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**Thought Leadership Circle:
Reshaping the
Digital Landscape
DEBRIEFING REPORT**



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INTRODUCTION

THE SECOND PHASE of the Thought Leadership Circle joint initiative co-hosted by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) and The Business Year (TBY), convened under the theme "Reshaping the Digital Landscape", held on the 1st of December 2025 at the Chairman's Club, KIPCO Tower, Kuwait City.

The roundtable bringing together senior public- and private-sector decision-makers to examine Kuwait's ambition to become an integrated hub for digital innovation and artificial intelligence. Designed as a focused, action-oriented exchange, the session advanced the national conversation on how Kuwait can accelerate its digital transformation through coordinated investment, enabling regulation, and cross-sector collaboration.

The event was headlined by His Excellency Omar Saud Al-Omar, Minister of State for Communication Affairs, who hosted the discussion and underscored the government's commitment to strengthening national digital infrastructure and regulatory readiness.

In his opening remarks, he highlighted the need for institutional alignment and public-private synergy to unlock economic value from digital modernization. "As we transform Kuwait's digital landscape, we must ensure institutional alignment, infrastructure strength, and public-private synergy to unlock the true potential of our economy," he said.

The roundtable featured key contributions from: HE Khaled Mohammad Al-Zamel, Chairman of Communication & Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA); HE Abeer Al-Awadhi, Chief of the Kuwait National Cyber Security Center (NCSC); Sheikh Ahmed Duajj Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Commercial Bank of Kuwait; Muataz Al-Dharrab, CEO of stc Kuwait; Alaeddine Karim, General Manager of Microsoft Kuwait; Bader Al-Ghanim, Vice President & Managing Director of Talabat Kuwait; Fahad Al-Menayes, Acting CEO of International Turnkey Systems (its); and Sulaiman Al-Arouj, Executive Chairman of Empower State Holdings, reflecting a unified commitment to shaping a secure, scalable, and globally competitive digital ecosystem.

The event reaffirmed KDIPA and TBY commitment to sustaining high-level dialogue that translates into practical collaboration, accelerates ecosystem readiness, and advances Kuwait's digital future.

This initiative aligns closely with Kuwait Vision 2035 by reinforcing the national drive to build a diversified, knowledge-based economy anchored in digital capability, innovation, and global competitiveness. It also reflects the ongoing efforts of public and private stakeholders to translate the Vision into measurable outcomes through modernized infrastructure, future-ready regulation, strengthened cybersecurity, and sustained investment in nurturing national talent and modern technology.

مقدمة

انطلقت المرحلة الثانية من المبادرة المشتركة "دائرة القيادة الفكرية" بتنظيم من قبل هيئة تشجيع الاستثمار المباشر ومجموعة ذا بزنس بير الإعلامية وعقدت تحت عنوان «إعادة تشكيل المشهد الرقمي». بتاريخ 1 ديسمبر 2025 في شيرمانز كلوب في برج كيبكو، في العاصمة الكويت.

وقد جمعت المائدة المستديرة بين نخبة من كبار المسؤولين والمتخصصين في القطاعين العام والخاص لمناقشة رغبة الكويت في أن تصبح مركزاً حيوياً متكاملًا للابتكار الرقمي والذكاء الاصطناعي. وقد وفرت منصة للحوار التفاعلي والنقاش المركز وطرح توصيات عملية بهدف تحفيز الحوار الوطني حول سبل تسريع التحول الرقمي في الكويت من خلال تكريس الاستثمارات المتناغمة، والتشريعات الداعمة، والتعاون التشاركي بين مختلف القطاعات.

ترأس الجلسة معالي السيد عمر سعود العمر، وزير الدولة لشؤون الاتصالات، الذي أكد على جدية الحكومة والتزامها بتعزيز البنية التحتية الرقمية وتسريع جاهزية الأطر التنظيمية.

وشدد في كلمته الافتتاحية على أهمية التوافق المؤسسي والتناغم بين القطاعين العام والخاص لتحقيق القيمة الاقتصادية المنشودة من التحديث الرقمي، قائلاً: «مع تحول المشهد الرقمي في الكويت، يجب أن نضمن التوافق المؤسسي، ومثالية البنية التحتية، والتناغم بين القطاعين العام والخاص لإطلاق الإمكانيات الحقيقية لاقتصادنا».

وشهدت المائدة المستديرة مشاركات بارزة من معالي الدكتور خالد محمد الزامل، رئيس مجلس إدارة الهيئة العامة للاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات، ومعالي المهندسة عبير العوضي، رئيس المركز الوطني للأمن السيبراني في الكويت، والشيخ أحمد دعيح الصباح، رئيس مجلس إدارة البنك التجاري الكويتي، والمهندس معتر عبدالله الصراب، الرئيس التنفيذي لشركة الاتصالات السعودية (اس تي سي) الكويت، والسيد علاء الدين كريم، المدير العام لشركة مايكروسوفت الكويت، والسيد بدر الغانم، نائب الرئيس والمدير العام لشركة طلبات الكويت، والسيد همد المنيس، الرئيس التنفيذي بالإمانة لشركة الأنظمة الدولية المتكاملة، والسيد سليمان العروج، رئيس مجلس إدارة شركة إمباور ستيت هولدينجز، في صورة تعكس التزاماً موحداً ببناء منظومة رقمية آمنة وقابلة للتوسع وقادرة على المنافسة عالمياً.

وأكد الحدث من جديد التزام هيئة تشجيع الاستثمار المباشر ومجموعة "ذا بزنس بير" بمواصلة الحوارات رفيعة المستوى التي تتحول إلى تعاون عملي، وتسرع جاهزية المنظومة الرقمية، ودفع عجلة المستقبل الرقمي للكويت. كما تتماشى هذه المبادرة بشكل وثيق مع رؤية الكويت 2035 من خلال تعزيز التوجه الوطني نحو بناء اقتصاد متنوع قائم على المعرفة، يرتكز على القدرات الرقمية والابتكار والتنافسية العالمية. ويعكس ذلك أيضاً الجهود المستمرة للقطاعين العام والخاص لتحويل هذه الرؤية إلى نتائج ملموسة عبر تحديث البنية التحتية، والأخذ بالتشريعات المستقبلية، وتعزيز الأمن السيبراني والاستثمار المستدام في تنمية المهارات الوطنية والتكنولوجيا المتقدمة.

SPEAKERS



HE Omar Saud Al-Omar,
Minister of State for
Communication Affairs



HE Dr. Khaled Mohammad Al-Zamel,
Chairman of the
Communication &
Information Technology
Regulatory Authority (CITRA)



HE Abeer Al-Awadhi,
Chief of the Kuwait
National Cyber
Security Center (NCSC)



Mohammed Yousef Mulla Yaqoub,
Assistant Director
General for Business
Development, KDIPA



Sheikh Ahmed Duajj Al-Sabah,
Chairman of the
Commercial Bank
of Kuwait



Muataz Al-Dharrab,
CEO of stc Kuwait



Alaedddine Karim,
General Manager of
Microsoft Kuwait



Bader Al-Ghanim,
Vice President & Managing
Director of Talabat Kuwait



Fahad Al-Menayes,
Acting CEO of
International Turnkey
Systems (its)



Sulaiman Al-Arouj,
Executive Chairman of
Empower State Holdings



Maite Elizalde,
Moderator,
Country Editor,
The Business Year





KEY TOPICS

The conversation was structured around four interconnected themes that together mapped Kuwait's digital trajectory from enabling foundations to execution-ready priorities. It opened with Foundations of an integrated Digital Hub, focusing on how integrated services, shared data, and resilient infrastructure can create interoperable ecosystems, supported by regulatory approaches that allow digital growth to scale sustainably. Building on this base, the discussion moved to Strategic Collaborations & AI Readiness, where leaders highlighted the role of cross-sector partnerships in accelerating innovation while safeguarding national interests. It then progressed to Smart Technologies and Infrastructure & Cybersecurity and resilience in the era of smart infrastructure, examining how smart systems can strengthen fintech and critical national services, while reinforcing the idea that digital advancement must be matched by robust cyber resilience and trust. The final theme, Investing in Kuwait's Digital future: Talent and Ecosystem, emphasized workforce readiness and digital skills development as essential levers for attracting global technology players and ensuring Kuwait's people are prepared to lead and benefit from the next phase of transformation.

FOUNDATIONS OF AN INTEGRATED DIGITAL HUB

Kuwait’s “integrated digital hub” vision was framed as more than digitizing individual services but about building the foundations that let government, business, and citizens interact seamlessly through connected infrastructure, trusted data, and enabling regulation. His Excellency the Minister summarized the core building blocks as “infrastructure, skilling, and robust interconnectivity between government entities.”

Key areas discussed

› **Three foundational pillars (infrastructure, skills, interconnectivity):**

The base needed to modernize services and enable transparency and security.

HE The Minister positioned these pillars as interdependent, not sequential. Connectivity across entities enables services to be delivered as end-to-end citizen “journeys,” but it only works if the underlying infrastructure is modernized and the workforce is trained to run, secure, and continuously improve those systems.

› **Cloud readiness and national infrastructure capacity:**

This includes the ambition for a “cloud ready Sovereign cloud” and future-ready data center capabilities to host hyperscalers and scale digital services.

The discussion linked cloud readiness to both national capability and service scalability. HE The Minister described Kuwait as already “migrating to the cloud,” while also planning future national data center capacity “so the government can modernize services while ensuring the environment is strong enough to host major providers and expand securely.”

› **A “holistic view” of the hub’s value:**

stc highlighted that the true measure is economic impact and improved service delivery focusing on the impact on the economy and how are the services delivered differently.

The perspective anchored the “digital hub” conversation in outcomes: changing how services reach citizens, and how business models evolve once infrastructure, data, and regulation unlock new ways of operating. The idea was that technology layers matter, but they only prove their value when they



translate into “better delivery and measurable economic benefits.”

› **Adoption as a core “fourth” pillar:**

Microsoft Kuwait stressed that infrastructure and talent must be matched with adoption “you cannot be an AI regional hub if you are not really adopting AI.”

It emphasized that readiness is not only about building capability, but about using it at scale. Framing adoption as practical, organization-wide behavior across government, private sector, and education so AI becomes “embedded in day-to-day workflows rather than remaining an initiative.”

› **Regulatory shift from digitization to hub-building:**

CITRA distinguished basic digitization from a digital hub, noting the future focus of regulation should be innovation, investment and ecosystem growth.

This framing clarified that digitization is largely about efficiency, moving services online, while hub-building requires regulation that actively enables new markets and new types of digital activity. Beyond basic protections and interoperability, “regulation must evolve to support emerging technologies, investment attraction, and an ecosystem that can grow and compete accordingly.”

TOTAL BANK CARD TRANSACTIONS (BILLION KWD)

SOURCE: TIMES KUWAIT





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