



LOCAL
UAE-Kuwait relations offer opportunities to grow to greater horizons **2**

4 **LOCAL**
UN Committee criticizes 'sixties' decision

7 **LOCAL**
Entrepreneurship a growing trend in Kuwait



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Democracy

More than parliament, elected representatives

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Democracy involves more than conducting periodic free and fair election exercises that allow people to choose men and women to represent them in parliament; it is more than having a democratic model of governance with an elected parliament and an independent executive, legislative, and judicial wings, or having a vibrant free-wheeling political backdrop for a government and opposition to function in. It involves more than having a framework of political, economic, social and civil rights and liberties guaranteed to citizens by a Constitution; or having a vigilant media



that diligently monitors and impartially reports on events. These are all just institutions and practices of democracy. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) — the global organization representing national parliaments from around the world — at its core, democracy involves adherence to a set of ideals based on two very simple principles: first, that the people should have the determining influence and control over the rules and policies enacted on their behalf, through participation in deliberations about their common interest; second, that in doing so they should treat each other, and be treated, as equals. How effectively the ideals are adhered to and realised in practice is the touchstone of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



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UAE-Kuwait relations offer opportunities to grow to greater horizons



By Reaven D'Souza
Managing Editor

UAE Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Dr. Matar Hamid Al Neyadi lauding the deep-rooted relations at various levels between the UAE and Kuwait, said that these bonds were based on ancient and historical ties that existed between the two countries and their peoples, and which continue to grow, with many opportunities arising to push this growth to even greater horizons in the years ahead.

Ambassador Al Neyadi was speaking at a media gathering on the occasion of the upcoming 50th anniversary of UAE National Day on 2 December. Saying that he is proud of the level of existing cooperation and coordination, and the level of harmony and mutual love between the two brotherly peoples, he added that these relations qualify for further integration and partnership in light of the care they receive from their respective leaderships.

international peace and security.

He said the UAE slogan at the Security Council is 'Stronger with our Union', as the UAE will work to consolidate this understanding through its efforts, whether at the internal level or through its effective diplomacy abroad.

In the Security Council, the envoy said, "the UAE will be a constructive partner in addressing some of the critical challenges of our time, such as supporting gender equality, promoting tolerance, combating terrorism and extremism, building resilience to climate change, prioritizing humanitarian relief, maintaining peace, addressing global health crises and harnessing the potential of innovation."

On the potential for increased trade ties between the two countries, Ambassador Al Neyadi noted that despite the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, trade exchange between the two countries until last October was more than 30 billion UAE Dirhams (KD 2.5 billion). Referring to the markets in both countries as promising for investors, the envoy called on investors

world level.

He noted, the UAE provided support and assistance to many countries in the world during Corona, until mid-2021, including 2,300 tons of medical supplies and other supplies to 136 countries, in addition to establishing field hospitals in a number of countries in support of their respective health systems.

Speaking about his country's desire to pursue environmentally sustainable development, the envoy said that the UAE has invested about US\$17 billion in renewable energy in the six continents in the form of commercial projects. It has also provided more than \$1 billion in grants and soft loans to support the establishment of clean energy plants around the world, including in the UAE-Pacific Partnership Fund and Emirates Renewable Energy.

He pointed out his country's keenness to contribute to the goals of sustainable development, including the fight against poverty in the world. He pointed out that the UAE has provided over 322 billion dirhams (KD 27 billion) in the form of humanitarian aid, 91 percent of which was in the form of development aid, 7 percent as humanitarian aid and 2 percent as charitable aid to 196 countries for the benefit of about one billion people — three quarters of them women and children.

Describing his country as modern, he said the UAE seeks continuous development and aspires to progress based on the values of tolerance, inclusiveness, moderation, flexibility and giving. He added that the UAE has developed a unique model in the Middle East that empowers women, embraces diversity, encourages innovation and welcomes global partnership.

He went on to note that the UAE is working to be the global capital for investment and economic innovation, and an integrated incubator for entrepreneurship. In this regard, he pointed to the recent major amendments in legislation and the announcement of a package of initiatives, the most important of which are: restructuring the entry and residence system; launching the 'Invest in the UAE' portal; and introducing a new data law initiative to attract 100 programmers per day; launch 100 model projects in priority sectors; and conclude comprehensive economic partnership agreements with eight major global markets around the world to enhance the UAE's position as a main gateway to global trade and investment. Each of these initiatives will have a major role in strengthening the existing investment environment in the UAE to be more capable and flexible.

On the security front, and in response to the diplomatic moves by the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister in the region, the ambassador indicated the UAE seeks to establish better relations with Iran by building on commonalities. He stressed on the importance of Iran dealing with the countries of the region based on the principles of good neighborliness, non-interference in internal affairs and respect for territorial sovereignty and the resolution of disputes by peaceful means. He added any dialogue or diplomatic action is generally welcome.

Regarding the Gulf-Lebanese crisis, he said that the UAE joined the brothers



in the Arab Gulf states in condemning the statements made by the Lebanese Minister of Information criticizing the coalition that supports the legitimacy of Yemen led by Saudi Arabia.

His Excellency the ambassador added that the UAE's decision to withdraw its diplomats from Lebanon came as a result of the accumulation of illegal statements which were supported by some Lebanese officials against the Arab Gulf states, stressing at the same time that the UAE respects the historical bilateral relations with Lebanon and the Lebanese people, especially those residing in the United Arab Emirates, who are considered part of the Emirati social fabric and added that the UAE has stood with the brotherly Lebanese people in various circumstances.

He went on to note that as part of diversifying and transforming the country's economy, the government of UAE has set up EDGE — a holding firm with several companies, including businesses that were once under Emirates Defence Industries Company. He added that EDGE had contributed significantly to job creation for locals, as well as repositioning the UAE as a notable global player in advanced technology and defence industry.

He revealed that EDGE had already started manufacturing Offshore Patrol Vessels for the UAE navy, and also has a manufacturing unit in Al Ain that has begun producing parts for wings of Airbus planes.

Since its formation in 2019, EDGE has developed partnerships with world-leading industries, accelerating the rate of innovation and also attracting elite industry experts and talent from around the globe, to help on a wide spectrum of modern product development.

He concluded by noting that the UAE has consistently topped the Global Innovation Index for the Arab world, and that EDGE has significantly contributed to help the UAE to retain and expand that foremost position.



“The ambassador pointed out the travel and tourism sector in the UAE is looking forward to full resumption of air traffic between the two brotherly countries, “which will further contribute to increasing interconnectivity between the various segments of society.” On the issue of COVID-19 crisis, the ambassador said that addressing the pandemic required concerted efforts, as well as support and coordination at the world level.”

He pointed out over the past 50 years the UAE has made many achievements and is looking forward towards the next 50 years, stressing the UAE is able with its vision and its various resources to give, grow and prosper.

Speaking of the UAE's non-permanent membership in the Security Council, which begins in January 2022, the envoy affirmed that the Security Council is considered the most important organ in the United Nations due to powers it enjoys and the competencies it supervises, the most important of which is the

in the private sector to explore and benefit from the stimulating investment environment in both countries.

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Court sentences former MP, security official to jail terms, hefty fines

The long-drawn out controversial legal case of former high officials indicted in money laundering and human trafficking concluded last week with the Court of Cassation passing its verdict sentencing those involved to long jail terms and multi-million dinar fines.

The Court of Cassation sentenced the Bangladeshi MP Muhammad Shahid, to seven years imprisonment with hard labor and a fine of KD2,710,000, followed by deportation from the country. The court found him guilty of all the charges filed against him.

The Court also sentenced Major-General Mazen Al-Jarrah for seven years and Nawaf Al-Shalahi to four years in prison with hard labor and a fine of KD1,970,000 each. In addition, the court found former MP Salah Khorshid guilty and sentenced him to seven years imprisonment with hard labor and a fine of KD740,000, while it acquitted MP Saadoun Hammad of all the charges filed against him.

The prosecution charged Muhammad Shahid, managing director and CEO of a local company, with human trafficking, money laundering, and exploiting his compatriot

workers. The court heard testimonies from five Bangladeshis, who confirmed that they had paid up to KD3,000 each in exchange for arranging a visa for them to come and work in Kuwait, and that they were also paying annual sums for renewing their residence permits. The others were found guilty by the court for working in collusion with Muhammad Shahid to gain monetary benefit and were considered as partners in crime.

The men were earlier arrested and referred to Public Prosecution for their involvement in 'human trafficking' and money laundering.



MEW increases pace of installing smart meters

Since the launch of smart meters to record water and electricity usage that began nearly two months ago, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy (MEW) has installed over 30,000 smart meters in Salmiya. These installations provide smart metering to around half of the utility customers in the area.

With the experience gained from installations in Salmiya, and the pace of installations picking up speed to around 1,000 meter installations per day, the MEW said it was gearing up to launch these meters in other areas of the country starting next with the suburb of Hawally.

Noting that teams assigned to the installation process deal first-hand with any problems that appear on the



field, the ministry said that all those who had the meters installed have paid their previous dues.

The ministry added that it is keen to collect all overdue bills and that the collection process is going ahead smoothly with the amount of due amounts collected in this fiscal is a huge leap from that during the height of the COVID-19 period. Overdue bill collections exceeded KD300 million since the beginning of the fiscal year in April, said the ministry, adding that at this rate by the end of the fiscal year in March 2022, the collections could reach a record KD370 million.

Traffic cars to register penalties against illegal parking

Traffic cars equipped with cutting-edge technology are to monitor and register fines against vehicles parked illegally. Revealing this, the General Traffic Department (GTD) said it intends to monitor motorists who park vehicles in 'No Parking' zones and those who obstruct the flow of traffic especially in front of government institutions.

The GTD began a trial-run of vehicles equipped with state-of-the-art cameras on a test basis nearly two years ago. The patrol cars were used to track vehicles parked in 'prohibited places' and those obstructing traffic especially in front of government offices, commercial complexes and markets. Now the Ministry of Interior plans to sign a contract with dealers of these specially equipped patrol cars for what it called 'accurate monitoring of violating vehicles'.

The GTD noted that "these cars have a built-in video recording system which monitors and photographs the violating vehicles and then the footage is uploaded into the GTD system and violations are recorded against the drivers without the need to manually issue a citation by the traffic police officer."

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UN Committee criticizes 'sixties' decision



Kuwait has come under criticism by UN agencies and global human rights watchdogs over the decision to ban issuing work permits to expatriates aged 60 and over, if they do not hold a valid university degree or diploma. They point out that the ban, among others, runs counter to international covenants that Kuwait has signed on to.

Article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that Kuwait ratified in 1996 states that: countries ratifying the covenant will take appropriate measures to 'safeguard the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts'.

Last week, the UN Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations Committee in Kuwait expressed its concern about the administrative decision recently issued by the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) to ban the issuance of work permits to those aged 60 years and above who hold high school diplomas or below and its equivalent. During its concluding observations on Kuwait's third periodic report, the committee recommended the need to repeal the aforementioned decision.

The UN Committee in Kuwait also

recommended increasing the inspection capacity of concerned officials to monitor working conditions within companies to ensure the effective implementation of the sanctions imposed on perpetrators of violations against labor rights. In addition, the committee also expressed concern about the continued violation of the rights of expatriate workers, as well as the punishing of absconding workers, which exposes them to abuse and forced labor. The committee called for taking the necessary legislative measures to abolish the punishment for 'absconders' and ensure their economic, social and cultural rights are protected.

With regard to domestic workers, the Committee expressed its concern about the continued exploitation and abuse by sponsors of these workers, as well as the failure to protect them. It recommended the need to take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of the rights of migrant domestic workers and the imposition of deterrent penalties on sponsors who violate the regulating legislation.

In addition, the committee pointed to the need to remove obstacles and barriers for such workers to access courts and judicial bodies, and to raise awareness among the public in general and employment of the articles of Law (68/2015) regarding domestic workers. The UN agency also called for ensuring effective regulation of work by recruitment and employment agencies and monitoring them to prevent the exploitation of labor, as well as harmonizing the laws of domestic workers and work in the private sector with regard to working hours, salaries and sick leaves, and ratifying the International Labor Organization Convention on Domestic Workers No. 189/2011.

In accordance with the procedures for

following up on concluding observations adopted by the Committee, Kuwait is required to provide, within 24 months, of the adoption of these observations, information on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, as well as submit its

next periodic report in accordance with Article 16 of the Covenant by the end of October 2024, unless it is notified otherwise due to a change in the review cycle, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268.

Domestic workers reluctant to work in Kuwait

Domestic worker recruitment offices say there is a growing trend among household helpers in many labor supplying countries to refuse to come to work in Kuwait. Instead recruitment agencies in these countries prefer to send workers to take up jobs in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which offer higher financial privileges, and implement better labor and human rights.

As an example, the recruitment offices cite the case of the Philippines. Other global markets that hire domestic workers from the Philippines, such as Singapore, Japan, Canada, and the United States, not only provide better living and working conditions, but also offer monthly salaries higher than that offered in Kuwait by about US\$400 per month.

Outbreak of the COVID-19 health crisis in early 2020 that led to an acute shortage of domestic workers in Kuwait, as well as the recently revised regulatory mechanisms for recruiting workers from abroad, and the increased cost of hiring domestic workers due to various factors, have all combined to make the recruitment of domestic workers a burdensome task for many citizens.

Domestic worker recruiting offices say



they are no longer able to sign new hiring contracts, as Kuwait has so far signed official recruitment agreements with only the Philippines and India. At the same time, the cost of hiring Filipino domestic workers has become exorbitant with the contract cost of each worker ranging from KD1,700 to KD2,000. Though Nepal, Indonesia, and Ethiopia have requested for the signing of similar recruitment agreements with Kuwait, so as to start exporting their labor to Kuwait, nothing has materialized in this respect until date.

Citizens complain that the new regulatory measures and increase in hiring cost has still not addressed the core issue of the shortage of domestic workers in Kuwait. Nationals add that they continue to suffer both from the high cost of recruiting household helpers, as well as the shortage in supply of workers in this category.

ABK's Alfouz Draw Account

Take a 10-Year Holiday with Alfouz

Taking a paid holiday from work for a month is the maximum that most working people can expect. But with the innovative Alfouz draw account from Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait it is possible to extend this paid holiday break for ten whole years.

To learn how to win this decade-long paid holiday, we recently interviewed the Assistant General Manager, Retail Banking at Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait, Dr. Haneen AlRumaihi.



Please tell us what is the main USP of the Alfouz Draw Account?

The Alfouz draw account is the first account of its kind. It gives customers the opportunity to win KD10,000 weekly, which is the biggest single weekly prize in Kuwait. The account offers a unique annual prize, which is KD5,000 monthly salary for 10 years.

Who can open an Alfouz account, are there any limitations?

Anyone who has a valid Kuwait residence can open an Alfouz draw account, whether they are existing customers of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait or new customers and it is available to individuals of every age.

How does the Alfouz account work for the holder of the account?

The Alfouz draw account is a savings account and customers only need KD100 to open it. This makes it accessible to all segments of society and individuals of all ages. The customer receives a debit card once the account is opened. Every KD100 average monthly balance in the customer's account is equal to one entry in the draws. In addition to the biggest single weekly prize, there is also the annual prize of KD5,000 monthly for 10 years, which provides customers safety and peace of mind for the future. Therefore the more you save and the longer you save, the greater your chances of winning. The important thing to remember is that once you open the account, you have to maintain minimum KD100 to enter the draw.

What is the frequency and method of the draw?

Draws are held weekly and one annual draw will be held to choose the winner of the Grand Prize. All draws are conducted under the supervision of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. External



auditors are appointed to ensure the highest degree of transparency when announcing the names of the winners. It is worth mentioning that all entries for prior weeks in the draw will be aggregated for the annual draw, leading to a loyalty benefit.

You have had 4 weekly winners already. How was their response?

The weekly winners have been extremely excited at winning. We have been announcing the names of the weekly winners on 88.8 FM, and the radio station has been calling the winners live on air so we can congratulate them. It feels great to see their positive and happy reactions.

Lastly can you tell us how the response has been so far to the Alfouz account concept?

Alfouz has been extremely well received, as it stands apart in the market. The pandemic has made us rethink our priorities, making security and financial stability top of the list for every family. The good thing about Alfouz is it is a savings account with the benefit of winning!

Anything special you would like to say to our readers?

I hope you all are keeping safe and well. I would just like to say that give yourself a chance to save, and give yourself a chance to win with ABK's Alfouz draw account!

No curfews, flight bans, but vigilance raised against Omicron

Health and security authorities at Kuwait International Airport (KIA) are taking full precautionary measures to ensure that all inbound passengers landing at the airport are free of COVID-19 virus or any of its variants.

The extra wariness follows instructions issued by the Council of Ministers during its extraordinary meeting last Monday to take all necessary steps to reduce the risk of reemergence of the coronavirus or its mutant forms in the country. Meanwhile, the Director of Ahmadi Health District, Dr. Ahmed Al-Shatti, said that though the situation in the country is reassuring and there are currently no plans on imposing curfews or travel bans, people still needed to adhere to all precautionary measures recommended by the health authorities. He added there was also the need to exert extra vigilance and initiate preventive measures at the country's land border crossings, as well as at sea and air ports.

As part of precautionary measures, Kuwait has banned all commercial flights from nine African countries, while new

precautionary and preventive steps at the health and logistical levels have been initiated at all entry points to Kuwait. The aim is to prevent the entry of anyone infected with COVID-19 virus in general, and the mutant strain 'Omicron' in particular. Additionally, the General Administration of Residency Affairs at Ministry of Interior is said to be studying the possibility of stopping the issuance of entry and tourist visas to people from countries where the Omicron variant has been detected.

A health official said maintaining this situation is the biggest challenge, since the World Health Organization (WHO) has suggested that border closures are not the best option to contain the new mutant. The WHO recommended that preventive measures are currently sufficient, especially in countries where the vaccination rate has increased to about 80 percent, such as in Kuwait.

The official reiterated that the intensification of health control at the entry points would prevent the emergence of the mutant strain in Kuwait. Pointing out that demand for a third booster dose from residents and citizens has increased significantly in recent days, the official said a third dose would enhance societal immunity against the emerging strains. Health authorities are also said to be contemplating reducing the time needed for a third booster dose from the current six months to just three months. The third dose is especially important to certain categories



of adults, such as those with chronic diseases, immunodeficiency patients, and adults in general.

Pressure on the health system has decreased significantly in recent weeks, as hospital wards are currently devoid of COVID-19 cases, and 'zero deaths' have become the norm each day. However, December could be a real test in view of the emergence of the 'Omicron' variant, which is currently being screened for by using a standard PCR test.

Airport authorities have also banned entry to expatriates coming from some African countries, whether they arrive directly or through other countries, unless they spend at least 14 days in a third country.



Jollibee Kids Club holds costume party at ICA

By Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Children and members of Jollibee Kids Club held a costume party at the International Culinary Arts (ICA) in Salam Mall on 25 November. The top-ten best costumes of the kids were chosen by a panel of three judges after a brief tour of the mall led by the Jollibee mascot.

One by one kids made their appearances at Al Salam Mall dressed in various costumes, they were all members of the Jollibee Kids Club, a franchise fast food chain from the Philippines, renowned and available globally.

The first event in the Kids Club party kicked off with a workshop on baking at the International Culinary Arts with 25 members. The costume parade was the second event held in the same venue, and participated by 58 children clad in different costumes from the most popular Squid Game, fairy tales, popular cartoon characters and public service personalities such as police, military and even a chef.

Fun games paired with prizes and warm up fun dances were among the exciting list of activities at the party, followed by a brief parade by the kids from the ground floor to the mezzanine floor of the mall led by popular Jollibee mascot. Kids were ecstatic as Jollibee appeared.

Dadabhai Travel distributed gift bags and LBC Express came with bags of chocolates and candies. ICA also gave out prizes of scholarship to any courses in the school to the parents of the top three winners of Best in Costumes event.

Prizes were distributed by Philippine Cultural Attaché Princess Conwi and ICA General Manager Olivia Ferrer. Panel of judges was composed of Claire Constantino, Filipino community leader, Jollibee, and Chow King Operations Manager Ariel De la Cruz and Olivia Ferrer, owner of ICA. The Jollibee team was composed of Aiza Reguillano, DonDon Molina, Jervee Oseo and Jollibee Marketing Manager Andrea Sta. Maria.

Favorite fare from Jollibee were distributed both to parents and children, followed by awarding of prizes and token of appreciation. "It was such a joy to see the kids have fun and be able to wear costumes of their favorite TV characters," added Marcela Santos, mother of a participant. "This is a great experience for every child as they once again develop their social skills that were held back by the pandemic. I hope that more of these activities for children are organized in the future," stated Arnel Villegas, father of a participant.

Al Salam Mall management team headed by Sabiha Abdullah extended her appreciation to ICA and Jollibee for a very well organized event. Mall visitors, shoppers and shop owners took pictures of kids as they paraded the mall. Jollibee plans to hold its holiday party for its kids members in the second week of December in the same venue.

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Thought for the week

“ However bad life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. Where there's life, there's hope.

Stephen Hawking, British physicist



A guide to pan-seared steaks

There is nothing better than a delicious, juicy, mouth-watering steak. When it comes to cooking one, preparation and technique make all the difference in the world. With the right tools, the right cut of meat, and the right cooking style, it is not hard to pan-sear a steak to crisp, juicy perfection.

The right steak: You cannot end up with a great cooked steak if you start with a crummy raw one. The best steaks are the tender ones cut from the loin of the cow that generally command the highest prices at the market.

There are four different high-end steaks that you should know and each one is a little different.

Ribeye: This steak comes with a large, tender eye of meat surrounded by a swath of fat and a cap that comes from the spinalis muscle. This cap is the juiciest, most flavorful piece of meat that you will find on any steak.

Strip: Also known as New York Strip, Kansas City Strip, or contre-filet, strip is similar in texture to that central eye of meat in a ribeye steak. That is because it comes from the exact same muscle, just a little further back down along the cow. People enjoy strip steak for its relatively tender texture and good amount of marbling.



Tenderloin: Also known as filet mignon, tenderloin is the tenderest cut of meat on the cow. When cooked, it has a buttery, almost spoon-tender texture. But what it has in tenderness, it lacks in flavor. As a nearly unused muscle in the cow, the tenderloin generally has very little fat, and almost no flavor to speak of.

T-Bone: Also known as Porterhouse when the tenderloin section is at least 1 1/2-inches wide, T-bone is simply a slice of rib with both the strip and the tenderloin still attached. It is certainly an impressive and daunting cut of meat, but



with the little fat and a small profile, the tenderloin section ends up cooking much faster than the larger strip section.

Size matters: The thickness of a steak is not just about portion control. Without an adequately thick steak, it is difficult to get that contrast between exterior and interior. Thin steaks tend to overcook before they can finish developing a nice crust. It is recommended to get steaks that are at least an inch and a half thick, if not two inches.

Aging: There are two types of aging. So-called wet-aged meat is meat that has been placed in a vacuum-sealed bag and allowed to rest for a few weeks. A wet aged steak shows some improvement over a standard non-aged steak in terms of tenderness—there are enzymes present in the meat that will break down tough connective tissue over time.

Dry-aged meat on the other hand is meat that has been stored in a temperature and humidity-controlled room for anywhere from a week and up to 10 weeks or longer.

Bone in, or out: It is better to cook meat with the bone-in because it adds flavor.

Salt it well: It is recommended to salt your meal about 40 minutes before it hits the grill. Use kosher salt and not regular table salt when doing so. The larger grains of kosher salt are easier to sprinkle evenly with your fingers, and will also draw more initial moisture out of the meat to dissolve than table salt.

Use cast iron: A good cast iron pan is thick, heavy, and designed to hold on to heat for a long, long time. Once properly pre-heated, a good cast iron pan will practically sear a steak on its own, even if you lift it off its heat source. Fast searing is essential if you want to build a thick brown crust without overcooking the interior.

Start with oil: The best cooking medium for a steak is actually plain old oil. Make sure to use plenty of it so that your steak cooks nice and evenly. A quarter cup in a 12-inch skillet would suffice. Adding butter to the pan a few minutes before it is done cooking is a fine idea. This is just enough time to allow the buttery flavor and texture to coat the meat, but not so long that it will burn excessively, producing acrid undertones.

Flip out: Flipping a steak multiple times—as often as once every 15 seconds or so—will give you an evenly cooked meat. This is because with multiple flips, neither side is exposed to intense heat for too long, nor does it lose much heat to the relatively cool air above. It is the equivalent of cooking it from both directions simultaneously.

Baste: Basting is the real key to a perfect pan-seared steak. It performs two different functions. A combination of flipping and basting—that is, spooning hot fat over your meat—will help cook it more gently, and more importantly, from both sides simultaneously, drastically cutting down on its cooking time. A basted and flipped steak will hit its appropriate internal temperature a good 35 percent faster than a single-flip, no-baste steak.

Basting is also a perfect way to perform touch-up jobs on your crust. Spoon hot melted butter over them, and they will quickly color in. The easiest way to baste is to tilt your pan slightly so that hot butter collects near the handle, then use a spoon to pour it over the top of the steak.

Add aromatics: After the butter is melted, add a handful of herbs such as thyme or rosemary, along with some sweet alliums like shallots or garlic. They pop and sputter, releasing their aromas and rapidly infusing the fat with their flavor.

Use a thermometer: Insert the thermometer gently into the very center of your steak to register a reading. For a medium-rare, the thermometer should read around 54 degrees Celsius.

Take a rest: Let your steak rest until its internal temperature drops to about five degrees below its maximum temperature.

RECIPE

Zaatar Paneer Popcorn With Makhni Fondue



Paneer is a versatile ingredient often used for making a variety of dishes. The Paneer popcorn detailed below is an easy to make crispy, party-snack loved by kids. These crunchy paneer bites, also referred to as paneer nuggets, are a great instant appetizer for those times when guests arrive unannounced, or for a casual evening get-together of family and friends.

Total time: 30 minutes
Serving: 3 to 4 people

Ingredients:

- For Zaatar Paneer
- 200g paneer cubes
- 1/4 cup zaatar powder
- 1 cup crushed raw papad
- 1 tbsp cornflour
- 1 tbsp maida (all-purpose flour)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- Salt to taste

For Makhni Fondue:

- 1 cup tomato puree (blanched and sieved)
- 1 tsp butter
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste
- Pinch of kasuri methi (dried fenugreek leaves)
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1/2 tsp chilli powder.
- Salt to taste
- 2 cube cheese

Preparation:

- In a large bowl add oil and 1tbsp zaatar powder, chilli flakes and mix well with a sprinkling of salt
- Add paneer cubes and gently marinate before covering and freezing for 10 minutes
- Meanwhile, prepare the makhni fondue
- In a bowl add corn flour, maida, salt and water as required to make a semi-thick slurry
- Add butter to a hot pan and let it melt
- Add onion powder and ginger-garlic paste, and saute for a while
- Add the tomato puree and let it cook for 2-3 minutes
- Season with salt, chilli powder, sugar, kasuri methi and let it cook on low flame
- Add cheese cubes and mix well until cheese melts to form a fondue
- Whisk the cornstarch slurry again and then add to the fondue while stirring over low flame
- Remove to a fondue cup

To make the Paneer Popcorn; dip the paneer cubes in cornflour batter and roll them in crushed papad.

Indian Chef Chhaya Thakker, who has a huge following online on WhatsApp and YouTube will be sharing her favorite recipes and cooking tips with readers of The Times Kuwait. For feedback, you can write to editortimeskuwait@gmail.com



Chef Chhaya Thakker

Entrepreneurship a growing trend in Kuwait

Professionals in Kuwait prefer to be self-employed or run their own companies, with interest in entrepreneurship becoming a growing trend in the country, finds a new survey conducted in the region.

Seven out of ten respondents (69%) in the survey titled 'Entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)', said they prefer to be self-employed or have their own business if given the choice.

The survey organized by Bayt.com, the Middle East's #1 job site, and conducted in collaboration with market research agency YouGov, found that even among those who are employed, 62 percent are currently thinking of starting their own business, 28 percent of respondents have tried to start their own business in the past, while only 9 percent never thought of starting their own business.

Personal fulfillment (55%) and building a business children can inherit (45%) emerge as the top reasons for preferring to be self-employed. This is followed by the freedom to choose work-life balance (42%) and being their own boss (41%).

Those who have already started their business seem to have similar reasoning. When asked about the reasons they have for starting their own business, the top three answers from respondents in the MENA survey were: 'wanted more income' (37%), 'greater independence in what I want to achieve' (32%), and 'wanted to do what I love' (24%).

On the other hand, 18 percent of Kuwait professionals claimed they would prefer to seek employment in a company, with the main reasons for opting to work in a company being, having regular income (55%), stability of employment/ job security

(45%), and fixed working hours (40%).

Ola Haddad, Director of Human Resources at Bayt.com said: "Despite last year's challenges, it's inspiring to see MENA entrepreneurs determined to work their way back to recovery and success. At the heart of entrepreneurship is the ability to adapt and move forward. Our new survey shows that budding entrepreneurs, small companies and startups are demonstrating perseverance and resilience as they plan for today and for their future."

Entrepreneurship continues to be a growing trend in Kuwait. Despite the given challenges of setting up a business, the survey indicates that entrepreneurship has become more popular than ever before. Many entrepreneurs are looking to grow their startups and establish business. In fact, with growth in mind, 66 percent of Kuwait respondents said they plan to hire for their business in the next year.

When it comes to the current stage of their business, 33 percent of the self-employed are at the startup stage of the business, while 26 percent claimed that their business is established but not performing well. On the other hand, 21 percent said their business is well established and performing well.



The top concern of Kuwait respondents while setting up their own business were found to be procuring finances to start (52%) and the uncertainty of profit/ income (37%). Meanwhile, the most appealing industries for entrepreneurship in Kuwait are considered to be IT/ Internet/ E-commerce (15%), followed by Real Estate/ Property Development (13%), and Consumer Goods/ FMCG (9%). Over a quarter of respondents believe that innovation is the key to success as an entrepreneur (28%), followed by employing the right people (24%) and access to funding (21%).

WISE announces speakers for 2021 Global Summit; Young changemakers to take central stage



A diverse group of cutting-edge thinkers, innovators and youth-leaders in education will gather for the 2021 World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) Global Summit, which will take place on 7 to 9 December at Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) in Doha.

WISE is an initiative of Qatar Foundation, dedicated to building the future of education through innovation. The Summit will feature key thought leaders who are resetting the education agenda in the wake of the pandemic. They include Marc Brackett, founding director of the Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence; Debora Kayembe, a refugee, human rights lawyer, and the first African woman to be elected Rector of the University of Edinburgh; and Prof. Abhijit Banerjee, Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics and Co-Founder of the pioneering J-PAL at M.I.T.

Alongside more established figures, WISE will also put young people center stage at the Summit with a dedicated Youth Studio and live stream channel, featuring a program curated entirely by WISE's group of young curators. Young changemakers featured at the Summit include: Gitanjali Rao, a 16-year-old entrepreneur and Time Magazine's Top Young Innovator of the Year for 2020; Zuriel Oduwole, a 19-year-old filmmaker and advocate for girls' education; Tanmay Bakshi a 17-year-old AI and Machine Learning expert and Software Engineer with IBM; and Kehkashan Basu, a 21-year-old activist for climate justice in education.

WISE will also engage with a diverse group of artists who are increasingly active in the field of education. Among them are concert pianist Malek Jandali, with his inspiring Pianos for Peace project which brings the arts to disadvantaged students; YouTuber and filmmaker Samy Chaffai; street and graffiti artist Akacha; and documentary filmmaker Mariam Al-Dhubhani.

As with previous editions of the Summit, the identity of the most recent WISE Prize for Education Laureate will be revealed during the opening session, and the six innovative WISE Awards winning projects will be celebrated during a special plenary session on day two. The Education Above All Foundation will also be holding a special plenary session on day three of the Summit, discussing progress towards its objective of getting to Zero Out of School Children (OOSC).

In what will be one of the first major international education conferences since the pandemic began, WISE will bring together a global community of education policymakers,

thought leaders, practitioners, and entrepreneurs — both virtually and in-person — to explore the most pressing challenges in education.

The Summit will feature around 200 sessions of panels, fireside chats, talks, masterclasses and workshops, amongst others. Around 40 key sessions will be hybrid, available to all participants, those attending in-person, and virtually. Around 100 or so smaller group sessions will be available only to those Summit delegates who will be present in-person at the QNCC in Doha, offering them an immersive in-depth experience over the three days of the Summit. Finally, around 60 sessions will be fully virtual, available on a dedicated WISE platform, on the WISE website, and on social media, allowing participants to join the global conversations on the future of education. Many of the virtual sessions will be curated by a wide array of knowledge partner organizations such as Deloitte, Teach for All, UNESCO, UNICEF, Minerva, Brookings and the World Bank.

Some other notable WISE 2021 Summit speakers: Her Highness Sheikha Intisar Salem Al Ali Al Sabah, Founder and CEO, Bareec
Dr. David Moinina Sengeh, Minister of Education, Sierra Leone
Nadia Nadim, Professional Footballer, future doctor
Kathleen Rogers, President, Earth Day
Sir Anthony Seldon, Educator and author of the Fourth Education Revolution
Shannon May, Co-Founder and President, NewGlobe
Patrick Gymiah Awuah, President, Ashesi University
Eric Steinberger, Co-Founder and CEO, ClimateScience
Yasmine Ouirhrane, Co-Founder, We Belong...
Ann Makosinski, Inventor and Writer
Mike Feerick, Founder, Alison
Naza Alakija, Humanitarian, Philanthropist and Global Education Advocate; Founder of SAGE Foundation
Mathieu Nebra, Co-founder, Open Classrooms
Kiran Bir Sethi, Founder & Director, The Riverside School
Emiliana Vegas, Co-director of the Center for Universal Education, Brookings Institution
You can register to attend the Summit in-person at QNCC via this link: <https://www.wise-qatar.org/wise-2021/direct-registration/>
You can also follow the Summit virtually by registering via this link: <https://www.wise-qatar.org/wise-2021/registration-summit>

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Kuwait congratulates UAE on 50th National Day



The State of Kuwait on Wednesday underscored the strength of relationship with the United Arab Emirates, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

The relations with the UAE and other members of the GCC keep growing thanks to the close contacts and cooperation in all areas, Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said.

He made the comments while attending a reception, hosted by the UAE Embassy in Kuwait on the eve of the 50 National Day of the UAE, on 2 December. The celebration also gathered Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Ahmad Nasser noted that following the 41st Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit meeting in Al-Ula city, Saudi Arabia, in January, joint committees and workshops

resumed activities under auspices of the GCC Secretariat to strengthen cooperation among the GCC members in all fields. He voiced hope that the upcoming summit will be a critical juncture in the march of the bloc's joint action.

On his part, Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad said the deep-rooted historical ties

between Kuwait and UAE keep growing thanks to the great support from leaders of both countries. He wished the sisterly UAE more prosperity and progress, congratulating its leaders and people on the National Day.

Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer expressed sincere congratulations for the UAE on its National Day and hoped for more prosperity and progress under its wise leadership.

The UAE celebrates its National Day on 2 December, each year in remembrance of the day in 1971 when the six emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain and Fujairah came together to form the UAE federation; the seventh emirate of Ras al Khaimah jumped on the wagon on 10 February, 1972.



Reception marks end of World week of Italian cuisine

Italian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Carlo Baldocci hosted a gala reception at his residence to mark the conclusion of the 'World Week of Italian Cuisine' in Kuwait.



With the collaboration of Executive Chef Simone Murru and his team from Sheraton Kuwait's Riccardo Restaurant — the oldest Italian restaurant in Kuwait — over 150 people, including representatives of the diplomatic community and Kuwaiti civil society, enjoyed a memorable meal at the gala event.

The sixth annual iteration of the World Week of Italian Cuisine that drew to a close on 28 November, was launched a week earlier with an exciting show on Kuwait Television.



Kuwaitis and French share the same passion for food: Zanghellini

The French Embassy in Kuwait in October celebrated the French Gastronomy Week as part of the 'Good France 2021' initiative by organizing live and virtual workshops with local French and Kuwaiti chefs.



The economic advisor at the French Embassy Bruno Zanghellini said the chefs were happy to share their culinary experiences including the French culinary heritage with

the Kuwaiti people. In a statement to reporters on the sidelines of the opening of a branch of a French restaurant in Kuwait in the presence of Ambassador H E Claire Le Flecher, he added Kuwaitis and French people share a passion for food.

Moreover, Kuwaitis enjoy traveling and knowing the art of French cooking during their stay in France, be it in Paris or the Riviera and are very keen to enjoy the same gastronomic experience here in Kuwait.

He stated the French embassy is trying to unify creativity around the French culinary traditions once a year through the 'Good France initiative', with a French menu in a number of Kuwaiti restaurants and French cuisine and workshops by top chefs on the social networking websites.

He pointed out the next edition is scheduled to be held in the spring of next year, adding the new French ambassador, Le Flecher wants to present the experience of French food to the Public who do not go to restaurants, such as children in hospitals saying she intends to set up a cooking or pastry workshop inside one of the children's hospitals in Kuwait.

He said that French cuisine already has a long history. The majority of the so-called world cuisine is actually derived from the classic French cuisine, as codified in its



techniques since the mid-18th century by chefs and culinary critics.

He emphasized the concept of a restaurant is indeed a French innovation and the word restaurant is the same in almost all languages.

He stated France has contributed to the development of restaurants all over Europe through the world-famous Michelin Guide. The first edition of the 'Little Red Guide', he added, was born in Paris in 1900, fittingly on the occasion of the Paris World Fair in that particular year.

In recognition of France's contribution to the advancement of food culture, UNESCO has included the 'Gastronomic Meal of the French People' in the 'Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'.



The French cuisine, he went on to say, is still alive and well. It still sets international standards for fine dining 200 million luxury items.

He said Kuwait is an important export market for France, where France primarily sell aircraft, machinery, pharmaceuticals, industrial equipment and also a lot of consumer goods.

"Our exports span a wide range from high-end fashion, handbags, suitcases and jewelry to cosmetics, perfumes and of course gourmet foods.

"Kuwaitis are among the most educated and discerning consumers. They enjoy the finer things in life, and it is only natural that every year they purchase over \$200 million worth of luxury goods from France," he said.

Khazak ambassador holds luncheon briefing on CICA



Ambassador of Kazakhstan H.E. Azamat Berdibay held a briefing reception at the Crowne Plaza hotel last week under the theme: 'Security and Sustainable Development in Asia'.

Several diplomats attended the briefing which was held within the framework of Kazakhstan's Chairmanship in the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA)

Addressing the gathering Ambassador Berdibay pointed out that the CICA is one of the most important foreign policy initiatives of Kazakhstan. In less than three decades, it has found its realization as an effective forum of multilateral diplomacy with the participation of 27 States occupying over 90 percent of

the territory of the Asian continent with more than half of the world's population and providing two-thirds of global economic growth.

He said that CICA faces the need to further adapt its tasks and tools for the full realization of its noble mission — to promote permanent meaningful interstate dialogue and cooperation for the sake of security and development of all peoples inhabiting the world's largest continent. Last year, Kazakhstan again assumed the chairmanship of the Meeting, and therefore their diplomacy is entrusted with the

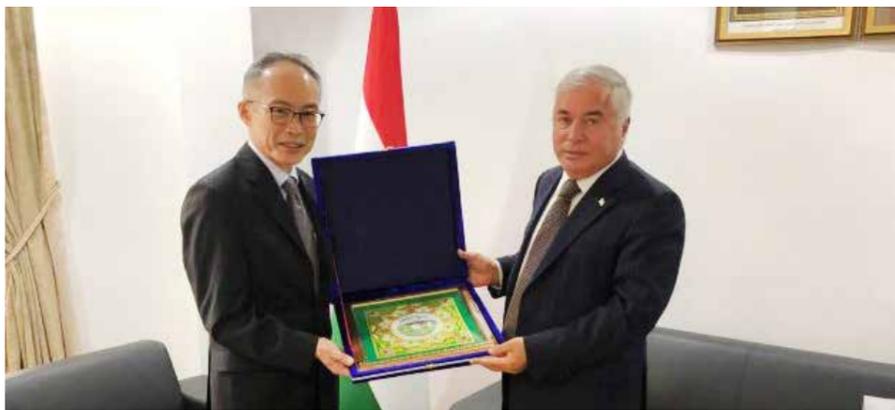
responsible task of promoting this initiative.

The First President of Kazakhstan H.E. Nursultan Nazarbayev, had publicly announced a proposal to convene a Conference on Interaction and confidence-building measures in Asia at the 47th session of the UN General Assembly in October 1992. This step marked the beginning of the search for a new format of interstate cooperation in Asia in order to develop confidence-building measures in various areas of international cooperation.

The idea of the First President of Kazakhstan was met with interest and received positive responses from the leaders of the leading countries of the continent. Next year, ambassador Berdibay pointed out that this initiative would celebrate its 30th anniversary.

Today, it can be stated that after almost three decades, the CICA has become an effective forum for multilateral diplomacy in Asia. Its uniqueness is based on the common understanding of the participants in the meeting that peace and security in Asia can be achieved only through dialogue and cooperation, and this is the basis for the successful fulfillment of the main mission of the CICA — to serve as a platform for political dialogue and interaction in order to strengthen confidence.

Member States are constantly implementing confidence-building measures in jointly defined five dimensions of interaction, which include military-political, combating new challenges and threats, economic, environmental and humanitarian.



Dean of Diplomatic Corps bids farewell to Japanese ambassador

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan to the State of Kuwait H.E. Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda met with the Ambassador of Japan to the State of Kuwait H.E. Masato Takaoka on the occasion of the completion of the Japanese envoy's diplomatic mission in Kuwait. On behalf of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador Zubaydzoda sincerely wished the Japanese Ambassador all success in his future endeavors and presented him with a parting gift in memory of his services in Kuwait.



Kuwait Airways resumes flights to Bangkok

Kuwait Airways declared Tuesday 30 November resumption of its commercial flights to Bangkok, Thailand, with four flights per week.

In a press statement, Kuwait Airways Director of the Public Relations, Fayez Al-Enezi, said the first flight was perfectly smooth and easy, with no delay.

Considering that Bangkok is one of the most desired tourist destinations, the KAC has decided to resume its flights to it in order to serve more passengers.



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Food stocks adequate to meet demand for six months



Omicron, a newly discovered mutant variety of the SARS-CoV2 virus that led to the global pandemic, has been labeled as a 'Variant of Concern' by the World Health Organization (WHO). Following its initial discovery in South Africa, health authorities around the world are initiating various measures designed to limit its entry into their respective jurisdictions.

Though Kuwait has said it has so far not considered introducing any blanket ban on the movement of people and goods through

its land, sea and air ports, the government is taking all possible precautionary steps to monitor and prevent the entry of the new variant into the country.

For its part, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has informed concerned authorities and announced to the public that it has huge strategic food supplies that are more than adequate to meet the needs of people in Kuwait for well over six months.

The ministry also said instructions have been given to import any commodity that is missing from the local market to meet the needs of citizens and residents, and to increase the quantity of stock in the supply branches.

Meanwhile, freight routes by air, land and sea to and from Kuwait are open and there is no change, said the ministry noting that Kuwait has sufficient experience in this field to ensure adequate food solvency to counter any emergency situation. Moreover, the relevant

authorities are monitoring and implementing plans as per a road map that was drawn up to deal with this and other crises successfully.

The ministry stressed that there is no reason to panic in light of the new 'Omicron' variant and that the Food Committee has not even called for a meeting against the background of this mutant, which shows that at the moment there is no need for such a meeting.

With regard to importing foodstuffs from South African countries, the sources confirmed no instructions have yet been issued in this area, meaning the import of all kinds of foodstuffs continues, while at the same time ruling out the closure of shipping lines at the moment or even in the foreseeable future.

The sources pointed out the ministry has succeeded, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, in developing plans commensurate with the challenges of the

pandemic, with the application of precise and deliberate measures, including expanding the base of importing foodstuffs of all kinds, and facilitating the movement of raw materials needed for industry, and opening the way for traders and importers to enhance the food stock in the country.

Meanwhile, the Executive Director of the Marketing and Local Sales Sector at the Livestock Transport and Trade Company, Abdulhadi Boland, assured the public that the company has a sufficient stock of all types of fresh, chilled and processed meat. He added that Al-Mawashi, which is one of the food security companies, is always ready to keep pace with any developments, and that the livestock transport lines from all importing countries are still open and there has been no change, which ensures that the strategic stock of the company will continue to be strengthened without interruption during the next stage.

Democracy, more than parliament, elected representatives

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

how democratic any country can claim to be, said the IPU in a new book published on parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century.

When framed against this view as expressed by the IPU, democracy and its practice in Kuwait leaves a lot more to be realized. This shortcoming was underscored by no other than the current Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly, Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanim. In his keynote address at the 143rd iteration of the annual assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held under the theme, 'Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community', Speaker Al-Ghanim said that superficial rhetorical discussions were not sufficient to address the challenges facing democracy, and that it was necessary to put aside slogans and purported "sanctities" when addressing the challenges posed to democracy.

The five-day IPU convention, which was held in Madrid, Spain from 26 to 30 November, provided delegates with a platform to discuss, exchange views and seek ways to spur parliamentary action to uphold and promote democracy around the world, in line with the IPU motto of 'For democracy. For everyone'. Among the challenges confronting modern democracy that were debated in the assembly were rising social divisions against the backdrop of dwindling confidence in political establishments, growing polarization, and the deliberate dissemination of spurious arguments and misleading information on social media platforms.

Speaker Al-Ghanim, who headed Kuwait's parliamentary delegation to the IPU, clarified in his address that in order to overcome the contemporary challenges confronting democracy, it was necessary to have "in-depth culture and intelligence, as well as a broad understanding of core issues involved, namely the current practice of democracy, the obstacles it faces, as well as the social, economic and cultural dimensions attached to the issue". He went on to note, "Democracy is a means, not an objective; it is a practice, not a slogan; and we ought not to turn into slaves for political paganism or legal statue, even if they carry a democratic name.

"We should not be afraid when we point the finger at wrong practices; for democracy is not sacred and nothing should prohibit efforts to correct or guide it where the practices are not right." Pointing out that "shielding any ruling regime, even if it had a democratic form, was the main obstacle to reviewing, renewing and remedying its drawbacks," the Speaker noted that criticism of some "erroneous practices in the democratic system and examining it regularly", was not aimed at undermining the governing regime, but rather safeguarding it.

If anyone would know this, it has to be Speaker Al-Ghanim. Since 2006, for the past 15 years, he has been a member of Kuwait parliament, and for the past seven years he has been at the helm of the National Assembly presiding over it as Speaker. His knowledge of the pernicious foibles and faultlines that exist in the parliamentary life of Kuwait, as well as his experiences in steering the National Assembly through the tenacious political turbulences witnessed in recent years, have made

him adroit in handling the recurring contentious relations between the executive and legislative branches of government.

Though the opposition in parliament see him as a government supporter, and the government eyes him as being too liberal in his leanings, it appears that he is the only person who can tamp down the populism and polarization exhibited by the two sides, and find a viable middle-ground that is critical to ensure efficient functioning of Kuwait's democratic bastion going forward.

In his address to the IPU, and probably speaking from first-hand experiences gained from his involvement over the years in Kuwait's parliamentary, semi-democratic style of governance, Kuwait's National Assembly chief pointed to some of the perils arising from a democracy that strays away from its basic principles, and a dysfunctioning parliament that is unable or unwilling to carry out its responsibilities.

The Speaker underscored that "democracy could encounter serious threats and challenges when society witnesses sharp polarization and parties get embroiled in irresponsible conflicts". It is obvious that factors driving such polarization, including growing economic divide and persistent inequalities, as well as the exclusion of some societal groups from political discourse, can only be overcome through enlightened leadership exhibiting a strong political will.

Reiterating the view expressed by Speaker Al-Ghanim, the Madrid Declaration announced at the end of the 143rd IPU assembly on 30 November, noted that polarization and populism undermine democratic systems, and that parliamentary leadership was crucial to bridging divides and moving society forward in cohesion and concert. The document noted that while these social and political divides are not new concepts, in recent years the level of this polarization has reached new heights.

In its opening remarks the declaration pointed out that the world is striving to overcome a wide array of challenges created by social, political, economic and health-related upheavals. Societal divides and the deterioration of social peace are having an impact on the state of democracy, and in particular on the institutions that put democratic values into practice. In order to address the contemporary challenges to democracy, it was vital to overcome social divisions, unite instead of divide people, foster hope not hate, and join forces to seek common ground.

The document added that while partisan competition is normal and healthy, intense polarization carries significant risks. It penetrates society as a whole and affects everyday interactions among ordinary people. It has the potential to damage the culture of tolerance, increase conflict and widen distrust. It can also severely undermine the effectiveness of democratic institutions.

Amid the growing cacophony and dissonance that regularly rise from the hallowed halls of the Abdulla Salem Hall of the National Assembly, parliamentarians in Kuwait need to re-read the lines drafted in the Madrid Declaration, and perhaps, for once, listen to the voice of reason from their Speaker.

The IPU declaration goes on to note that political compromise is a core of the democratic

process and that the ability to reach agreements, cooperate across political divides and prioritize public interests over party politics contributes to depolarization and sustainable social peace. Reaching consensus through trade-off between competing norms or values which cannot all be maximised simultaneously, is no doubt difficult, but it is a balancing act that needs to be perfected for democratic societies to flourish.

In Kuwait, parliament has over the years lived up to its role of monitoring and scrutinizing policies and projects put forward by the government for social, economic and cultural development of the country. It has assiduously amended or scrapped policies and projects that it conceived to be against the interests of citizens, and questioned ministers when they failed to live up to their duties, or allegedly engaged in activities deemed harmful to the state and its people.

These actions are what one would expect from conscientious lawmakers and is the reason why they were elected in the first place. But when these questioning of ministers at every whim and fancy, and thwarting the implementation of any policy brought forward by the government, based on personal and narrow parochial interests of individual parliamentarians and their groups takes precedence, it runs against the norms expected of parliamentarians as outlined by the IPU, and more importantly comes at an enormous cost to the growth and development of the country and the future of its people.

The IPU document also emphasized that a core function of the parliamentary ecosystem is to promote trust in democracy and reinforce the relevance of representative institutions. Political leaders and elected officials bear responsibility for demonstrating respect for democratic values through their words and actions, the IPU stated. It added that wider societal coherence can be built by avoiding poisonous rhetoric, demonstrating a willingness to cooperate across party lines, and promoting evidence-based decision-making.

The declaration also noted the growing perception among people that the political establishment is losing touch with the population has fuelled the rise of populism and deepened societal divides. Pointing out that politics founded on confrontation and division undermines the legitimacy of the system as a whole, the IPU declaration expressed concern that increased polarization was reducing opportunities to build broad coalitions in society and implement bold public policies to address urgent social and economic issues including in confronting the global threat of climate change and pandemics.

In Kuwait the parliamentary ecosystem is characterized by the presence of lawmakers and factions that reflect the polarization that already exists in the country along social, ethnic and political faultlines. Evident divisions along sectarian lines, discernible divides between urban-rural populations, and between liberal, Islamists, and tribal factions, as well as imperceptible divisions that prevails in society are mirrored in the individuals who make their way into parliament, and in the various groupings they form in parliament after each election.

Despite the seeming need to exhibit fidelity

to, and conform with, the parochial divides that brought them to parliament, the lawmakers have for the most part missed the opportunity presented to them to help heal social rifts. They have failed to leverage their vantage seat in the National Assembly to build inclusive societies, or to promote trust in democracy and its institutions, as demanded of responsible parliamentarians and as repeatedly exhorted by the IPU.

If anything, the actions and antics of parliamentarians, and the use of unparliamentary language, which appears to have become the lingua franca of some lawmakers, during recent parliamentary proceedings have only helped to exacerbate rather than ameliorate the perceived differences among people, and have only deepened the fractures and widened the social chasms that exist in the country.

In his address to the IPU, Speaker Al-Ghanim also warned that in the shadow of a weak democratic system, social media platforms could turn into an arena for strife among intelligence agencies, ransom seekers and criminals, who infest these platforms with rumors, half-truths, and misleading information aimed at fomenting primitive and barbaric strifes of sectarian nature and furthering populism and polarization in society. The polarizations evident in parliament today have probably existed since Kuwait first evolved as a society, the heightened tensions currently evident can in no small measure be attributed to the deliberate misinformation and rumors spread through social media platforms.

The polarization evident today is probably the outcome of incisions that appeared in the early relationship between the rulers and the wealthy merchant elites in society, who were the main source of finances for the government in the early days of Kuwait's history. However, the revenue that began to flow into the country following the discovery and export of oil in the mid-20th century, rattled the then prevailing social status quo and empowered the rulers with the resources to function without support from the elites, and enabled them to flex their new-found powers.

The dichotomy in relations between rulers and society, or at least the elite families in society, led to two unequal but nevertheless powerful factions in the country. The frictions that followed eroded the spirit of consultation, consensus and cooperation that earmarked earlier relations, and probably sowed the early seeds of polarizations in society. The divisions continued to simmer even after the country gained its independence in 1961, and decided to pursue a democratic model of governance, endowed with a Constitution, a Parliament and elected representatives.

The political frictions that were apparent from the days of the first parliament, have evolved over the years, with more factions joining the fray and widening the rift. Uneasy, temporary alliances have also cropped up from time to time between the various factions in support of, or in opposition to, the government. Parliamentary turbulence over the years has resulted in Kuwait ending up with an iconic Parliament building that on the outside trumpets its democratic credentials, but has in large measure become a dysfunctional institution on the inside.

Cost of living doubles following pandemic



Cost of living has more than doubled since the onset of COVID-19 pandemic in Kuwait. People, especially those on relatively low incomes, are struggling to make both ends meet with the prices of both goods and food products, including vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, as well as, other consumer goods such as cleaning materials, cookware, clothing, footwear, medicines, stationery, school materials and others have increased two-fold shows a survey of retail outlets in the country. This is in addition to steep increases in prices of many white goods such as television,

computers, and other household items, as well as other regular home expenses.

Complaints on social media platforms reflect this price hike, with many people saying that this is unwarranted and that merchants are using the COVID-19 crisis as an excuse to fleece consumers. Social media is also rife with anger against the lax attitude of concerned authorities, who are supposed to monitor prices in the market and take action at businesses found to be gouging customers.

For their part, many merchants say the price increases are inevitable given that Kuwait depends on imports for most of its food and goods. They note that the price on most products have been hiked by exporting countries, and moreover, the cost of shipping and logistics of importing goods have also gone up sharply. In addition, businesses complain that rents for their shops and other properties have also been hiked by real-estate owners.

No matter what the causes, the end result is consumers are at a loss on how to stretch their monthly income to meet expenses.

ABCK-AmCham Kuwait holds annual Thanksgiving dinner



Dr. Arezou Harraf, Vice-Chair
ABCK-AmCham Kuwait



Mr. James Holtsnider, Deputy Chief of Mission
U.S. Embassy Kuwait



Mr. Yousef Dashti, Member of the Board
Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport Company (KGL)



Event Sponsors: KGL, The Bridge Company, Gulf
Insurance Group, EQUATE, KLM

ABCK-AmCham Kuwait held its Annual Thanksgiving Dinner on 23 November at the Hilton Kuwait Resort's Al Dorra Ballroom. The annual Thanksgiving event was sponsored by Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport Company (KGL), The Bridge Company, Gulf Insurance Group (GIG), and EQUATE Petrochemicals Company (EQUATE), as well as the event's exclusive airline partners, KLM and Air France.

The dinner began with opening remarks from AmCham Kuwait's Vice-Chair Dr. Arezou Harraf, who expressed gratitude to AmCham

Kuwait Members for their consistent support over the years and spoke about the meaning of Thanksgiving and its significance during these times.

Dr. Harraf also welcomed the guest of honor, US Deputy Chief of Mission to Kuwait, James Holtsnider, and thanked the US Embassy for their participation in this event. She also thanked the contingent of US military men and women for attending the event, and called for a round of applause to honor the services and sacrifices rendered by the US Army.

The reappointment of Sheikh Sabah Al Khaled as prime minister on 23 November, and with his efforts to form and announce a new cabinet still going on it is not clear whether a new board to head KPC will be announced before year-end.

Meanwhile, the ongoing uncertainty in restructuring this crucial institution, on which the country depends for nearly all its revenues, is causing a major disruption in the country's energy sector. Many urgently needed decisions are lying in limbo, while several planned activities remain suspended or have suffered setbacks.

KPC Board to be constituted before year end

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has been without a Board of Directors for a while now, with the oil minister and the cabinet delaying this decision earlier. Hopes of any immediate decision were dashed with the resignation of the cabinet in early November.

GTD retracts 'My Identity' driving license decision

Announcement by the Traffic Awareness Department, of the General Traffic Department at the Ministry of Interior (MoI), on the invalidity of carrying driving licenses in digital format on the 'My Identity' app, has been swiftly retracted by the Public Relations and Security Media Department at the same ministry, all in the space of just three days.

On Thursday, last week, an officer at the Traffic Information and Awareness Department, Major Abdullah Abu Hassan, had noted during a media interview that many citizens were confused with regard to the validity of driving licenses held on the 'My Identity' application.

He clarified the confusion by categorically stating that drivers presenting the digital version of the driving license, in place of an original printed license, when a traffic official asks for it, is a violation of Article 36 (Paragraph 4) of the Traffic Law, and the motorist was liable for a traffic fine.

Major Abu Hassan added that failure to carry a driver's license was a traffic violation as well as an obstruction of the duties of a security officer, and could also warrant the withdrawal of the driver's license.

However, in a statement issued Sunday,



the Public Relations and Security Media Department at the MoI came out with a statement that said: "In the framework of achieving the future vision of e-government, and in implementation of the Cabinet's decision to adopt 'My Identity' application, the digital format of the driving license is valid proof, and is treated as an original driver's license. The statement added that the General Traffic Department supports all electronic procedures that make it easier for citizens and residents to complete their transactions electronically.



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

The Connectivity War



MARK LEONARD

Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations and the author of *The Age of Unpeace: How Connectivity Causes Conflict*

Many observers have long assumed that the future of geopolitics will be decided in a sea battle over the Taiwan Strait or some rocky outcropping or atoll in the South China Sea. Yet we could probably learn more by examining the treatment of a few thousand desperate refugees in the twenty-first century's geopolitical backwaters.

Start with the English Channel. Once the site of some of the most dramatic confrontations in history — from the Spanish Armada and the Napoleonic Wars to the Normandy Landings — it is no longer a theater for great-power politics. Instead, the recent deaths of 27 civilians whose inflatable boat capsized after leaving the French coast has turned the channel into a site of humanitarian tragedy.

Rather than working together in solidarity with France to root out the migrant smugglers responsible for the deaths, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson immediately sought to play to a domestic political audience by blaming the French in an open letter published on Twitter. Far from just another juvenile political stunt, Johnson's dereliction of leadership will most likely have dreadful and far-reaching consequences.

Facing re-election next spring, in a campaign where migration will be a sensitive issue, French President Emmanuel Macron pushed back against Johnson's boorishness and disinvited the British home secretary from a gathering of European

interior ministers in Calais. Owing to a lack of trust on both sides of the channel, each government believes that the other is using the conflict as part of a bigger power play that extends to trade, defense, and foreign policy.

While migration has become a political football in Western Europe, it has been fully weaponized in an obscure strip of land between Belarus and Poland. Hardly a popular destination for travelers from the Middle East, Belarus has been flying in migrants from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, and then funneling them to the border with the promise of entry into the European Union. Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko's motive is clear: to pressure European governments to relax the sanctions imposed on his regime following last year's fraudulent presidential election and tightened after he forced down a commercial airliner to arrest one of its passengers.

“ Toxic behaviors are contagious, as national leaders respond by reciprocating the weaponization of connectivity. Reversing the results will also be difficult, as connectivity conflicts occur under hypocrisy and plausible deniability. ”

Lukashenko is under no illusion that a few thousand migrants would be enough to overwhelm Poland, or even Lithuania. Rather, he understands that the most important battleground nowadays is people's minds, not territory. Aiming to recreate the images from the EU's 2015 migration crisis, his use of migrants is ultimately an act of information warfare.

Political scientist Kelly M. Greenhill has shown that Lukashenko is far from the first to turn migrants into a tool of government

policy. She documents more than 75 occasions when governments, including those of Morocco, Russia, Libya, and Turkey, forced civilians from their homes (or encouraged them to flee) in order to achieve some political, military, or economic objective. The weaponization of migration has become a frequent complement to other forms of pressure such as sanctions, information and cyber warfare, and trade and infrastructure policies.

In this context, both the Belarusian campaign and the tussle over the English Channel are symptomatic of a changing foreign-policy environment in which wars are being replaced by new forms of aggression. The connections between people and countries are the new preferred currencies of power.

The military theorist Carl von Clausewitz famously described war as the continuation of politics by other means. But in a nuclear age, war is often an unfathomable option,

contagious as national leaders respond to the weaponization of connectivity by reciprocating it.

The resulting downward spiral will be difficult to reverse, because connectivity conflicts tend to play out under a cloud of hypocrisy and plausible deniability. Lukashenko can argue, however unpersuasive it may be, that migrants from the Middle East traveled to Belarus of their own accord. Similarly, the EU can claim that its decision to suspend the certification of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline linking Germany directly to Russian gas supplies was made on procedural grounds that have nothing to do with politics.

The informal nature of such conflicts makes it difficult to work out why certain decisions were made. Governments and companies have yet to find the right frameworks for evaluating even their own choices. For example, when it comes to decisions about migration, how should a government prioritize international law, human safety, and its own influence? Are trade policies meant to increase profit or national power? Should their goal be to minimize the cost to the consumer in the short-term, or to protect local producers from unfair competition (thereby giving consumers a greater choice over the long term)?

Rather than eliminating tensions between countries, connectivity offers new means of competing and engaging in conflict. No wonder the line between war and peace has become increasingly blurred. Gone is Tolstoy's world, where alternating periods of open conflict and harmony were clearly delineated. We have entered an era of perpetual conflict, in which most of the combatants and almost all of the victims will be civilians. In what I call 'the age of unpeace', the wretched of the Earth have become unwitting ordnance.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

The Internet Is Not the Enemy



ANDREW SULLIVAN

President and CEO of the Internet Society, a global nonprofit organization focused on internet policy, technology, and development.

We live in an age of wonder in which half the world now has access to a technology, the internet, that supports people's health and education, can be a lifeline in a time of disaster or disease, and was designed to be open to everyone but owned by no one. And the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted both its importance and its potential by forcing the world to connect remotely, contact-free, and in real time.

Unfortunately, we also live in an age of fear and suspicion. You do not even need to 'doom scroll' to find claims that the internet is worse than any previous pestilence or war. The internet is the scapegoat for many of today's problems, including terrorism, child abuse, and even the end of democracy.

But think about it. To believe, for example, that fake news is somehow the internet's fault is to forget the state propaganda machines perfected in the twentieth century. Likewise, excessive wealth concentration and overly powerful monopolies are not products of the digital age; once upon a time, there were firms like US Steel, Standard Oil, and the British and Dutch East India companies. Some even hold the internet responsible for the decline of civic values and even civility, as though lying politicians and incendiary speech were not possible before Twitter.

Transformative technologies have far-reaching effects on societies and individuals. We are now in a period of social change that is unquestionably attributable in part to the rise of the internet, because the tool has created new opportunities.

Some of those opportunities are socially valuable: people can now communicate easily and cheaply with friends or family far away. Some of them are socially harmful: scammers are almost certain to make money. And some are socially ambiguous: traditional authorities and gatekeepers are losing influence because people have more channels and ways to access information.

But while many of the harms people



ascrcribe to the internet are neither new nor caused by it, governments are seeking to regulate the internet as though they are. Before heading down that path, we had better be sure we are regulating the right thing.

Consider the problem of today's giant tech corporations and their effects on commerce and public discourse. Some advocate applying special regulations

“ Many people also express concern about internet-enabled political interference, both within a given country and from foreign actors. But it is careless and historically inaccurate to attribute this phenomenon entirely to the internet. ”

to these companies when they reach a certain market capitalization or level of revenue. But this is hardly the first time the issue of corporate concentration has arisen. After Standard Oil came to dominate the petroleum industry in the United States and many other countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, governments addressed the firm's power using antitrust policy, not 'oil policy'.

Many people also express concern

about internet-enabled political interference, both within a given country and from foreign actors. But it is careless and historically inaccurate to attribute this phenomenon entirely to the internet. The US, France, Russia, and China each underwent violent revolutions in pre-internet times. And long before anyone had sent a datagram on the internet, countries were interfering in other

countries' political processes, as both the Soviet Union and the US frequently did during the Cold War.

Political systems, and democracies in particular, depend on the efficient functioning and legitimacy of their governments. It is not possible to solve the problem of popular disaffection with a political regime by controlling information flows from abroad. That was just as true of Russia before 1917, when information

was printed on paper, as it is now when it comes in packets of data.

To be sure, some challenges are unique to the internet. For starters, the technology enables more communication at a greater speed than ever before. It is also exceptionally difficult to be confident of the identity of someone online (or even to be confident that it is a person). But these are the types of narrow issues where internet-specific regulation might make sense, if policymakers can be sure that introducing such measures will not negatively affect the internet itself.

The internet is an ecosystem that we need to protect. When considering possible regulations, the best way forward is to undertake an Internet Impact Assessment, much like how we conduct environmental or traffic assessments before deciding whether to build new infrastructure. The evaluation can determine whether a given action will benefit or harm the internet's underlying health.

Above all, we need to ensure that the internet is not made a scapegoat for problems caused by the legal, economic, and political systems where it is used. The internet must remain a tool for all of us. That means protecting it as we would any precious resource.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Building a Better Global Health Framework



TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

Director-General of the World Health Organization.

It is incredible to think that when the last Paris Peace Forum was held, in November 2020, no COVID-19 vaccine had yet been approved. A year later, more than seven billion doses have been administered, preventing countless deaths and helping to turn the tide of the pandemic in many countries. But this scientific triumph is being overshadowed by the failure to ensure that all people benefit from it.

At the time of writing, more than one-third of the world's population is fully vaccinated. But in Africa, that share is just 6.7 percent. This is unacceptable, and we must urgently change it. Any threat to global solidarity is a threat to global security and stability.

All governments have a responsibility to protect their own people. But the failure of some governments to share crucial resources — including information, biological samples, and tools such as vaccines, tests, and other supplies — has deprived their counterparts in many low- and lower-middle-income countries of the ability to fulfill that mandate.

The COVID-19 pandemic will not be our last. That is why, as we recover and rebuild from this crisis, we must also take steps to ensure that we can meet future disease outbreaks with effective cooperation and collaboration, instead of the kind of chaos and confusion that have exacerbated the current one. The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been the subject of much analysis. And there have been many recommendations for measures that would enable us to detect the next disease outbreak early, and either prevent it from becoming an epidemic, let alone a pandemic, or ensure a rapid and effective response. In all of these reviews and reports, four themes stand out.

First, global governance must be made more inclusive, equitable, and accountable. The existing global health-security architecture is complex and fragmented, and voluntary mechanisms have not produced the necessary level of collective action. That is why I advocate the creation of a new international instrument, such as a treaty, to guide pandemic preparedness and response.



By providing an overarching framework for global cooperation, including clear rules of the game, such a mechanism could boost solidarity among countries significantly. The World Health Organization's member states will discuss this initiative this month, at a Special Session of the World Health Assembly.

Second, we need more and better financing for pandemic preparedness and response. That includes a substantial increase in domestic investment, as well as far more international financing to support low- and lower-middle-income countries.

a burden-sharing basis.

Third, we need to devise and implement better systems and tools for multi-sectoral health surveillance. Already, WHO has begun building such tools. On 1 September, we inaugurated the new WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence in Berlin, which will provide the world with better data and analytics to support the detection of, and response to, public-health emergencies. I then had the honor of joining French President Emmanuel Macron in Lyon to celebrate the groundbreaking

as they identify gaps and build capacity for pandemic preparedness and response.

Finally, we need a strengthened, empowered, and sustainably financed WHO at the center of the global health framework. With 194 member states and 152 country offices, the WHO stands out for its global mandate, reach, and legitimacy. But over the last several decades, it has been progressively weakened by a debilitating imbalance between assessed (compulsory) contributions and voluntary, earmarked contributions. This distorts our budget, thereby constraining our ability to attract and retain top talent and to fulfill our member states' expectations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of global health security. The further weakening of the WHO, and the further fragmentation of the institutional framework of global health, are among the greatest risks to such security. The world must now invest in an organization that truly represents and works for the health of all countries.

In the coming months and years, other crises will inevitably demand our attention. But we must not lose sight of the importance of bolstering global health security. If the world continues down its current path, our health will only deteriorate, with devastating economic and political consequences. But if we embrace new ideas and work together in solidarity, we can build a future that is healthier, safer, fairer, and more peaceful.

“ Global governance needs to be more inclusive, equitable, and accountable. The existing global health-security architecture is complex and fragmented, and voluntary mechanisms have not yielded the necessary level of collective action. ”

Crucially, any financing facilities must be built via existing financial institutions; creating new ones would fragment the global health architecture further. Moreover, such mechanisms should not be funded solely by voluntary development assistance, which would intensify competition for already scarce resources. Rather, we propose a Health Threats Fund to pool additional resources, which could be established at the World Bank as a Financial Intermediary Fund, and financed by countries and regional organizations on

ceremony for the WHO Academy, which will use cutting-edge technologies to expand access to high-quality, lifelong learning for the world's health workers.

Other initiatives are in development, such as the WHO BioHub, a facility for storing and sharing pathogens in Switzerland, and the Universal Health and Preparedness Review. Modeled after the Universal Periodic Review used by the United Nations Human Rights Council, the UHPR will make use of peer review to increase accountability and transparency among WHO member states

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Reviewing infection control practices at hospitals

A recent assessment of prevailing infection-control measures in hospitals found that the outdated theories and practices used in many healthcare facilities need to be revisited and revised to create smarter virus transmission control policies.

The review by scientists and doctors came in the wake of observations made in the hospital environments during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding the enormous health and economic repercussions caused by the pandemic, the global health crisis offered several lessons on better and more effective ways on curbing and controlling respiratory disease transmissions.

The review suggests that some of the prevailing infection-control tactics at hospitals are outmoded and ineffective in preventing transmission of viruses, and that certain changes such as the greater use of N95 masks in hospitals might be needed. The reviewers noted that current infection-control measures are based, in part, on a 'false simplification' of respiratory virus transmission. The traditional teaching was that most respiratory viruses, like the flu and common cold, are mainly transmitted by respiratory 'droplets' — relatively heavy particles that people expel when they exhale. Droplets fall to the ground around the infected person, and they are adequately blocked by a surgical mask.

In addition, some other viruses such as those causing measles and tuberculosis, have traditionally been labeled as 'airborne' — meaning they can be transmitted among people by tiny 'aerosols' or airborne particles that remain suspended in the air for a longer time. These

particles also tend to accumulate over time in poorly ventilated spaces. Surgical masks block some of those minute particles, but not all.

Until the arrival of COVID-19 pandemic, the prevailing droplet or aerosol premise has helped guide policies at hospitals. For example, N95 masks are generally reserved for procedures considered 'aerosol-generating', like inserting a ventilator tube.

But recent studies and observations underline that the droplet-aerosol divide can only be considered dubious at best. New studies show that most of what we exhale is aerosol, and that all respiratory viruses can to a certain extent be transmitted by these tiny airborne particles.

Examining how the droplet-airborne distinction came about in the first place shows that it originated from observations regarding proximity. Most respiratory viruses, including the flu, are usually passed among people in relatively close contact. However, other pathogens like the measles virus, can infect people at greater distances. For instance, a US measles outbreak in the 1990s, happened at an international sports event held in a domed stadium. The droplet-airborne categories emerged to explain those differences in viral transmission.

Researchers point out that there are also other factors that are key in determining transmission of viruses, such as ventilation. Even airborne pathogens rapidly become 'diluted' in a well-ventilated area, which lowers the risk of infection. For example, a pandemic-era study of train passengers found that people seated next to someone with an asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection were 10 times as likely to become

infected as passengers who were three seats away. But poor ventilation was also found to lower the protection afforded by distance.

In addition, the duration of exposure matters, even in reasonably well-ventilated places. In that same train passenger study, travelers on long journeys were at greater risk of infection than those on fairly short trips.

Moreover, there are differences among respiratory viruses themselves that influence transmission, and differences in response among the people infected. If, for instance, they have a high 'viral load' — the amount of virus in their bodies — they are more contagious.

The researchers behind the new finding suggest that hospitals that are still based on the outdated droplet-airborne premise need to revisit their infection-control policies. Among the recommendations made following the review are:

- Hospitals should consider using N95 masks in the care of all patients with a respiratory infection and not just during aerosol-generating procedures.
- Allocate airborne-infection isolation rooms for patients with respiratory infections and a high viral load.
- Review minimum ventilation standards, and consider increasing standards for non-clinical areas of the hospital, outside of patient care areas.

The new review highlights that there is no strict dichotomy between droplet and aerosol based transmissions. Observations made during the COVID-19 era reveal that surgical masks, along



with eye protection, have worked 'extraordinarily well' in preventing COVID-19 outbreaks among US health care workers. Moreover, other respiratory infections that can spread in hospitals basically disappeared due to the use of these protective gear among healthcare providers in hospitals.

Another major takeaway from the pandemic period is that 'source-control masking' — masking the infected person — really works. Doctors recommend a reasonable approach going forward when seasonal respiratory infections once again return to their normal patterns in the US and elsewhere. Introduce the practice of 'universal' masking in hospitals during the respiratory infection season, when viruses like flu are highly active.

It is not clear that N95 masks would have significant added value, and moreover they would be challenging to wear for extended periods. For instance, continuously wearing masks over an eight-hour shift can be suffocating for many staff. But the workaround is not to abandon masks but to find ways to refine the process. Manufacturers could look at new masking options that offer better filtration, along with wearability.

Work-out 'highs' due to cannabis-like substance in body



Increased production of cannabis-like substances by gut microbes in the body could be responsible for the work-out 'highs' experienced by people after exercising. The substance, which is known to reduce inflammation, has the potential to help prevent conditions like arthritis, heart disease, and even cancer.

A new study by researchers at University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom found that people with arthritis who exercised, not only experienced reduced pain, but also lowered levels of inflammatory markers called cytokines and increased levels of endocannabinoids — a substance akin to cannabis that are naturally produced by gut microbes in our microbiomes. The human microbiome has been known to play a key role in many bodily functions, such as digestion and the immune system.

For the study, the researchers recruited 78 people with knee arthritis; 38 of the participants performed 15 minutes of muscle-strengthening exercises every day for six weeks, while the other 40 did nothing.

Researchers found that those who exercised not only reduced their pain, but also had more of a type of microbe in their guts that produces anti-inflammatory substances. They also had lower levels of cytokines, which is an indicator of inflammation, and higher endocannabinoid levels.

According to researchers, at least one-third of the anti-inflammatory effect of the gut microbiome was due to the increased endocannabinoids. These cannabis-like substances are naturally occurring neurotransmitters that are produced in the body. Endocannabinoids are linked to various functions and influence things like mood, energy, memory, appetite, and pain levels. The findings are novel as it may have found a key link between how substances produced by gut microbes interact with the substances produced by our own bodies that inform us on how physical exercise reduces inflammation.

Findings from this study are important as it underscores that lifestyle interventions like exercise can influence endocannabinoid production. This is a timely discovery, especially given the increased interest around the use of cannabidiol and other related supplements in reducing levels of inflammation. Inflammation is a natural part of the body's defense mechanism. But when inflammation becomes chronic, it can lead to disease and disability. The effects of chronic inflammation can lead to conditions such as fatigue, pain, mood disturbance, as well as gastrointestinal and immune system disruption.



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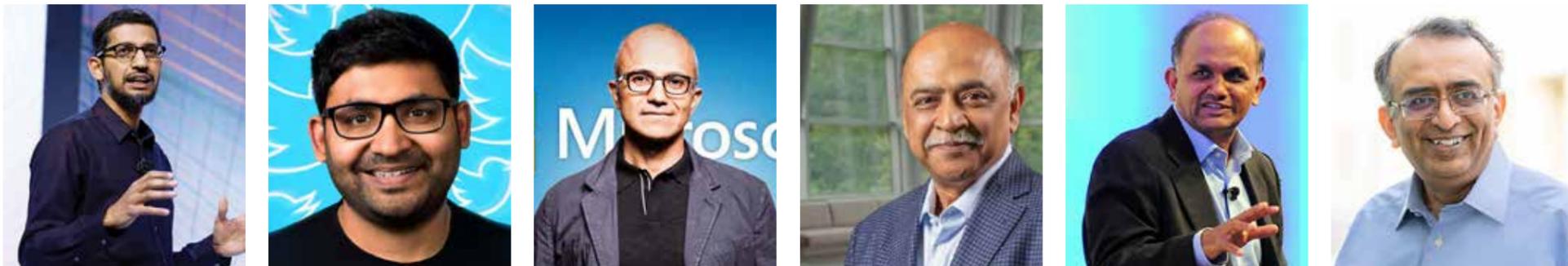
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Indian origin CEOs who are running American Big Tech



Parag Agrawal who took over Monday as the new head of Twitter shot from relative obscurity as the platform's technology expert to becoming the latest India-born talent to lead a US tech giant. With Indian-American Agrawal becoming the CEO of Twitter, the number of Indians currently holding important positions in different American tech companies has increased. The list is only likely to grow.

The big names from Indian diaspora who currently run Big Tech in the United States include Google's Sundar Pichai, Twitter's Parag Agrawal, Microsoft's Satya Nadella and more!

Sundar Pichai – Alphabet

The CEO of Alphabet (Google's parent company), Sundar Pichai was born in Chennai, Tamil Nadu in India. He studied at IIT Kharagpur before going to Stanford University to pursue an MS degree in materials science and engineering. Pichai also went on to get an MBA degree from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Pichai took over CEO duties

for Google in August 2015 after Larry Page.

Parag Agrawal – Twitter

Parag Agrawal, the newly-appointed CEO of Twitter, is the latest figure to emerge from the Indian diaspora in the United States. Agrawal went to IIT-Bombay, after which he studied at Stanford University and got a PhD degree in computer science. In 2011, he joined Twitter as a distinguished software engineer, and became the chief technology officer (CTO) in 2017.

Satya Nadella – Microsoft

Microsoft's magic man Satya Nadella was born in Hyderabad, India. Before becoming the CEO of Microsoft, Satya Nadella was the executive vice president of Microsoft's cloud and enterprise group. At Microsoft, Nadella is credited for the company's swift move to cloud computing – overseeing the development of one of the world's largest cloud infrastructures.

Nadella received a bachelor's in electrical engineering from the Manipal Institute of Technology in Karnataka, before moving

to the US to get an MS degree in computer science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Before joining Microsoft in 1992, Nadella worked at Sun Microsystems.

Arvind Krishna – IBM

The current chairman and CEO of IBM, Arvind Krishna was born in Andhra Pradesh, India. He has remained the CEO of IBM since April 2020 and also took over chairman duties in January 2021. Krishna was behind IBM's acquisition of Red Hat, the largest one for IBM ever (at \$34 billion). Before moving to the States, Krishna received a BTech degree in electrical engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur. Then, he pursued a PhD degree in electrical engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Krishna succeeded Ginni Rometty, who served as IBM's CEO from 2012-2020.

Shantanu Narayen – Adobe Inc.

Born in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, Shantanu Narayen has been at the helm of Adobe Inc since December 2007. Before becoming the CEO, chairman, and the

president of Adobe Inc, Narayen got a bachelor's degree in electronics and communication engineering from University College of Engineering, Osmania University. Not much later, he received a master's degree in computer science from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Narayen also has an MBA degree from the Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley.

Raghu Raghuram – VMWare

The CEO of VMWare, Raghu Raghuram joined the company in 2003. Raghuram has held multiple leadership roles at VMWare including CEO. According to VMWare, Raghuram is responsible for all of VMWare's product and service offerings including centralized services, support, and operational functions. Before working at VMWare, Raghuram worked at AOL, Bang Networks, and Netscape – holding product management and marketing roles. Raghuram received a Master's degree in electrical engineering from IIT-Bombay and also has an MBA degree from the Wharton School of Business.

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