medium bowl until smooth. Prepare an ice bath (large bowl filled with ice water).
- When the eggs are ready, tap them gently against the counter to crack the shell in a few places, then submerge in ice water for at least 1 minute. Peel the eggs and dice into small pieces. Fold the eggs into the yogurt mixture. Taste and season with more salt as needed.
- Place the naan on a cutting board. Divide the arugula over the naan. Dollop the egg salad over the arugula, spread into an even layer, and top with cilantro if using. Cut each naan into wedges and serve.



Qatayef Drizzled in Sweet Syrup

To round off your Ramadan menu, have a bite into Qatayef, one of the most popular Middle-Eastern desserts. Qatayef are basically pancakes that are stuffed with a sweet walnut or sweet cheese filling. Crunchy on the outside, soft on the inside, and drizzled in sugar syrup they make for the perfect dessert.

Ingredients

For the sugar syrup

- 2 cups sugar, 400g
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon rose water or orange blossom water, optional

For the batter

- 2 1/2 cups warm water, up to 1/4 cup more as needed
- 1 teaspoon instant yeast
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar, 25g
- 1/3 cup fine semolina, 55g
- 2 cups all-purpose flour, 240g
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Neutral oil or ghee for frying/baking

For the nut filling for half the batter

- 1 1/2 cups walnuts, crushed into small pieces
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon powder
- 3 tablespoons simple syrup or honey
- For the sweet cheese filling for remaining half of the batter
- 300 grams sweet cheese, crumbled or shredded

Instructions:

For the syrup:

- Add sugar, water and lime juice to a small pot on medium heat.
- Bring to a boil and then lower the heat and let simmer for an additional 8 minutes.
- Once cooled, add rosewater/orange blossom water if using and let cool completely.

For the batter:

- Add the water to the blender, followed by the yeast, baking powder, sugar, fine semolina, flour, salt and vanilla extract. Blend on a medium-high speed for 20 seconds, until bubbles have formed on the surface.
- Let rest for 20 minutes.
- For the walnut and cheese filling:
- Place the walnuts and/or pecans in a ziploc bag and crush them with something heavy, like a rolling pin.
- In a bowl combine the crushed nuts with the cinnamon and the sugar syrup or honey and set aside.
- Crumble the sweet cheese in a bowl and set aside.

Continued on Next Page



Fresh Fruit and Nut Tabouli

This seasonal twist on the traditional Arabic tabouli salad adds fresh fruit to the mix, but keeps bulgur as its base; the high-fiber whole grain is sure to give you energy. Feel free to swap in the strawberries for your personal favorite fruit, like blueberries or pomegranate seeds.

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup sliced almonds

- 1 cup coarse-grind bulgur (cracked wheat)
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 cup thinly-sliced strawberries, stemmed, hulled and washed (about 6 to 7 large berries)
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh mint
- 1/4 cup chopped basil
- About 1/3 cup crumbled goat cheese
- 1/4 cup dried currants
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 177 °C. Lay the almonds out onto a small rimmed baking sheet and toast for 5 to 7 minutes until fragrant. Remove from oven and set aside to cool.
- Place bulgur in a medium heat-proof bowl. Bring the water to a boil and then pour over the bulgur. Let stand until the bulgur has absorbed most of the water and has become tender, about 25 to 30 minutes. If there is any remaining water, simply drain and fluff the grains with a fork. Set aside to cool.
- In the meantime, in a large bowl combine the strawberries, mint, basil, goat cheese, and currants. Fold in the bulgur wheat, toasted almonds, lemon juice, olive oil and salt. Stir to combine. Serve at room temperature or cover and refrigerate to serve cold.

Day	Ramadan	Date	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhur	Asr	Magrib	Isha
Sunday	09	March 09	4:47 AM	6:05 AM	11:59 AM	3:21 PM	5:52 PM	7:09 PM
Monday	10	March 10	4:45 AM	6:04 AM	11:58 AM	3:21 PM	5:53 PM	7:10 PM
Tuesday	11	March 11	4:44 AM	6:03 AM	11:58 AM	3:21 PM	5:54 PM	7:10 PM
Wednesday	12	March 12	4:43 AM	6:01 AM	11:58 AM	3:22 PM	5:54 PM	7:11 PM
Thursday	13	March 13	4:41 AM	6:00 AM	11:58 AM	3:22 PM	5:55 PM	7:11 PM
Friday	14	March 14	4:41 AM	5:59 AM	11:57 AM	3:22 PM	5:55 PM	7:12 PM
Saturday	15	March 15	4:40 AM	5:58 AM	11:57 AM	3:22 PM	5:56 PM	7:13 PM
Sunday	16	March 16	4:38 AM	5:57 AM	11:57 AM	3:22 PM	5:57 PM	7:13 PM
Monday	17	March 17	4:37 AM	5:56 AM	11:57 AM	3:22 PM	5:57 PM	7:14 PM
Tuesday	18	March 18	4:36 AM	5:54 AM	11:56 AM	3:23 PM	5:58 PM	7:15 PM
Wednesday	19	March 19	4:34 AM	5:53 AM	11:56 AM	3:23 PM	5:59 PM	7:15 PM
Thursday	20	March 20	4:34 AM	5:52 AM	11:56 AM	3:23 PM	5:59 PM	7:16 PM
Friday	21	March 21	4:32 AM	5:51 AM	11:55 AM	3:23 PM	6:00 PM	7:17 PM
Saturday	22	March 22	4:30 AM	5:50 AM	11:55 AM	3:23 PM	6:01 PM	7:17 PM
Sunday	23	March 23	4:30 AM	5:48 AM	11:55 AM	3:23 PM	6:01 PM	7:18 PM
Monday	24	March 24	4:29 AM	5:47 AM	11:54 AM	3:23 PM	6:01 PM	7:19 PM
Tuesday	25	March 25	4:27 AM	5:46 AM	11:54 AM	3:23 PM	6:02 PM	7:19 PM
Wednesday	26	March 26	4:26 AM	5:45 AM	11:54 AM	3:23 PM	6:03 PM	7:20 PM
Thursday	27	March 27	4:25 AM	5:44 AM	11:54 AM	3:23 PM	6:03 PM	7:21 PM
Friday	28	March 28	4:23 AM	5:43 AM	11:53 AM	3:23 PM	6:04 PM	7:21 PM
Saturday	29	March 29	4:22 AM	5:41 AM	11:53 AM	3:23 PM	6:04 PM	7:22 PM
Sunday	30	March 30	4:21 AM	5:40 AM	11:53 AM	3:23 PM	6:05 PM	7:23 PM

For cooking the qatayef:

- Heat a non-stick medium sized pan over low heat. Once your pan is hot and your batter has rested for 20 minutes, pour approximately a 1/8 cup measure of batter onto your pan (which is half of a 1/4 measuring cup). Depending on the size of your pan, you can make more than one at a time.
- Bubbles will start forming on the surface. Do not move or disturb it while it cooks. You will see the white color of the batter slowly dry up from the outside in. Once it has completely dried, use a flat edged utensil or spatula to remove from the heat. Do not flip it over as qatayef is only cooked on one side. If the first pancake does not have small uniform bubbles and looks thick, simply add 1/4 cup of water to your batter and gently mix it through.

- Place your cooked qatayef on a tea towel and cover with another towel while you cook the remainder of the batter to prevent them from drying out. Arrange them side by side, do not stack them on top of each other, until they are completely cool, otherwise they will stick to each other.

To make the qatayef:

- Hold your qatayef in one hand, bubble side up. Pinch one end closed to create a cone shape. Place about a spoonful of your nut filling into the centre of the circle.
- Pinch together the edges of the qatayef to make a semi-circle with the filling in the middle. Then pinch over again in the opposite direction to make sure it is securely closed.
- Repeat for all the qatayef. Keep the qatayef covered while you fill the rest.

Bake or air-fry:

- To avoid deep frying in oil we recommend either baking or air-frying the qatayef.
- Preheat your oven or air-fryer to 200 C. Place the filled qatayef on a greased baking tray, brushing them with a generous coating of vegetable oil or ghee on both sides. Bake or air fry for 8-10 minutes, turning half way. Baking may require 4-5 additional minutes, depending on your oven, and you can broil for 1-2 minutes on each side at the end for extra goldenness and crunch.
- Remove from oven or air-fryer and while still hot, drizzle the syrup over the qatayef and serve. Garnish with crushed pistachios or walnuts or keep as is, glistening in syrup. Serve warm with additional syrup on the side.



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Tareq Yousef AlShumaimry, Editor-in-Chief of The Times Kuwait welcomes Ambassadors of Tajikistan, Thailand and Serbia



Tareq AlShumaimry welcoming Ambassadors of Bhutan, UN Habitat, Turkey, Cuba and Honduras

Diwaniya Diplomacy: A time-honored Kuwaiti tradition



Tareq Yousef AlShumaimry, Editor-in-Chief of The Times Kuwait welcomes Ambassadors of Tajikistan, EU Delegation and Brazil



Welcoming Ambassadors of Thailand, Bulgaria and Nepal



Welcoming Ambassadors of Vietnam, head of UNHCR and IOM in Kuwait



Welcoming Ambassador of Bhutan

Staff Report

Editor-in-Chief of The Times Kuwait, Tareq AlShumaimry held his diwaniya on 3rd and 4th of March to welcome friends and well wishers on the auspicious occasion of the holy month of Ramadan.

The diwaniya was an opportunity to bring families, friends, and communities closer together making the Ramadan Diwaniya a central hub for these connections. Several diplomats and businessmen attended the Diwaniya to exchange greetings and extend best wishes.

Diwaniya gatherings give an opportunity for people to strengthen relationships and engage in meaningful conversations. They create a sense of unity and solidarity, particularly in a time of year when compassion and togetherness are emphasized.

Diwaniya diplomacy highlights how cultural practices can serve as a foundation for peaceful and constructive interactions. In a world often dominated by formal institutions and rigid protocols, the Diwaniya offers a reminder of the power of simplicity, hospitality, and human connection.

In essence, the Diwaniya is more than just a cultural tradition—it is Kuwait's enduring contribution to the art of dialogue and diplomacy. By embracing this practice, the nation underscores the importance of understanding and cooperation in building a better future.

The tradition of Diwaniya takes on a special meaning in Kuwait during Ramadan, providing an opportunity to bring together friends and family for breaking the fast, for prayer, and spiritual reflection.

Ramadan Diwanis are also unique because these gatherings embody the spirit of generosity. During Ramadan, Diwanis bring together people of all ages, encouraging the exchange of stories, wisdom, and traditions across generations.

While the essence of the Ramadan Diwaniya remains rooted in tradition, it has adapted to modern times. From intimate family gatherings to larger community events, the Diwaniya continues to be a cherished part of Kuwaiti culture, especially during the sacred month of Ramadan.





Welcoming Ambassadors of Brazil, Myanmar, Laos and Armenia



Welcoming Charge d'Affairs of Serbia



Welcoming Ambassadors of Honduras, Georgia and Cuba



Welcoming Ambassador of South Korea



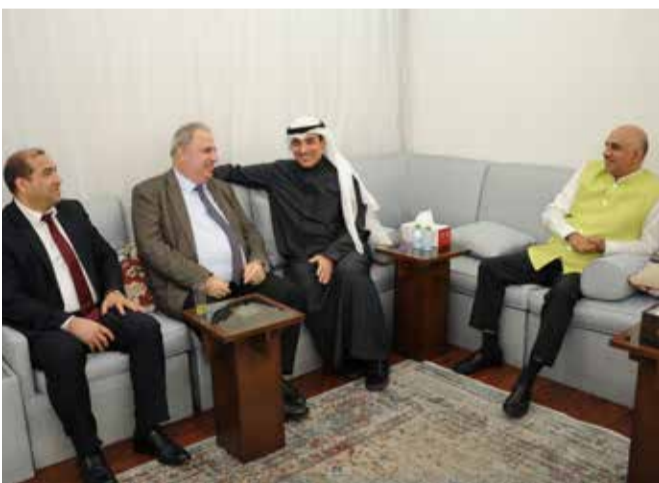
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Welcoming Ambassadors of Mexico and Bangladesh



Welcoming DCM of United Kingdom

Türkiye's Global Streaming Service tabii Launches in the MENA Region

tabii marks its launch in a star-studded gala in Dubai unveiling its global vision to satisfy the region's demand for Turkish content

The Times Kuwait Report

tabii, the global streaming service by Türkiye's national public broadcaster, TRT, has officially launched globally in the MENA region which is pivotal to tabii's mission of connecting cultures through compelling storytelling.

Since its launch in May 2023 in Türkiye, tabii has captivated local audiences with its productions based on common values. Built on Turkish storytelling long admired by MENA audiences, tabii sets off in the region with a unique streaming experience and fresh perspective to digital entertainment of rich high-quality content appealing to universal values with something for everyone in the family. With the motto "Stories That Bond Us," tabii aims to satisfy the global demand for high-quality Turkish entertainment by providing unmatched access to more than 40 original productions exclusive to the platform; series, movies, documentaries, kids' content, and an extensive library of popular TRT productions. tabii offers its viewers multiple language options localized in Arabic, English, Spanish, and Urdu in addition to Turkish; ensuring accessibility and cultural relevance, breaking language barriers to create a seamless viewing experience. tabii shares stories rooted in Turkish heritage, providing an authentic storytelling experience woven with love, bravery, empathy, resilience, and triumph, creating inspiring storylines

and putting a spotlight on the stories of a culturally diverse audience underrepresented in mainstream digital streaming platforms.

Digital Home for Turkish Storytelling

Turkish productions already have over 750 million viewers in 170 countries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Americas with more than 150 TV series. International demand for these shows increased by 184% between 2020-2023. Turkish dramas have long resonated deeply with audiences in the UAE and the broader Middle East, celebrated for their complex narratives and universal themes of family, honor, and love. These series consistently rank among the most-watched in the region, showcasing a cultural bond that tabii seeks to deepen and expand. The service's launch in the MENA region represents a cultural bridge directly to regional viewers. tabii fills this content gap in the digital streaming industry by curating an extensive Turkish library.

Universal Hub for Stories That Bond Us

"TRT's global streaming service tabii will emerge as a crucial actor and a positive influence on the global streaming landscape, particularly in the Middle East, where shared cultural and historical ties resonate deeply," said Prof. Dr. Mehmet Zahid Sobaci, Director General of TRT. Speaking at the exclusive MENA launch event at the Grand Hyatt Dubai, he added: "Tonight is more than just a streaming service launch it marks the beginning of a new



era in entertainment, where the rich stories of the East meet modern narratives of the West. As tabii expands globally, it continues to bridge cultures, celebrate diversity, and bring family-friendly entertainment to audiences worldwide."

tabii brings fresh perspectives to the stories of prominent historical figures underlining the significance of regional shared cultural and geographical values as well as captivating modern stories in various genres including action, adventure, animation, comedy, drama, fantasy, and thriller. Stories of the beloved and iconic "Rumi" a profound story of the exploration of love and spirituality that highlights the life of the scholar, poet, and teacher; "Free Sky" which shares the action-packed stories of the Turkish Air Force and fighter jets; TRT's popular production "Little Archer: Iskender" returning with its brand new adventures; "The Late Offices" the story of a mortician on a path to find who will wash him when he dies which has become a big social media phenomenon in Türkiye; "The Fifth Vigilante" following the journey of an assassin who witnesses an event that changes his life

completely and leads him into an unexpected struggle; "Young Ibn Sina", the story of the childhood of Ibn-i Sina, a child genius who becomes one of the most famous thinkers of his time amongst many other original productions. The platform's library features several highly popular actors, including Bülent İnal, Mehmet Ali Nuroğlu, Devrim Özkan, Ahmet Kural, Hande Soral, Kaan Yıldırım, Ozan Akbaba, Tuba Ünsal, İbrahim Çelikkol, Cansu Dere, Ozan Güven and Büşra Develi.

Since its launch in May 2023, tabii has exceeded 11 million users featuring over 40+ original productions in addition to its thousands of hours of content library. It now aims to captivate the MENA region viewers by expanding its services to more countries with exciting content dubbed and subtitled in multiple languages including Arabic. In the MENA region, tabii will primarily operate in Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt.

tabii Offers Different Subscription Tiers

tabii launched with both basic and premium package options in the MENA region. tabii subscribers are entitled to full access to the originals exclusive to the platform as well as the rich TRT content library dubbed and subtitled in Arabic and other supported languages including English, Spanish, and Urdu. tabii offers a 7-day free trial period to its new subscribers to enjoy the features of the streaming service.

Ratings agency maintains Kuwait's 'AA' status, stable outlook

Fitch Ratings has confirmed Kuwait's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'AA-' with a stable outlook. An 'AA' rating indicates very high credit quality with expectations of very low default risk. They indicate a very strong capacity for payment of financial commitments and that this capacity is not significantly vulnerable to foreseeable events.

Commenting on the latest Fitch ratings, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said in a statement that the rating is underpinned by Kuwait's robust financial and external balance sheets, despite the country's reliance on oil and a large public sector that could exert long-term fiscal pressure.

Kuwait's external balance sheet is the strongest among all Fitch-rated nations. The agency forecasts that Kuwait's sovereign net foreign assets will increase to 601 percent of GDP in 2025, up from an estimated 582 percent of GDP in 2024. The majority of these assets are managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) and are held in the Future Generations Fund and the General Reserve Fund (GRF), the government's treasury account.

The agency noted that the current government has initiated several reforms to reduce dependence on oil revenue, enhance government efficiency, and rationalize spending. The government has also introduced a 15 percent domestic minimum top-up tax (DMTT) on multinational companies, effective from 1 January 2025. This tax is expected to generate about 0.5 percent of GDP annually, with collections expected to start by 2027.

Fitch Ratings added that the government



is also aiming to pass a liquidity/debt law, which would allow Kuwait to raise new debt, following the expiry of the previous debt law in 2017. However, the timeframe for this law's implementation remains uncertain. "Despite this, the government should be able to meet its financing obligations in the coming years, given the substantial assets at its disposal", the agency said.

Fitch expects Kuwait's budget position to deteriorate in the fiscal year ending March 2026 (FY25), due to a decline in oil revenue, due to lower oil prices and OPEC+'s delay in unwinding oil production quotas. Non-oil revenue is expected to grow modestly in FY25, but it will likely fall short of the government's target of KD2.9 billion (6% of GDP).

Kuwait's fiscal break-even oil price (including investment income) is estimated at US\$58/bbl in FY25-FY26. Gross government debt/GDP remains low, at an estimated 2.9 percent in FY24.

Assuming the passage of a liquidity law in FY25, Fitch forecasts government debt/GDP will rise to 6 percent in FY25 and 9.2 percent in FY26.

Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and disruptions to Red Sea shipping have had a minimal impact on Kuwait, which has large government assets that provide a buffer to support the economy if tensions were to escalate. However, the country's heavy reliance on hydrocarbons does pose a risk to its budgetary outcomes, making them highly sensitive to oil prices.

Fitch Ratings publishes credit ratings that are forward-looking opinions on the relative ability of an entity or obligation to meet financial commitments. Issuer default ratings (IDRs) are assigned to sovereign entities, corporations, financial institutions such as banks, leasing companies and insurers, and public finance entities (local and regional governments).

Fitch's credit rating scale for issuers and issues is expressed using the categories 'AAA' to 'BBB' (investment grade) and 'BB' to 'D' (speculative grade) with an additional +/- for AA through CCC levels indicating relative differences of probability of default or recovery for issues.

The agency noted that the terms 'investment grade' and 'speculative grade', are market conventions and do not imply any recommendation or endorsement of a specific security for investment purposes. Investment grade categories indicate relatively low to moderate credit risk, while ratings in the speculative categories signal either a higher level of credit risk or that a default has already occurred.

Amendments to 'money laundering' law aim to fix loopholes

Relevant authorities are reportedly working on introducing amendments to the 'money laundering' law to address legislative gaps and loopholes, which have in the past allowed some violators to evade conviction and punishment.

National Committee for Combating Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing is collaborating with key government agencies, which include: the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Finance, Commerce and Social Affairs, along with the Public Prosecution, Financial Intelligence Authority, Central Bank of Kuwait, and the anti-corruption authority, Nazaha, to amend the law. The amendments aim to align Kuwaiti laws with international financial and credit standards.

Some of the obstacles identified in the current law include differences in legal and judicial systems as well as the absence of clear standards for evaluating the sufficiency of evidence and methods of proof. Data provided by the Public Prosecution reveal that 188 cases of money laundering were reported in 2024.

Once the new law is enacted, no violator or individual involved in money laundering will evade punishment, as it will cover all forms of money laundering crimes.

The National Committee for Combating Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing is working within its mandate to develop a 'national strategy' to combat money laundering, terrorism financing, and the funding of weapons of mass destruction. This includes assessing money laundering risks and coordinating with relevant authorities to curb these crimes.

MoE, Google to collaborate in AI-assisted teaching, learning

A related project proposed by Google is on collaborating at the government level with the Artificial Intelligence Academy, to develop a 'Government AI Campus' that will offer training courses, host virtual events, and provide essential resources to equip government leaders with practical AI expertise.

General Directorate of Computer Science at the Ministry of Education (MoE) emphasized the importance of developing curricula and training programs aligned with artificial intelligence concepts. This initiative aims to equip a new generation of students with the skills to utilize AI technologies across various fields. To achieve this, the directorate stressed the need for qualified educators to teach these subjects and the modernization of technological infrastructure in schools.

The General Technical Guidance for Computers department has proposed several initiatives, including collaboration with Google to train teachers in AI education and the development of flexible, continuously updated curricula to keep pace with advancements in the field. Additionally, the proposal emphasized leveraging Google's e-learning platforms to enhance access to educational resources.

The ministry said its relevant departments had reviewed Google's proposed project to empower the education sector with artificial intelligence. Submitted to the Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington, the project is seen as a significant opportunity for Kuwait to advance its education system.

Key technical recommendations in the project include ensuring alignment with 'Kuwait Vision 2035', conducting a comprehensive feasibility study before implementation, and drawing insights from other countries that have successfully integrated AI into their education systems.

A related project proposed by Google is on collaborating at the government level with the Artificial Intelligence Academy, to develop a 'Government AI Campus' that will offer training courses, host virtual events, and provide essential resources to equip government leaders with practical AI expertise.

Google's Artificial Intelligence Academy has recently

translated all these resources into Arabic and expressed its readiness to offer the program to Kuwait, aiming to strengthen cooperation between both sides

Meanwhile, at the school level, the Ministry of Education's Computer Technical Guidance Department is developing a futuristic plan to integrate robot programming into the twelfth-grade curriculum in secondary schools.



Efforts are also underway to provide intensive training for teachers in artificial intelligence programming and Python coding language. Faculty training courses will continue until artificial intelligence technology is officially introduced into the second part of the tenth-grade computer curriculum, set to be implemented by mid-Ramadan.

The technical guidance department added that each teacher training session is scheduled to last for four hours, from 8am to 1pm, with two half-hour breaks. In the meantime, all school computers have been equipped with the PyCharm program to help students grasp and practice programming fundamentals.

Part-Two of the Information Technology course will focus on Python programming and artificial intelligence, aligning with a strategic vision to equip students with the skills needed to engage with modern technologies and apply them across various fields.

Learning to code in Python language is a key digital foundation for future generations. Known for its ease and flexibility, Python is widely used in web development, data analysis, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence. The curriculum will also introduce essential programming concepts, including debugging, exceptions, libraries, graphical user interfaces, and functions.

The second unit of the curriculum will focus on artificial intelligence, covering its role in data analysis, predictions, and deep learning. Key topics will include generative AI, machine learning, and deep learning tools, as well as AI-driven applications for generating images, texts, and videos. Additionally, students will explore ethical concerns related to AI, such as deepfakes and their impact on digital information.

The ministry's aim to integrate Python programming and artificial intelligence into the tenth-grade curriculum is considered a bold step toward equipping students with modern technological skills. While challenges in teaching these subjects exist, the adoption of interactive methods and hands-on learning can transform obstacles into opportunities for success. As curricula evolve, students in Kuwait will gain a valuable foundation to thrive in a rapidly advancing digital world.



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Let Afghan Women Lead



Palwasha Hassan, Shafiqah Khpalwak

Palwasha Hassan, Senior Technical and Program Director at Mina's List, is a former senior fellow at the Institute for Women, Peace, and Security at Georgetown University.

Shafiqah Khpalwak is a poet, writer, and activist, who supports Mina's List with communications and advocacy.



This year's International Women's Day is marked by a sense of foreboding, even despair. Progress on women's rights and representation is stalling: the number of women in parliaments grew last year at the lowest rate in a generation, and the global financing gap for gender initiatives remains wide. At a time of widespread democratic backsliding – and with US President Donald Trump freezing foreign aid, including for gender initiatives – the prospects for improvement appear bleak.

No one understands the consequences of such setbacks better than women and girls in Afghanistan, where some of the world's most severe gender-based rights violations are occurring. And yet, Afghan women also offer compelling reasons for hope and powerful motivation – especially for those of us who enjoy rights, freedoms, and opportunities they do not – to keep fighting.

Afghan women have long had to find imaginative ways to resist and circumvent harsh repression. In the late 1990s, as the Taliban consolidated control of the country and imposed regressive policies, women established underground schools, community centers, and health clinics. Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, Afghan women have

renewed such initiatives. For example, they have set up secret schools, which girls – who are now prohibited from education past the sixth grade – can attend in person or online. Where such classes are not accessible, mothers often educate their daughters at home, using their phones or tablets to access the necessary materials.

Forbidden from speaking outside their homes, women have used social media and the press to tell their stories. Unable to protest peacefully without facing violence from the authorities, women have embraced creative forms of resistance, depicting their experiences and demanding change in poetry, paintings, and film. Sahra Mani's moving documentary, *Bread & Roses*, which provides a glimpse into Afghan women's efforts to resist Taliban repression, has earned international acclaim.

We are from Afghanistan, but we were fortunate to have the opportunity to restart our

lives in a new country, where we can advocate for our sisters back home without fear for our personal safety. But the heroines of *Bread & Roses*, and countless other Afghan women activists, face mortal danger every day. It is thus imperative that we do not stop at listening to their stories. Admiring their courage or sympathizing with their plight means little if we do nothing to keep them on the global agenda. That is why, at the upcoming United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), we will be calling on the international community to take three critical steps to support Afghan women.

First, Afghan refugees must have credible and timely options for safe and permanent resettlement. When the Taliban returned to power, hundreds of thousands of refugees – including Afghan nationals who had worked with American or NATO forces during the war – fled to neighboring Pakistan, where they

applied for their promised US visas. Many have waited for years for their chance at resettlement, often facing arbitrary detention and harassment in the meantime.

Far from accelerating this process, Trump has suspended the US Refugee Admissions Program. This has put Afghans at elevated risk of deportation – tantamount to a death sentence for many – by the Pakistani government, which has expressed frustration at the lengthy relocation timeframes. A credible pathway to permanent resettlement in safe locations must be established as soon as possible.

Second, the international community must give Afghan women the resources they need to effect change within Afghanistan. Afghan women have the vision, tenacity, experience, and commitment needed to make a difference. But, since the Taliban's return to power, donors have been afraid to support them. Far more financing must be provided to Afghan women-led programs, including those facilitating dialogue between Afghan women at home and in exile.

Finally, women – and civil society more broadly – must be included in any political dialogue or peace process related to Afghanistan. If the Taliban seek to deny women a seat at the table, as they have so far, the international community must push back. Afghanistan's future, and the region's stability, depends on it.

This year's CSW meeting will mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the world's most progressive blueprint for advancing women's rights. When it was created three decades ago, the women involved were filled with hope that the fight for gender equality had reached a turning point. But despite progress in some areas – including women's labor force participation, political representation, and financial inclusion – the declaration's promise remains unfulfilled. Now is the time to draw on the creativity, leadership, knowhow, and courage of a new generation of women activists – not least those in Afghanistan.

Empowering Women Empowers Nation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Minister Al-Sumait stressed that Article 153 has no basis in Islamic law and causes more harm than good. He stated, "It discriminates between men and women and also contradicts Kuwait's obligations under international agreements, particularly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. He explained that after the abolition of this article, the killing of women will be treated like any other murder case, with the standard provisions of the Penal Code applied to the accused.

Repealing Article 153 helps promote gender-equality, provide justice to women, and aligns Kuwait's laws with international human rights norms. Abolishing the law is also in line with Article 29 of the Constitution, which states: 'All people are equal in human dignity and in public rights and duties before the law, without distinction to race, origin, language, or religion'.

In recent decades, Kuwait has enacted laws, adopted legislations, and implemented measures in support of women and their rights. In 2005, in what is described as a seminal decision for women's rights and gender-equality, the National Assembly passed a law granting women full political rights, enabling them to vote and run in elections like their male counterparts.

Although the legislative decision did not uproot deeply entrenched conservative views on women's role, or remove prevailing patriarchal norms in society, it nonetheless gave women a political say, and a participatory

role in the democratic process governing the country. Since the passage of the universal suffrage bill, parliament has witnessed the presence of several female ministers and parliamentarians.

In line with the government initiative to empower women, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor has sponsored many projects that support women, including helping them set up their own businesses to provide a steady income and make them economically independent. The private sector has also contributed to the economic advancement of women, with more than 40 companies contributing to initiatives aimed at empowering women economically.

The government has also established the Supreme Council for Family Affairs in 2006, and tasked the Council to collaborate with civil society organizations to protect families and children. In 2015, to mark the 10th anniversary of the women gaining the vote and in recognition of the long struggle by Kuwaiti women to achieve the right to political participation, the government designated 16 May annually as Kuwait Women's Day.

However, it is the enactment of Law No.16 in 2020 by parliament that is often considered a watershed moment in the struggle to eliminate violence against women in society and within families. The law not only provides a comprehensive legislative framework to protect women from domestic violence, it also addresses many of the legal gaps that previously existed. In particular, it establishes a clear definition of domestic violence that extends beyond physical violence to include verbal, economic, sexual and psychological violence.

Law No.16, for which executive regulations were issued only in 2023, also provides immediate protection mechanisms by establishing temporary shelters to provide safe haven for victims, and a hotline to receive domestic violence complaints. Additionally, the law provides for counseling and legal assistance measures for victims, and allows for emergency restraining orders to prevent abusers from contacting their victim.

Additionally, in alignment with UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which urges all actors to increase participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in peace and security efforts, the government in December 2023 established the National Committee for Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The committee works to prevent violence and discrimination against women; create an enabling space for women entrepreneurs; encourage women in leadership roles; and promote women's contributions to peace and security.

In October 2024, on the 24th anniversary of UN Resolution 1325, the Peace Day Forum was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator Office, the EU Delegation, and NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. Speakers at the forum highlighted Kuwait's achievements in promoting the WPS agenda, and the country's advancement to third place in the Arab World and 61st spot among 177 countries surveyed on WPS.

Kuwait has achieved significant successes over the years on gender-parity, and women's empowerment. In a reflection of the

government's keenness to empower women, the current cabinet lineup includes three female ministers. Today, women make up more than 58 percent of the workforce in Kuwait, occupying nearly 60 percent of jobs in the public sector and 48 percent in the private sector. In the government sector, over 28 percent of women employed hold executive positions, including as ministers, undersecretaries and assistant-undersecretaries.

Foreign ministry has 144 female diplomats, while 47 percent of senior positions in the Ministry of Defense are held by women. Additionally, 19 women have been appointed in the National Guard, and there are over 900 female police personnel. Four women were appointed managers in the Public Prosecution, and there are 88 public prosecutors and 19 judges in the Ministry of justice.

Women also occupy 54 percent of the total workforce in Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), and 41 percent of executive posts in the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), as well as 26 percent of executive jobs in private sector banks. While these achievements are certainly commendable, this is no reason for complacency; there is much more work to be done, and the time to start is right now.

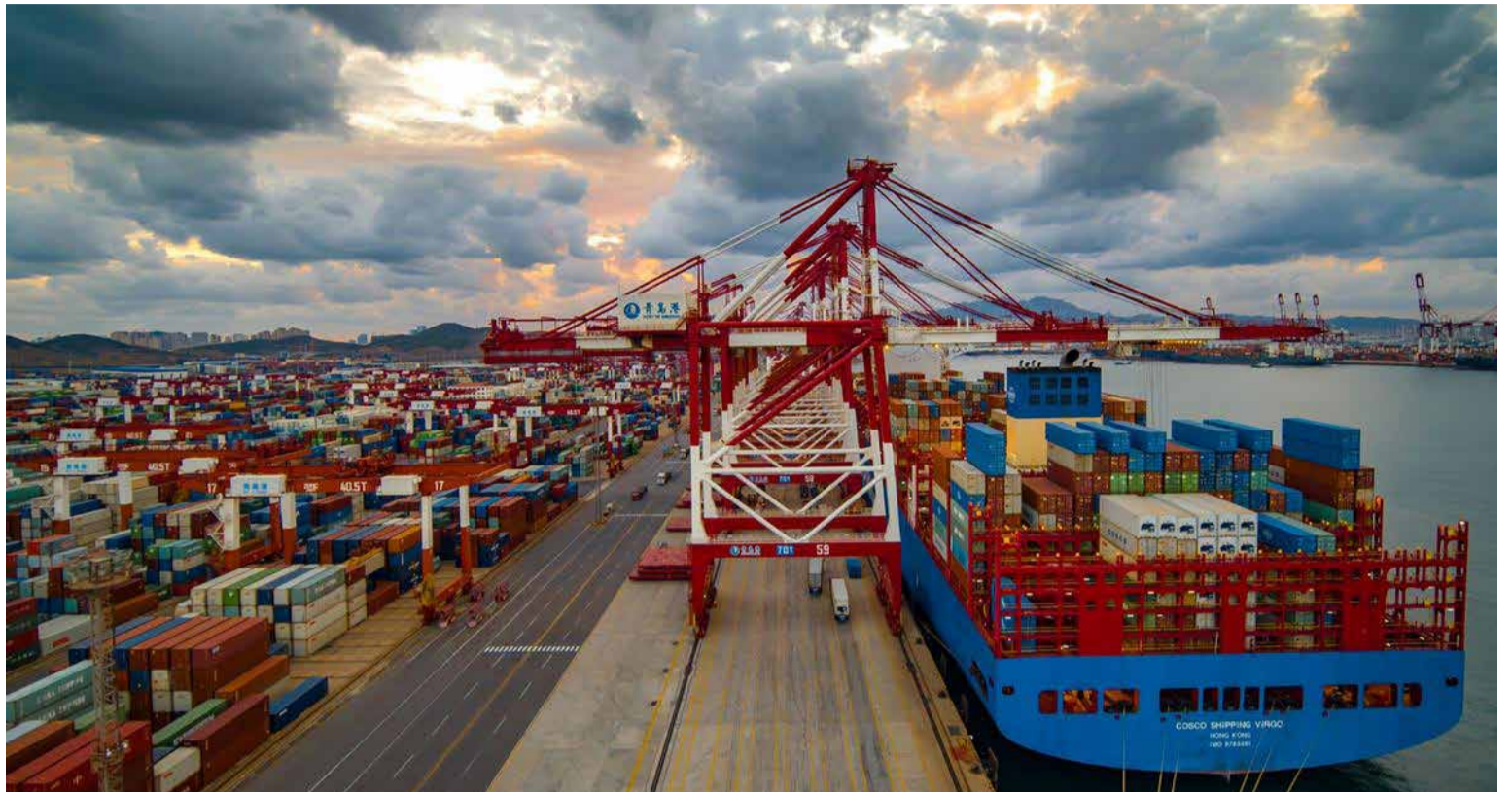
Although the world has come a long way in terms of gender parity, it is still a long way away from achieving it. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), none of us will see gender-equality in our lifetime, and nor will our children. Studies by the WEF show that at the current rate of progress it will take until 2158, which is roughly five generations from now, to reach full gender parity worldwide.

End of Globalization as We Know It



Dalia Marin

Professor of International Economics at the School of Management of the Technical University of Munich, is a research fellow at the Centre for Economic Policy Research and a non-resident fellow at Bruegel.



As US President Donald Trump's administration prepares to impose 'reciprocal tariffs' on America's trading partners, it is clear that firms can no longer assume that their business models will not be disrupted by new trade barriers, or even a full-blown trade war. Could this be the final nail in the coffin of globalization?

It is no secret that globalization has been in retreat for a while. But as my co-authors and I show in a new paper, this process began earlier than many realize, with the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC) as the turning point. From 1990-2008, often called the period of hyper-globalization, trade, as a share of GDP, rose by more than one percentage point annually, on average. In 2000-07 alone, the share of total inputs that advanced economies sourced from developing countries almost tripled. But after the GFC, this expansion ended abruptly, before reversing in 2011, and overall trade growth has since stagnated.

The likely explanation for this change is relatively straightforward: the GFC was the first in a long series of negative shocks. In 2012, the eurozone faced a sovereign-debt crisis. In 2016, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. In 2018, Trump's first administration launched a tariff campaign against major US trading partners, especially China (which continued under Joe Biden). In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began. In 2022, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. And in 2024, Trump, the self-proclaimed 'Tariff Man' was elected for a second term.

When trade uncertainty is high, so is risk, which makes global value chains costly. If firms fear that new tariffs might make imports of key inputs more expensive, or that new trade barriers or other disruptions might prevent those inputs from arriving at all, they will question whether buying those items from foreign suppliers still makes sense. With rapid technological advances enabling the automation of a fast-growing range of tasks, they may well conclude that it does not.

In this case, firms might 'reshore' production,

whether by increasing their reliance on domestic suppliers or by moving production in-house (vertical integration). We found that higher uncertainty in developing economies leads to significant increases in the share of inputs produced in high-income countries—but only in highly robotized industries. In industries where automation is less widespread or feasible, the cost of local labor appears to be prohibitive for many firms.

We also found that, when reshoring, firms tend to favor vertical integration over

this route, as they generally lack the sprawling multinational networks that might facilitate a larger firm's search for new suppliers.

While firms in high-income countries engaged in some reshoring before the GFC, the reshoring response to uncertainty has more than tripled since 2008. The low-interest-rate environment that prevailed for over a decade after the GFC probably contributed to this shift—along with increased risk aversion and advances in automation technologies—by making investment in robots more attractive.

new suppliers is so costly. Moreover, some types of production are highly concentrated geographically. For example, rare-earth minerals and electric-vehicle batteries originate mostly in China.

Another strategy for coping with uncertainty is nearshoring—relocating supply chains to nearby countries, especially friendly ones (friendshoring). But we find little evidence that firms are embracing this approach, either. On the contrary, in industries where automation is an option, countries have been reshoring even from neighbors with which trade barriers are unlikely to emerge. Germany is a case in point: far from shifting production to its fellow EU members in Central and Eastern Europe, where labor costs are lower, it has moved production from those countries back onto its own territory. US firms have also reshored production from Mexico—though, again, having the option to use robots, rather than expensive domestic labor, is essential.

Since the GFC, rising economic, geopolitical, and climate risks, together with progress on automation, have fundamentally changed firms' calculations regarding global value chains, with offshoring viewed as increasingly costly. While firms have reason to keep some production on foreign soil—if it cannot be automated at home—the reshoring trend is likely to accelerate, driven not least by Trump's rapidly escalating trade war. Globalization might not die, but it will never be the same.

“ Firms tend to favor vertical integration over dependence on domestic suppliers, whether because they want to exercise as much control as possible over their value chains—yet another hedge against uncertainty—or because it is too costly to source inputs from new suppliers. ”

dependence on domestic suppliers, whether because they want to exercise as much control as possible over their value chains—yet another hedge against uncertainty—or because it is too costly to source inputs from new suppliers. (Building relationships with suppliers typically involves investment, including the provision of knowledge and technology.) Small and medium-size firms are especially likely to take

Of course, reshoring is not the only possible response to uncertainty. Policymakers and consultancies often recommend that firms facing geopolitical, climate, or trade risks bolster supply-chain resilience by diversifying their input suppliers across locations, thereby limiting the impact of disruptions in one or more. But we find little evidence that firms heed this advice, largely because finding



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Scientists discover 'stop-eating' switch in brain

The decision to stop eating happens every time we sit down to eat a meal: At a certain point while we are eating, we start to feel full, and then we get fuller, and then we get to a point where we think, okay, that is enough.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines overweight as a condition of excessive fat deposits in the body, while obesity is considered a chronic complex disease defined by excessive fat deposits that can impair health. Obesity increases the risk of serious health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. It can affect bone health and reproduction, and significantly affect the quality of life by limiting movement and social participation.

The severity of obesity globally is highlighted in a recent report by WHO, which shows that there were more than 2.5 billion adults—those of age 18 years and older—identified as overweight in 2022. Of these, 890 million were living with obesity. The data also reveals that in 2022 there were 390 million children and adolescents—those aged 5–19 years—who were overweight, of whom, 160 million were living with obesity. In addition, around 37 million children—under the age of 5 years—were found to be overweight.

In general, overweight and obesity result from an imbalance of energy intake (diet) and energy expenditure (physical activity). In most cases obesity is a multifactorial disease due to obesogenic environments, psycho-social factors and genetic variants. The obesogenic environment is related to structural factors, including modern lifestyles, lack of access to affordable healthy sustainable foods, and an absence of adequate legal and regulatory environment.

The lack of an effective health system response to identify excess weight gain and fat deposition in their early stages is aggravating the progression to obesity. Governments and health systems need to prioritize making available easy access to wholesome foods at affordable prices to people, and encourage



greater physical activity among them.

On a related track, scientists at Columbia University in the United States have made progress in studies to control the urge to excessive eating. In their recently published study, the researchers claimed to have discovered specialized brainstem neurons that signal mice when to stop eating. The study offers insights for developing obesity treatments in the future for people.

While many feeding circuits in the brain are known to regulate food intake, the neurons within those circuits do not make the final decision to stop eating. The newly identified neurons, a previously unknown component of these circuits, are located in the brainstem—the oldest part of the vertebrate brain. The discovery could pave the way for new treatments that tackle both overweight and obesity.

The newly discovered neurons are unlike any

other neuron involved in regulating satiation. Other neurons in the brain are usually restricted to sensing food put into our mouth, or how food fills the gut, or the nutrition obtained from food. The neurons discovered are special in that they seem to integrate all these different pieces of information and more.

The decision to stop eating happens every time we sit down to eat a meal: At a certain point while we are eating, we start to feel full, and then we get fuller, and then we get to a point where we think, okay, that is enough. The study sought to find out how the brain knows when the body has had enough, and how it acts on that information to stop eating.

For their study, the scientists deployed new single-cell techniques that make it possible to peer into a region of the brain and discern different types of cells that until now have been difficult to distinguish from one another. The

technique, referred to as 'Spatially Resolved Molecular Profiling' allows researchers to see where cells are in the brainstem and what their molecular composition looks like.

During their profiling of a brainstem region known for processing complex signals, the researchers spotted previously unrecognized cells that had similar characteristics to other neurons involved in regulating appetite. To see how the neurons influenced eating, the researchers engineered the neurons so they could be turned on and off, by light.

When the neurons were activated by the light, the mice ate much smaller meals. The intensity of the activation determined how quickly animals stopped eating. Interestingly, these neurons did not just signal an immediate stop; they helped the mice to slow down their eating gradually. The researchers found that the neurons were silenced by a hormone that increases appetite, and activated by a GLP-1 agonist—a class of drugs now popular for treating obesity and diabetes.

The experiments found that these inputs helped the neurons track each bite the mice took. Essentially these neurons can smell food, see food, feel food in the mouth and in the gut, and interpret all the gut hormones that are released in response to eating. This allows the neurons to leverage all of this information to decide when enough is enough.

Though the specialized neurons were found in mice, the research team said that their location in the brainstem, a part of the brain that is essentially the same in all vertebrates, suggests that it is highly likely that humans have the same neurons. The scientists hoped that further developments based on this new discovery could lead to the formulation of obesity therapies in the future.

Cell activity prediction by AI enhances disease research

A cell is the smallest structural, functional, and biological unit of an organism. It is typically microscopic and at its most basic level consists of cytoplasm and a nucleus enclosed in a membrane. Cells and their structure and activities are fundamental to living organisms, including for growth, movement, reproduction, and much more. Cells perform these activities through organelles found in the cytoplasm, which act like mini-organs serving specific functions.

Among the major cell activities are:

Growth: cells divide to create new cells, and help tissues grow in complex organisms like humans. **Reproduction:** Cells reproduce. **Movement:** Cells move, and most of these functions require energy. **Energy production:** Cells produce energy. **Nutrition:** Cells get nutrition. **Excretion:** Cells excrete waste. **Respiration:** Cells respire. **Metabolism:** Cells metabolize. **Transport:** Cells transport materials. **Response to external stimuli:** Cells respond to external stimuli.

With so many different functions taking place within a cell, identifying a specific cell activity has been difficult. Now, researchers at

Columbia University in the United States have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) model that predicts cell activity. By analyzing gene expression patterns, they can accurately predict the functions and activities of specific cells.

Gene expression is the process by which information from the genetic material in a gene is used in the synthesis of a functional gene product that enables it to produce end products, proteins or non-coding RNA (RNA that is not translated into a protein), and ultimately affect a phenotype (observable traits of an organism).

Gene expression is the most fundamental level at which genetic information stored in DNA gives rise to the phenotype. All steps in the gene expression process may be modulated (regulated), including the transcription (DNA to RNA), RNA splicing, translation (RNA to protein), and post-translational modification of a protein.

Regulation of gene expression gives control over the timing, location, and amount of a given gene product (protein or non-coding RNA) present in a cell and can have a profound effect on the cellular structure and function.

The researchers trained the AI model using



data obtained from more than 1.3 million human cells. In the process, they developed an algorithm that can predict cell activity based on the gene expression of cells and accessible genome data. The discovery is expected to provide new avenues for research on various diseases such as cancer and rare diseases.

The technology works in a similar way to ChatGPT, which understands human language. It learns rules and patterns from data and then applies them to new situations. The algorithm developed by the researchers compared the normal and diseased states of cells and performed predictions with high accuracy even in pathological states such as cancer cells.

Research in the use of AI technologies in

science could contribute to the transition of biology from explanation-centered science to prediction-centered science. This can be of great help in cellular biology, for instance to quickly analyze gene expression patterns to uncover the fundamental mechanisms of diseases. This research is expected to play an important role in uncovering the causes of various diseases, including cancer.

In particular, it can be used for research on non-coding regions of the genome, called 'dark matter'. Using AI models, it is possible to study mutations in genome regions that have not been discovered so far, which could potentially lead to the development of innovative treatments for cancer and other diseases.



Future of World Order



Joseph S. Nye

Professor Emeritus at Harvard University, is a former US assistant secretary of defense and author of the memoir A Life in the American Century

US President Donald Trump has cast serious doubts on the future of the postwar international order. In recent speeches and United Nations votes, his administration has sided with Russia, an aggressor that launched a war of conquest against its peaceful neighbor, Ukraine. His tariff threats have raised questions about long-standing alliances and the future of the global trading system, and his withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement and the World Health Organization has undercut cooperation on transnational threats.

The prospect of a wholly disengaged, self-focused United States has troubling implications for world order. It is easy to imagine Russia taking advantage of the situation to try to dominate Europe through the exercise or threat of force. Europe will have to show greater unity and provide for its own defense, even if a US backstop will remain important. Likewise, it is easy to imagine China asserting itself more in Asia, where it openly seeks dominance over its neighbors. Those neighbors will surely have taken note.

In fact, all countries will be affected, because the relationships among states and other major transnational actors are interconnected. An international order rests on a stable distribution of power among states; norms that influence and legitimize conduct; and shared institutions. A given international order can evolve incrementally without leading to a clear paradigm shift. But if the preeminent power's domestic politics change too radically, all bets are off.

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Since relations among states naturally vary over time, order is a matter of degree. Before the modern state system, order was often imposed by force and conquest, taking the form of regional empires.

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Since relations among states naturally vary over time, order is a matter of degree. Before the modern state system, order was often imposed by force and conquest, taking the form of regional empires such as China and Rome (among many others). Variations in war and peace between powerful empires were more an issue of geography than of norms and institutions. Because they were contiguous, Rome and Parthia (the area around modern-day Iran) sometimes fought, whereas Rome, China, and the Mesoamerican empires did not.

Empires themselves depended on both hard and soft power. China was held together by strong common norms, highly developed political institutions, and mutual economic benefit. So was Rome, especially the Republic. Post-Roman Europe had institutions and norms in the form of the papacy and dynastic monarchies, which meant that territories



often changed governance through marriage and family alliances, regardless of the subject people's wishes. Wars were often motivated by dynastic considerations, though the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought wars born of religious fervor and geopolitical ambition, owing to the rise of Protestantism, divisions within the Roman Catholic Church, and increased interstate competition.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the French Revolution disrupted the monarchical norms and the traditional restraints that had long sustained the European balance of power. Although Napoleon's pursuit of empire ultimately failed after his retreat from Moscow, his armies swept away many territorial boundaries and created new states, leading to the first deliberate efforts to create a modern state system, at the 1815 Congress of Vienna.

The post-Vienna 'Concert of Europe' suffered a series of disruptions over the following decades, most notably in 1848, when nationalist revolutions swept the continent. Following these upheavals, Otto von Bismarck launched various wars to unite Germany, which assumed a powerful central position in the region, reflected in the 1878 Congress of Berlin. Through his alliance with Russia, Bismarck produced a stable order until the Kaiser fired him in 1890.

Then came World War I, which was followed by the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, whose failure set the stage for World War II. The subsequent creation of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the precursor to the World Trade Organization) marked the most important institution-building episode of the twentieth century. Since the US was the dominant player, the post-1945 era became known as the 'American Century'. The end of the Cold War in 1991 then produced a unipolar distribution of power, allowing for the creation or strengthening of institutions such as the WTO, the International Criminal Court, and the Paris climate agreement.

Even before Trump, some analysts believed that this American order was coming to an end. The twenty-first century had brought another shift in the distribution of power, usually described as the rise (or more accurately, the recovery) of Asia. While Asia had accounted for the largest share of the world economy in 1800, it fell behind after the Industrial Revolution in the West. And like other regions, it suffered from the new imperialism that Western military and communications technologies had made possible.

Now, Asia is returning to its status as the leading source of global economic output. But its recent gains have come more at the expense of Europe than the US. Rather than declining, the

US still represents one-quarter of global GDP, as it did in the 1970s. While China has shrunk the US lead substantially, it has not surpassed the US economically, militarily, or in terms of its alliances. If the international order is eroding, America's domestic politics are as much of a cause as China's

rise. The question is whether we are entering a totally new period of American decline, or whether the second Trump administration's attacks on the American Century's institutions and alliances will prove to be another cyclical dip. We may not know until 2029.

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Nature Needs Its Own ID



Midori Paxton
Director of the United Nations Development Programme's Nature Hub.

During my 35-year career in environmental conservation, I have come to realize that today's planetary crisis is driven not just by destruction and neglect but also by something more profound: our economic systems' blindness to nature's value.

As governments chase GDP growth and companies seek to maximize profits, they fail to account for the vast ecosystems that sustain our economies, societies, and personal well-being. We manage what we measure, and because ecosystem services do not appear on balance sheets, they are effectively invisible, even as the implications—exploitation of natural resources, habitat destruction, and pollution of our air, land, water, and ocean—stare us in the face.

The consequences of remaining on our current path are well-documented. The World Bank warns that the collapse of just a few critical ecosystem services, such as wild pollination and marine fisheries, could shrink global GDP by \$2.7 trillion annually by 2030.

How can we make nature more visible and integral to our decision-making? The Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures represents an important first step. By providing financial institutions and corporations with the tools to assess their dependence and impact on natural ecosystems, the initiative encourages and enables them to shift financial flows toward nature-positive investments.

Quantifying these relationships is no easy feat. But digital nature IDs offer a promising solution. Much like personal IDs enable citizens to exercise their rights, receive government benefits, access banking services, and take legal action, a digital nature ID could help establish essential environmental metrics to account for the ecosystems supporting human development.

A person without an ID risks invisibility in modern society. The same is true for nature. Assigning secure IDs to natural ecosystems could shield them from unchecked exploitation. For example, a forested watershed could have an ID storing information about its geographical



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

“ A forested watershed could have an ID storing information about its geographical characteristics, biodiversity, ecosystem services, and the measurable benefits it provides to local communities and distant populations downstream. ”

characteristics, biodiversity, and ecosystem services, along with the measurable benefits it provides to local communities and even distant populations downstream. By quantifying these benefits, we could make it harder for businesses or individuals to disregard or harm nature. No longer invisible, nature's value would be profiled, legally recognized, and far more difficult to exploit.

With digitalization revolutionizing ID systems, our ability to identify, track, and measure has reached levels that once seemed unimaginable. Aadhaar—India's biometric, data-driven digital ID system—is a prime example. By enabling instant identity verification, Aadhaar has provided more than one billion people access to a range of public services and social programs. Likewise, digital public infrastructure for sustainable development already assigns unique identifiers to physical structures like roads and bridges, underscoring their economic value.

A similar approach could be applied to nature. With the rapid development of mobile technologies, a digital nature ID can integrate digital tagging, remote sensing, and sensor data for real-time monitoring of natural ecosystems. AI could further enhance these systems, making environmental data more accessible

and actionable. Imagine a geo-tagged data parcel, overlaid with key ecological features and environmental health indicators, offering a holistic, living snapshot of a specific ecosystem. An early iteration of this concept is the ability to track supply chains to ensure that your cup of coffee is deforestation-free.

By integrating administrative, environmental, and geographic data, digital nature IDs could pave the way for scaling results-based payment schemes, providing fair compensation to those who protect carbon-absorbing rainforests, mangroves, and other vital ecosystems. They could also enhance the traceability of raw materials in agricultural supply chains and empower land-rights holders by improving access to biodiversity credits, green bonds, and loans tied to sustainable stewardship. Moreover, such a system could bolster legal protections for indigenous and local communities by incorporating clear, location-specific records.

But the development of a digital nature ID must be a whole-of-society effort, underpinned by the principles of inclusion and collaboration. Its design should reflect the concerns of all stakeholders, so that it serves as a public good that drives nature-positive action at scale. Above all, it must uphold the rights, welfare, and value systems

of indigenous peoples and local communities, ensuring that they retain control over data related to their lands, resources, and way of life.

To succeed, a digital nature ID system must be integrated with existing digital infrastructure, allowing countries to adapt and refine it to fit their unique socioeconomic and environmental realities. Strong laws and policies promoting data sharing, standardization, and certification would be necessary to promote interoperability and protect against misuse.

At scale, a digital nature ID could become a transformative tool for accounting for the value of our planet's natural resources and contributions to humanity. By recognizing and quantifying the ways nature enables our societies and economies to survive and thrive, we can usher in a new era of environmental accountability.

The United Nations Development Programme, with support from The Rockefeller Foundation and other partners, has been developing the concept of digital nature IDs as a digital public infrastructure through research and consultations with indigenous peoples, governments, NGOs, and the private sector. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the funders or partners.



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