الكويت

KUWAIT IN SPACE

A REVIEW OF KUWAIT'S
SPACE AFFAIRS & OPPORTUNITIES

LUCIAN SPACE | OCTOBER 2026



A TIMELINE OF KUWAIT'S SPACE ACTIVITIES.

1969
KUWAIT'S FIRST GROUND STATION FOR SATELLITES

5 OF 5
UN SPACE TREATIES JOINED. NO OTHER GULF STATE HAS 5

3
SATELLITES SINCE 2021. TWO STILL IN ORBIT

2024
THE AMIR LAUNCHES A SPACE RESEARCH CENTRE

2026
KUWAIT JOINS COSPAR, THIRD GCC MEMBER

1969
Kuwait opens the Umm Al-Aish ground station.
A dish on Earth that talks to satellites. Kuwait joined Intelsat in 1965.

1976
Arab states found Arabsat. Kuwait is a party to its agreement.
Arabsat is the Arab world's satellite operator. Founded 14 April.

1990
The Iraqi invasion destroys the Umm Al-Aish ground station.
Three dishes are lost. The remains are sold as scrap in 2009.

2014
Kuwait joins the last two of the five UN space treaties.
The Moon Agreement and the Registration Convention. No other Gulf state has all five.

2021
QMR-KWT, the first Kuwaiti satellite, reaches orbit.
Launched 30 June. Kuwait also joins COPUOS, the UN space committee.

2023
SpaceX launches KuwaitSat-1. Kuwait University students built it.
3 January. KFAS, the science foundation, paid for it. Its camera sees 39 metres per pixel.

2024
The Amir launches the Kuwait National Space Research Center.
Bayan Palace, September. It sits under KFAS and runs with Kuwait University.

2026
Kuwait joins COSPAR, the Committee on Space Research.
14 March. The third GCC member, after Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

UNOOSA · UN TREATY STATUS 2026 · CELESTRAK · KUWAIT UNIVERSITY · COSPAR · KUWAIT TIMES

THE GULF SPACE ECOSYSTEM

UAE	Reached Mars orbit on its first attempt in 2021, has flown two astronauts, and launched the pan-Arab 813 satellite in December 2025. Rashid 2 and an asteroid mission are slated for 2027 and 2028.	**~AED 44B** INVESTED
SAUDI ARABIA	A full agency since 2023, weeks after two Saudis flew to the ISS. Its Shams cubesat rode Artemis II in April 2026, and PIF's Neo Space Group is buying up the value chain.	**$8.7B** SPACE ECONOMY, 2024
QATAR	Es'hailSat's two-satellite GEO fleet serves broadcasters across the region; a Qatari research survey has even discovered exoplanets.	**2** GEO SATELLITES
BAHRAIN	An agency since 2014, renamed the Bahrain Space Agency in 2025; Al Munther, its first home-built satellite, reached orbit in March 2025 with AI processing onboard.	**2** SMALLSATS FLOWN
OMAN	The region's first commercial spaceport: Etlaq at Duqm flew its first rocket in December 2024 and targets commercial service by end-2027; signed the Artemis Accords in January 2026 as the 61st nation.	**1 LAUNCH** FLOWN SO FAR
EGYPT	A space agency created by law in 2018 and host of the African Space Agency in Cairo; its SPNEX satellite launched alongside the Arab 813 in December 2025.	**ILRS** MEMBER

NATIONAL AGENCIES · NASA · CST · 2026

COMPARISON

	NATION	AGENCY & LAW	SATELLITES	HUMANS FLOWN	BEYOND EARTH	LAUNCH FROM SOIL	UN TREATIES	VERDICT
1	UAE	●	●	●	●	○	◑	The benchmark
2	SAUDI ARABIA	●	●	●	◑	○	◑	The wallet
3	OMAN	◑	◑	○	◑	●	◑	The launchpad
4	QATAR	◑	◑	○	○	○	◑	The operator
5	KUWAIT	◑	◑	○	○	◑	●	The endowment
6	BAHRAIN	◑	◑	○	◑	○	◑	The payload house

● ESTABLISHED ◑ OPERATIONAL ◑ NASCENT ○ NONE

COMPILED FROM NATIONAL AGENCIES · UN TREATY STATUS 1 JAN 2026 · NASA · 2026

THE GLOBAL SPACE ECOSYSTEM

US | SPACEX	SpaceX did roughly half of all global orbital launches in 2025, and booster reuse is now routine. SPCX IPO'd reaching $2.1T market cap on close. This was the largest IPO in history.	**$2.1T** DAY-ONE MARKET CAP
US | NASA	FY2026 discretionary funding of $24.4B; Artemis II flew 4 astronauts around the Moon in April 2026. NASA's current plan has Artemis III rehearse docking in 2027 and a landing attempt on Artemis IV in 2028.	**$24.4B** FY2026 BUDGET
US | OTHER	Blue Origin took its first outside capital in July 2026 at $130B; Rocket Lab, Vast, Firefly and Sierra sit inside a New Space ecosystem of 950+ US space companies - more than any other country.	**$37B+** RAISED BY US SPACE FIRMS
CHINA	92 orbital launch attempts in 2025; Tiangong is permanently crewed; Chang'e-6 returned far-side samples in 2024; a crewed landing is targeted before 2030.	**92** LAUNCHES IN 2025
RUSSIA	Soyuz still ferries crews and cargo as it has for nearly six decades, but 17 launches in 2025, the loss of Luna-25 and a thin commercial sector point to a programme in retreat.	**17** LAUNCHES IN 2025
INDIA	Chandrayaan-3 made India the fourth country to soft-land on the Moon and the southernmost lunar landing achieved at the time; Gaganyaan targets a first crewed flight no earlier than 2027.	**2027+** FIRST CREW TARGET
EUROPE	Ariane 6 has returned Europe to the launch market, and JUICE and BepiColombo continue deep-space science - but Europe still buys crew seats abroad.	**NO CREW SHIP** OF ITS OWN
JAPAN	SLIM achieved a precise lunar landing in 2024 and Hayabusa brought asteroid samples home; H3 is operational, but cadence stays deliberately low.	**1** LUNAR LANDING
UK	Home to SSTL, Eutelsat OneWeb's London operations and a deep space-finance ecosystem - but after Virgin Orbit's failure at Cornwall, Britain still awaits its first successful orbital launch from home soil.	**NO ORBITAL LAUNCH** FROM SOIL

JONATHAN'S SPACE REPORT · TRACXN · NATIONAL AGENCIES · 2026



THE CASE FOR SPACE

1 **MASSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE BUILD-OUT**

Space creates vast amounts of job opportunities on Earth, because the infrastructure required to support space is massive.

2 **UNIQUE R&D OF VALUE TO EARTH**

Some types of R&D can only be done in the zero-gravity conditions of space, but they have immense value to applications and uses back on Earth.

3 **BUILD A LOCAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM**

Space draws in vast amounts of private and public money, which can support an entirely new startup ecosystem from scratch.

4 **RESILIENCE FROM ORBIT**

Kuwait is a small, dense state. Its own satellites can watch its territory and carry its communications. They keep working when ground stations and cables are hit.

5 **PATIENT CAPITAL**

Kuwait set up the world's first sovereign wealth fund in 1953. Space pays back over decades. Kuwait has invested for the long term for more than seventy years.

6 **SOFT POWER**

A functional and efficient space programme is a display of a nation's might.

7 **RESOURCES AND GAME THEORY**

Other countries are going to space whether you like it or not. You can either wait and watch and be left behind when they inevitably start extracting mineral resources from space. Or you can go now.

8 **THE NEW FRONTIER**

Space is an open canvas waiting to be developed, like America was in the golden age of discovery.

And then look what happened to America.

HOW HAVE SPACE TECHNOLOGIES TRANSFORMED EARTH?

DELIVERED

MAPS	**Real-time maps in your pocket.** Live routes help you navigate faster, cut fuel use and delays.	**6.5B+** DEVICES IN USE
TRANSPORT	**Planes and boats permanently run on satellites.** Fuel-optimal ocean and aircraft routes, with always-on tracking where radar could not reach. Every large vessel is tracked from orbit.	**EVERY** LARGE SHIP TRACKED
APPS	**Uber, Careem, DoorDash and Talabat could not exist without satellites in Space.** The on-demand economy connects customers to moving drivers. Impossible without space.	**1978** FIRST GPS SATELLITE
WEATHER	**Accurate 5-day forecasts, where the 1970s only had 1-day forecasts.** Hurricane/cyclone deaths have fallen, despite coastal populations growing. Airlines, farmers and energy traders totally rely on this data.	**5 DAYS** VS 1 DAY IN 1975
DISASTERS	**Floods, wildfires and damage maps while they happen.** Drought early warning gives governments months, not weeks, to protect food supply. These save lives.	**HOURS** TO A DAMAGE MAP
CLIMATE	**Satellites tracked the ozone hole and made the Montreal Protocol enforceable.** Sea level, ice mass, forest loss and methane leaks can ONLY be measured from orbit.	**1987** MONTREAL PROTOCOL
OSINT	**Journalists, NGOs and analysts can verify events anywhere on Earth.** Arms-control treaties became verifiable.	**30CM** COMMERCIAL RESOLUTION
HEALTH	**The camera in every smartphone came from a NASA sensor.** Medical imaging, infrared thermometers, insulin pumps and water purification all came from space technologies.	**CMOS** SENSOR · NASA 1990S

NEXT

1. **LAUNCH EFFICIENCY**
   Reusable rockets make orbit 10-100× cheaper. Cheaper access multiplies everything on the left dramatically.
2. **ONLY-IN-SPACE MANUFACTURING**
   Optical fibre, semiconductor crystals, purer drug crystals and 3D-printed vascularised tissue: these are materials that CANNOT form under gravity.
3. **BIOMEDICAL R&D**
   Microgravity accelerates critical research on ageing, bone loss and muscle atrophy, as this decay happens in months in space - saving more lives on Earth.
4. **SOLAR SYSTEM RESOURCES**
   Resources including propellant from lunar ice, metals and water from asteroids. Exploring and extracting advances health, science and quality of life on Earth.
5. **EARTH AS AN OASIS**
   Heavy industry, mining and power generation can happen off-planet, alleviating climate change.

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THE SKY OVER KUWAIT

سهيل

1 **The Nastulus astrolabe:** Kuwait's al-Sabah Collection holds the oldest dated astrolabe known, made in Baghdad in 927-928. An astrolabe measures star positions to find the time and latitude. A satellite's star tracker measures star positions to find its direction.

2 **Dr Saleh Al-Ujairi:** A Kuwaiti astronomer, 1920 to 2022. He computed the national calendar. The state still sets its prayer times and lunar months by it. Kuwait's first satellite, launched in 2021, was named QMR-KWT, Moon of Kuwait.

3 **Kuwait's first observatory:** Al-Ujairi built Kuwait's first observatory in the early 1970s. From it, on 25 October 1985, he observed Halley's Comet. In March 1986 five spacecraft from Europe, Japan and the Soviet Union flew past the same comet.

4 **Suhail over Kuwait:** Suhail is the Arabic name of the star Canopus. It first appears over Kuwait around 4 September. Its appearance marks the end of the summer heat. NASA's Mariner and Voyager probes locked on Canopus to hold a steady orientation in space.

5 **The Drour calendar:** Gulf seafarers kept a 365-day star calendar, Al Drour, in ten-day periods called ders. It told them when to plant, fish and dive for pearls. Weather satellites are the modern Drour calendar.

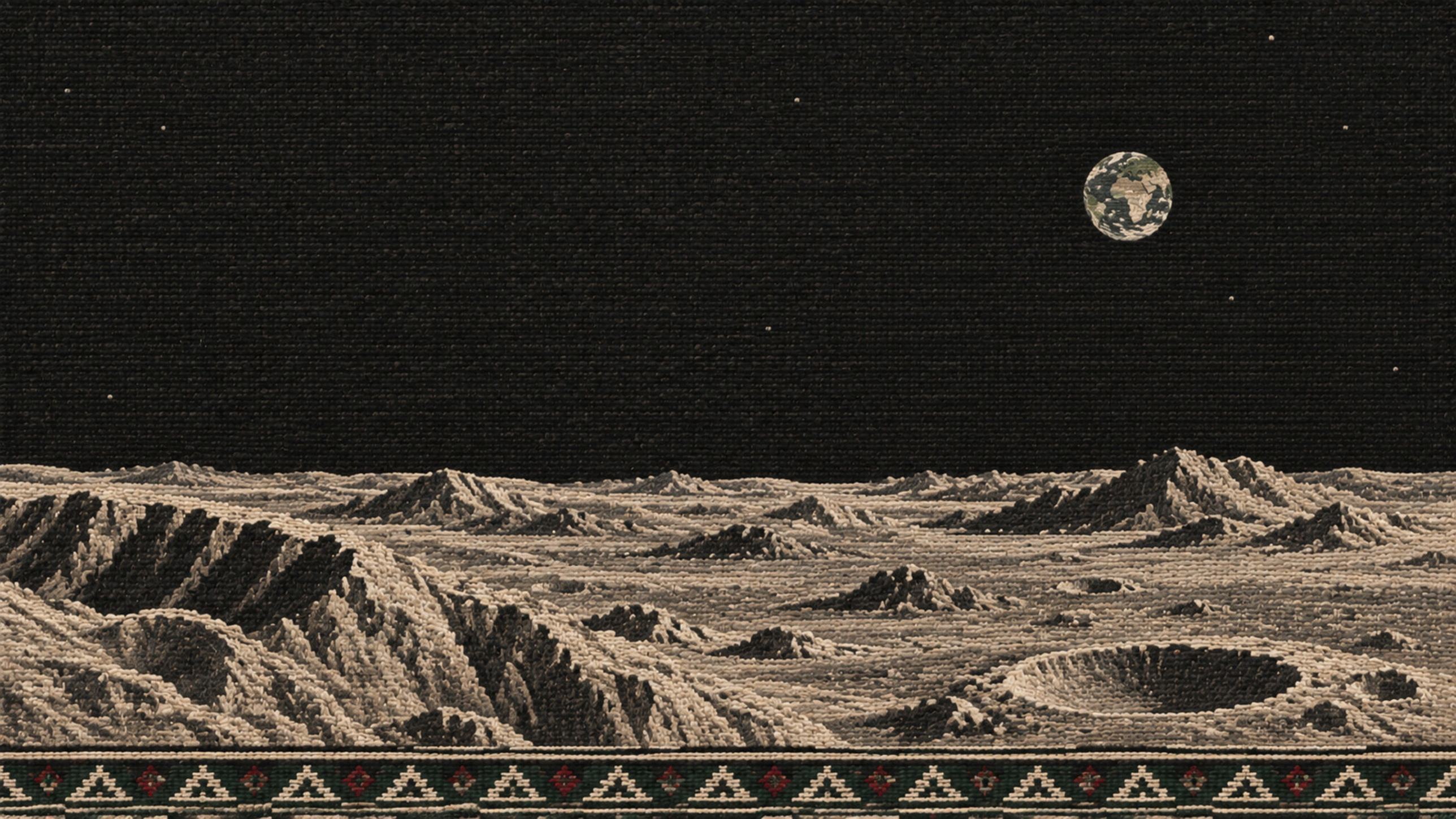
6 **The boom captains:** A boom is a large sailing ship. It is on Kuwait's emblem. Kuwaiti captains, the nakhodas, sailed booms to India and East Africa on the monsoon winds. They navigated by the stars. Today ships navigate by GPS satellites.

7 **Sons of Sindbad:** In 1938 the writer Alan Villiers joined the Kuwaiti boom Bayan at Aden. He sailed with its crew to East Africa and back to Kuwait in 1939. His 1940 book Sons of Sindbad records the voyage. In 1969 Kuwait opened its first satellite ground station.

8 **Umm Al-Aish and Apollo:** Kuwait opened the Umm Al-Aish ground station in 1969. It is reported to have received and rebroadcast signals from the Apollo 12 Moon mission that November. By 1981 three 30-metre dishes stood there.



AL-SABAH COLLECTION · AL-OJEIRI SCIENTIFIC CENTER · KUWAIT TIMES · THE NATIONAL · SATELLITEPRO ME · NASA · ESA



KUWAIT'S MAJOR ADVANTAGES

THE FUND

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem set up the Kuwait Investment Board in London in February 1953, eight years before independence. It was the world's first sovereign wealth fund. Its successor, the Kuwait Investment Authority, manages about USD 1 trillion and put about USD 9 billion into AI and digital companies over five years. Kuwait has turned oil into long-term assets for more than seventy years. Space is one more.

THE FOUNDATION

KFAS, the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, is a private non-profit founded in December 1976. Kuwait's shareholding companies currently pay it one percent of their annual profits. The Amir chairs its board. KFAS paid for KuwaitSat-1, the student-built satellite launched in 2023, and the Kuwait National Space Research Center sits under it. Few countries fund science from a standing share of company profits. Kuwait does.

THE TABLE

Kuwait's space record starts in 1963, when it took part in the ITU conference that set the radio frequencies for space. It joined Intelsat in 1965 and opened the Umm Al-Aish ground station in 1969, among the region's first. It is a party to all five UN space treaties. No other Gulf state is. It joined COPUOS, the UN space committee, in 2021 and COSPAR in March 2026. Kuwait has been a participant in the space economy for 60 years.

THE PIPELINE

Kuwait University has taught a BSc in Engineering Physics with a remote sensing track since 2003. Since 2006 it has run a muon detector for a global space-weather network and a NASA sun photometer that measures dust in the air. Its students designed, built and tested KuwaitSat-1. The university is small, about 44,000 students, and it has already put a satellite in orbit.

THE PUBLIC

The Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Centre opened in 2018. It holds a Space Museum and a 110-seat planetarium, next to an Arabic Islamic Science Museum. KFAS, the science foundation, also runs The Scientific Center, a public science centre. For decades Kuwait has set its prayer times and seasons by the calendar of its own astronomer, Dr Saleh Al-Ujairi. Kuwaitis already know the sky matters.



KIA · GLOBAL SWF · KFAS · UNOOSA · KUWAIT UNIVERSITY · COSPAR · 2026

KUWAIT IS THE ENDOWMENT FOR SPACE

1953

THE WORLD'S FIRST SOVEREIGN WEALTH FUND

USD 1.0T

MANAGED BY THE KUWAIT INVESTMENT AUTHORITY, OCTOBER 2026

1%

OF COMPANY PROFITS PAID TO KFAS EACH YEAR, CURRENTLY

THE FUND

Kuwait opened the Kuwait Investment Board in London in **February 1953**, before independence. In 1976 it created the Future Generations Fund with half the state's general reserve. Today the Kuwait Investment Authority manages **about USD 1 trillion**, among the six largest sovereign wealth funds. In 1990 its London office served as the finance ministry of the government in exile.

THE FOUNDATION

KFAS is a private non-profit. The Amir chairs it. Kuwait's shareholding companies fund it with a contribution from their profits, **currently one percent**. KFAS paid for the project that built KuwaitSat-1. The Kuwait National Space Research Center now sits under KFAS and runs with Kuwait University. Kuwait has a standing source of science money.

THE APPETITE

Over five years the KIA put about **USD 9 billion into digital and AI companies**. Its assets grew by about USD 22 billion in 2025. In June 2026 the press reported that it ordered USD 1 to 5 billion of shares in SpaceX's IPO and was allocated more than USD 1 billion. The KIA has not confirmed it. The appetite is there.

THE MISSING PIECE

This money has no space mandate at home. Kuwait has no space agency, no space law and no space strategy. The KIA invests mostly abroad. Its only reported space holding is a passive stake in SpaceX, which it has not confirmed. The global space economy reached **USD 686 billion in 2025**, 79 percent of it commercial. Two steps would connect Kuwait's money to that market. First, a space agency, to give the money a mandate. Second, a fund beside KFAS that invests in space companies together with private investors.

KIA · IFSWF · GLOBAL SWF · KFAS · TIMES KUWAIT · SPACE FOUNDATION · 2026

NASA IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL BRANDS. NOBODY KNOWS ABOUT KUWAIT'S SPACE HERITAGE.

NASA

NASA WAS FOUNDED IN 1958. IT HAS 92 MILLION FOLLOWERS ON X AND 15 MILLION SUBSCRIBERS ON YOUTUBE.

NSRC ?

THE KUWAIT NATIONAL SPACE RESEARCH CENTER WAS LAUNCHED IN 2024, BUT HAS NO REAL ONLINE PRESENCE OF ITS OWN.

1. **Found the Agency as a Brand From Day One** - When the decree that creates the agency is signed, publish its name, its mark, its Arabic and English wordmarks, its website and its social media accounts on the same day. Kuwait has no old identity to replace. The agency can start with a clean brand.

2. **Name KuwaitSat-2 Before It Flies** - The NSRC plans a satellite that will measure dust and gases in the air. Give the satellite a name, a look and a story before it launches. Kuwait's first satellite was named QMR-KWT, the Moon of Kuwait. That was a name people could remember. Do the same for this one.

3. **Put the Story Under One Roof** - Today many small accounts tell the Kuwaiti space story: Umm Al-Aish, Al-Ujairi, QMR-KWT, KuwaitSat-1, the rocket team and the Space Museum. Create one channel, backed by KFAS and the Cultural Centre. Let it tell the whole sixty-year story.

4. **Bring the Audience to Kuwait** - Invite space creators and journalists to Kuwait for one big event: the founding of the agency, or the naming of KuwaitSat-2. At the same event, offer Kuwaiti engineers who work abroad a way to come home.

STORY = TALENT + CAPITAL + CLIENTS

TALENT

Media creates excitement about the potential for Kuwait's space activities. **More STEM graduates at home, more talented space engineers looking to Kuwait** to build their career and the future of space.

INVESTMENT

Media attracts private investment from **VCs and angels**. It also lays the groundwork among retail investors for **public stocks, or tokenized funding projects**.

CLIENTS

Media reaches far more clients than door-to-door sales ever will - **not merely governments, but commercial enterprises, startups and research teams**. Reaching the world's space operators efficiently, at scale, takes a powerful, reputable brand - **built from day one**.

ARTWORK Woven artworks made for this briefing in September 2026, image-generation assisted. Kuwait City after NASA astronaut photograph ISS032-E-17635 (NASA / ISS Crew Earth Observations, Johnson Space Center); the dhow after Zairon, Kuwait City Dhow Harbour 07 (CC BY 4.0), via Wikimedia Commons; borders inspired by Al Sadu weaving. The sail, the Moon and the lunar landscape are imagined, not records.