

Aspiring Kuwait Transforms

The cosmopolitan oil exporter is undergoing major social, structural, and economic changes as it builds a roadmap to a more sustainable future.

In the midst of the largest and most far-reaching investment program ever introduced, Kuwait is en route to becoming a regional financial and trade center. The five-year, US\$125 billion plan sets out a blueprint for sustainable economic development, social inclusion, and economic diversification, which Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah hopes to achieve through government capital expenditure and increased private sector participation.

Launched in 2009, the plan outlines ambitious infrastructural works, which include the new Silk City business hub, a major container port and 25 kilometer causeway, a railway and metro system, additional spending on new cities including health and

education services, and the equivalent of US\$90 billion of oil sector investments to raise productivity and modernize facilities.

Two years on, substantial progress has already been made. "Kuwait has been focused on strengthening ties to other nations," says Khalid Al-Bannai, Under Secretary for General Affairs. "Many treaties have been signed, so it is a very promising time for diplomacy and foreign relations." Khalifa Hamada, Under Secretary of the Ministry of Finance adds: "The Kuwaiti economy is headed in the right direction and the future is optimistic."

Abdulaziz Al-Kulaib, Under Secretary for the Minister of Public Works, the department charged with the tendering,

Petrochemicals giant helps Kuwait become a beacon for the industry's development

As the world edges slowly toward economic recovery by mid-2011, analysts are predicting improved margins on petrochemical products. This is good news for the Kuwait-based Qurain Petrochemical Industries Company (QPIC), which is focused on direct and indirect investments in companies producing, trading, and storing chemical and petrochemical products and related by-products.

Established by Amiri decree in 2004, QPIC has played a pivotal role in the development of Kuwait's energy sector, attracting much-needed private sector involvement in major petrochemical projects.

Among its many successful joint ventures are Equate, the Kuwait-based producer of high-quality polyethylene, ethylene glycol, and styrene monomer; Kuwait Olefins II, in which it has a 6% stake; the US\$2 billion Kuwait Paraxylene Production Co., which is a fifth-owned by QPIC, and an Algerian methanol project slated to begin operations in 2013.

The company is actively investigating local, regional, and international opportunities as part of its long-term strategy, and boasts United Industries Company, a KIPCO Group company, as a major shareholder.

As it seeks international technology partners to help grow its activities within Kuwait, the Middle East, and North Africa region, QPIC is also targeting Asia and other growth markets for viable opportunities.

"Kuwait has all the requisites to contribute to the petrochemicals industry in the Arabian Gulf," says Sheikh



Sheikh Mubarak
 Chairman
 QPIC

Mubarak A. Al Mubarak Al Sabah, QPIC chairman. "It has financial strength, resources, a high level of education, experience from being the pioneers in this industry, especially with the private sector, and proximity to populated markets. All of this gives it a competitive advantage.

"With coordination between the private sector and the government, Kuwait's petrochemical industry can be a beacon for the development of the industry in the Gulf."

The company, which announced first quarter earnings equivalent to US\$11.5 million in April, will be looking at diversification within the energy sector as part of its long-term strategy. "QPIC has already acquired a share in an upstream holding company that owns assets of energy and petroleum services, and is also investigating international acquisition opportunities to complement its existing portfolio and help it achieve its strategic goals," the chairman says.

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planning, and design of each project, is also upbeat. "We are fortunate to have good international contractors," he says.

With an economy that depends on oil revenues for 95% of its budget, the plan is nothing if not ambitious. And yet, as oil minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, notes: "Parliament approved the privatization law, which will contribute towards reducing the dependency. Even if we accomplish 10%, it will be quite an achievement."

A tourism paradise

A highly urbanized nation with a rich cultural history, Kuwait offers visitors a host of attractions and services and a world-class hospitality sector through its small but sophisticated hotel industry. Two of the sector's premier agencies, Kuwait Tourism Services Company and Touristic Enterprises Company, provide information on every guest's questions from the basic where to stay, eat, and shop, to the local sights and customs.

The Crowne Plaza Hotel has been delivering high-quality hospitality service to Kuwait since 1982, when it was an iconic Holiday Inn. From its beginnings as a business hotel, it has grown to become a majestic business and leisure establishment, which manages to successfully combine a professional business environment with superb leisure activities for guests, not least a spectacular aquatonic spa. Part of the Intercontinental Hotels Group, some 40% of guests are loyalty cardholders.

Hani Kafafi, director of operations of the IHG, Northern Gulf, and general manager of the Crowne Plaza, says: "This hotel is one of the leading five-star establishments in Kuwait. It has continued to develop to offer international brand restaurants, meeting rooms, a 24-hour health club and the spa, which is one of the best in the world.

"The businessman is looking for a good experience and a healthy treatment." Hani Kafafi, General Manager, Crowne Plaza

"The quality of finish, the size of the rooms, the quality of the therapists, the number of treatments, and the Aquatonic pool, which is one of the biggest in the world, all help guests disconnect from the outside world," Kafafi says.

Spanning 650 square meters, the Aquatonic pool has four different water temperatures, while its 170 jets massage every muscle. "That is what the businessman is looking for," Kafafi adds. "A good experience and a healthy treatment."

In order to attract more long-term visitors, the hotel is now focusing on business, government, and conference bookings. A new convention center is due to open this summer, and approximately 80 new, fully furnished apartments will be opening by the beginning of 2012.

"This will satisfy a specific niche in the marketplace and it will attract longer-term corporate and industry personnel," Kafafi says. "The spa will complement the conference center and offer organizers a competitive advantage. For instance, during coffee breaks, we can send seven or eight therapists in to provide five-minute massages, and at the end of each day between 50 and 80 people can go and enjoy the pool."

The hotel's 24-hour health club is also a strong advantage, as guests can exercise whenever they like. "We try to go the extra mile for our clients to give them complete satisfaction," Kafafi says. "I am 100% sure that people come to the hotel just for the health club or spa, as much as they come for its location or the free Internet access we offer everywhere."

Guests can enjoy the Personal Hotelier service, which offers one point of contact to book services such as car hire, club boardroom bookings, secretarial and printing services, travel and tour arrangements, restaurants and treatments.

"All of these things make the hotel consistently higher in market share—which makes our owners happy, the management happy, and the staff happy," Kafafi says.

The greatest challenge, he believes, is the lack of local employees entering the services sector. There is no university or faculty study aimed toward hospitality yet, so the hotel has to recruit expatriates, which takes time.

"There is, however, a lot of drive behind the national plan. There are consultants, developers, and businesspeople coming in with new technology and know-how, which will speed up the diversification process. I am confident Kuwait is moving forward," he says.

Developing the minds of the future



Prof. Abdullah Al-Fuhaid, Fmr. Pres., Kuwait University

Established in 1966, Kuwait University (KU) is the oldest higher education institution in Kuwait. In four decades, it has grown from humble beginnings: 400 students, one college, and some 32 professors—to become a quality institution with a formidable reputation.

With five campuses, 14 colleges, approximately 30,000 students, and 1,300 faculty members—all with PhDs—the University offers undergraduate and post-grad qualifications in a wide range

of fields, including Arts, Business, Law, Science, Medicine, Dentistry, and Social Sciences.

In 2014, it will enter a new period of growth with the opening of a US\$7 billion campus that will accommodate 40,000 undergraduates and some 2,000 post-graduates.

Prof. Abdullah Al-Fuhaid, the university's former president, says: "We now see a dream we have had for many years being realized. The university has done an excellent job in providing highly skilled professionals for Kuwait, including teachers, engineers, doctors, and businessmen. The new campus will enable the university to do an even better job.

"KU will continue to play a key role in Kuwait's growth and development, along with the government's five-year plan to assure sustainable social and economic progress."

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IRRESISTIBLE FEELINGS AT THE SPA AQUATONIC, CROWNE PLAZA KUWAIT

A true temple of serenity and relaxation, the Thermes Marins De Saint Malo has 8 branches worldwide. Pioneering the concept in the GCC is the Spa Aquatonic at the Crowne Plaza Kuwait. Created from the design of the original Aquatonic pool in France, Spa Aquatonic uniquely offers Thalasso therapy treatments that focus solely on stimulating blood circulation, improving muscle tone and treating stiff muscles in the back and neck. With a vast pool of seawater in 10 different areas, Spa Aquatonic features counter – current walk – through, water seats, hydro – jet pools, water loungers and leg geysers.

Signature treatments at the Spa include facial treatments, relaxing massages, foot reflexology and many more that are created to totally renew and refresh you when you walk out of our doors. With 50 plus treatments sourced from Thermes Marins De Saint Malo, the quality is maintained to meet the standards of France, with quality experts coming every 6 months from French headquarters to assure this.

Highly qualified therapists await to give you a totally new experience, unlike anything else that you have felt so far. A full session at the Aquatonic pool guarantees a loss of 300 – 500 calories in an hour. A slimming programme is scheduled for launch by January 2011, with high – tech machine to be used and certified European therapists available.

With outlets in France, Indonesia, Egypt, Japan and now Kuwait, the Les Thermes Marins De Saint Malo is an award – winning brand. Les Thermes Bali, Ayana Resort and Spa has been voted the number 1 spa in the world by Conde Nast Traveler Readers for 2010. This spa has also previously won Travel + Leisure World's best awards in 2009 by readers. For the months of May to September 2010, the Spa Aquatonic in Kuwait has also received awards from the headquarters in France for its excellence in performance.

We welcome you to the Spa Aquatonic at Crowne Plaza Kuwait to revitalize your soul and mind, to regain your poise and confidence. Come in for an extraordinary experience of the body, mind, and soul - an Irresistible Feeling!



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