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# Upcoming elections rev up political arena



## THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

A draft decree expected to be issued by the cabinet this week will call for parliamentary elections to be held on Thursday, 29 September. The snap election, midway through the 16th legislative term of parliament, follows the dissolution of Parliament by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on 22 June.

Announcing the parliamentary dissolution in a televised address, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, speaking on behalf of His Highness the Amir, said that the elections were necessitated "to rectify the political scene which involved lack of harmony and non-cooperation, differences and disputes, giving precedence to personal interests and involving practices and actions that undermine national unity."

As the country prepares for yet another election, the question many are asking is whether new elections with a new premier at the helm will help bring about changes to the underlying dynamics that have precipitated political impasse in parliament for well over a decade. It also remains to be seen if the newly announced cabinet will be able to find solutions to the persistent challenges that have mired previous governments and stymied the country's growth and progress over the years.

Among the many issues that need to be addressed are social, economic and political demands that have festered without any resolution for too long. At the forefront is the corruption, nepotism and cronyism charges that have been leveled at the government and public figures in the past. In the first few weeks that the new cabinet led by the Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf has been in office it



appears determined to put an end to these practices proactively.

Other administrative and socially impinging matters, such as reducing and realigning the bloated public sector to better serve the public; skilling and preparing young citizens to meet market needs, and finding meaningful, productive employment

for them in the private sector and encouraging entrepreneurship. As these are works in progress it could take time to be realized effectively.

On the economic side, diversification of the economy away from its overreliance on hydrocarbon revenues, increasing private sector participation, attracting foreign

investments, introducing necessary financial reforms such as reducing subsidies and implementing a value added tax to buttress the budget, as well as passing the public debt bill that has been held up in parliament since 2017, are no doubt issues that the new government will need to confront on a priority basis.

However, it is on the political front and in parliament that the new government could face some of its earliest challenges. A rarity in the region, Kuwait's elected parliament has more powers and is more inclined to wield this muscle than other similar entities in the region. Contentious relations between the executive and the legislative arms of government have hobbled parliamentary proceedings that have then led to most of the dissolutions in the past; they have also held back growth and progress of the country.

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# Uzbekistan pursues an active, friendly, constructive and pragmatic foreign policy

1 September 2022 – 31st Anniversary of the Independence of The Republic of Uzbekistan

## Special to The Times Kuwait

The Republic of Uzbekistan under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev implements an open, consistent and deeply thought-out foreign policy course, which allows to effectively promote the national interests of the country and adequately respond to contemporary international challenges.

Uzbekistan's foreign policy has become more active in recent years not just in its region but around the globe. Tashkent's influence has grown in many international organizations and within the framework international integration processes.

On the initiative of the head of state, specific and forward-looking goals outlined in the "Strategy of actions for the development of Uzbekistan in five priority areas in 2017-2021" were achieved. Particular attention was paid to enhancing the role and influence of Uzbekistan in the regional and international arena.

As a result of the implementation of the Development Strategy, Uzbekistan's political, economic and cultural relations with neighboring countries, major world powers and international institutions have reached a qualitatively new and unprecedentedly active level.

In the era of speedy transformations taking place in the country, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has identified new, even more important and urgent goals and objectives of foreign policy, which are reflected in the New Uzbekistan Development Strategy for 2022-2026.

Current global changes in the world, characterized by increasing geopolitical tensions, are having a negative impact on the countries of Central Asia, neighboring and other regions. In addition, ongoing pandemic barriers and restrictions imposed in connection with the coronavirus pandemic and its new strains are negatively affecting all areas of international cooperation, primarily economic and logistical ties.

In the current circumstances,

Uzbekistan seeks to further expand the areas of its foreign policy, intensify cooperation with foreign partners, primarily with neighboring countries, at various levels and in priority areas, systematically monitor developments in the region and the world and respond to emerging challenges in a timely and comprehensive manner.

Uzbekistan is consolidating a completely new political environment in the Central Asian region in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect, good neighborliness and strategic partnership.

The main objective is to make Central Asia a place of prosperity and sustainable development, trust and friendship. To this end, Uzbekistan attaches priority to strengthening the interactions with neighboring and adjacent regions.

To advance the cooperation the Consultative Meeting of the heads of state of Central Asian countries was initiated by President Mirziyoyev.

In order to promote stability, security, post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan and its integration into regional cooperation processes in the interests of the multinational Afghan people and the whole world, Uzbekistan actively participates in international efforts to peaceful settlement of situation in Afghanistan. The post-crisis development of Afghanistan is the key importance for the entire system of international and regional security.

On July 26th 2022, International conference on Afghanistan was held in Tashkent, which was attended by the representatives of 50 world countries and international organizations.

At this conference the Minister of foreign affairs of Uzbekistan Vladimir Norov noted, Uzbekistan is interested in the development of Afghanistan as a peaceful, independent and prosperous state. We also maintain a clear position that in the foreseeable future, Afghanistan shall remain an important factor in regional security, directly affecting the national interests



H.E. Dr. Bakhromjon Alov,  
Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan  
to the State of Kuwait

of regional countries, primarily the neighboring states.

As the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev said at the Consultative Meeting of the heads of Central Asian states on July 21 this year in Chalpan Ata, Kyrgyzstan, "Our most important priority should remain the continuation of close cooperation in promoting long-term peace in Afghanistan and its socio-economic recovery. We are the closest neighbors, and no one else should be more interested in stability in this country. It largely depends on us how the international community perceives this problem".

In this regard, the development of joint approaches to solving the socio-economic problems of Afghanistan at

this stage of the country's development should become a top priority for the states of the region and the world community.

Uzbek Foreign minister said, it is time to move from words to actions - to help to revive the Afghan economy and to create all the necessary conditions for involving Afghanistan in the regional integration processes. In order to deliver the humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, we have created a multifunctional transport and logistics hub in the border city of Termez, which is now being actively used by various UN bodies.

On July 18, expeditionary work began on the territory of Afghanistan with the participation of specialists from Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and

Pakistan to determine the railway route of the trans-Afghan railway "Termez-Mazar-I-Sharif - Kabul - Peshawar" and a feasibility study of the project. In addition, Uzbek specialists have completed work on the restoration of the international airport in the city of Mazar-I-Sharif this year.

We believe it is important to continue jointly with Afghanistan to implement such infrastructure projects as the construction of the "Termez - Mazar-e-Sharif - Kabul - Peshawar" railroad, the transit potential of which is 20 million tons of cargo annually and the "Surkhan - Pul-e-Khumri" power transmission line.

Uzbekistan is convinced that the implementation of these projects will not only help the reconstruction of the Afghan economy and make Afghanistan a bridge between Central and South Asia, but also promote the overall process of regional connectivity for the benefit and prosperity of the people of the vast region. We attach an enormous importance to the training of Afghan youth at the Educational Center in Termez, established at the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan. We are confident that this will accelerate the training of highly qualified specialists for the key sectors of the national economy of Afghanistan, who will be able to make a fair share of contribution to its economic revival.

Uzbekistan collaborates with multilateral institutions at the global and regional level. Uzbekistan attaches great importance to interaction with the United Nations, cooperation with which is defined as one of the priorities of our country's foreign policy. The Republic actively and systematically participates in the activities of the organization and a number of its specialized agencies, such as the World Health Organization, International Labor Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, Education, Science and Culture Organization, FAO, World Bank, IAEA etc.

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# Talabat among 50 'Best Workplaces in the Middle East'

Kuwait's home-grown online food ordering company, Talabat was featured in this year's list of 50 'Best Workplaces in the Middle East' list. Talabat, founded in Kuwait in 2004, and with branches now all over the Gulf and in many places in the wider Arab world, was the lone representative from Kuwait in the large organizations category of the Best Workplaces in the Middle East list for 2022.

The annual list of 'Best Workplaces' is formulated by 'Great Place to Work', a global research, training and consultancy firm that recognizes the Best Workplaces in over 60 countries worldwide. This year's list recognized 10 large, 20 medium and 20 small organizations across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states for their efforts.

Organizations this year also built upon a sense of belonging. When everything seemed to be susceptible to the pandemic, employees of these companies were made to feel comfortable with choices they made. The stability that was granted to them throughout the year provided them with the chance to get inspired and grow mentally and physically while seeking to uphold the success of their work/life balance.

Commenting on this year's Best Workplaces in the GCC list, Managing Director for the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait, Great Place to Work Middle East, Ibrahim Mougharbel, said: "Despite the challenges we have faced during the pandemic, we are proud to witness even more continuous growth in employee culture awareness among leaders in the UAE and the Middle East in general. Our Best Workplaces for this year have persevered through the time of unprecedented upheaval and have continued to persevere post-pandemic and we are here to celebrate them. We are therefore not celebrating companies; we are celebrating heroes."

Commenting on this year's Best Workplaces in the KSA list, Tanzeel Rehman, Managing Director for the KSA and Bahrain, Great Place to Work Middle East, said: "As a part of their organizational strategy, great workplaces throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia compete across different sectors in providing great workplace environments for all employees to ensure winning the war of local talent."

The following 50 companies were selected for being the best workplaces, not only focusing on being the best for customers, but on being



the best for their employees as well:

Large Category: RICC McDonald's; McDonald's; Ajman Police; Leminar; DHL Express; Five Hotels; Talabat; Chalhoub Group; Alhokair Fashion Retail; Hilton Medium Category: THE One; Dubai Police Academy; Century Financial; Pizza Express; Metropolitan Group; Cisco; Global Food Industries; International Beverage and Filling Industries; PetroGas Piping; TDRA; International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC); SARA Group; Petrotec; Makkiyoon; Hill +

Knowlton Strategies; Energy City Development Company (ECDC); Servier; Al Muhaidib Holding Company Unifonic; Amgen Small Category: Hadi Express Exchange; OYOC; Charterhouse; Ashjan Najd; Privilee; Alkhabeer Capital; Oxford System Integration; Tajalla Creative Agency; ARC Solutions; Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority; AlBahia Beauty Salon; Officers Affairs, Ministry of Bahrain; UM Qatar; Eaton Business School; Saudi Tharwa; Lucidya; AMAM; Trahum; InoChem; DOW.

## Traffic campaign highlights disdain for traffic laws

Traffic and Operations Affairs at the General Traffic Department (GTD) arrested 27,000 traffic violators, 71 reckless drivers, and 65 juvenile drivers, not during the past one year, but in the span of just last week.

The series of traffic inspections held during last week also led to the impounding of 79 vehicles, the apprehending of 73 individuals wanted by the law, the arrest of four people



in possession of narcotic substances, and the deportation of 23 expatriates for using their vehicles as taxis to illegally transport

passengers. The expatriates were transferred to the General Administration of Correctional Institution's Deportation section. The 65 juveniles who were nabbed for the serious offense of driving without a driver's license were referred to the Juvenile Prosecution for further action.

Perpetuation of traffic violations despite stringent measures initiated by the authorities, reflects the scant regard for laws in general, and traffic laws in particular, by people who believe they have the influence or power to get away with such violations. Punitive measures such as fines, license confiscation, vehicle impounding, jail terms and deportation on their own are unlikely to make a dent or have a lasting effect,

on what is basically a lack of civic sense among sections of society. While this social sense has to be inculcated at an early age in schools and homes, it also remains that you cannot teach what people do not want to learn.

The week-long traffic campaign was carried out under the supervision of the Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Operations and Traffic Affairs, Major General Jamal Al Sayegh, and under the field supervision of the Assistant Director-General of the General Traffic Department for Licensing Affairs, Major General Yousef Al-Khadda, as well as, the Director-General of the General Department of Emergency Police, Brigadier Faris Al-Qahtani.

## PAM to roll out smart recruitment

As part of efforts by the government to raise the efficiency and performance of the labor market, as well as meet its needs for skilled labor, the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) is said to have drawn up a project titled, 'Smart recruitment of skilled labor. PAM has reportedly approached several government entities with the aim of getting them to come on board and support the project. The project, which will initially target 20 most important professions needed by the Kuwait labor market, is designed to eventually cover other professions. Among the advantages to implementing the smart recruitment project are:

Academic accreditation of professions and development of an automated test system that will evaluate applicants proficiency and determine whether they

are qualified to undertake the work they applied for.

The project will update the professions required, and specify the professional standards, based on the needs of the labor market. This will include adopting laws and decisions that guarantee commitment to professions and their adoption in all fields related to the labor market.

Automation of at least 50 vocational tests covering the most important professions needed by the private Kuwaiti labor market.

Determine the 20 most required jobs and professions that need to be recruited for the labor market, in order to raise the efficiency of professional workers.

Sign memoranda of understanding with the supporting civil associations and unions regarding the tests that determine the validity and skill of the worker in his field.

Activate and strengthen the supervisory role of PAM through statistics, inspection of professions, and direct coordination with the relevant authorities.

Sift the labor market inputs through proficiency tests of its workers, follow-up on upgrading the skills and professions to keep pace with technology and market requirements.



## E&Y led consortium to be consultants for KAPP renewable project

Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP), which spearheads public and private partnership projects in Kuwait has inked a contract to provide Phase 3 consultancy services for the Al-Dabdaba project for electric power generation and the Shaqaya project for renewable energies, with a consortium led by Ernst & Young Consulting Group.

The contract, which was signed in cooperation with the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy (MEW) and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), followed approvals from relevant regulatory authorities. The two vital projects are expected to produce over its various phases between 3,000 and 3,500 megawatts of electricity. The duration of the consultancy work is for a period of three years and five months, from the closing date of the tender.

KAPP and MEW are reportedly keen to implement the project according to its schedule without delay due to the urgent need of the ministry to raise its production capacity of electricity, especially in light of the increasing demand and failure to introduce large electricity



production projects in recent years.

The scope of work specified to the consultancy includes preparing feasibility studies for the project and the work related to offering the project for bids, such as preparing qualification documents and procedures for qualifying investors, preparing project tender documents, supervising the technical, financial, legal and environmental

aspects of the project, and coordinating with investors in accordance with the provisions of Law 39 of 2010 and its amendments as per Law 116 of 2014, regarding the establishment of Kuwaiti shareholding companies that undertake the construction and implementation of electric power and water desalination plants in Kuwait.

The sources pointed out that the project will provide the country's increasing needs of electrical energy, which will enhance the existing network, and is an implementation of the lofty desire of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, God willing, to produce 15 percent of the State of Kuwait's need for energy from various renewable sources by 2030.



# Women's empowerment, a focus of new leadership

The Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Dr. Khaled Mahdi said the council is working on enacting new legislations and laws and implementing international agreements in line with the desire of the political leadership, while keeping in mind the importance of empowering women in society.

Speaking at a symposium entitled 'Principles of Empowering Women in the Private Sector', organized by the Secretariat-General of the Council, Dr. Mahdi said the launch of the online platform for women's empowerment under the title, 'Kuwait

leaders for Change', will enable decision-makers to select qualified Kuwaiti women in senior positions. Mahdi called on Kuwaiti women to follow this platform to update their full job history so that the work team can view it to activate the role of this initiative.

He praised the role of the private sector in Kuwait and its interest in employing women, providing them with training and opportunities to hold executive positions, as this is one of the important ways to reach the goals of sustainable development.

In turn, the acting resident representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Khaled Shahwan, explained that

Kuwait has taken several important steps towards implementing the comprehensive national plan. He indicated that the UNDP was in coordination with the Planning Secretariat on substantive technical consultations to promote the principles of women's empowerment in the private sector, and to help accelerate the implementation of the 'New Kuwait 2035' vision by increasing the representation of women in leadership positions.

He indicated that 44 companies and their executives have so far signed the Women Empowerment Principles, a national initiative with a global vision.



## Jazeera to operate shuttle flights for FIFA 2022

Jazeera Airways has joined the flight shuttle program for the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, following an agreement with Qatar Airways and local authorities to fly football supporters from Kuwait to Hamad International Airport, Doha on match days.

For group matches commencing on 21 November, Jazeera will operate six flights a day to ensure fans get to Doha around four hours before kick-off and leave back to Kuwait around four hours after the final



whistle. For the knock-out stages, four flights a day will be operated and three for

the final match on 18 December.

Announcing the shuttle service, Jazeera

Airways Chief Executive Officer, Rohit Ramachandran, said: "We are excited to be able to offer flights for fans from Kuwait to the World Cup. This is a once in a lifetime event for us to have a World Cup on our doorstep and demand is expected to be high for all flights. We are very grateful to Group Chief Executive Qatar Airways, Akbar Al Baker, for enabling these shuttle flights and we are confident that the tournament will be a great success for Qatar."

Bookings will be open for all flights to the tournament at [jazeeraairways.com](http://jazeeraairways.com) or on the Jazeera App. Tickets will go on sale in early September following approval of the flight schedules by the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority.

## New Farwaniya Hospital opens to public

A new Farwaniya Hospital, one of the largest in the country, was opened to the public in its first operational phase on 24 August by the Minister of Health Dr. Khaled Al-Saeed, and in the presence of the Undersecretary of the Ministry, Dr. Mustafa Reda.

In a statement released on the occasion, official spokesperson for the Ministry of Health, Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad, stated that the new hospital represents a qualitative addition to the country's health system, and improves its quality level in line with the pillars of Kuwait's development plans and the vision of New Kuwait 2035. The hospital opening was under the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The new Farwaniya Hospital is located within the current Farwaniya Hospital campus. The two hospitals are linked by air-conditioned bridges that will facilitate movement of patients and visitors, and an underground passage that will facilitate the service staff's movement. Dr. Al-Sanad, noted that the main building of the hospital and the outpatient clinics consists of four other towers consisting of nine floors each, including the basement and the ground floor. He added that the hospital includes 314 general and specialized clinics, and the clinical

capacity of the project is 955 beds and 35 suites for specialized medical services.

In related health news, specialized teams from the Ministry of Health (MoH) are reported to be investigating pharmacies and food supplement companies to ensure they follow the regulations, and with a view to tighten control over drugs and strengthen concepts of maintaining the efficacy, safety and quality of medicine, especially in pharmacies.

In this regard, Health Minister Dr. Khaled Al-Saeed is said to have stopped considering applications for granting licenses to new pharmacies in the private medical sector, and requests to grant licenses to practice the profession of pharmacy for non-Kuwaitis, until the completion of the study in this regard.

The issuing of licenses and management of pharmacies is limited to Kuwaiti pharmacists who are licensed to practice the profession, and are granted a license to open a pharmacy.

The ministry noted that violations are monitored from time to time in private sector pharmacies, including those related to giving medicines without prescriptions, or the presence of smuggled and unregistered medicines, or even expired drugs. The MoH added that the doors of the ministry are open to Kuwaiti pharmacists and other staff — medical, technical and nursing, to listen to any complaints or suggestions that would help organize work in pharmacies or others.



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# Uzbekistan pursues an active, friendly, constructive and pragmatic foreign policy

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Uzbekistan's cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies has come to a qualitatively new level in the last few years. This is seen in the President of Uzbekistan's speeches at the 72nd, 75th and 76th sessions of the UN General Assembly and the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council in 2021, during which the initiatives of Uzbekistan in strengthening international and regional security, further development of education, spirituality, environment, tourism and human rights protection were voiced.

Uzbekistan's activities within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are of particular importance.

The SCO was founded on June 15, 2001, by the leaders of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. It now also includes India and Pakistan as permanent members. Observers to the SCO include Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia and Belarus. Dialogue partners are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nepal, Cambodia, Turkey and Sri Lanka.

Today, the SCO is an organization spanning three continents — Asia, Europe and Africa. The total territory of the SCO member nations exceeds 34,000,000 square kilometers, more than 60% of Eurasia. About half of the world's population — 3 billion people — live in the SCO member countries. China, India and Pakistan have the status as nuclear powers.

Since Mirziyoyev came to power in 2016, Uzbekistan has pursued a "good neighbor" foreign policy and given great attention to strengthening security in Central Asia. This has led to Uzbekistan's leadership, influence, and position within the SCO significantly improving.

During the meetings between the heads of SCO member nations from 2017-2021, the Uzbek president proposed important initiatives on 50 subjects. Uzbekistan's initiatives reflect its national interests and priority areas for development, and fully comply with the main tasks aimed at sustainable development of its region. This is why all members of the organization support these initiatives.

The activities of SCO reflect Uzbekistan's new foreign strategy over the last five years. Recently, Uzbekistan has openly declared a need to direct the organization's huge potential toward the development of cooperation in such important and practical areas as transport, connectivity and logistics, innovative and digital development, as well as cultural and public diplomacy. A number of important proposals of the president aimed at expanding the SCO's agenda also have been implemented.

Each year, a meeting is held of the heads of the SCO member state. The meetings were held in Uzbekistan in 2004, 2010 and 2016. They will again chair this year's event.

Uzbekistan is the chairman of SCO since September 2021. Currently, the preparatory work regarding the high level meeting of the SCO Heads of State Council on September 15-16 in Samarkand is currently underway.

Uzbekistan, as part of its chairmanship of the SCO, is holding many international events, develop a program for boosting trade inside the region and step up the engagement of member countries in the area of security.

Ministerial-level meetings were held under Uzbekistan's chairmanship in November 2021. Similar meetings on poverty relief were held on January 25.

At the suggestion of the president, within the framework of the SCO, the first

*The Independence Monument in the "Yangi O'zbekiston (New Uzbekistan)" Park*



high-level meeting on Afghanistan was organized in July, 2022, which was served to further strengthen the country's authority in regional and international arenas.

Uzbekistan is the chairman of SCO and plans to host the largest number of international events it has ever hosted: 80. The SCO summit (September 15-16 in Samarkand), SCO foreign ministers meeting (July 28, 29 and 29 in Tashkent), and the high-level meeting about Afghanistan (July 27, 28 and 28 in Tashkent), SCO secretaries of Security Council meeting (August 19, in Tashkent), SCO ministries of defense meeting (August 24, are just a few of them). The events have two main purposes: to develop economic cooperation in the region, and to coordinate issues to ensure regional security.

In May, Tashkent hosted the international tourism forum titled "A New Stage of Cooperation Between the SCO Countries: Tourism and Cultural Heritage," as well as a meeting of the sports ministers of the SCO countries. During the events, goals and objectives were identified and agreements were made that will be signed by the parties at the September SCO leaders summit.

The main events, documents, and documents that will be approved under the chairmanship Uzbekistan's leadership are designed to promote and demonstrate the new Uzbekistan's domestic and foreign policies, priorities goals, and objectives.

The main results of Uzbekistan's chairmanship will be summed up at the summit scheduled for September in Samarkand. It will undoubtedly be a major diplomatic and political forum, and it will be remembered as a significant step towards the future development of the organization.

Uzbekistan's active, open, pragmatic, and constructive foreign policy will be a strong foundation for making important decisions within the framework the summit. The 21st SCO Summit will bring the historic closeness of its members to a new level. It will also take into account the changing international climate.

Uzbekistan attaches great importance to the development and strengthening of mutually beneficial relations with the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the spheres of economy, transport communications, finance, investments and tourism, including within the framework of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Islamic Development Bank.

I would like to note with satisfaction that over the past six years high-level meetings and different manifestation and events between Uzbekistan and GCC countries, including Kuwait are held on a regular basis. Political dialogue has been strengthened, effective cooperation has been established on international and regional issues, including Afghanistan. There are positive developments of ties in trade, economic, investment and humanitarian fields. Every year, the government of Uzbekistan has adopted "Roadmaps" of measures to develop relations with all countries GCC.

The state visit of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Saudi Arabia on 16-17 August, 2022, was very successful. Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud met President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The President of Uzbekistan expressed confidence that his first state visit to Saudi Arabia would open wide opportunities for this. The talks at the highest level demonstrated the commonality of views and aspirations. The State Program Saudi Vision 2030 successfully implemented in the country was highly appreciated. It is consonant with the goals and objectives of the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for the transformation of all spheres of society. The two countries pay much attention to the implementation of the principles of the digital and green economy.

The parties discussed issues of further enhancing mutually beneficial ties in the political, trade, economic, investment, cultural and humanitarian spheres. 15 documents on cooperation were signed at the level of governments and ministries of the two countries in such areas as energy, customs, civil aviation, tourism, agriculture, healthcare, labor relations and others.

The State of Kuwait recognized the Independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan on December 30, 1991. In July 1994, diplomatic relations were established between the two countries. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan and Kuwait regularly hold political consultations. Next round of consultations will take place in Tashkent this year. During this mechanism of cooperation the current state and prospects for the development of relations in the political, trade, economic, investment, cultural, and humanitarian spheres, as well as issues of international and regional

cooperation are discussed. It is also good opportunity to provide detailed information on the large-scale reforms carried out in Uzbekistan in recent years in all spheres of life, exchange of opinions on new opportunities for the further development of multifaceted cooperation between the two countries.

A representative delegation of State of Kuwait, headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah took part in the international conference "Central and South Asia: regional interdependence Threats and Opportunities" held in Tashkent on July 15-16, 2021.

Sheikh Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah was received by the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Kuwaiti side highly appreciated and supported the important international initiatives of the Uzbekistan to strengthen regional ties in Central and South Asia, as well as efforts to comprehensively assist in finding a peaceful solution to the situation in Afghanistan.

It should be noted that Uzbekistan and Kuwait actively support each other in international and regional organizations.

We should note with satisfaction the intensification of relations between the parliaments of the two countries. The Uzbek-Kuwait Inter-Parliamentary Group for Cooperation was established in the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the Kuwait-Uzbekistan Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group was established in the Kuwait National Assembly.

Delegations of the National Assembly of Kuwait visited Uzbekistan five times (October 2002, September 2005, April 2010, April 2015 and March 2019).

Head of the Constitutional Court of Kuwait Mohammad bin Naji, Chairman of the Kuwaiti Transparency Society Majid Al-Mutairi and Professor of the University of Kuwait Muhammad al-Fili participated as international observers in the Presidential elections on October 24, 2021.

Particular attention is paid to trade, economic, and investment cooperation, increasing the volume and structure of mutual trade and, in a word, the implementation of joint projects in priority areas for the parties.

Uzbekistan has been actively cooperating with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development since 1997. Large social projects in the fields of health, education and infrastructure are being implemented in Uzbekistan at the expense of soft loans from Kuwait. To date, the Government of Uzbekistan and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development have signed 10 Loan agreements worth \$ 213.2 million and 4 technical assistance agreements worth \$ 2.5 million were signed.

Over the past 3 years, the turnover has increased significantly. But the volume of mutual trade does not satisfy both sides, so our countries have identified priorities in this direction. The stabilization of the global situation related to the coronavirus pandemic will certainly contribute to the further growth of Uzbek-Kuwaiti trade relations.

Bilateral relations in the field of transport are also developing. Jazeera Airways operates regular flights between Uzbekistan and Kuwait. Our countries pay special attention to the accelerated development of cooperation in the cultural and humanitarian spheres. Today, it is obvious that ties in the fields of culture, healthcare, science, education, tourism, and sports are becoming stronger.



# EU Ambassador bids farewell to Kuwait

The Ambassador of European Union Delegation H.E. Cristian Tudor bid farewell after the successful completion of his term to the diplomatic corps in an event held at the St Regis last week. Addressing the exclusive gathering of diplomats and well wishers and media Ambassador Tudor, said that Kuwait will remain a partner and ally of the Union in the Arab Gulf region and emphasized that relations between the Kuwait and the EU have reached unprecedented levels.

Tudor added that without the support of the Kuwaiti authorities, it would not have been possible to achieve continuous achievements in the relations between the two sides. He also expressed his gratitude to the political leadership and the Kuwaiti government for the cooperation. He also stressed his confidence following the announcement of the first strategy of the Union towards the Gulf states which focuses on "strengthening joint cooperation".

The High Representative for Foreign Affairs of the European Union has retained the Ambassador's posting in the Gulf region, where he will continue to play his role in strengthening relations between the European Union and the Gulf, including cooperation with Kuwait.

Ambassador Tudor explained that Kuwait was the first Gulf country to sign a cooperation arrangement with the European Union in 2016 and has since then strengthened it to include various fields, such as trade, investment, research, education and development, humanitarian aid and security. "I am very happy with my experience in Kuwait, on a personal and official level, I discovered an open society and I was lucky to arrive in Kuwait in October 2019. These relationships were very important, especially during the pandemic," he told reporters. Tudor added that he does not have any information about the further development on the "Schengen" visa issue. "Personally I am very optimistic and I think that the process is going smoothly, but I can't say when. The process takes a long time, but it does not mean that there is any obstruction or consequences, as you know, the European Union is comprised of 27 countries, the



decision-making process and its decision-making in the European Union takes its time between the European Council and the European Parliament. But I appreciate the efforts made by the Kuwaiti government," he said.

Ambassador Tudor also praised the relations between the Kuwaiti authorities and the European Union mission, adding that the issue of exemption from the "Schengen" reflects the European Union's interest in Kuwait and its position.

"At the level of the European Union, this year in particular, a European Union strategy dedicated to the GCC countries was announced, as for the first time in the European Union it is developing a special strategy in the GCC countries in all fields, political, humanitarian and economic. We want to go in-depth with the Kuwaiti authorities in terms of digital transformation and green transformation. Although there is a war in Europe and that the European Union



still depends on traditional energy, we are very committed to this transformation, and we are interested in deepening and researching more on this issue with the authorities Kuwaiti," he said.

Ambassador Tudor explained that the process of appointing a new ambassador needs administrative procedures that take time, but he assured that the ambassador will be appointed soon. He said that his departure from Kuwait will be on 1st of September. "Through my career in Kuwait, I discovered a diverse Kuwaiti society, and this trip in Kuwait helped me increase my experience and knowledge in the Gulf, in general. I lived in Kuwait the process of establishing an EU mission from scratch, and I believe that my appointment in Qatar is due to my successful and positive experience in Kuwait, where I gained this kind of experience," he said. He also said that the European Union is a successful project, and despite the existence of war between Russia and Ukraine, the union is strong and united internally. "We went through difficult circumstances, but this war against Ukraine helped us in unifying our positions, so I am sure that this project has its benefits and returns, like any successful investment project," he said.



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# Deportation for bus drivers, new rules for on-call, roaming taxis

Public and private bus drivers could face deportation if they do not abide by traffic rules and regulations, including stopping and picking up passengers from places other than designated bus-stops.

The decision came during a meeting chaired by Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Traffic and Operations Affairs, Major General Jamal Al-Sayegh, and held in the presence of the Acting Assistant Director of Violations Department, Brigadier Majid Al-Sahli, and the technical office in the administration of the Office of the Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic and Operations Affairs with representatives of Kuwaiti public transport companies on 21 August.

The meeting discussed the various violations committed by bus drivers, the problems they face in their work, and the appropriate methods for dealing with them. In this context, it was agreed to cooperate and coordinate between the General Directorate of Traffic and public transport companies to

provide parking for passengers to get on and off on public roads in the Capital Governorate.

Pointing out that the decision will come into effect from Friday, 26 August, Major-General Al-Sayegh stressed that bus drivers should comply with the instructions set by the ministry and only park in designated parking spaces.

In related news last week, the Public Relations and Security and Media Department at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced that the General Traffic Department has issued new instructions guiding the operations of on-call and roaming taxi companies and offices.

The new regulations are as follows:

- Placing the permit copy for the roaming taxi or on-call taxi in Arabic and English, as well as the company's details and driver's phone number in a clear place behind the driver's seat on both sides.
- Operating the fare-meter.
- Illuminating of the 'taxi' sign when it



is for hire.

- Taxi drivers on call are not allowed to pick up passengers from the street, and all taxi drivers are forbidden from loading or

unloading passengers on highways and main roads.

- Commitment of taxi and on-call taxi drivers not to pick up passengers from Kuwait International Airport.

- The obligation of both types of taxi drivers to transport only passengers and not transport goods or foods.

The statement added that the new instructions were within the framework of the keenness and interest of the senior security leadership at the Ministry of Interior in everything that contributes to improving the taxi drivers' transportation service and providing the best services to citizens and residents, as well as ensure safety of passengers and vehicle drivers, and to facilitate traffic on the roads.

The General Traffic Department stressed the need for taxi drivers to abide by these instructions, and that any taxi driver who violates the instructions and the traffic law will be held accountable.

## PAM to raise heat on fraudulent companies

The transfer of affiliation of the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) from the Minister of Justice to the Minister of Interior, which was recently agreed upon by the Council of Minister, is expected to strengthen the hands of the Authority in addressing the file of 'residency dealers', marginal foreign workers, and violators of residence and labor laws.

The new affiliation will enable better and closer cooperation and coordination between various sectors of PAM and the Ministry of Interior in the fight against visa traders and residency violators. In line with this new coordination, PAM last week began taking actions against fraudulent companies after receiving complaints against them by workers. The workers complained that they were cheated by false recruitments by these companies, and on arriving in Kuwait found their files were closed by the company and they became illegal residents.

Representative of the Inspection Department at PAM, Bashayer Al-Mutairi, called on concerned workers to approach the authority in order to complete the legal procedures against the fraudulent employers, and to allow them to transfer their visas. She added that during the first half of the year, at least 1,314 labor violations were recorded over the course of 73 inspection campaigns conducted all over Kuwait by the Tripartite Committee formed for this purpose.

Al-Mutairi said that the committee seized 600 household service workers employed in the private sector, some of whom have absconding cases. She noted that 2,029 violating workers are currently facing legal actions through the efforts of the Tripartite Committee, in addition to non-compliant employers and other violations reported by the Inspection Department.

Officials at the Authority also urged business owners to reactivate their facilities and update their records at PAM to ensure the rights of the workers and prevent them from committing residency violations, while stressing that permanently closed businesses that continue to issue residencies illegally will face penalties of a minimum of KD2000 for each residency issued, in addition to facing up to 3 years jail-time. Officials also warned that strict measures would be taken against sponsors violating the residency and labor laws.



## Park and ride, to alleviate traffic congestion

A proposal to include the global 'Park and Ride' system as one of the means of transportation in the third phase of the Fourth Master Plan of Kuwait has been tabled by Engr. Alia Al-Farsi, member of the Municipal Council.

The global Park and Ride system pivots around reducing urban traffic congestion, with drivers leaving their vehicles in parking lots on the outskirts of the city and traveling to the city center on public transport.

In a letter forwarded to the head of the Municipal Council, ngr. Al-Farsi said the project would not only help with urban traffic congestion but also reduce the problem of environmental pollution by allocating separate spaces in the various governorates for this purpose. She added that it would also support the state's strategic 2035 vision of New Kuwait, which aims to transform Kuwait into a financial and commercial center through implementation of the third phase in the fourth structural plan of the State of Kuwait.

Al-Farsi indicated that the idea of the project depends on distributing service points in six areas covering all governorates, in a specific and thoughtful manner, with the possibility of increasing service points in the future. The letter noted that the project will initially consist of multi-storey car parks spread over 80 percent of the allotted land area; private bus stops in 15 percent

of the area; while rest areas and space for commercial activities would occupy the remaining 5 percent of the area.

As outlined in the plan, the six service points for the 'Park and Ride' service are in: Khalidiya with an area of 14,842 square meters (m2); Adailiya with an area of 7,441 m2; Jabriya with an area of 6000.1 m2; South Sabahiya area with an area of 10,030 m2; West Abu Fatira with an area of 13,835 m2; and Jahra area with an area of 13,674 m2.

Al-Farsi said that the proposal comes in light of the increase in urban development and growth, increasing pressure on state facilities, such as universities, ministries areas, service centers, places of entertainment, and others.





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# Disposable income drives spending spree among citizens

Global sovereign credit-worthiness rating agency, Fitch Solutions in its assessment of the economy of Kuwait, reported that the household goods and furnishing sector in the country is booming, and it expects the share of this sector to constitute about 17 percent of the total household spending in Kuwait this year. This ratio would make the goods and furnishing sector to be the second largest category within the monthly household expenditure after personal expenditure. The agency explained that factors such as the growth in number of citizens, the rise in income and urbanization lay strong foundations for medium-term growth between 2022 and 2026 in this sector.

According to the agency, savings accumulated over the past two years prompted consumers to refurbish their homes, adding it is likely that spending on household goods and furnishings in Kuwait will continue to rise compared to other sectors in the medium term. This would increase the spending on household goods and furnishings from about KD2 billion in 2022 (5.2% of total spending of families) to KD2.9 billion by 2026.

Fitch also noted that Kuwait, like the rest of the Gulf countries, enjoys the highest rates of disposable income available to citizens, which makes it an ideal market for luxury brands, indicating that the average disposable



income for a citizen may reach KD2, 100 in 2022, and is expected to grow by 7.5 percent over the next four years to reach KD2, 300 dinars by 2026. The agency also predicted the growth in proportion of Kuwaiti families with

high incomes (\$ 50,000) from 13 percent of the total Kuwaiti population to 15 percent by 2026, noting that the Kuwaiti consumer base, young and wealthy, is increasingly interested in luxury brands.

## MoI requests parents to report drug addicted children

Anti-drugs campaign 'wuyak' (with you), organized by the Public Relations and Security Media Department at the Ministry of Interior (MoI), in cooperation with Zain Communications Company and the Kuwait Cartoon Society, held an awareness exhibition at the Avenues Mall last week.

Speaking on the occasion, Director-General of the Public Relations and Security Media Department at the Ministry of Interior, Major General Tawhid Al-Kandari, urged parents to report to the concerned authorities if their children consume drugs so that they can be effectively treated, cared for and rehabilitated, without considering it as a criminal precedent. He stressed that the administration's doors are open

to parents to answer queries related to drugs, indicating the possibility of receiving inquiries on the emergency phone (112), or through the hotline of the Directorate-General for Drug Control on phone number 1884141, or through the Ministry of Interior on the websites.

He pointed out that the exhibition aims to raise comprehensive awareness of the dangers of drugs and psychotropic substances, and their dangerous negative effects on the individual and society. The exhibition also seeks to enhance communication with the public in order to achieve integration in the efforts exerted between official agencies and community institutions.

## Information Ministry scraps superfluous consultants, committees

Abundance of redundant consultants and committees at the Ministry of Information and Culture, (MoInfo) that were draining ministry resources for very little productive work, are to be scrapped with immediate effect.

A decision in this regard was reportedly issued last week by the Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi. The decision will abolish the contracts of over 50 consultants and experts at the ministry, who were deemed to be receiving unmerited salaries for unnecessary contracts. Only a limited list of consultants genuinely needed for the ministry's media sectors are to be retained following the decision. Also, on a related note, the Undersecretary of

the Ministry of Information, Muhammad bin Naji, under the directives of Minister Al-Mutairi, is said to have issued a decision to cancel all committees and work teams in the ministry effective 21 August. The committees affected include those related to artists, broadcasters, and producers. The cancellation of committees is reportedly being done in order to ascertain the actual need of the ministry for their services, and to evaluate their productivity so far. The decision will also allow the minister to examine reports of favoritism and nepotism in the appointment of these consultants and committees in the past, and provide opportunities to qualified and experienced youth to be employed so as to support national competencies and expertise.

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# Kuwait proud of its distinguished relations with the US

Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States Jasem Albudaiwei affirmed that his country is proud of its distinguished relations with the United States of America and seeks to develop them in all fields and at all levels.

Ambassador Albudaiwei said during his meeting with Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri, founder and CEO of Reconnaissance Research, that he is proud of the trust bestowed on him by



the political leadership, which gave him the opportunity to represent his country in the United States, a reliable ally to the Kuwaiti leadership and people, pointing out that the healthy relations between the two sides are enjoying continuous development and extended cooperation at various levels.

Albudaiwei praised Reconnaissance Research and the work they do, saying: "Reconnaissance Research is a promising independent Kuwaiti initiative and an example of the true heart of the Kuwaiti society, known for their keen interest in building long lasting bridges of communication and friendship with the world." He added, "The noticeable praise and appreciation that Reconnaissance Research receives from diplomatic missions operating in Kuwait and abroad is a source of pride for us." For his part, Al-Anjeri said: "I was very pleased with meeting His Excellency the Ambassador. We have held great discussions and I look forward to the new phase that he will launch here in Washington D.C. to further strengthen the relations between the two countries."

Al-Anjeri added: "I am certain that Ambassador Albudaiwei will have a fresh impetus for advancing the long history of friendship and cooperation between the United States and Kuwait. And his distinguished experience in foreign service for more than 30 years will play a major role in his success."



## Upcoming elections rev up political arena

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The prevailing systemic dichotomy in governance between an elected parliament, and a prime minister and his cabinet who are appointed through a decree by the Amir of Kuwait, has often been cited as the main cause for the persistent dissonance in parliament, and in the political sphere in Kuwait. Finding an effective solution that is acceptable to all stakeholders is no easy task, but it is one that will undoubtedly raise its head as election approaches.

Although democracy as practiced in Kuwait is far from perfect and is beset with several shortcomings that are inherent to democratic systems around the world, as well as a few that are unique to this country, it is nevertheless the only enduring parliamentary process in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, and one of the freest in the wider Arab world.

Parliament in Kuwait is not a token institution and has the powers to supervise the executive, set up committees of inquiry, and question cabinet members and hold a vote of confidence that could lead to removal of the concerned minister. This could then catalyze a cabinet reshuffle or resignation that would lead to the Amir assigning a new government or dissolving parliament and calling for elections.

The upcoming election follows the resignation in early April of the previous cabinet headed by Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and the subsequent dissolution of parliament on 2 August. Parliamentary dissolutions are nothing new to Kuwait; the country has witnessed around 10 parliamentary annulments and over a dozen general elections since it embarked along the path of democracy and a parliamentary form of governance following independence in 1961.

With new elections scheduled for next month, a look at how the election process evolves and how representatives are elected

would be quite timely. Elections in Kuwait are a relatively straight-forward process taking into consideration the partly parliamentary, partly presidential, semi-democratic structure of governance that the country is endowed with. Elections are also based on nuances that determine who gets to vote, who does not; how electoral districts are determined and how the process often gets undermined.

Following the country's independence in 1961, the then Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah issued a decree to hold elections to a Constituent Assembly on 20 January, 1962. The 20 members elected to the Constituent Assembly, along with 11 nominated ministers, were mandated to compile a constitution to establish the system of government, the norms of operation as well as the obligations, rights and duties of citizens. The Constitution was promulgated on 11 November, 1962.

Article 6 of the Constitution states that the system of government shall be democratic, under which sovereignty resides in the people, the source of all powers. The Constitution also states that the system of government is based on the principle of separation of powers into legislative, executive and judicial. The legislative power is vested in the Amir and the National Assembly in accordance with the constitution; the Executive power is vested in the Amir, the Cabinet headed by the prime minister and the Council of Ministers; the judicial power is vested in the courts, which shall exercise it in the name of the Amir.

The legislature in Kuwait comprises a unicameral house called the National Assembly or Parliament, which comprises 50 members elected directly by universal suffrage and secret ballot from among the country's registered voters. In addition to the 50 directly elected parliamentarians, the National Assembly also includes the Prime Minister and up to a maximum of 15 ex-officio members who form the Council of Ministers. At least one of the appointed ministers,

and up to a maximum of three, has to be an elected representative.

The Constitution defines the term of the National Assembly as four calendar years commencing from the day of its first sitting. It is also mandated that elections for the new Assembly should take place within 60 days preceding the expiry of the previous parliamentary term. The term of the Assembly may be truncated if it is dissolved by an Amiri decree, which should clearly specify the reasons for the dissolution.

According to Kuwaiti law, one must be a Kuwaiti citizen over 21 years old and a registered voter in order to participate in the general elections. And, herein lies the rub; Kuwait's citizenship law, in theory, only grants citizenship to those who descended, in the male line, from residents of Kuwait in 1920. Children of women married to foreigners are, again in theory, not citizens. Thus there are now almost 796,000 eligible voters in the upcoming elections, from a Kuwaiti population of over 1.4 million.

Any Kuwaiti citizen whose age is 21-years or older, living in the country at the time of the election and registered in one of the five electoral districts, is eligible to cast a vote in that constituency. Any Kuwaiti citizen whose age is 30-years or older, resident of the country at the time of the election and with the ability to read and write in Arabic, is eligible to stand as a candidate for parliamentary elections.

At the same time, the head of state, ministers of state, members of the judiciary, executives of the Electoral Commission, members of the Electoral Commission and members of the armed forces or police force, are not allowed to stand as a candidate during the term of their office. In addition, any person, who has been sentenced to imprisonment, convicted of a felony or dishonorable crime or has been naturalized within the last 30 years, is not eligible to cast a vote or stand as a candidate.

The constituencies are organized into five electoral districts, with each district

comprising several residential areas. Districts 4 and 5 have the largest number of voters and together they comprise 38 large residential areas. However, irrespective of the residential areas they represent or the number of voters in the electoral district, each of the five districts are accorded only 10 representatives in parliament.

Each eligible voter registered in a constituency is allowed one vote, and the 10 candidates with the most number of votes are declared elected from that constituency. There is no minimum threshold of votes needed to win a seat and voting is not compulsory. If two or more candidates receive the same number of votes, the election committee draws a lot to pick the winner.

Candidates seeking a parliament seat have to make a deposit of KD500, which is reimbursed if they are able to win at least 10 votes from their constituency. However, the amount is forfeited and paid to a charity in case the candidate fails to win the minimum votes or they withdraw their candidature after the date of withdrawal. The withdrawal date is fixed at seven days before the election date.

There are no official political parties in Kuwait and candidates have to run as independents in elections. However, upon winning a seat, members usually form informal parliamentary blocs that tend to lend support and vote en-bloc on bills and issues presented before parliament. Major de facto political parties in previous parliaments included the National Democratic Alliance, Popular Action Bloc, Hadas (Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood), National Islamic Alliance and Justice and Peace Alliance. Together the blocs account for a mix of liberals, tribals, urbanities populists, nationalists and Islamist members.

Everyone, citizens and residents, voters and those who watch on the sidelines are hoping that the 2022 elections and subsequent 17th legislative term of parliament under the new government will be a change from the past.



# Indian embassy felicitates community members

## Book on Indian Diplomacy and Covid Response released locally

Embassy of India, Kuwait organized an event last week to release in Kuwait the monograph captioned 'Indian Diplomacy and Covid Response' published by Indian Council of World Affairs. The event organized under the aegis of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' marked the 75th Anniversary of India's independence and 60th anniversary of Diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait.

In his address to the gathering Ambassador of India H E Sibi George said that the purpose of the book was to present the diplomatic response by the Ministry of External Affairs and its Missions abroad to the Covid-19 challenge. It looks at how Ministry and Missions managed within the existing resources by adopting a matrix-structure in which the existing chains of command were re-engineered and assigned specific pandemic related roles over and above their normal responsibilities.

He highlighted the role that India played as a pharmacy of the world by supplying Covid-19 vaccines and medicines related to Covid-19 to over hundred countries in the world. Speaking specifically about Kuwait, Ambassador said that our cooperation in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic is the best example of which a traditional partnership of two friendly countries, India and Kuwait, can do when faced with exceptional challenges which is to help each other unconditionally in times of need.

Ambassador also thanked the Indian Community members and various Indian Community associations for providing their wholehearted support to Embassy in handling the unprecedented situation of Covid-19 effectively. Ambassador also thanked the electronic, print and online media for providing support in getting the message of Embassy on the fight against Covid 19 to each every corner of Kuwait. Ambassador also acknowledged the role played by medical professionals who worked tirelessly and selflessly to protect the human lives. He also recollected the joint cooperation shown by India and Kuwait in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic including the visit of Indian emergency medical team to Kuwait, supply of 'Made in India' vaccines to



Kuwait and shipment of Oxygen Cylinders and Liquid Medical Oxygen tankers to India with personal engagement of the leadership of the two countries and the support of the vibrant Indian community in Kuwait.

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador thanked the Indian Community, Friends of India and Kuwaiti authorities for extending support during the COVID times. He also remarked that India-Kuwait joint cooperation in tackling COVID-19 pandemic is a testimony of strong multi-dimensional bilateral relationship. He urged the Indian community to maintain the spirit of unity in all its future endeavors during the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' and also during the 'Amrit Kaal' as India heads towards the

centenary of her independence. He said that history will remember the Indian community in Kuwait not as victims, but as path breakers which challenged the COVID-19 pandemic with

unity, unmatched fortitude and bravery.

A reading session by the readers of the Embassy's Indian Readers Network (IRN) was also held where the members of the Network read some of the excerpts from this book.

Ambassador also felicitated the members of the Executive Committee of Indian Community Support Group (ICSG), Indian Doctors Forum (IDF), Indian Business Promotion Council (IBPC), IIT-IIM Alumni Association and a few major business firms for the role played by them to support the community during the pandemic and supply of oxygen to India.

The event witnessed enthusiastic response with people from different walks of life in Kuwait participating virtually as well as physically. A video presentation detailing



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# Six Best Steak and Seafood Restaurants in the Gulf

By Hermoine Macura Noble  
Special to The Times Kuwait

**M**idar - Kuwait: The first premium seafood restaurant in Kuwait, Midar has become a cultural landmark since its debut thanks to its design, authentic seafood cuisine, and traditional hospitality menu. Located in The Gardens, The Avenues, Midar offers a delightfully contemporary yet nostalgic experience, a salute to a time when fresh seafood was enjoyed daily and casually, and most importantly, prepared with love. The Founder and CEO, Basil Al-Salem, worked closely with the design team to develop a theme that focused on embracing Kuwaiti tradition and heritage, particularly in dining. Al Salem explains, "Midar is a tribute to Kuwait's golden era, an age of prosperity and simplicity. With this venue, we aim to revive that sense of joy and familiarity that is at the core of every memorable experience."

The ocean plays a crucial influence in Midar's design, with patterns emulating fish scales carved into the marble, oxidized fishing nets adorning the ceiling, vintage brass detail, and walls blanketed with sanded textures that create a bright, welcoming space. Inspired by Kuwait's desert origin and its brute urban landscape, natural, earthy hues have been used on surfaces with traditional breeze blocks on the ceiling that is key to the local heritage. The décor features homemade pottery developed by local artisans, sun dried plants, and vintage treasures showcased throughout the venue.

La Maschou - Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Located in the diplomatic quarter of the capital of Saudi Arabia, La Maschou features French cuisine at its best amidst a rustic interior reminiscent of the old winding walkways of Paris itself. Founded in 1963 in Cannes, Le Maschou is a French fine-dine restaurant specializing in steaks cooked up in their unique wood-fire grill and decorated with provençal herbs. The romantic restaurant also has a fabulous fig salad, homemade country bread, and a bresaola melon board, among other items that will tickle your tastebuds. The perfect location for a date or special occasion, enjoy Le Maschou's old-world charm and crackling fire, which is maintained during the winter months. And whatever you do, make sure you leave room for their desserts!

RHAIN - Dubai, UAE: Voted as one of the best steakhouses in Dubai, RHAIN steakhouse is hidden inside the Conrad Hotel on Sheikh Zayed Road and gets its name — an acronym

of the first letters of the owner and his family members. The meat lovers haven't created a storm amongst residents and visitors alike when it announced it would offer gilded steaks on its menu, among other delicacies. When you enter the venue, it is clear that they take fine dining seriously with a beautiful interior design and stunning cellar by Italian designer Raffaella, an open-counter butcher, live DJ set-up, snug booths, and trickling water features. It all pulls together to elevate a dining experience that revolves around marble-like slabs of meat. RHAIN General Manager Anas Choubany shares more. "The diversity and quality of the ingredients and dishes are sourced from all over the world but only from the best suppliers. For example, our meat is imported from Australia, where the quality of the meat is some of the best in the world. Each dish is a combination of culinary delights from across the globe."

With ingredients sourced from 45 different countries, some of the best options on the menu include a variety of super fresh seafood and meat dishes, including Tempura Squid, Oysters Kilpatrick, lobster, and delicious black cod, as well as Turkish-style spicy sausages and a buttery textured filet mignon, all of which are served with side dishes such as the creamy spinach, and sweet potato fries. Other must-try sides include the Rhain salad, beef sushi, T-bone steak with mustard marinade, truffle fries, and asparagus. The gold steak is, of course, the menu highlight as it is served with either a spy or an army show which is truly a memorable experience unlike any other dining experience in Dubai.

CUT by Wolfgang Puck - Manama, Bahrain: Envisioned by acclaimed chef Wolfgang Puck, CUT is a steakhouse located at the Four



Seasons in Bahrain. Puck was pivotal in the rise of California cuisine during the late 1970s. He launched his modern fusion cuisine by combining classic French techniques with Asian influences, using fresh ingredients showcasing California's agricultural bounty.

Guests are welcomed by a sleek and modern interior stretching over a pool and stunning gardens that envelope the hotel. They say the best restaurants have an open kitchen where nothing can be hidden, which is the case at CUT. The sleek and modern American steak restaurant delivers innovation at every level through its unique culinary, service, and design combination. The menu features the renowned chef's interpretation of global comfort fare,

highlighting several of his signature recipes using only the freshest, locally-sourced ingredients and the best selection of beef available in the GCC. From prime dry and wet-aged beef to premium whole fresh fish. Seafood lovers will be glad to know that CUT also offers a shellfish plateau with oysters, shrimp, king crab legs, and two pounds of lobster with four sauces, among other delicacies. The most popular meat dishes are the striploin from Argentina and the dry-aged rib eye with house-made steak sauce. Great side dishes include the Cavatappi Pasta 'Mac & Cheese' and Sautéed Brussels with Garlic Aioli. Finish your main meal with one of the two desserts: Banana Cream Pie with Madagascar vanilla crème brûlée and banana sorbet or the classic Sticky Date Pudding with cream cheese frosting.

Nusr-Et - Doha, Qatar: Located in the Sheraton Grand Doha Resort in West Bay, Nusr-Et needs no introduction. The Turkish restaurant is owned by Salt Bae, aka Nusret Gökçe, who went viral for his technique for seasoning meat back in January 2017 and sometimes even feeding it to guests. The steaks here are mostly charcoal-grilled with a dash of sea salt and a sprinkling of ground pepper. They are served on wooden butcher's blocks. The Lokum steak is a seared filet favorite — again, three cuts that are sweet and tender. The beef in most dishes melts in your mouth, which is probably

why he has garnered such a huge following. Sides like the Al dente brussels sprouts are mixed with diced veal bacon — a quirky and well-executed accompaniment. The pistachio baklava is Nusr-Et's signature dessert made up of layers of Turkey's famed vanilla ice cream from Gaziantep amongst the coarsely ground pistachios and slivers of filo pastry. Crunchy, crispy, velvety, and not too sweet, baklava is usually decadent and heavy; however, there is a lightness to this version. Aside from the chance to run into Salt Bae himself, Nusr-Et is worth a visit for fantastic steaks and a fun experience.

Asado - Muscat, Oman: Featuring South American flavors for steak lovers, Asado is a top-notch steakhouse located at the Sheraton Oman — a one-stop shop for high-quality meats amid uniquely designed, wild-inspired decor. Guests can sample tender meats carved table-side or enjoy creative sharing plates, sizzling pans, and marble muddlers, enabling guests to mix their own salsas and marvel at live plating.

Asado offers indoor and outdoor seating options by their manicured lawn by the pool, which is great for cooler evenings and where you can get a closer look at the live barbecue station. Either way, each succulent skewer will be brought to your table, and you can go 'all knives out' cowboy-style and cut yourself a generous portion. The table service enables you to choose from an unlimited oncoming of meat, and a coaster-like plaque card serves as the controller — keep it at 'More Please,' and the servers come forward with another helping; turn to 'My Dessert Please,' and you'll be brought a fine selection of the chef's choice of pastries. Salads and starters are displayed buffet-style if you feel like a second helping.

From exclusive cuts, rumps, and loins — the short ribs are unique; they are slow-cooked for 36 hours before being done. From classic options like barbecued chicken, lamb chops, and prawns to flank and sirloin steaks all marinated in signature spices, the Gaucho theme night is a paradise for those who have the appetite for meat. Gaucho Thursdays are when diners feast on some of the finest cuts in an all-you-can-eat session served, rodizio style.

## Hermoine Macura-Noble



The first Australian English speaking News Anchor in the Middle East. She is also the Author of Faces of the Middle East and Founder of US-based 501c3 charity — The House of Rest which helps to ease the suffering of victims of war. For more from our Contributing Editor, you can follow her on Instagram, here.





# Health Messaging in the Disinformation Age



**William A. Haseltine**

*A scientist, biotech entrepreneur, and infectious disease expert, is Chair and President of the global health think tank ACCESS Health International.*

As the director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Rochelle Walensky, recently acknowledged, poor public-health communication and messaging throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has damaged the public's trust in health agencies and institutions. This, in turn, contributed to well-known problems such as vaccine hesitancy, non-compliance with mask recommendations and other protective measures, and general misinformation about the virus and how it is transmitted.

According to a 2021 poll from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, only 52 percent of Americans now place a great deal of trust in the CDC, and only 37 percent have much confidence in the National Institutes of Health or the Food and Drug Administration. State health departments fare little better — they are trusted by just 41 percent of Americans, with local health departments trusted by 44 percent, and the same poll shows that positive ratings of the public health system declined from 43 percent to 34 percent between 2009 and 2021.

Clearly, public-health agencies need to win back the public's trust, not just to combat crises like COVID-19 and monkeypox, but also to address a wider range of ongoing health issues. This process must start with a commitment to community engagement, partnerships across other sectors such as housing and education, effective communication at every level, and transparency and integrity in decision-making.

Public-health officials often must base their recommendations on incomplete data; as the data evolve, so will the recommendations. However, in a misguided effort to appear authoritative, public-health officials are rarely transparent about the nuances and fluid nature of what they are communicating.

A perfect example is the early advice on how SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted. The CDC was adamant that the coronavirus was spreading on surfaces and not through the air, rather than acknowledging that airborne transmission was still a strong possibility. This approach bred confusion and distrust, because the CDC eventually had to change its advice (as it should have foreseen). After acknowledging that SARS-CoV-2 was spreading through droplets, it finally also conceded that it was spreading through aerosol particles.

As this example shows, credibility often gets confused with infallibility, resulting in public-health officials who may be slow to admit mistakes — further undermining their credibility. Transparency is key, especially at a time when peddlers of online misinformation will seize every opportunity to discredit public-health officials. Successful public-health communication establishes credibility by being effective, not by being unchanging.

Another cornerstone of sound communication is clarity. Public-health officials must explain how data and recommendations relate to people's everyday lives. Whether the information is correct or incorrect is a moot question if the public does not understand what is being communicated.

Here, US officials failed the messaging test again when they did not make clear that COVID-19 vaccines' effectiveness was measured by hospitalizations, not infections. The public believed that vaccines would block transmission and infection; but when the Delta and Omicron variants emerged and caused breakthrough infections to surge, distrust and 'booster-shot fatigue' duly followed. As of August 3, only 32 percent of Americans had received their first



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booster shot. In this case, public-health officials could have used the example of the Salk polio vaccine to assure the public that a vaccine does not need to prevent infection or transmission outright to eradicate a disease. Or, they could have emphasized how much the vaccines reduce the burden on our hospitals.

Unfortunately, other historical lessons seem not to have sunk in. Many public-health officials have been committing a grave error by stigmatizing monkeypox as a disease that only threatens gay, bisexual, and other men who

by the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Health Services Planning Councils. These are community groups appointed by local officials whose members represent the general public, people living with HIV, funded service providers, and other health and social service organizations. Planning Council members work together to identify the care needs of people living with HIV. They then determine which services are the highest priority, and how much funding should be committed to each. This model of inclusive decision-making

could be applied more broadly to public-health planning and resource allocation.

The current climate of 'alternative facts' and rampant disinformation presents many challenges to effective public-health communication. But by learning from past mistakes and developing messages that are clear, inclusive, and conveyed by the right sources, we can start the difficult but necessary process of rebuilding trust in public-health agencies before the next big crisis strikes.

“The public believed that vaccines would block transmission and infection; but when the Delta and Omicron variants emerged and caused breakthrough infections to surge, distrust and 'booster-shot fatigue' duly followed

have sex with men. Yet while it is true that this population has been disproportionately affected by the current outbreak, monkeypox can be transmitted in any situation where there is close skin-to-skin contact with lesions.

By depicting monkeypox as a sexually transmitted infection, public-health officials could give people the false impression that they are not at risk, preventing them from seeking a diagnosis or isolating if they do contract the virus. The situation is not dissimilar to the (incorrect) early messaging about HIV/AIDS spreading only among homosexual populations.

More broadly, public-health messages are best understood and most likely to be believed when they come from trusted individuals within the communities that need to be reached. The messenger is often as important as the message, especially in communities where structural racism and historical traumas have left people disinclined to trust medical authorities.

Rather than issuing authoritative statements and assuming that they will be heeded, local public-health officials should think of their messaging as being part of an inclusive conversation. They should seek out community voices and trusted advocates such as faith leaders, shelter managers, and food-bank directors to collaborate on messaging and reaching populations that may be vulnerable to health disparities.

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# Economics in the New Age of National Security



**Rabah Arezki**

*Former chief economist and vice president at the African Development Bank, and former chief economist of the World Bank's Middle East and North Africa Region, is a senior fellow at Harvard Kennedy School.*

The global economy has entered a new age of national security. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the vulnerability caused by overreliance on global supply chains and the failure of coordination in tackling global health risks. But what has really ushered in this new era is Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and sabotage of the global economy.

Beyond its human and economic toll, the war in Ukraine has sharply increased the divisions between the Western and Eastern geopolitical blocs centered around the United States and China, respectively. Russia has weaponized its energy and food exports to divide Europeans and has sought to stoke anti-Western sentiment in developing countries. China has sided with Russia and affirmed its support for the Kremlin's security concerns. Tensions over Taiwan, a leading global semiconductor manufacturer, are another major flash point in US-China relations.

These developments should be seen as aftershocks of the world economy's increasing polarization, underpinned by the asymmetry of the two superpowers' political systems. It is no coincidence that several frozen conflicts have recently become active, and that many medium-size and regional powers are behaving more assertively.

Unlike the Soviet Union during the Cold War, China is both a strategic and an economic rival to the US. China's growing trade and financial ties with the Global South help to explain the shift in many poorer countries' allegiances vis-à-vis America. But the decision by many developing countries in March to abstain from voting on United Nations General Assembly resolutions condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine surprised US and European officials.

The growing geopolitical and economic split between the superpowers should prompt a paradigm shift in economic thinking. Economists have long regarded national security as a separate field of study with little relevance to their analysis of markets — and for good reason: their profession, like the global economy, has flourished amid the relative stability of the post-World War II era.

The Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization — with the West



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“ Growing geopolitical and economic split between the superpowers should prompt a major shift in economic thinking. Economists have long regarded national security as a separate field of study with little relevance to their analysis of markets ”

and specifically the US providing an implicit backstop — have helped support the global economy's expansion. Since 1960, global GDP has increased about eightfold. And as a result of the Chinese economy's formidable rise in recent decades, China's GDP (measured at market exchange rates) could surpass that of the US by 2030.

But today's geopolitical polarization risks fragmenting the global economy in multiple ways. There are strong indications that this is already happening. Former US President Donald Trump's 'America First' approach and instigation of a tariff war with China dealt a sharp blow to free markets and free trade, and Joe Biden's administration has followed suit. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen recently advocated 'friend-shoring' supply chains to trusted allies as part of America's strategic response to the growing Chinese challenge. But deciding who counts as a 'friend' may be difficult; using criteria such as a country's

commitment to democracy could result in a rather small group.

In parallel, a growing number of countries have shown interest in joining the BRICS, a group comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. China is promoting a new global governance system supported by new organizations. And China and Russia are looking to develop alternatives to the SWIFT payment system. That, too, will not be easy, not least because payment systems are intertwined with issues related to reserve currencies. A litmus test for China is whether it can find an alternative to US Treasuries in which to invest its sizable foreign-exchange reserves.

There have been many historical episodes of fragmentation, including trade wars, but perhaps none so pervasive between two economic and strategic superpowers. The trend is evident in stock-exchange delistings, sectors such as microchips and

telecommunications technology, agricultural land sales, energy, and the defense industry. And the fragmentation of supply chains for both goods and services could increase further as a result of non-tariff barriers such as security, privacy, and phytosanitary standards or problems related to the interoperability of electronic and digital equipment.

The trade-offs between economic efficiency and national security are enormous. Deviating from globalized markets will no doubt reduce efficiency, stoke inflation, and leave hundreds of millions of people worse off. Economists should therefore rethink their approach to topics such as comparative advantage, market integration, and how to promote convergence.

In this new environment where security of supply has become paramount, the design of value chains will have to minimize the risk of weaponization. And while free markets define efficient pricing better than any other mechanism, fragments of the global economy will likely function independently with autonomous pricing and sourcing.

Tackling increasing economic fragmentation and curbing its costs will undoubtedly require economists to address the underlying sources of division. Building trust and limiting uncertainty between the two superpowers and their allies will thus be vital. But that will require something altogether different from fresh economic thinking.



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# Thinking hard can be tiring

People engaged in work that involves heavy thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, and other processes taxing their mental faculties, could experience what doctors often refer to as 'cognitive fatigue'. In layman terms this is usually described as being mentally exhausted, or more colorfully as being burned out or brain-fried. While signs of physical exhaustion are easily recognizable, such as limbs feeling heavy, eyes feeling droopy, and dropping energy levels, indications of mental fatigue are less easily discernible.

Nevertheless, there are several subtle signs of mental fatigue that you should be aware of, and take care to address, in order to ensure your mental health and wellbeing. Among these indications are, feeling overwhelmed or run down; being out of touch with your feelings and emotions; lacking interest or enthusiasm for things that you used to enjoy; stomachaches and digestive problems.

Other symptoms include head pain; changes in appetite; sleep problems, including disrupted sleep or fatigue; and increased cynicism, apathy, lack of motivation, and trouble focusing, as well as other changes in mood or emotions. If any or all of these signs sound familiar to what you are experiencing now, then you could be suffering from cognitive fatigue.

Researchers have for long been conducting studies to gain a better understanding of the mechanism behind cognitive fatigue. Now, a team of scientists in France, working in collaboration with colleagues in other universities around the world, say that the metabolite, glutamate, could be a major factor behind cognitive fatigue.

Metabolites are substances produced during metabolism (digestion or other bodily chemical processes) in the body. Glutamate is the most abundant metabolite in the brain, where it serves as a neurotransmitter, or chemical messenger, facilitating communication between brain cells.

For their study, the researchers asked participants to complete a series of tasks after which they were told to make various economic



choices. The scientists then looked at the metabolites in participants' brains using magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS), a type of medical imaging scan. The results revealed that tasks that were more cognitively demanding led to a buildup of glutamate in the lateral prefrontal cortex (LPFC) of the brain. The LPFC has been shown to be the part of the brain that plays an important role in several tasks, including: inhibition, paying attention, planning, problem-solving, working memory.

Researchers found that once glutamate accumulation occurs, it requires extra energy to activate the LPFC. In other words, after you have made a lot of choices — especially tough choices that take a lot of mental power — the brain requires progressively more energy to conduct its activities and this could result in the cognitive fatigue we experience. While it was not the main focus of their research, the scientists also found that glutamate concentrations decrease during sleep.

While this new neuro-metabolic theory of cognitive fatigue is interesting in its own right, the

question remains: What can be done to safeguard the brain from becoming fatigued in the first place?

Below are a few suggestions to help you recharge and avoid future burnout. To begin, consider the mind-body connection. Previous studies have consistently shown the strong link between physical and mental health in ensuring an individual's overall well-being.

**Sleep:** As shown by studies on LPFC, sleep is fundamental to lowering glutamate buildup, and getting enough sleep regularly is probably the best way to fight cognitive fatigue. Your body needs sleep even more than usual when you have a lot going on. Cutting back on sleep may seem like a good way to get more things done, but the more likely outcome is that you will feel exhausted and take longer to get things done.

**Proper food:** Whether it is mental or physical fatigue, exhaustion could make you turn to comforting or soothing foods, especially those that may have a lot of sugar, or empty calories. Instead, when you feel the need for a cognitive boost, try to make sure you get nutrients from

high-fiber foods like oatmeal, beans, and nuts; protein-rich foods like yogurt, lean meats, eggs, and fatty fish; whole fruits and vegetables, especially blueberries, broccoli, and oranges; as well as whole grains.

Also, take care to stay hydrated and eat at regular times. You might feel like you are too busy to eat, but going hungry can lower your blood sugar and deprive you of cognitive energy.

**Enough Exercise:** A tired brain can sometimes benefit from a quick bout of refreshing exercise. It does not have to be strenuous exercises; any exercise has been found to be beneficial. If you can only manage a 15-minute walk on your lunch break, you are still benefiting by giving your brain a break. Sure, you could spend those 15 minutes getting more stuff done, but you will probably be able to work more efficiently if you give yourself a break. **Break down work:** When you are already mentally exhausted, thinking about a big job you have to finish can seem too daunting for you to even make a start. Instead of letting thoughts of the entire project overwhelm you, try breaking the task down into smaller parts, and tackling each segment separately.

**Avoid multi-tasking:** We often bounce between multiple tasks in a one-hour block under the assumption that it improves our productivity. Instead, all it does is increase the buildup of glutamate that leads to cognitive fatigue, which could result in poor decision-making. It is important not to make critical decisions when feeling mentally fatigued.

Cognitive fatigue can also be relieved by mental relaxation, meditation, and mindfulness exercises. Besides the short-term consequences of impairing decision-making, increased glutamate levels in the brain have also been shown to impact long-term health. Excess glutamate is found to be excitotoxic, meaning that over the long term it can increase neurodegeneration or death of brain cells. Learning the skills needed to regulate your brain's level of excitement is important for your long-term cognition.

## Scientists get closer to an artificial heart

Heart disease, the leading cause of death in many countries, is so deadly in part because the heart, unlike other organs, cannot repair itself after injury. This inability is why developing a human heart that can replace a defective one has been the Holy Grail for cardiac medicine researchers for ages.

To build a human heart from the ground up, researchers need to replicate the unique structures that make up the heart. This includes recreating helical geometries, which creates the twisting motion critical to pump blood at high volumes from the heart's lower chamber, the ventricle, during heart beats. This has so far proven elusive.

Over the centuries, physicians and scientists have built a comprehensive understanding of the heart's structure but the purpose of spiraling muscles has remained frustratingly hard to study. In 1969, Edward Sallin, at the University of Alabama in the US, argued that the heart's helical alignment is critical to the percentage of how much blood the ventricle pumps with each contraction.

Now, bioengineers from Harvard's School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) have developed the first biohybrid model of human ventricles with helically aligned beating cardiac cells. This advancement was



made possible using a new technique used in textile manufacturing labeled Focused Rotary Jet Spinning (FRJS).

To test Sallin's theory, the SEAS researchers used the FRJS system to control the alignment of spun fibers on which they could grow cardiac cells.

The first step of FRJS works like a cotton candy machine — a liquid polymer solution

is loaded into a reservoir and pushed out through a tiny opening by centrifugal force as the device spins. As the solution leaves the reservoir, the solvent evaporates, and the polymers solidify to form fibers. Then, a focused airstream controls the orientation of the fiber as they are deposited on a collector. The team found that by angling and rotating the collector, the fibers in the stream would

align and twist around the collector as it spun, mimicking the helical structure of heart muscles.

After spinning, the ventricles were seeded with human stem cell derived cardiomyocyte cells, which are responsible for generating contractile force in an intact heart. Within about a week, several thin layers of beating tissue covered the scaffold, with the cells following the alignment of the fibers beneath. The beating ventricles mimicked the same twisting or wringing motion present in human hearts.

The researchers also showed that muscle alignment does, in fact, dramatically increase how much blood the ventricle can pump with each contraction. The researchers compared the ventricle pumping ability between ventricles made from helical aligned fibers and those made from circumferentially aligned fibers. They found on every front, the helically aligned tissue outperformed the circumferentially aligned tissue.

The team also demonstrated that the process can be scaled up to the size of an actual human heart and even larger. The Harvard Office of Technology Development has protected the intellectual property relating to this project and is exploring commercialization opportunities.





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