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Cyprus envoy Mavros praises depth and strength of Cypriot-Kuwaiti relations

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A new parliament, a new beginning



TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Inaugurating the first session of the 17th legislative term of the National Assembly on 18 October, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah urged the executive and legislative arms of government to open a new chapter in their relations and to work together, with their focus on the country's development and the well-being of its citizens.

Advising the parliament members to put aside their disputes and to "abstain from wasting the assembly sessions with bickering and quarrels ... and raising their voices in breach of norms of dialogue", the Crown Prince noted that "the people and the ruling family were partners and bear responsibility for the welfare and prosperity of the nation".

Addressing lawmakers, he stated: "It was the will of the people that brought you to Parliament without any intervention from our side. Our speech today before your Parliament is a new covenant, which is an address of guidance and a message from the political leadership to the children of my nation, and to the authorities, about how work should be done during the coming period."

A day earlier, in his speech to the new Cabinet following their constitutional oath-taking, the Crown Prince declared: "You have before you major issues and many files which are of great importance to us. Each one of you has to apply the law in a fair and equal manner, boost integrity and transparency, execute issues of priority for the political leaders, and the faithful people of Kuwait."

He added that loyalty for the nation and His Highness the Amir, respect



of the constitution and application of laws, protecting freedoms and interests, and the funds of people should be the foundation of the government's action. He urged the new Cabinet to work out a strategy to protect and preserve the security of the nation, implement development

projects, improve healthcare and education, provide housing units, as well as tackle corruption and pursue the corrupt".

In his speech on the occasion, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah expressed deep and sincere gratitude

to His Highness the Crown Prince for the confidence vested in the Cabinet. He promised to exert all efforts and place all available resources so as to attain the aspirations of citizens, and to implement full-scale reform programs in all domains. The prime minister also underlined that the aspired reforms would entail positive and constructive cooperation with the National Assembly, all segments of the society and the civil society associations.

Following the opening, the new session of parliament got underway on a subdued note, with legislators and ministers evidently imbibing the reconciliatory spirit embedded in the Crown Prince's speech. A new sense of cooperation, consensus and understanding appeared to prevail in the hallowed Abdullah Al Salem Hall of parliament,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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Cyprus envoy Mavros praises depth and strength of Cypriot-Kuwaiti relations

STAFF REPORT

Ambassador of Cyprus H.E. Michael Mavros praised the depth and strength of the Cypriot-Kuwaiti relations, which he described as historical and developed, pointing out that the two countries share common denominators, the most important of which is respect for international law and adherence to the United Nations Charter.

The ambassador was speaking during an interview he recently accorded to select media personnel. Referring to Kuwaiti diplomacy as a unique school and its diplomats as highly professional, the Cypriot envoy stressed that Kuwait's balanced foreign policy and its role in supporting and promoting stability at the regional and international levels are universally praised. He also highlighted the cooperation between Cyprus and Kuwait on many files and issues of common interest on the regional and international arenas.

Evaluating the relations between Cyprus and Kuwait, its past and present, its stages of development, and its future prospects, the envoy said these relations stem from Cyprus' special and long-term interaction with the Middle East. He went on to note, "Thanks to Cyprus' strategic location, we have deep-rooted relations with the Middle East as reflected in history, culture and common values. This is reflected in the foreign policy of Cyprus, which attaches special importance to the Middle East and the Gulf regions, which has about 25 percent of its diplomatic missions around the world.

"Cyprus and Kuwait are moderate and like-minded states that understand the importance of the rule of international law in our global system and adherence to the Charter of the United Nations and United Nations Security Council resolutions, both having suffered from flagrant violations of their sovereignty. We are among the few countries that have had the experience of the post-war era, and both are two relatively small countries. We gained our independence in the early 1960s and in 1967, we appointed Fahd Al Mojel as our honorary consul in Kuwait, and he became the face of Cyprus in Kuwait for many decades and is still our friend and supporter.

"The majority of Kuwaitis discovered Cyprus in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War, many of whom obtained vacation homes in Cyprus and witnessed the customs and other societal denominators between the two countries. To this day, we are pleased to see many Kuwaitis visiting our country every year.



Ambassador of Cyprus
H.E. Michael Mavros



Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of Cyprus Kornelius Korneliou

“Cyprus and Kuwait are moderate and like-minded states that understand the importance of the rule of international law in our global system and adherence to the Charter of the United Nations and United Nations Security Council resolutions, both having suffered from flagrant violations of their sovereignty.”

"Following the opening of embassies in 2011, several high-ranking officials in Cyprus visited Kuwait including the President in 2013 and the Foreign Ministers in 2015, 2017 and 2018 with the aim of developing relations with the signing of several agreements and memoranda of understanding. After the Corona pandemic, our bilateral interaction returned to its tracks with the visit of former Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed to Cyprus last January, and his subsequent visit to Brussels at the invitation of his Cypriot counterpart, and the celebration of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations."

The Cyprus envoy disclosed that about 15 agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoU) have been signed between the two countries. These documents form the basis of bilateral relations between the two countries and provide the legal framework for them. Among these bilateral agreements and MoUs signed are: Agreements on mutual exemption from short-stay visas for diplomatic service and special passport holders; cooperation in

higher education, sciences, public health and medical sciences; avoidance of double taxation, and cooperation in the field of tourism. Some of the other documents relate to air services, technical arrangements relating to the arrival and departure of Kuwaitis to the Republic of Cyprus in the event of evacuation from the Middle East through Cyprus, and notes of political consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the two countries as well as cooperation in the energy sector, protection of cultural heritage, and several more. We are currently working on a few agreements in the field of culture and arts, sports cooperation, seawater desalination and wastewater treatment and reuse.

Last January during the visit of the former Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed to Cyprus, Cyprus signed a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of a joint committee for cooperation with the aim of strengthening all areas of bilateral cooperation, dialogue and information exchange. It is possible that the

first meeting will be held during the next visit at the level of foreign ministers.

Admitting that the volume of trade exchange between the two countries is not up to the level of ambition and is not commensurate with the capabilities available in the two countries, the ambassador said, "We are striving to increase bilateral trade, which currently ranges between 6 and 9 million Euros annually; with the trade balance is in favor of Cyprus. Exports from Cyprus include mainly medicines, fresh fish and dairy products (hallum cheese), and as for Kuwait's exports to Cyprus, it is mainly petroleum by-products."

Turning to Kuwaiti investments in Cyprus, Ambassador Mavros highlighted the favorable investment climate and distinct opportunities available in a number of sectors in Cyprus. Noting that there is an increase in the number of Kuwaiti indirect investments, he added that there are no major direct investment projects so far. "Investment is one of the areas that we are working on. At the present time, there are promising investment opportunities in Cyprus in the fields of tourism, health care and education and renewable energy sources, and we will soon have a delegation from Cyprus Invest, the government's investment authority, to promote this in Kuwait," said the envoy.

On the issue of academic cooperation between the two countries, he said the Cypriot universities are internationally recognized for their efficiency and provide a wonderful and high-quality level of education. He added, "We welcome Kuwaiti students to study in our country, and there are some cooperation agreements between a number of universities in the two countries, but the number of Kuwaiti students in Cyprus is very low at the present time and since my arrival I have been working assiduously to create the conditions to bring in more Kuwaiti students to our country, and I expect to get some results next year."

On another level, the Cyprus envoy said, "I must admit that I did not fully realize how deep the roots of democracy in Kuwait are, but since I came I am very impressed with the Kuwaiti parliamentary experience. I can see the challenges that exist in the cooperation between the government and parliament, but I firmly believe that the country is capable of overcoming them. I would like to see more participation of women in Parliament because they are an important component of a more balanced decision-making. I also admire the public debate in this very open and lively country.

COUNTINUED ON PAGE 19

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Two skin care brands, one family

The Soap Box Kuwait, and BLOOM, The Cosmeceutical for Arabia

By Nourah Al-Oseimi
Exclusive to The Times, Kuwait

Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a lavender farm somewhere in Ireland. Imagine the fresh, clean air. Breathe it in, breathe it out.

I walk into a uniquely spa-like store on a Thursday afternoon and the scent of freshly cut lavender takes over my senses and transports me somewhere else completely. I am standing amongst visuals of a beautiful, violet-colored oasis on my left and rose gold and pearl jewel-like bottles on my right and I quietly observe as Astrid Al Hadeedi converses with two customers about different skin care products and soaps. Astrid makes no assumptions; she simply listens to what they are looking for and offers friendly advice. She does not push them to buy anything, instead she wants them to know the choice is entirely theirs. I immediately deduce that she cares about her customers, and she respects her product.

I turn to Yousef Al Hadeedi, Astrid's son, who greets me with the same warmth as Astrid and he begins to tell me the origins of how his parents met and how that story, from so long ago, set into motion the events that followed. "My Dad is a surgeon, and my Mum is a registered nurse. They met in an operating room! My dad has naturally very dry skin and being a surgeon, he frequently has to scrub his hands. Mum, who has always had an interest in health

and wellness, suggested he start using handmade soaps which are cleansing but also moisturizing. Such soaps were not available in Kuwait at that time."

Astrid chips in, "We started buying handmade cold process soap whenever we went abroad and we realized it made quite a significant improvement so every time we traveled we would stock up. But soap is heavy and soon we realized that this lovely soap was taking up a lot of our baggage allowance! And then a very dear friend gave me a box of handmade soap. They had been made in Kuwait, by an American lady (who soon after left Kuwait). I thought to myself, "Well if she can make it in Kuwait, then so can I!" Astrid continues to tell me more about the origins of the business as well as each person's role within it.

"I'm very much a self-taught soap maker who also loves the science of skincare. After lots of trials and experiments I knew I had hit the magic formula. Our soaps are 100 percent natural and we use only pure, plant-based essential oils to scent our soaps. That is quite a luxury in these chemical-laden days. Of course, the more soap I made, the more our house smelt lovely. By then I was making for the wider family and giving it to friends as gifts. Very quickly I noticed some people felt embarrassed to ask for more and asked me if they could order and pay for the soaps I was making. I have a Health and Wellness background, I am not one bit business oriented so I suggested to Yousef, who has a degree in Business Administration, why don't we go into business together?" We already had a 'boutique' style lavender farm in Ireland, which we planted for fun and for its beauty in 2013. So somehow it seemed that all things were 'coming together'.

A simple question that prompted the establishment of a high-quality business by a family who really care about customer service, offering premium products and



above all, nurturing one another and allowing each other to shine.

"I'm only 33 percent of the business. Two of my children make up the other 33 percent of the business. Yousef handles the business, marketing and facilities management. The other 33 percent lies in the branding, which is a vital element to our business. In a saturated market, what will make you pick one product over another? We are enormously proud of the branding of our two separate skin care lines, The Soap Box Kuwait and BLOOM, The Cosmeceutical for Arabia. The person who gets the claim to fame for this is Lara, Yousef's sister and my daughter. An Art Director by profession, Lara has ensured that our branding and our adherence to our brand ethos exceeds most of the international names available in Kuwait. Every 'touch point' for customers is elegant, luxurious, easy, and tempting. Customers frequently praise us for this.

Astrid provided me with details on how their family set up their business as a partnership following which I asked both her and Yousef about how their operation was funded.

Astrid recalls how the business was funded in its early days and how the support they obtained from the Government really helped them lay a foundation for their first brand, The Soap Box Kuwait, a business created by a Kuwaiti family, in Kuwait and for the people of Kuwait and beyond. "At the same time as we thought of building a business, the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Sabah (Rest in Peace) had initiated the Kuwait National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises. This fund was created to provide financing to suitable Kuwaiti entrepreneurs who wanted to start their own business.

To qualify for funding, entrepreneurs had to attend a two-month training program on all aspects of entrepreneurship and business planning. Then we had to submit

our detailed plan and vision for the first three years. We were successful and received some funding that we put towards our own capital. Within six months of receiving funding we had set up our shop, website and production facility." Yousef chirps in and adds, "Our initial growth was slow, but in our second year two extremely entrepreneurial girls started Qout Farmer's Market which was a wonderful marketing help for us. Using lavender we grow on our own lavender farm in Ireland, we like to say that we are mixing the clean and green of Ireland with the culture of the Arabian Hammam. We were completely aligned with Qout's ethos of farm to table, though we were farm to spa! Based on the success of Qout Market, we were being requested to join different markets across the country which was a wonderful salute to us. We were not very well into the digital world at the time."

It was not long before customers of The Soap Box Kuwait started asking this duo for products for the face that were just as great as the ones they were producing for the body. They knew too that businesses do not stand still, they either grow or become more specialized.

Astrid and Yousef decided to grow and in late 2020 they launched BLOOM, The Cosmeceutical for Arabia. Bloom is a facial skincare brand that is designed specifically for the hot, dry, and frequently dusty climate we have in Kuwait and for the Arabian skin type exposed to that climate. It is the first time anyone has scientifically developed a product for the Arabian skin type. Astrid explained to me the rationale and inspiration behind Bloom as a concept.

"Bloom is targeted towards the modern, educated Kuwaiti. It is minimal, just three products containing all seven actives needed to protect, nourish and enhance facial skin that is exposed to a seriously harsh climate.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6





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Slovak Ambassador holds farewell reception

Ambassador of the Slovak Republic, H.E. Igor Hajdusek completes his four-year tenure as ambassador of his country to Kuwait on 30 October.

Addressing a farewell event arranged for him at the Palm Beach Hotel by his diplomatic colleagues, Ambassador Hajdusek said, "After almost four years here, on 30 October, I will complete my term as Slovak Ambassador to Kuwait. I will also be concluding over 30 years of active diplomatic service to my country and will retire with much satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment.

"During my tenure in Kuwait I held many cooperative events with the Kuwaiti side, in the political, business, cultural, and sport areas, as well as facilitating medical treatment for many Kuwaitis at our well-known

Piestany Spa," he added.

"On a more personal note, I thank you for giving me your precious time and attending this farewell event. I would like to take this opportunity to say goodbye to you and to extend my sincere thanks for the care, support and trust I have received during my last four years here in the country.



"Thank you all for the understanding that has always been there, your kind cooperation with me and the Embassy of the Slovak Republic. I would like to thank the heads of missions in Kuwait for your friendship and sharing of experience, and

representatives of the media for their excellent coverage of our events. Special thanks goes to management of Palms Beach Hotel headed by General Manager Mr. Rabih Al Atrash, and

Sales Manager Mr. Ahmed Dacrouri, and to staff of the hotel for always supporting us; and to Mr. Nematallah and Mr. Barghaut for their support in cultural activities and during business events, and to all of you who are here today with us.

"Finally, at this pivotal point in my life, I would like to point out that at the end of my tenure in Kuwait, I will retire after long service

at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic.

"A new chapter of my life will be opened for me to enjoy my personal life with family and close friends. I hope to be in touch with all of you. Together with my wife Lydka, I wish everyone good health, happiness and success, and for the host country more progress and prosperity. Thank you and God bless all."

Two skin care brands, one family

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

We need to get real on this excessive consumption and excessive purchasing of products that are not suited for us or are left in a drawer to expire because we have too much. Also, so much of the available skincare in Kuwait is produced for Northern American and European skin types living in more temperate climates.

"We decided to be the bridge between what dermatologists were saying about what our ladies in Kuwait are complaining of and what cosmetic scientists were able to produce." Astrid further elaborates on her involvement in the product development process, and I find that my initial observations of her with her customers were completely accurate.

"We have taken the knowledge of what the problem is with the solutions of what really, really works and brought that to the cosmetic laboratories to make that product. We spent an enormous amount of money in developing a product regime in which we hoped the result of the product would sell the product. And then along came COVID-19. "So we are back a little in time" says Astrid, "relaunching a relatively new brand!"

I turn to Yousef and ask him how family dynamics affect their ability to run their business together. Do they struggle at all?

"Everybody has their part in their own way. We make decisions together but each person has their own area of specialty. We've been doing it for a while so we kind of know what each other's strengths and weaknesses are and that helps in a way. If we disagree on something, we debate it."

I turn to Astrid with the same question.

"My husband, he is the most ambassadorial, diplomatic and wonderful leader. When things are going in a way that isn't helpful he will come in with that word of advice and it will be exactly spot on. Because he's not in the situation, he can see it for what it really is. It's charming also that our Soap Box Kuwait logo has the letter S in it. S for Soap and Sabon and my husband's initial!

Yousef has a very easygoing and extremely patient personality, I am the complete opposite, I am the most impatient person in the world which drives my children bonkers but at the same time, I think that they recognize it's my determination to get things done. It's a synergy.

Seeing how family-oriented the Al-Hadeedi family is truly warmed my heart. As an owner-

managed business, Astrid and I joked about the culture of 'modeer' (Arabic word for manager) in Kuwait and how most owners are not as involved in their day-to-day business as Astrid, Yousef and Lara are.

Yousef further elaborates. "We are always trying to think outside the box, to connect with our customers and grow our customer base. From time to time we conduct workshops here [at Dar Al Awadhi] as this is a private area during the evenings. In the past we've had soapmaking demos, 'make your own body scrub', 'understanding facial oils and serums', etc.. A lot of people understand us through these events. They're very in tune with the brand, they've met the founder and the product developer."

I found myself wondering whether having a physical store was warranted considering The Soap Box's strong digital presence and same-day shipping policy for online orders.

Yousef, the business mastermind, quickly responds, "In any business, having a bricks and mortar as well as an online presence actually builds on both platforms. And when we attended Qout Market, we could always say that 'we're in Dar Al Awadhi' and it brought a lot more trust and strength to the brand. It's a cultural/Middle Eastern thing where people want to smell/touch/feel the product and they love meeting us."

I couldn't agree more. I certainly loved meeting Yousef and Astrid and learning about their family, their business, and their ethos as entrepreneurs.

As our conversation ended, both Yousef and Astrid wanted to emphasize how excited they are for what the future holds. They have aspirations for Bloom to grow and for The Soap Box to expand across the country. "In an ideal world we'll see both brands reach the wider GCC" I, myself, have no doubts over the wonderful successes that the future will hold for this incredible family.

To learn more about Bloom, please visit www.mybloomskinicare.com

To learn more about The Soap Box, please visit www.thesoapboxkuwait.com

Nourah Al-Oseimi is a 30-year-old Kuwaiti who holds a Master's degree in Business Administration. Nourah has worked in different places such as the Central Bank of Kuwait and the United Nations. She serves as a free-lance contributing writer to the Times Kuwait – Newsmagazine.

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KU in 30th spot in Arab university rankings

Kuwait University (KU), the country's premier higher education institution and one of the oldest in the Gulf region, ranked 30 out of 199 universities in the Arab region, in the annual online ranking at www.TopUniversities.com, published by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), the world's leading provider of services, analytics, and insight to the global higher education sector.

Though Kuwait's 2023 ranking is an improvement from previous years, the relatively modest ranking, especially when compared to newer universities in the immediate neighborhood, is perhaps emblematic of the worrying state of education in Kuwait.

Featuring almost 200 universities across 18 countries, this year's QS Arab Region rankings sees three institutions from Saudi Arabia in the top five. For the fourth consecutive year, Saudi Arabia's King Abdulaziz University takes the regional top spot, followed by Qatar University in 2nd, King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals in Saudi Arabia coming 3rd, and King Saud University jumping from sixth to fourth place in the 2023 ranking.



This year's QS rankings were constructed using 10 different indicators, including academic and employer reputation, research output, resources and internationalization.

Highlights from the 2023 index of universities in the Arab region show:

- Three of the region's top-5 universities are Saudi Arabian. Its institutions have an outstanding reputation among employers and academics.
- Egypt is the region's most represented country, with 33 listed universities. The

American University in Cairo is the highest-ranked African institution, placing 11th.

- Of locations with 10+ ranked institutions, UAE has the highest proportion of top-tier universities, with 72 percent in the regional top-50, and 22 percent among the top-10.
- Bahrain's Applied Science University breaks into the region's top-20.
- Five Moroccan institutions rank among the region's top-10 for their number of staff with PhD.
- Iraq enjoys high teaching capacity, with two universities among the top-3 for this metric.
- Of this year's newly ranked universities, Tunisia's Université de Sfax is the best, placing in the 51-60 band
- The Islamic University of Lebanon enjoys the Arab Region's joint-highest teaching capacity.
- Oman and Jordan have one top-10 university each – Sultan Qaboos University (8th) and the University of Jordan (10th).

A list of the top-20 universities in the Arab region show:

1. King Abdulaziz University (KAU) Saudi Arabia
2. Qatar University, Qatar
3. King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals, Saudi Arabia
4. King Saud University, Saudi Arabia
5. American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanon
6. United Arab Emirates University, UAE
7. Khalifa University of Science and Technology, UAE
8. Sultan Qaboos University, Oman
9. American University of Sharjah, UAE
10. University of Jordan, Jordan
11. The American University in Cairo, Egypt
12. Cairo University, Egypt
13. Lebanese University, Lebanon
14. Ain Shams University, Egypt
15. University of Sharjah, UAE
16. Jordan University of Science & Technology, Jordan
17. Umm Al-Qura University, Saudi Arabia
18. Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd university, Saudi Arabia
19. Applied Science University - Bahrain, Bahrain
20. Zayed University, UAE.

Teacher arrested for cutting-off student's hair

An expatriate teacher employed by the Ministry of Education has been arrested for allegedly cutting-off the hair of one of her students last week. In a statement on the incident, the Director General of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone, Muhammad Ayed Al-Ajmi, said the accused had been suspended until investigations are completed by the ministry. It was also reported that the accused was subsequently arrested by the authorities on

complaints by the victim's parents.

He noted that the school administration has been informed of the decision and that the ministry's legal affairs was conducting an investigation into the incident, to determine the reasons that led the suspect to cut the student's hair. He added that a final decision would be taken based on the outcome of the investigations.

Al-Ajmi expressed his rejection of the alleged behavior by the teacher against the student, and pledged to protect all students from harm within school premises. He stressed the need for all to adhere to rules and regulations, and to avoid insulting students in any way.

Director of Lulu Hypermarket visits UAE Embassy



The Director of Lulu Hypermarket, Kuwait, Mr Mohamed Haris called on the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Kuwait, H.E Dr Matar Hamed Al-Niadi at the UAE embassy in Kuwait,

on Monday, October 17. The meeting touched on various topics of mutual interest in addition to identifying opportunities beneficial to both sides especially in the area of promoting business ties.

Al Muzaini announces winner of their FIFA World Cup 2022 campaign

Al-Muzaini, the leading exchange company in Kuwait recently concluded its promotional campaign in collaboration with Visa; "Transfer to VISA Cards and Win with Al-Muzaini", which lasted from July 19th to September 30th, 2022.

Mr. Rakhmonov Khasanjon was announced as the winner with the prize being a fully paid VIP package for two persons. The winner will now be attending an exciting match at the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy Al Muzaini's collaboration with Visa. The draw was conducted under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and representatives of Al Muzaini Company.

All customers who transferred money during the campaign period to VISA cards, whether through any of the 124 Al Muzaini branches or through the website or Al Muzaini app were automatically eligible to participate and stand a chance to attend this global sporting event. Al-Muzaini Company is keen to continue its excellence in providing its customers with the best services and unique advantages when it comes to using the company's remittances services.

Al Muzaini is eager to provide the highest levels of quality financial services such as money transfers and foreign currency



RAKHMONOV KHASANJON



exchange, comfortably and safely at the best prices throughout. Al Muzaini General Manager Mr. Hugh Fernandes congratulated the winner and stated, "We are pleased to partner with Visa to offer our customers an unforgettable experience and a chance to participate in this once in a lifetime, global sporting event. We are also always looking forward to presenting the best offers and conducting more promotional campaigns in the future to thank our valued customers for their loyalty and trust in us."

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Diwali, celebrating the inner light that guides us in life

Diwali, or the Festival of Lights is arguably the biggest and brightest of festivals celebrated in the Indian subcontinent and among the Indian diaspora spread across the four corners of the world.

Diwali, or Deepavali as it is known in some Indian states, is celebrated over five days during the Hindu lunisolar month of Kartika that corresponds to mid-October and mid-November each year. Diwali is concurrent with and analogous to various other religious, spiritual and historical celebrations marked by other communities, cultures and religions in the region, including among Hindus, Jains and Sikhs, and among Newar Buddhists in Nepal, as well as by many tribal cultures in north-easterly states of India.

While the religious aspect of Diwali is the highlight of the festival for the Hindus, to the Sikhs and Jains it is the historical and sacred



as well as spiritual implications of the festival that take center-stage. To the Hindus in India, and around the world, the celebration of Diwali has religious associations that vary based on regional and local interpretations of myths and legends from the Indian epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata.

In Nepal it is celebrated as Tihar or as Swanti by Buddhists, especially Newar Buddhists in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal.

For adherents of the Jain faith, Diwali venerates the attainment in the 6th century of 'Moksha' — the highest and noblest objective of the soul — by Lord Mahavira, the 24th and last 'Tirthankar' or spiritual leader of Jains. Meanwhile, the Sikh community around the world celebrate Diwali as 'Bandi Shor Divas',



or Day of Liberation, in commemoration of the release from imprisonment of their sixth Guru and leader, Guru Hargobind ji, by Mughal invaders in the 17th century.

Besides its religious, cultural or historical importance to people across the vast sub-continent, and the contextual differences of the celebration, Diwali remains symbolic of the inner light that guides us throughout our life. The festival resonates with the message of the ultimate victory of light over darkness, of hope over despair, of good over evil, of knowledge over ignorance.

The symbolism of light has been prevalent in cultures throughout the evolution of humanity. It is one of the oldest and among the most significant and enduring icons, with spiritual, mystical and metaphorical connotations to various cultures and religions around the world.



Throughout the eons, among gnostics as well as those with agnostic leanings, light has been seen as a symbol of life and hope, of joy and happiness, of truth, wisdom, guidance, enlightenment, and as an embodiment of divinity. In many parts of the world, light is represented with candles, lamps, fires and fireworks that represent the victory of light in its perpetual opposition to darkness.

In India, the origin of Diwali can be traced back historically to the ancient period, when it was celebrated during the Hindu calendar month of Karthika as an important harvest festival. Over time, various legends and myths from the



Hindu epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata were associated and celebrated along with the early agrarian festival. While some Hindus believe Diwali to be a celebration of the birth and also marriage of the Goddess Lakshmi with Lord Vishnu, in Bengal, the festival is dedicated to the worship of Mother Kali, the Goddess of strength. Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed God, the symbol of auspiciousness and wisdom, is also worshiped in most Hindu homes on this day.

To many Hindus, Diwali also commemorates the return of Lord Rama as king of Ayodhya in Northern India, along with his wife Sita and brother Lakshman, after a 14-year-long exile and the vanquishing of demon-king Ravana. In joyous celebration of the return of their king, the people of Ayodhya, the capital of Lord Rama's kingdom, illuminated the town with earthen diyas (oil lamps) and burst fire-crackers. Today, a symbolic reenactment 'Ram Lila', or the killing by Rama of Ravana and the freeing of Sita, takes up center-stage in the ancient town of Ayodhya and elsewhere, with effigies of the ten-headed Ravana being burned.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



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Festival of Lights,

--- a five-day celebration ---



Dhanteras: In many regions, Dhanteras mark the start of Diwali. This day marks the birthday of Lakshmi — the Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity, and the birthday of Dhanvantari — the Goddess of Health and Healing. Diyas are lit and kept burning throughout the night in honor of Lakshmi and Dhanvantari. Dhanteras is also a major shopping day, particularly for gold or silver articles. A special Lakshmi Puja is performed in the evening.

Naraka chaturdasi: The second day of the Diwali festival is Naraka Chaturdasi marking the vanquishing of the demon Naraka by Lord Krishna and his wife Satyabhama. Homes are decorated with



Diwali or the Indian Festival of Lights is celebrated around the world over a period of five days during the Hindu lunisolar calendar month of Kartik, which usually occurs between mid-October and mid-November in the Gregorian calendar.

In the lead-up to Diwali, celebrants across India and among the diaspora worldwide engage in several traditional rituals and practices. In many places this is a time when every nook and cranny of a house gets a thorough makeover, renovations and refurbishing of homes also take place ahead of the festivities. Stacks of small earthen oil lamps, referred to as diyas are taken out of year-long storage and cleaned in preparation for lining them in front of houses and on terraces. Rangolis, or colorful designs and patterns are drawn on the floor at entrances to homes. The vibrant artwork is created using natural dyes made from rice flour, lentils, powdered bricks, chalk and flowers.

The two days prior to Diwali Day, the main Diwali day, and the two days following it, are of special significance, with each day of the festival having different religious connotations based on different regions of India and beliefs of people celebrating. On the main Diwali day, in the morning worshippers solemnly visit temples to offer prayers, don new clothes and people go visiting neighbors, friends and relatives. Greetings are exchanged, sweets and other delicacies are gifted, and delicious meals cooked for the occasion are shared by neighbors, friends and family.

All of the simple rituals of Diwali have a religious or social significance and a mythological tale behind them. Homes are illuminated with lights as a mark of respect and adoration of the gods, and fireworks fill the skies as an expression of thanks to the heavens for all the bounties of health, wealth, knowledge, peace, and prosperity granted to the people. Here is a look at some of the mythological significances and rituals performed over the five days of Diwali:



rangoli and women embellish their hands with henna designs. Families are also busy preparing homemade sweets for the main Diwali.

Diwali: The third day of the five-day festival is usually celebrated as the main festive day of Diwali. People don their new clothes, diyas are lit and special pujas are offered to the Goddess Lakshmi. Windows and doors are left open to provide easy access for the Goddess. After the puja, people go out and celebrate by bursting fire-crackers. Visits to friends and relatives and exchange of gifts and sweets also take place on this day.

In some places, additional deities, usually Ganesha, Saraswati, and Kubera are honored on this day with offerings and pujas. Blessings are invoked from Goddess Lakshmi as she symbolizes wealth and prosperity, while Lord Ganesha symbolizes ethical beginnings and is a fearless remover of obstacles. Meanwhile, Goddess Saraswati

symbolizes music, literature and learning and Lord Kubera symbolizes bookkeeping, treasury and wealth management. Among some business communities, new account books for the year ahead are opened on this occasion.



Padwa: The day after Diwali celebrates the love and mutual devotion between the wife and husband. The husbands give gifts to their wives on this day. In many regions, newly married daughters with their husbands are invited to parents' home for special meals. Sometimes brothers go and pick up their sisters from their in-laws' home for this important day. The day is also a special day for the married couple, in a manner similar to anniversaries elsewhere in the world. The day after Diwali devotees perform Govardhan puja in honor of Lord Krishna.

Bhai Dooj: The last day of the festival, called Bhai dooj, celebrates the strong relationship and bonds of love between

sisters and brothers. The day ritually emphasizes the love and lifelong bond between siblings and is a day when women and girls get together, perform a puja with prayers for the well-being of their brothers and then get together with the rest of the family to share food.

In each legend, myth and story of Diwali lies the significance of the victory of good over evil. It is with each Diwali and with the lights that illuminate our homes and hearts, that the truth behind this simple message



resonates and finds new reason and hope. From darkness unto light — the light that empowers us to commit ourselves to good deeds, that which brings us closer to divinity.

Mingled in the riot of lights, colors, sounds and odors that mark Diwali across the Indian subcontinent and around the world is a festival that symbolizes joy, togetherness and hope for the future.





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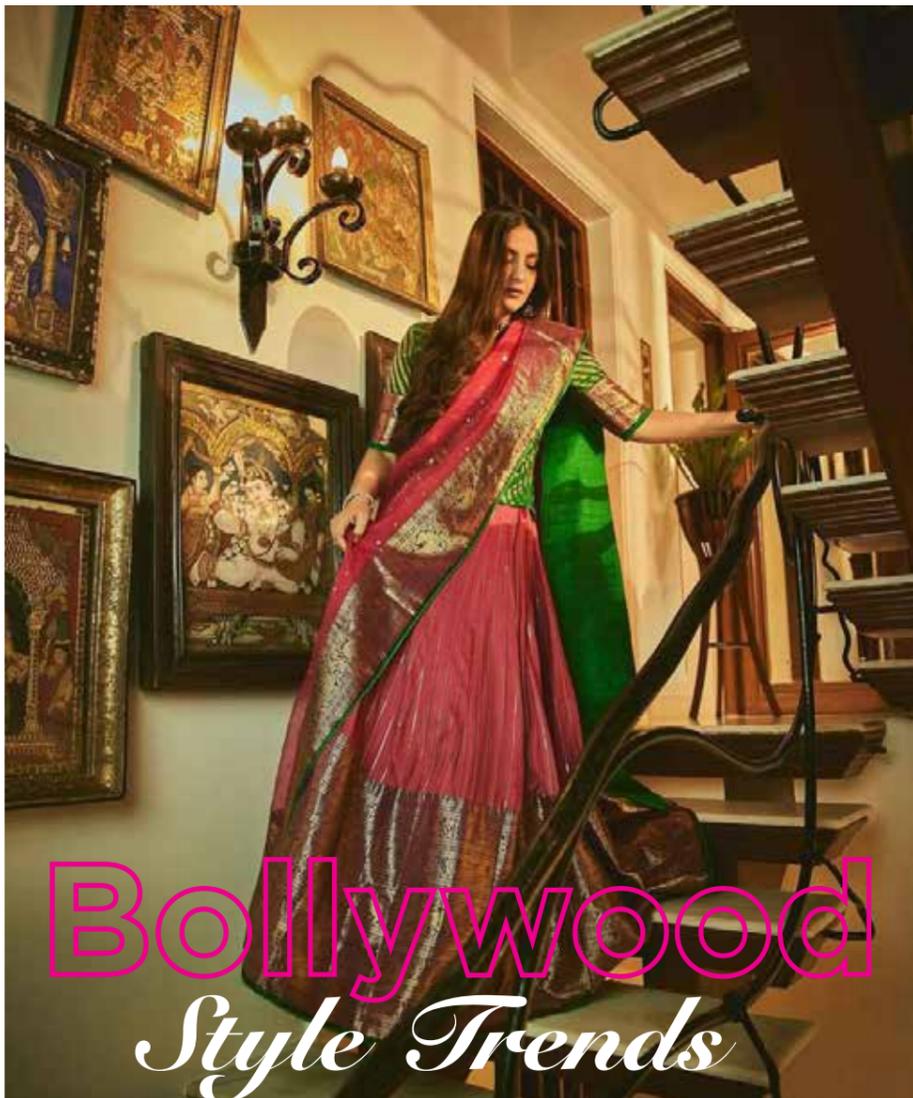
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Bollywood Style Trends for this festive season

Diwali is one the most excitedly anticipated festivals of the year, the festival of lights hosts an array of celebrations ranging from events, to feasts and celebrations, family gatherings and many more where you can don glamorous ensembles and look your best. Updating the style quotient by adding versatility to your look has to be one of your topmost priorities.

In keeping with the brightness and spirit of Diwali alight, let us delve into the world of glamor and Bollywood to find what the well-

heeled are wearing this Diwali. From dramatic couture to layered classics, Bollywood divas have never failed to mesmerize viewers. With trends changing at the speed of light, it is no surprise that to keep up with these stylish tips does become worrisome.

New trends invariably pop up on each festive occasion, and this Diwali is no different. So let us make the most of this festival of lights decked up in the latest trend. While celebrities continue to collectively inject new, gorgeous trends that we desire in our wardrobes, many,

if not most of them are exorbitantly expensive.

Nevertheless, there is no harm in running through this year's unmissable trends; it is not a crime to aspire and dream. So, without further adieu, is Janhvi Kapoor in Manish Malhotra's pink flush co-ord set, or Deepika Padukone's glamorous sequin saree your pick this Diwali? Here are some more choices.



Sonam's dazzling lehenga choli in cool undertones: This traditional attire from Sonam looks absolutely steal worthy, with a signature wide golden lace at the bottom of the skirt and blouse, this one is a must have this Diwali. The bare minimum amount of jewelry allows the exquisite design to steal the spotlight. While the tones explore more pinks and green which lean more on the brighter side.



with gold undertones, the stunning appeal of the detailed mirror-work make it all the more irresistible. To complete this look, is it best to pair Kundan jewelry to add more definition to the entire outfit.

Hina's olive green set: Hina Khan's olive green suit might just be the most relaxed and comfortable outfit to pick this festive season. This year stone-studded rings are the most gorgeous trends to try. Light embroidered designs, A-line kurta, long sleeved slightly flared at the hems and a typical boat neck are headlining to be the new favorites this year.



Katrina's stunning Sabyasachi saree: This elegantly draped saree can be a show stopper this Diwali. The classic net saree infused with a darker hue of pink paired with a contrastingly lighter green colored blouse is a gorgeous look to recreate. Statement jewelry can always be experimented with but a set of red bangles and string golden earrings are also perfect to compliment this look. This Diwali aiming for a saree clubbed with vibrant accessories sets the festive mood right.

Madhuri's glam ethnic ensemble: Shades of gold never fail to pump up the festive spirit. While Madhuri effortlessly pulls this brilliant design, it's a great choice to pick from this Diwali. The design aims to deliver warmth through autumn, the reason being its shaded



Diwali, celebrating the inner light that guides us in life

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

The word Diwali comes from a fusion of two Sanskrit words, Dipa or Deepa meaning light or lamp, and Awali meaning a row, series or line. In many parts of India, the festival is celebrated by lighting rows of small earthen-oil lamps called diyas that symbolize the driving away of darkness. In other parts of India, the Festival of Light marks the start of a new year in the Hindu calendar. In many areas, Diwali has taken on a more temporal note, with merchants, retailers and corporates using the festival to market and sell their products. Today, the five-day long Festival of Lights has

become almost synonymous with shopping frenzy, of bargain offers and special discounts, as well as a time of socializing and entertaining among family and friends.

Like any major festival, preparations for Diwali begin days or weeks ahead, with the formal festival limited to five-days, beginning two days before the night of Diwali, and ending two days after. Each day of Diwali has its own tale, legend and myth to tell. Sweet treats are exchanged, houses are thoroughly cleaned, homes are lit with diyas and decorated with rangoli, the colorful designs and patterns created on the threshold to homes and on the floor during the festival using natural colors, dyes, flowers and other material. New clothes are worn and each day of the festival is marked by different traditional rituals.

Through all this celebration and festivities, what remains true and consistent throughout the five days of Diwali, is the celebration of life, its enjoyment and goodness. This year, even if you are away from the sights and sounds of Diwali as it is celebrated in the Indian subcontinent, take a moment to light a candle or a diya, sit quietly, close your eyes, breathe deeply and concentrate on that supreme light which illuminates your inner self and guides you along the path of life.





Diwali among the Indian diaspora worldwide

Celebrations marking Diwali, the Indian Festival of Light, is a high-point in the socializing and entertaining calendar of the Indian diaspora spread worldwide. It is celebrated with fun, festivities and religious traditions by Indian communities living in far-flung countries.

Diwali celebrations are held with almost fervent zeal by Indian communities in lands that stretch from Guyana, on South America's north-eastern Atlantic coast, to the Caribbean nations and island-states lying in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean; all the way to south-east Asian countries and on the African continent, as well as in most other countries where Indian communities have long settled and over generations have come to call it their home.



Diwali is also now celebrated by the millions of migrant diaspora that have sought jobs and livelihood in countries lying in the Far-East, Middle-East, in Europe, the US and elsewhere around the world.

The five-day festival of Diwali, which has



traditional, religious, social and historical connotations attached to it, differs based on the celebrants, and though it has acquired a more mercantile aspect in recent times, the spiritual relevance of Diwali remains the same and has abided over the ages. The Festival of Light continues to symbolize the universal power of light to uplift, guide, and lead people along the righteous path.

The festival epitomizes the conquest of light over darkness, of good over evil, and on a more personal level the eradication of ignorance with the light of knowledge. This

eternal aspect of Diwali is what makes the festival so popular and is the reason it has prevailed for nearly three millennia on the Indian subcontinent and wherever Indians have made their home.

While in India Diwali is an unfettered celebration of the joy of life and marked by a profusion of riotous colors, aromas and sounds emanating from every quarter, it tends to be observed in a more subdued manner in countries populated by Indian communities, and in places where Indian expatriates live and work. No matter how it



is commemorated, there is no denying the spirit of joie de vivre that the Festival of Lights spreads in the hearts and minds of Indians everywhere.

Generations of Indians abroad have marked Diwali with festive and religious traditions, and shared the joy of the festival with the exchange of sweets and gifts among relatives, friends and colleagues. For the expatriate Indian community, Diwali is also a celebration that reflects their longing to share the occasion with their near and dear ones back home. For people of Indian origin who have settled in various countries abroad, Diwali is often a way to keep in touch with their roots, and to join friends, kith and kin in a celebration of the rich culture and heritage of India.

However, in recent times, there has been a gradual but noticeable erosion of interest in Diwali as well as other traditional festivals among many young Indians overseas, engaged as they are in their own busy daily schedules.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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Elegance is the go-to look this Diwali



hues of pastel are the number one choice this festive season. A simple flower designed lehenga paired with a medium to heavy embroidered blouse, washed in light shades of sunshine colors or light pink, worn with a Kundan necklace set and hoop earrings are a delightful choice for the day. At night, lehengas with heavier zari and sequins can be paired with beautiful jhumkas or bell shaped earrings to complete your evening Diwali look.

Straight kurta set in warm tones: Kurtas are the embodiment of traditional wear. While choosing particular designs in kurtas can be a personal choice, straight cut kurtas are the most elegant pick this year, with solid warm tones that compliment your skin tone. Gold Jhumkas and string bracelets can add more shimmer to this pattern. These designs are simple yet captivating and can be worn throughout the day to keep you comfortable while looking chic.

Floor-length Anarkalis in Bright Colors: This long frock-style top is among the favorites. The slim fitted bottom adds an edge to the design. A comfortable anarkali with contrasting colors like red-yellow, blue-green, pink-purple, will alleviate your look this Diwali. A beautiful embroidered anarkali will look best when a gem-studded maang tikka or forehead jewelry is added to complete your look.

Silk (Organza) Saree with golden embroidery: A saree redefines the traditional Indian look. A classic since time immemorial, make saree your best friend



this Diwali. With rich colors like silver and gold accompanied with golden borders while matched with signature jewelry are the latest buzz. Organza sarees are made from lightweight thin fabric with appealing designs make an effort to symbolize royalty.



Diwali celebration brings with it not only the opportunity for one to indulge in mouth-savory delicacies and sweets, but also a chance to wear their best outfits. It is the festival when fashion experiences a real zeal of evolution, with everyone aiming to wear the best, in-trend, stunning traditional attire.

So what is the latest style-book to look glamorous this Diwali? Without doubt, elegance remains the go-to look to have this festive season. To make sure you look your absolute best during evening celebrations on the five days of this Diwali, here are some elegant outfits you could experiment with

Breezy, flower patterned classical lehengas: A design that just cannot go wrong. The gorgeous lehengas with gentle



Diwali among the Indian diaspora worldwide

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Many do not seem to share the sentiments of their parents' generation and appear to have no time for the rituals and rites associated with the festival.

Most young adolescent expats who probably were born and raised in a foreign environment, and have only made an occasional brief foray back home to India during holiday breaks, have no resonance with the cultures and traditions of a country that many find and consider alien.

Many of these youngsters have only a fuzzy idea of the culture and heritage of India, and often have difficulty in balancing the culture of their forebears with prevailing norms in the urban culture they grew up in, and in the foreign land that many have come

to consider their true home. If nothing else, the global pandemic and its repercussions during the past two years have driven home the fleeting nature of our lives and livelihoods, and how dependent we are on communities and social interactions.

The importance of our roots and our con-



nections have never been more poignantly driven home than during the height of the medical crisis, when there were reports of parochial sentiments on the part of citizens being brought to the fore in terms of delivery of healthcare and other essentials. Back then, knowing and acknowledging that we have a country and people to fall back on in the worst case scenario, was often the only bright spot in a situation that grew increasingly bleak during the early months.

Importance of the land of our ancestors which always remains open and welcome to us, should give us enough reason to grow familiar with its cultures and traditions if not for anything else then at least not to appear alien to the people back home. The Festival of Light this year could be the right time and opportunity to revive and give a restart to

relations with our native land and its culture.

The festival presents us with an occasion to familiarize and immerse ourselves in the beauty and grandeur of Indian culture and heritage. It also provides us with a chance to experience the tantalizing tastes of traditional dishes and delicacies prepared during the festival period. But, most importantly, it delivers us with a golden opportunity to imbue the sense of community and friendship that is fundamental aspect of our Indian values.

So this Diwali, even if you do not like to consider yourself an 'Indian', go light up your house, don bright clothes, the brighter the better, and go have fun with other Indians and other expatriates, while remembering to take along a gift of Diwali delicacies to share with them.



Diwali delicacies to devour

Diwali, the 'Festival of Lights', is one time of the year when people tend to forget their diet resolutions and devour sweet delicacies without a pang of guilt. Even though many are well aware of the 'morning-after' effects these unrestrained food devourings have on their health,

they nevertheless continue to enjoy them with the consoling thought, 'Diwali comes but once a year'.

However, rather than head to the nearest confectionary store and order oodles of sweets, why not prepare them fresh at home. Making them at home, you can be assured

of the quality of ingredients used and also control the sweetness and fat content of the sweet delights. Below we have put together a handful of Diwali specialties that are 'relatively healthier', which you can prepare at home without too much effort or time.



GULAB JAMUN

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups khoya (dried whole milk)
- ¼ cup chenna (cheese curd)
- ¼ teaspoon soda bicarbonate
- 3 tablespoons refined flour (maida)
- ¼ teaspoon green cardamom powder
- 2 cups sugar
- Ghee to deep fry

Instructions:

- Grate khoya and mash chenna and set aside
- Mix the two along with soda bicarbonate, refined flour, green cardamom powder and a little water to make a soft dough
- Divide into sixteen equal portions and shape into balls
- Prepare a sugar syrup with sugar and two cups of water
- Clear the syrup by removing the scum, if any
- Heat ghee/oil in a kadai.
- Add the balls and deep fry on low heat till it turns a golden color
- Drain and soak in the sugar syrup for at least fifteen to twenty minutes before serving.



BOONDI LADOO

Ingredients:

- 2 cups gram flour (besan)
- 2 cups sugar
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 10 cashew nuts
- 20 raisins
- 15 green cardamoms
- 4 saffron (kesar) strands
- A few drops of milk
- 500g ghee

Instructions:

- Shell and powder cardamoms
- Add one fourth cup of water to sugar and heat until it melts and becomes syrupy
- To check if the sugar syrup is ready, take a drop of the solution

- and drop in water
- If it remains intact and does not dissolve then your syrup is ready
- (While preparing the sugar syrup, add a few drops of milk. Impurities will collect on the surface in a layer. Remove this scum)
- Add saffron and cardamom powder to the syrup
- Separately, add soda and water to gram flour and prepare a paste without lumps
- Heat the ghee in a deep frying pan
- Sieve the gram flour directly into the hot ghee and fry till light yellow
- Drain and set aside.
- Fry cashew nuts and raisins and along with the boondi add to the sugar syrup
- Mix well and set aside to cool
- Apply some ghee on your palms and shape the boondi mixture to form balls.



MYSORE PAK

Ingredients

- ¾ cup gram flour
- 4 cups pure ghee
- 2 ½ cups desi ghee

Instructions:

- Sift the gram flour twice
- Heat the ghee in a pan and keep it hot over very low heat
- Cook the sugar with two and half cups of water over medium heat, stirring continuously till it dissolves
- Increase heat and bring the syrup to a boil
- Cook without stirring for about five minutes or till it reaches a single-thread consistency
- Add half a cup of hot ghee to the syrup and stir
- Add gram flour gradually, stirring all the while to prevent lumps from forming
- Stir continuously till the mixture starts bubbling
- Pour in the remaining hot ghee, half a cup at a time
- Everytime you add the ghee the

- mixture should sizzle and froth
- Continue this process till all the ghee is consumed and there is a pleasant sweet roasted aroma
- Pour the mixture into a greased tray
- Cool a little and cut into squares.
- Separate the squares when completely cooled and store in an airtight container to retain its freshness and crispness.



MALAI PEDAS

Ingredients:

- One liter whole milk
- Few strands of saffron (Kesar)
- ½ cup sugar
- Two pinches of citric acid
- One teaspoon cornflour/cornstarch
- ¼ tsp green cardamom powder
- 4-5 chopped almonds
- 7-8 chopped pistachios

Instructions:

- Bring the milk to a boil in a deep non-stick pan
- Cook, stirring continuously, for about twenty minutes, till it reduces to half its original volume
- Soak the saffron in two teaspoons of warm milk and add to the boiling milk
- Add the sugar and continue to cook for four to five minutes.
- Mix the citric acid in one tablespoon of water and add gradually to the boiling milk Cook till the milk curdles slightly
- Mix the cornflour with the remaining two teaspoons of milk and add to the pan Cook, stirring continuously, for about forty-five minutes till the mixture thickens and resembles khoya
- Add the cardamom powder and mix well
- Remove from heat and set aside to cool
- Divide into sixteen equal portions and shape into round balls
 - Decorate with almonds and pistachios, and serve.



JALEBI

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups refined flour
- Two cups sugar
- ¼ tsp orange color
- Two cups sugar
- One tbsp milk
- ½ tsp green cardamom powder

Instructions:

- Place the refined flour in a bowl, add one and a half cups of water and bring them together to form a light smooth batter
- Cover the bowl and keep in a warm place to ferment for twenty hours
- Mix the batter again with your hands for fifteen minutes
- Add the food color and two tablespoons of refined flour
- Mix again for ten minutes
- Cook the sugar with two cups of water in a deep non-stick pan on high heat, stirring continuously, till the sugar dissolves
- Add the milk and remove the scum that forms on top
- Add the cardamom powder and cook, stirring, till the syrup attains a one-string consistency
 - Let the syrup cool, but ensure that it remains lukewarm
 - Heat the ghee in a non-stick frying pan on medium heat
 - Pour some of the batter into a squeeze bottle
 - Hold the bottle over the hot ghee and gently squeeze the batter into the ghee in spiral shapes
 - Start from the outside and work inwards for better results
 - Cook, gently turning the jalebi over occasionally, till golden and crisp
 - Drain and soak in the sugar syrup for two to three minutes
 - Drain and serve hot.



Green Diwali



enjoy an
eco-friendly festival

Diwali, the Festival of Light, which is celebrated across India and in countries around the world where Indian communities live and work, is traditionally held over a five-day period. Religious rituals are undertaken and social gatherings are held, as families gather together to celebrate the Diwali festival.

The solemn prayers and rituals that mark the days leading up to, and on Diwali morning, takes on a fun and festive mood as the sun goes down on Diwali day. In the evening, homes get brightly lit with the traditional oil lamps lighting the interior and exterior, celebrants engage in songs and dances and the air gets rent with the sound of crackers as the sky lights up in myriad colors from fireworks going off everywhere.

Restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and carried forward in 2021 as a precautionary measure, had prevented many of the traditional rituals and social gatherings, including fireworks, associated with Diwali celebrations. This year, with no restrictions in place, many people are preparing to welcome the festival of lights with unbridled abandon and probably a loud bang.



Fireworks and firecrackers, a hallmark long associated with Diwali celebrations, is now also linked to an increase in noise and air pollution. In many cities and towns across India, air quality measurements of particulate matter (PM2.5) in the environment have shown a marked increase during and in the immediate aftermath of the five-day celebrations.

At a time when the world is engaged in combating the existential threat of climate change, we all have a responsibility to play a role and contribute to helping reduce our individual carbon footprint on the planet. This includes celebrating a greener, more eco-friendly Diwali.

Nevertheless, if you are still inclined to mark the festival of light with 'sound and fury', especially under compulsion of the kids, opt for eco-friendly versions. These 'green' crackers, a concept designed by the Indian National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, use recycled paper and do not contain harmful chemicals, especially barium nitrate that produces much of the heavy smoke and emissions. The sound produced from these crackers are also less than the 160 decibels of more associated with traditional crackers and is as per the defined limits of the Noise Pollution

Control Board.

The restrictions on fireworks during the pandemic had a positive impact on air quality measurements recorded last two years relative to previous years. Though the curtailments have been eased in many places this year, the creativity in celebrating Diwali displayed amid the pandemic repercussions of last year, can be carried forward this year so as to ensure a softer carbon footprint on the planet.

Some other eco-friendly options that you could introduce in your home this Diwali and help reduce your carbon footprint on the planet include lighting up the home and yard with small earthen lamps called diyas, in place of the electric bulbs that are now in vogue. Though earthen lamps need oil for illumination, the pollution is negligible and electricity consumption is nil.

Substituting candles and electric diyas with the good old earthen oil-diyas that are made from clay and other 'green' materials also helps in conservation as they can be used many times over. Remember, the candle diyas now popular can be used only once and are petroleum based. They also release toxins while burning which affects air quality.



Decorate the entrance floor with colorful patterns (rangolis) using natural dyes in place of chemical colors. Instead of the artificial rangoli color powders that are readily available in the market, make a rangoli out of fresh flowers or make the floor designs with traditional and natural ingredients, such as rice paste or dry rice flour. Also, use energy conserving LED and CFL lamps instead of incandescent bulbs inside homes.

Employ your creativity to design handcrafted decorative door hangings (torans) including using bright and colorful dupattas and sarees, rather than the plasticky choices available now, are definitely better options to celebrating this festival of light in an eco-friendly manner.

Here are a few more ways to go green this Diwali without dimming the brilliance and glitter of the festival in any significant way.

Green alternatives to crackers: Use colored balloons in festive colors of red, yellow, green and orange, and fill them with glitter and small bits of colored paper. Burst the balloons and dance in the glitter rain with your family and friends. It may not have the bang of traditional fireworks but it also leaves no environmental damage.

Reduce use of plastic bags: When exchanging gifts make sure not to pack them in plastic backed gift wrappings or carry them in plastic gift bags, instead use your creativity to come up with natural wrapping and present the gifts in cloth bags.

Make sweets at home: Spend a little extra time in the kitchen before the festivities start and make the sweets and other delicacies at home. Share them with your neighbors and friends in steel and glass plates. It may be more convenient to just buy them from the sweet shop next door, but think about the wasteful packaging that comes with it and the artificial colors and dressings used on them.



Rajasthan

land of kings, warriors, and wonders

Rajasthan, an incredible state located in northern India, is cocooned in cultural and ancient history. A symbolic land of heroism and royalty, Rajasthan captivates visitors and transports them to an era of great kings, mighty kingdoms, valiant warriors and fantasy-like palaces.

Established as a state in the Dominion of India in 1949, Rajasthan's rich and storied history still courses through its modern cities, towns and villages. Rajasthan is the largest state by area and seventh largest by population in the Indian peninsula, and the state can rightfully claim to be the dazzling jewel of India.

Tourists from everywhere should visit this magical state to witness its vibrant mélange of historical hill forts and palaces, glittery sands, diverse cultures and much more. Although classified under tropical desert climate due to low rains, Rajasthan has a climate that varies throughout the state.. Summers are hot and dry, while winters turn to be extremely cold.

The capital of the state is Jaipur, better known by its epithet Pink City. Many avenues of Jaipur are washed in the beautiful flush of pink giving it an attractive exquisite appearance. Woven with music, art, culture and delicious cuisine, the most famous and popular attractions of Jaipur include the Hawa Mahal, one of the most iconic buildings in Rajasthan, which stands right in the heart of the city's Johari Bazaar. The architecture is mesmerizing with windows appearing like a lattice of honeycombs.

Another ethereal sight is the Jal Mahal, situated in the center of Man Sagar Lake. The pink sandstone against the blue backdrop of the lake is a dreamy sight. Other attractions are Kanak Vrindavan, a landscape garden, Govind Devji Temple, Jantar Mantar, an astronomical observatory and many more.



Udaipur, also known as the Venice of the East, is a magical location in Royal Rajasthan. With shiny glittering lakes, vibrant colored marketplaces, narrow aesthetic lanes, Udaipur is like no other. Nestled in between the marvelous Aravalli range, the city offers picturesque sights to see. With an array of lakes like Fateh Sagar Lake, Lake Pichola and Jaisamand Lake, the city claims the title

of romance and serenity. Magical Havelis, fairytale palaces and museums are also notable attractions.

Home of Ajmer-e-Sharif, the city of Ajmer is a popular stop for pilgrims. Nurtured on the edge of the scenic expanse of Ana Sagar Lake, the dargah draws thousands of devotees all year round. Among Rajasthan's other astonishing attractions are Bikaner, Chittorgarh, Jodhpur, Kumbhalgarh and Jaisalmer.



Rajasthani cuisine reflects its rich and royal heritage, local food of Rajasthan is spicy and wonderfully fragrant. A favorite snack around the state are Kachoris, delightfully delicious stuffed and fried flatbreads filled with tangy and sweet potatoes, onions and spices.

Some of the other popular dishes from the state include Ghevar, a sweet that comes from traditional Rajasthan; Gatte ki Sabji, a delicious curry with gram flour dumpling; Lal Maas, the fiery dish prepared with mutton and red chilies; Dal Bhatti, an iconic dish made with dal and spices; Makhaniya Lassi is every foodie's dream, a cooling drink with saffron and white butter in it. The list of culinary wonders is endless when it comes to food in Rajasthan.

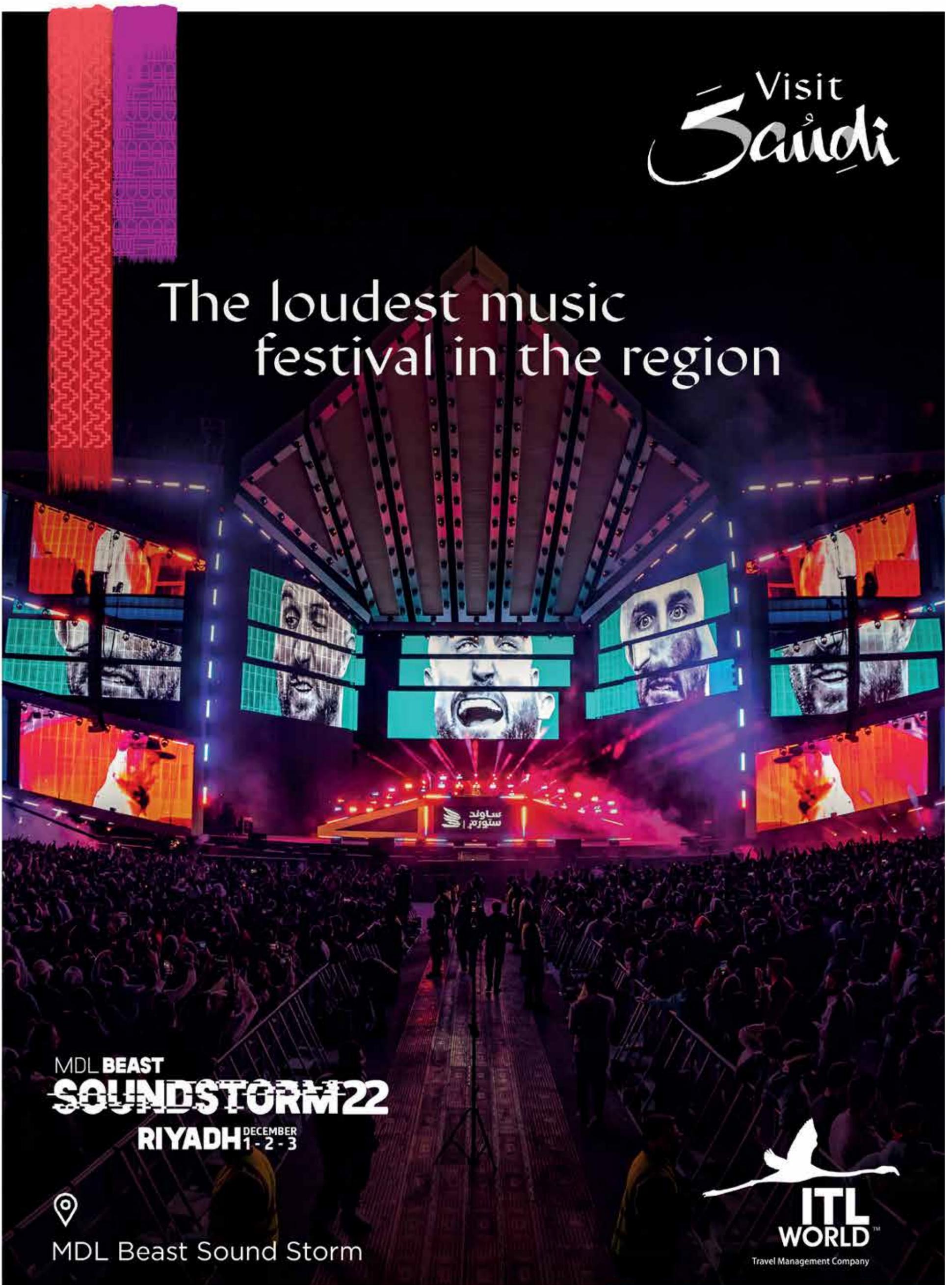


Rajasthani arts and craftwork are famous across the globe, the finely textured hand-made pottery and unique handloom designs are enchanting. The ultimate shopping list of souvenirs in Rajasthan must include the blue pottery, the quartz pieces are an unforgettable memento to take back home, leather craft as well as jewelry are extremely popular buys in the city. Kundan jewels are one of the most precious jewelry in Rajasthan, others also include Sanganer, tie-dye leheriya and much more to choose from.

The land of paradise, Rajasthan will embrace you in its allure, making it an unforgettable trip replete with royalty and rich culture.

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Rangoli competition marks Diwali festivity at LuLu Hypermarket

LuLu Hypermarket, the retailer of choice for discerning buyers, is organizing a spectrum of programs and events at all its outlets in Kuwait, to celebrate Diwali, the five-day-long Indian festival of lights.

As part of the ongoing LuLu Wali Diwali promotion, the hypermarket held a rangoli competition at its AlRai outlet on 22 October. Rangoli competitions are a traditional Diwali event with contestants vying to design intricate patterns on the floor or a table top using colors, natural dyes, flowers and other material. The rangoli competition was inaugurated on Saturday by the LuLu management in the presence of competitors, customers and well-wishers of the hypermarket.

Twelve teams representing various Indian states participated in the competition,



rendering elaborate patterns using an array of material arranged in artistic designs. The jury of selectors had a hard time picking the winners from the 12 equally brilliant designs. The rangolis were eventually narrowed down



to the top-three, with the first-prize winning team receiving KD100 as prize money, the second place winners receiving KD75, and the team winning the third spot receiving KD50. In addition, consolation prizes were distributed to

all participants.

The ongoing LuLu Wali Diwali 2022 promotion at all LuLu outlets in Kuwait is featuring a wide range of attractive offers and discounts on foods and other products, including exclusive offers on Diwali sweets. A special offer running from 13 – 24 October also provides shoppers with a KD5 gift voucher for every KD10 worth of purchase they make. The gift vouchers are redeemable on a wide selection of churidars and sarees available at the hypermarket.

The LuLu Wali promotion demonstrates once again why LuLu Hypermarket continues to be a favorite among discerning shoppers, with the festival of lights truly displaying the hypermarket's commitment to giving customers an incredible shopping experience.

A new parliament, a new beginning

COUNTINUED FROM PAGE 1

as the two arms of government pledged their commitment to assume their national responsibility and work together for the betterment of the citizens and the development of Kuwait.

The conviviality appeared to continue throughout the first day of parliament. Shortly before the election of the National Assembly Speaker, the Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Ammar Al-Ajmi announced that on the directives of the political leadership, the government would leave the hall to allow MPs elect their speaker "in a transparent and fair manner".

Election of the speaker was a divisive and acrimonious issue in the previous parliament, with legislators accusing the then government of interfering in the election process to favor their candidate, former Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim. Lawmakers then unanimously named veteran lawmaker MP Ahmad Al-Saadoun as speaker for the 17th legislative term, and MP Muhammad Al-Mutair was elected as deputy-speaker.

The prevailing affability in parliament could provide the government with a window of opportunity to pass a slew of legislations and bills, including the annual budget for fiscal year 2022/23 that needs to be passed before November, and the long pending public debt bill. Many of these legislations have remained unresolved over the years due to the contentious atmosphere that persisted in parliament between the elected legislators and various appointed governments.

Among the priority files that need parliamentary cooperation are several vital reforms and policies critical to improving the economic and investment climate in the country. Although there is general consensus among all sides in parliament on the importance of economic and financial sector reforms to the country's future, the challenge has been in finding agreement on designing and implementing policies and programs that cater to the interests of all stakeholders, while ensuring sustainable, inclusive and equitable

economic growth and productivity.

A report in September by Al Shall Consultancy, a leading business and financial advisory firm in Kuwait, noted that although public expenditures have multiplied 5.75 times from over the past 20 years, there has been no concomitant progress in productivity. Calling for proactive policies aimed at sustaining public finance, the consultancy noted that education, health services, infrastructure, housing and even the country's cleanliness and environmental pollution are all worse today than they were when public expenditures were far less.

In Kuwait, while decline in oil prices lead to sharp budget deficits, rise in prices do not result in a corresponding surge in surpluses. This is largely because increase in oil prices compels the government to spend more on non-productive expenditure, including raising wages and subsidies so as to placate citizens. Almost half of all subsidy allocations in the budget are currently directed toward energy subsidies.

Higher oil revenues also invariably lead to lowering the government's appetite to introduce unpopular fiscal reforms, such as realigning the public sector wage bill or introducing revenue boosting measures such as the 5 percent value added tax (VAT), agreed to by the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Most other GCC states have introduced VAT and have begun benefiting from its revenue benefits, Kuwait continues to prevaricate.

Kuwait forever seems to be in a 'catch-up' mode; enacting legislations, introducing reforms and policies long after others in the immediate neighborhood have already enacted and profited from such measures. Over the years, local economists, as well as specialists at international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have repeatedly been calling for economic and fiscal reforms, and policy measures that could help boost economic growth, provide employment to nationals, and in general improve Kuwait's long-term economic and financial outlook.

Among the many reforms suggested by the IMF and others are: Improving macroeconomic stability by de-linking government expenditure

from volatile oil revenue, so as to help avoid the large fluctuations in spending caused by sharp rises and falls in global oil prices. Enhancing tax revenue, which currently accounts for only a negligent portion of the total revenue, by implementing VAT and excise taxes and other tax reform. This could help build a stronger non-oil revenue base that then reduces the country's vulnerability to oil price fluctuations.

Additional fiscal reforms include rationalizing government expenditure and curtailing wasteful and unproductive spending, while leaving room for growth-enhancing investments, especially those that reduce the economy's dependence on oil. Savings realized by curtailing wasteful expenditure could be redirected to develop infrastructure, provide support for vulnerable sections of society, and improve quality and outcome of education.

Education reforms in particular should aim to improve educational standards so that the level of academic achievements are in line with regional and global standards. There is also the need to provide training to youth so as to better match the skills they possess with the actual needs of the labor market. Current unemployment, and the potential for it to increase in future, largely stems from a mismatch between job offers and the jobs sought by the national workforce, as well as the lack of skill-sets to effectively meet labor market demands.

On graduating, most young nationals seek work in the public sector. Currently the public sector accounts for over 80 percent of the employed nationals, but this situation is increasingly becoming untenable. Around 58 percent of total government spending is currently allocated towards public sector wages and salaries. Attempts to encourage youth to seek employment in the private sector by paying allowances to increment the salaries provided by companies, as well as compelling private companies to employ nationals through a quota system have both failed to realize desired results.

One reason behind the continued preference among nationals for a job in the public sector, and their reluctance to join private companies, is the large difference in compensation between

the two sectors. In addition, the job security and fringe benefits provided attract youth to the government sector. Sinicure jobs that do not entail any serious effort on the part of the employee is also an added bonus that attracts nationals to this sector.

Rather than continue to pursue ineffectual policies such as paying allowances to bring salaries close to par between public and private entities, a better option would be to realign the sky-high public sector wages and benefits, and make them compatible with that offered by the private sector. This would also have the added benefit of reducing the public sector wage bill, while mitigating the wage costs incurred by the private sector from employing nationals.

Policy reforms aimed at greater privatization, more public-private-partnership projects (PPP), and improvements in business climate, could further enhance competitiveness, encourage productivity gains, and increase investment in the country. Though some progress has been achieved in improving the business conditions in recent years, more needs to be done, as other countries in the region are making even more rapid progress in enhancing their business environment to attract foreign investments.

The current harmony in parliament could provide a rare opportunity to also pass the contentious debt law that has now been revised by the authorities. The bill would allow government to tap into global debt markets and provide flexibility for its debt management. In the absence of a debt law, financing budget deficits have relied on liquid assets of the state treasury, the General Reserve Fund. While this policy leads to the country having a low level of debt, it becomes unviable under sustained low oil price scenarios.

Unless the government and parliament heed the sagacious words of His Highness the Crown Prince, and recalibrate their past political strategies to work together to confront the many prevailing challenges in a cohesive and cooperative manner, the reforms and policy changes that are so direly needed will continue to languish, to the detriment of the country and its people. Is this what we want from parliament?

Bhutan reopens borders with new tourism strategy

Ambassador of Bhutan, H.E. Chitim Tenzin, said his country has reopened its borders to international guests after the COVID-19 pandemic, as of 22 September.

Addressing a press conference at the embassy last week, he revealed the new tourism strategy adopted by his country, which is supported by transformations in three main areas, namely, reinforcements for sustainable development policies and infrastructure, and raising the level of guest experience. He also pointed out that Bhutan's policy of high-value tourism has existed since they began welcoming our guests in 1974.

Explaining that visa procedures to Bhutan are easy and take only around five days to issue, he disclosed that in addition to visits by Kuwaiti government officials, around 300 Kuwaitis visited his country during the years

preceding the pandemic.

Elaborating on the Bhutanese - Kuwaiti official talks regarding the opening of direct flights, he said that they had led to advanced results, but the emergence of the Corona pandemic postponed the opening of the line. He indicated that discussions between the two sides in this regard could resume next year.

He urged Kuwaitis to increase visits to his country, saying that it is a tourist country with distinction and that its atmosphere is suitable throughout the year. He added that Indians could travel even more easily, as they do not need a visa to enter Bhutan.

The ambassador added that during a special ceremony his country had launched a new brand, 'Bhutan Believe', which aims at optimism, renewal and the Kingdom's ambition as it opens its doors to guests again.

He explained that his country has developed its tourism infrastructure and there are a number of international hotels in his country of all categories, in addition to the good hospitality that Bhutanese provide.

He said his country, which has a population of about 750,000 citizens, is characterized by its innovative policies related to gross domestic happiness, similar to the gross domestic product, and is famous for being a land where joy prevails through the level of health, education, community vitality, and protection of the land and nature reserves.

"Bhutanese government and people believe in sustainability and the importance of preserving nature, which the Kingdom sees as one of the most important ingredients of happiness for people. Unlike most countries in the world, we do not



seek the industrial revolution; and we do not measure success by technological developments, which the people of Bhutan believe kills the good mood. We measure success by indicators of happiness and our nationalism," said the ambassador in conclusion.

Adailiya co-op provides online delivery with Talabat

Adailiya Cooperative Society has become the first co-op in the country to officially launch a tie-up with Kuwait's leading company in online ordering and delivery

of foods and goods, Talabat. Announcing this, Saud Abdullah Al-Tuwaijri, the head of marketing and purchasing committee, said that an agreement had been signed with Talabat General Trading and Contracting Company to make use of the company's online app to provide the co-ops customers with an additional value added service.

Talabat's online application (app) receives and transfers requests from customers to the coop, facilitates payment through the

electronic payment gateway, and delivers requested orders quickly and safely anywhere in Kuwait. The system has initially been implemented in the society's Sweets and Pastries section, with this service expected to be expanded to the entire family supplies branch in the near future.

Al-Tuwaijri explained that since the signing of the contract with Talebat, the society has earned an average daily sale of around KD1,800 and a monthly average sale of KD54,500. He

added that the co-op was seeking to achieve an annual sale of around KD654,000 through the use of this app.

He continued that the Board of Directors is always on the lookout to improve and expand the level of services to customers and shareholders of Adailiya Cooperative Society. Through using the services of a leading e-commerce site such as Talabat, we aim to expand the co-op's reach, by targeting customers beyond the immediate surrounding region, said Al-Tuwaijri.

Cyprus envoy Mavros praises depth and strength of...

COUNTINUED FROM PAGE 3

He noted that the two friendly countries' belief lies in international law, and their commitment to the United Nations Charter and United Nations Security Council resolutions, constitute a sound basis and an appropriate umbrella for cooperation in many files and issues of common interest on the regional and international arenas. "We have a special interest in the Middle East and the Gulf region and a deeper understanding of its issues, including the Palestinian issue, so the cooperation is very good," stressed the ambassador.

On the issue of military cooperation, the Cyprus envoy said, Cyprus does not have military cooperation in the understandable sense, but only discussions on cooperation in the soft and logistical fields regarding the facilities provided to Kuwaitis upon arrival and departure from Cyprus in the event of evacuation from the Middle East through Cyprus. This is a facility provided by Cyprus after it played the main role in evacuating foreign nationals during the 2006 Lebanon War, and we want to engage in non-military security and safety areas including cyber security.

Speaking on Kuwaiti diplomacy, he called it 'unique' and called the Kuwaiti diplomats highly professional. "I felt that myself, as I received help, support and friendship from everyone here, whether in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in all governmental bodies and outside, and all of this is highly appreciated, especially considering that Kuwait is my first stop as an ambassador for my country," the envoy recollected.

"I can only praise Kuwait's balanced and professional foreign policy; its pioneering role, and its continuous efforts to support and enhance stability at the regional and international levels through its support for peaceful solutions to conflicts and

the strengthening of good-neighborly relations, just as Cyprus does in the eastern Mediterranean region.

"I was a direct witness to Kuwait's commitment to pluralism when I was serving as the representative of Cyprus to the United Nations during the time when Kuwait was occupying a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council 2018-2019, and Kuwait is a country with initiatives and mediation efforts that contributed to solving many crises, perhaps the most prominent of which is reconciliation in the Gulf Cooperation Council, restoring the cohesion of the Gulf Cooperation Council, healing the rifts, and its support for the sustainable development agenda, in addition to its active role in combating terrorism and extremist ideologies.

"Kuwait's humanitarian role is also praised by the international community, and its white hands have contributed greatly to alleviating the suffering of victims of natural and humanitarian disasters. We express our deep appreciation for the Kuwaiti principled and firm position on the Cyprus issue. More specifically, I witnessed in New York, Kuwait's support for the continuation of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus, Kuwait has also contributed financially as well as to the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, for which we are grateful."

He also noted that Cyprus attaches the utmost importance to cultural exchange as it is one of the most important bridges of communication between the two friendly peoples, provides a common ground for understanding between them and contributes to the development of bilateral relations. "Therefore, I am currently working on organizing one or more events to promote Cypriot art in Kuwait, in addition to creating artistic collaborations between Cypriot and Kuwaiti artists," revealed the envoy in conclusion.



Toyota sets new benchmark for compact sedans

Mohamed Naser AlSayer & Sons and Toyota are bringing new levels of style and sophistication to Kuwait's compact sedan segment with the eagerly awaited launch of the all-new Yaris. Combining powerful, elegant design and superior comfort with Toyota's uncompromising approach to quality, durability, and reliability, the 2023 Yaris delivers an exceptional experience that is set to further strengthen the model's appeal among the region's discerning drivers.

The launch event was attended by Faisal Bader Al Sayer Chairman and Bengt Schultz Chief Operating Officer from AlSayer Holding along with Hiroshi Miyashita from Middle East & Central Asia Division Toyota Motor Corporation Japan, Martin Aherne Business Director Toyota Sales Division, Theo Kruger General Manager Retail Sales, Savio Alvares Deputy General Manager 'AL OSTOUL' Fleet Sales, distinguished fleet customers, members from Toyota Sales team, in the presence of representatives from the press and media. According to Mr. Kruger "Toyota

sedans specially have earned world-wide success and popularity; they have remarkable footprint and have achieved strong sales and market shares within the most competitive markets. We see millions of Yaris customers across the globe who are spreading the big smile of satisfaction, it is an impressive car in the GCC region too."

Chief Engineer of the all-new Toyota Yaris, Hideyuki Kamino, commented: "With the all-new Yaris, we set out to ensure that the vehicle is not only functional, but also represents the lifestyle and values of our customers. Our next-generation sedan adopts a powerful and elegant fastback style that embodies the Yaris' trademark stability and reliability that has won a loyal following across the region.

Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, Kei Fujita added, "I would like to thank our customers in the region and beyond for continually inspiring us on our journey to innovate and build 'Ever-better Cars' that exceed their expectations."



FIFA World Cup “

Ticket sales for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 are approaching three million as the countdown continues to the first edition of the tournament in the Middle East and Arab world, which will get underway at Al Bayt Stadium in just over a month's time on 20 November.

“We have always said that Qatar will deliver the best-ever edition of the FIFA World Cup. And as you look around the country today, at the state-of-the-art stadiums, the training pitches, the metro, the wider infrastructure, everything is ready and everyone is welcome,” said FIFA President Gianni Infantino during a video message. “The world is excited. Qatar is ready. The stage is set. Together, we will deliver the best World Cup ever on and off the field,” he added.

During a press conference in Doha, organizers of the tournament announced that 2.89 million tickets had been sold for the 64 matches to be staged in eight state-of-the-art stadiums. Demand has been highest among fans based in Qatar, the USA, Saudi Arabia, England, Mexico, the United Arab Emirates, Argentina, France, Brazil, and Germany.

The tournament has also achieved record-breaking hospitality ticket sales. Infantino, addressing the conference in a recorded video, said 240,000 hospitality packages had been sold for the month-long tournament, 63 percent of which were purchased by international clients, making it the “most successful hospitality programme ever,” he said.

Hospitality tickets, which allow access to luxurious stadium lounges, some with free-flowing drinks, cost more than \$34,300 per person for semifinal matches and the final, according to the FIFA website.

Qatar, the smallest country to have hosted soccer's global showpiece tournament, is preparing for an estimated 1.2 million visitors during the World Cup, the first to be held in a Middle Eastern country.

Thousands of fans are expected to stay in neighboring countries like the UAE and fly in to Doha for matches due to limited accommodation in Qatar.

Director General of Qatar's World Cup organizing committee, Yasir Al Jamal, told the news conference that two million room nights had been sold and Qatar has added an additional 30,000 rooms to accommodate



last-minute ticket sales. “This has been designed to ensure that all ticket holders have the best chance of securing accommodation,” Al Jamal said.

With most of the 31,000 or so hotel rooms in Qatar occupied by teams, their support staff and World Cup officials, organizers are offering fans accommodation in apartments, villas, fan villages, prefabricated metal cabins, desert tents and three cruise ships moored in the Doha port. The biggest variety of accommodation is available from the Qatar Accommodation Agency. Rooms can be booked from USD 80

per person, per night, based on two-person occupancy.

Tickets for all matches will continue to be released between now and the end of the tournament, with fans encouraged to keep checking FIFA.com/tickets for the latest inventory. From this week, ticket holders will receive an email with information on how to download the ticketing app and retrieve their mobile tickets.

Tournament organizers reminded fans to apply for the mandatory Hayya Card and book their accommodation as soon as possible.



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”
 The Hayya Card will act as an entry permit for international fans. In addition, it will provide free public transport across the country and allow access to stadiums for fans with a valid match ticket.

Organizers also outlined the vast array of entertainment options that will be on offer to visitors during the tournament. The FIFA Fan Festival at Al Bidda Park will host up to 40,000 fans every day during the tournament. It will be free to attend and screen live matches, host globally renowned artists and feature football activities. There will also be a range of local and international food and beverage options.

In addition, the 6km Corniche activation from Sheraton Park to the Museum of Islamic Art will feature roving performances, retail stores and food and beverage kiosks. Other activities will include the daily Welcome to Qatar show – a water and pyrotechnics display that will feature music from the Qatar 2022 Official Soundtrack, as well as pieces by Qatari composer Wael Bin Ali and compositions performed by the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra.

Dance music fans can dance the night away at the 15,000-capacity Arcadia Spectacular and 5,000-capacity ARAVIA by MDLBEAST. In addition, Last-Mile Cultural Activations will offer more than 6,000 performances in 21 locations, entertaining fans on their way to stadiums.

Afghanistan's Girls and Women Fight Back



Gordon Brown and Yasmine Sherif

Gordon Brown, a former prime minister and chancellor of the exchequer of the United Kingdom, is United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, Chair of Education Cannot Wait's High-Level Steering Group, and Chair of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity.

Yasmine Sherif is Director of Education Cannot Wait.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Thousands of women and girls have taken to the streets of Afghanistan's cities to protest the repeated violation of their right to an education. The trigger for the protests — occurring simultaneously with protests in Iran — was last month's terrorist attack on an education center in Kabul that killed 53 students and injured more than 110, most of them girls and young women. But this was just the latest in a long series of attacks against female students, many of which targeted girls from the Hazara community.

September's deadly attack, which occurred as female students were getting ready to take a practice university entrance exam, came on the heels of an extremely damaging year for girls' education in Afghanistan.

When the Taliban took over Afghanistan following the US military's withdrawal in August 2021, its leaders promised to keep all primary, secondary, and tertiary schools open for both boys and girls. But it soon reneged. In March of this year, it barred girls from attending school beyond the sixth grade, effectively revoking the right to learn. When women in Kabul and

rates of early marriage and child labor since the Taliban takeover.

What makes the Taliban's decision to prohibit girls' secondary education even more tragic is that it reversed two decades of significant progress in expanding girls' access to education in Afghanistan. The number of Afghan girls enrolled in school increased from just 100,000 in 2000 to more than 3.5 million in 2019, and female literacy doubled between 2011 and 2018. But while the Education Cannot Wait fund and its partners, including UNICEF, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and Save the Children, continue to try to reach these girls, the Taliban ban has undoubtedly forced many more girls out of school.

We must follow the lead of the Afghan women and girls protesting in the streets, risking their lives to fight for their fundamental rights, and take immediate action. For starters, the members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation must use their platform and demand that Afghanistan's de facto authorities ensure that secondary-school girls return to school and that educational institutions, teachers, and students, particularly girls, are protected from attacks. Moreover, every young and adolescent girl must be welcomed back into classrooms with the teachers, infrastructure, and supplies needed for a quality education.

Given the disastrous economic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, the international community must ensure that schools have sufficient resources to provide safe and protective spaces and quality education for all girls and boys, including those living with disabilities. We must also provide Afghan educators with the training and materials they need to teach their students.

In a country as ravaged by war and disaster as Afghanistan is, we must also guarantee that all girls and boys have access to mental-health resources and psychosocial support. And we must all work to establish alternative learning environments for girls and boys who cannot attend public schools.

The Education Cannot Wait fund has invested more than \$58 million in education in Afghanistan since 2017, some of it through emergency responses and some through a multiyear resilience program launched in 2019. Owing to the dedicated work of our partners, this funding has reached 51 percent of Afghanistan's young female students and more than 181,000 girls and boys altogether. Soon, we will launch a new multi-year program to

increase girls' and boys' access to community-based education, even in the most remote and challenging environments.

But much more needs to be done. The

women and girls of Afghanistan are fighting for their rights in the face of violent attacks, and they are asking for help. It is our collective duty to heed their call.

“The Organization of Islamic Cooperation must use their platform and demand that Afghanistan's de facto authorities ensure that secondary-school girls return to school and that educational institutions are protected from attacks.”

other cities protested, Taliban forces responded violently, beating protesters and firing warning shots over their heads. Most of the 1,880 girls' secondary schools in Afghanistan are currently shuttered, and the Taliban has threatened to close those that remain in operation.

At the same time, increased levels of conflict and violence, together with a severe drought and a succession of economic shocks, have made Afghan girls and women more vulnerable. These developments have resulted in an even greater degradation of women's rights, as evidenced by Afghanistan's higher

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Financing Green Infrastructure



Karim El Aynaoui and Otaviano Canuto

Karim El Aynaoui is Executive President of the Policy Center for the New South, the Moroccan policy think-tank and is Executive Vice President of Mohammed VI Polytechnic University Marrakech, Morocco, and Dean of its Faculty of Governance, Economics, and Social Sciences.

Otaviano Canuto is a former vice president and executive director of the World Bank and executive director of the International Monetary Fund, is a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a senior fellow at the Policy Center for the New South.

To spur development and fight climate change, emerging-market and developing economies (EMDEs) will need huge amounts of investment in green infrastructure over the next few decades. But many of these countries have limited fiscal space, especially after the shocks of the last few years. Given this, to meet the EMDEs' infrastructure needs, we must mobilize excess private savings in the advanced economies. The question is how.

The first step toward building a bridge between private savings and infrastructure investment in EMDEs is to understand investors' needs. Institutional investors, like all other types of debt and equity investors, have their own incentives, constraints, and objectives, all of which inform their allocations of funds, including which types of projects (greenfield vs. brownfield) to support, where, and at what stage of the project cycle (development, construction, or operation). Inadequate risk coverage, lack of data, and the heterogeneity

of project structures, regulatory environments, and contractual standards can all act as barriers to investment.

The challenge is to define 'attractive investment opportunities' and match investors to them in a more systematic way. Central to this effort should be the provision of a wide range of well-structured investment products tailored for different types of institutional investors and their respective risk/return profiles. For example, institutional investors (such as pension funds) might be inclined to participate at a project's earlier stages (prior to operation) if refinancing risks are covered and construction risk is addressed.

“ Multilateral finance institutions have an important role to play in drawing private capital toward long-term projects that could spur development in countries and sectors that capital markets perceive as high-risk. ”

Currency risk poses another challenge for investors in EMDEs. Here, export credit agencies may be able to help, though often at high cost.

A dearth of appropriate financial instruments — and the costs and complexity of the instruments that are available — is yet another potential barrier to infrastructure investment in the EMDEs. Fixed-income instruments, including bonds (project, municipal, sub-sovereign, and green bonds, as well as sukuk), and loans (direct and co-investment lending to infrastructure projects and syndicated project loans), can help solve this problem, as they could appeal to a broad range of institutional investors in the EMDEs.

Multilateral finance institutions have an

important role to play in drawing private capital toward long-term projects that could spur development in countries and sectors that capital markets perceive as high-risk. By providing funding, guarantees, or both, such institutions can de-risk projects and crowd in private investment. They can also bring partners into specific deals through syndications.

For its part, the private sector has a number of instruments at its disposal with which to manage risk. For example, companies can use risk-transfer and credit-enhancement instruments, which are currently being piloted by national and multilateral development banks. These include guarantees, insurance

and multilateral banks and owners, can deter political intervention and act as a buffer against shocks. And just as strategic alliances with foreign entities provide local actors with a hedge against political intervention, partnerships with local companies can help an infrastructure operator transcend the 'foreign investor' label.

In transforming today's savings-liquidity glut into much-needed investment in green EMDE infrastructure, the public and private sectors both have important roles to play. Policymakers must increase the transparency of legal frameworks and achieve political and regulatory stability, recognizing that the public sector will ultimately bear the high transaction costs incurred by private investors when they channel financial resources to EMDEs.

Institutional investors and other financial intermediaries, as well as non-banking financial institutions, often highlight the lack of a pipeline of investment-ready projects. To improve their options, the public sector should take more responsibility for project design in situations characterized by significant complexity and regulatory risk, especially when risks are harder to identify and measure in advance. The costs of this process can largely be recouped when public-private partnerships (such as concessions) are established. Public-sector planning and priority-setting is essential.

But private investors must also embrace a more active role, including by taking advantage of the risk-management tools at their disposal. Sophisticated, developed financial markets and instruments would help, by enabling financial agents to take on risks that are in line with their appetites and capacities.

It will not be easy. But with these building blocks, we can construct the most important infrastructure of all: the bridge connecting advanced-country savings and EMDEs' financing needs.



Eating late increases obesity risks

World Health Organization (WHO) studies show that worldwide obesity has nearly tripled since 1975. Data made available by the Organization show that nearly 2 billion adults over the age of 18 were overweight in 2016; of these adults more than 650 million were obese. The figures also reveal that over 340 million children and adolescents in the 5 to 19 age group were either overweight or obese. Meanwhile, the latest data on children under the age of 5 show that more than 39 million of them were overweight or obese in 2020. The World Obesity Federation now predicts that one billion people globally, including 1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men, will be living with obesity by 2030.

The Federation's projections are a startling reminder that obesity, a condition that is largely preventable, has not received the attention it deserves. Obesity is one of the main risk factors behind several chronic diseases, including diabetes, cancer and other adverse health conditions.

Among the reasons that lead to an increase in risk of the onset of obesity is an unhealthy diet and lifestyle that results in excess body weight. Although regulation of calorie intake from diet, the number of calories burned through physical activity, and molecular changes in fat tissue, have

been identified as the three main pillars in body weight regulation, very few studies have comprehensively investigated the impact of diet timing on regulating diet.

A new study by investigators from Brigham and Women's Hospital in the United States on the impact of late eating on body weight regulation has come up with the revelation that when we eat significantly impacts our energy expenditure, appetite, and molecular pathways in adipose tissue.

Previous studies by the same researchers had shown that late eating is associated with increased obesity risk, increased body fat, and impaired weight loss success. The new study attempted to understand why this was so. To test the mechanisms that may explain why late eating increases obesity risk, the study team explored different eating schedules while keeping everything else consistent. They found that eating four hours later makes a significant difference to hunger levels, the way calories are burned, and how the body stores fat.

The study involved 16 participants whose body mass index (BMI) was in the overweight or obese range. Each participant completed two laboratory protocols: one with a strictly scheduled early meal schedule, and the other with the exact same meals, each scheduled about four hours later in the day.

In the last two to three weeks before starting each of the in-laboratory protocols, participants maintained fixed sleep and wake schedules, and in the final three days before entering the laboratory, they strictly followed identical diets and meal schedules at home. In the lab, participants regularly documented their hunger and appetite, provided frequent small blood samples throughout the day, and had their body temperature and energy expenditure measured.

To measure how eating time affected molecular pathways involved in adipogenesis — the way that the body stores fat — investigators collected biopsies of adipose tissue from a subset of participants during laboratory testing in both the early and late eating protocols, to enable comparison of gene expression patterns and or levels between these two eating conditions.

Results revealed that eating later had profound effects on the hunger and appetite-regulating hormones leptin and ghrelin, which influence our inclination to eat. Specifically, levels of the hormone leptin, which signals satiety, were decreased across the 24 hours in the late eating condition compared to the early eating conditions. When participants ate later, they also burned calories at a slower rate and exhibited adipose tissue gene expression towards increased adipogenesis and decreased lipolysis, which promote fat growth.

These findings suggest that there could be converging physiological and molecular mechanisms underlying the correlation between late eating and increased obesity risk. Besides being consistent with a large body of research suggesting that eating later may increase one's likelihood of developing



obesity, the findings also shed new light on how this might occur. By using a randomized crossover study, and tightly controlling for behavioral and environmental factors such as physical activity, posture, sleep, and light exposure, investigators were able to detect changes in the different control systems involved in energy balance, a marker of how our bodies use the food we consume.

In future studies, the investigators aim to recruit more participants and widen the gender and age base to increase the generalizability of their findings to a broader section of the population. While this study cohort included only five female participants, the study was set up to control for the menstrual phase, reducing confounding but making recruiting women more difficult. Going forward, the researchers said they would also attempt to better understand the impact that mealtime and bedtime had on energy balance. They added that in future studies they would also consider how other behavioral and environmental variables alter the biological pathways underlying obesity risk.



Removing kidney stones without anesthesia

Passing kidney stones through urine is a painful condition that people who have experienced it once would never wish to repeat. For those uninitiated about this disease, kidney stones are hard deposits of minerals and acid salts that stick together in concentrated urine.

Though it causes severe pain when passing through the urinary tract, kidney stones usually do not cause permanent damage. Treatments include pain relievers and drinking lots of water to help pass the stone. Medical procedures, such as ultrasound technologies administered while under anesthesia, may also be required to remove or break up larger stones.

A new technique which combines the use of two ultrasound technologies may offer an option to move kidney stones out of the ureter with minimal pain and no anesthesia. In this procedure, the physician uses a handheld transducer placed on the skin to direct ultrasound waves towards the stone. A transducer is a device that converts changes in electric signal into a physical quantity, such as sound, pressure or brightness, and vice versa.

In this case, the ultrasound produced by the transducer is used to move and reposition the stones to promote their passage through the urinary tract, a process called ultrasound propulsion, or to break up the stone, a technique called burst wave lithotripsy (BWL).

Unlike shock wave lithotripsy, which is

the standard procedure now in use and requires sedation, this technology does not cause any pain. The research team hopes that, with this new technology, the procedure of moving or breaking up the stones could eventually be performed in a clinic or emergency room setting.

Stones in the ureter, the passage which leads from the kidney to the bladder, can cause severe pain and are a common reason for emergency department visits. Most patients with ureteral stones are advised to wait to see if the stone will pass on its own. However, this observation period can last for weeks and can be a painful time for the patient, with nearly one-fourth of patients eventually requiring surgery. Up to 50 percent of patients with a stone event will probably have a recurrence within five years.

The research into developing a technology to remove kidney stones under emergency situations in a non-medical environment, first started several years ago, when the US space agency NASA funded a study to see if kidney stones could be moved or broken up, without anesthesia, on long space flights.

Scientists at the University of Washington and at the university's Northwest Kidney Stone Center, behind the new study, also focused on making the removal of kidney stones painless and without the use of anesthesia, so that eventually it could become a routine clinical procedure. Meanwhile, other medical trials at the university have concentrated on breaking apart kidney stones inside the kidneys.

This new trial is the first to look at moving the stones or breaking them apart in the ureter with BWL mentioned earlier. For their study, the researchers recruited 29 patients, of whom 16 were treated with propulsion alone and 13 with propulsion and burst wave lithotripsy. In 19 patients, the stones moved. In two cases, the stones moved out of the ureter and into the bladder.

The study noted that burst wave lithotripsy fragmented the stones in seven of the cases. At a two-week follow up, 18 of 21 patients (86%) whose stones were located lower in the ureter, closer to the bladder, had passed their stones. In this group, the average time to stone passage was about four days.

The researchers said their next step would be to perform a clinical trial with a control group, which would not receive either BWL bursts or ultrasound propulsion, to evaluate the degree to which this new technology potentially aids stone passage.

DR. ADARSH MD
Internal Medicine

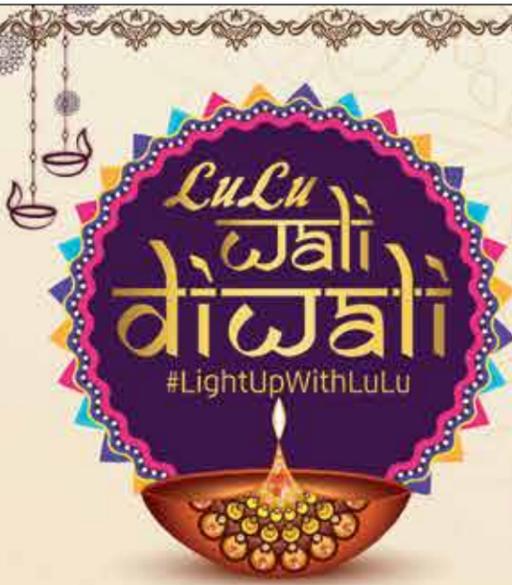
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South Indian Laddu
/kg



ك.د. ٤.٦٩٠
K.D. 4.690

Kaju Roll
/kg



ك.د. ٣.٤٩٠
K.D. 3.490

Gondh Laddu
/kg



ك.د. ٢.٨٩٠
K.D. 2.890

Coconut Barfi
/kg



ك.د. ٢.١٩٠
K.D. 2.190

Mysore Pak
/kg



ك.د. ٢.٤٩٠
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