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Flipping back through 2022



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

A new year heralds a new beginning, a chance to start afresh, to seek new possibilities and seize opportunities. It is an apt time to realize and accept that everything in life changes. An old year makes way for a new one, winter inevitably changes to spring, difficulties yield opportunities, expansion and growth usually comes on the heels of a recession. The new year is also a time for reflections, an occasion to take stock of the past, and to refine, improve and enhance on it. This is as much true for individuals as it is for nations.

As the new year unfolds, we take a look at what the world got right, and what it did not, in the year gone by. Despite fears that spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 would drag out the pandemic, January 2022 began on a positive note, firm in the belief that the worst of the pestilence was behind us. On the economic front, a wider rollout of anti-COVID vaccines, a fall in global infections, and reopening of international borders gave rise to signs of economic recovery in many countries.



Unfortunately, the optimism that prevailed at the start of 2022 was short-lived.

In February, the Russian invasion of Ukraine upturned all estimations and forecasts, with everything throughout 2022 then being defined and impacted by the events in eastern Europe. The aggression and its fallouts framed the uncertainty that prevailed throughout the past year, and affected global growth. The conflict fueled higher food and energy prices, spurred

inflation, and hobbled reaching consensus at international forums on several issues of critical concern to the world.


The largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II, along with the long tail of the pandemic, and response from China to rising COVID-19 infections, as well as measures by central banks to raise their interest rates to curb inflation, dramatically changed the economic, political and social narrative in 2022. Reflecting

this sober mood, head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Kristalina Georgieva, giving the Fund's assessment of the global economy at the start of 2023, stated that the year ahead will be "tougher" than last year.

With the US, EU and China seeing their economies slow down, the potential for a third of the world to sink into recession in 2023 was highly likely, said the IMF chief. Adding to the economic pessimism, the world faces record debt levels, declining investment rates, rising widespread hunger, growing political instability, and attempts to reduce global poverty grinding to a halt in many countries. On multiple fronts, things have become a lot worse over the past 12 months than what was envisioned at the start of 2022.

But it was not all gloom and doom in the year gone by. The world witnessed spectacular performances by individuals and countries at the Winter Olympics in China, and at the FIFA World Cup in Qatar. The best of the world was displayed at the World Expo in the United Arab Emirates, and the James Webb telescope gave us glimpses into the universe that we never had before. In Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, and again

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Business priorities in IT for 2023



Joe Baguley

Vice President
and Chief Technology Officer EMEA, VMware

making use of tools that instill accuracy and accountability when it comes to achieving sustainability goals.

Flexible working hours: In 2023, businesses will be defined by the way they work. The battle between those who advocate 'everyone in the office all of the time' versus flexible working rages on. It is even more heightened in the digital world, where employees still hold much of the power; making it clear they will search for a new job if they cannot choose their own approach. Whatever your personal stance, trying to force people to go one way or the other will define an organization's IT strategy, and therefore its future. Business leaders must agree what is next as there is no going backwards on the progress made in hybrid working. And these are pivotal times as company reputations will be defined by these decisions.

There is no two ways about it; the last few years have been a bumpy ride for us all. In particular, 2022 will go down as one of the most tumultuous years in recent times, raising numerous issues that look set to fundamentally transform the landscape of business and society for years, if not decades to come. Technology has been no exception to that disruption, encountering significant challenges of its own — from privacy and accountability concerns, to growing sustainability and regulatory mandates. But by and large, it continues to present huge promise at a time when certainty and reliability is otherwise in short supply.

So, with that in mind, I have pulled together a list of the top ten areas I think IT leaders are likely to be drawn to, and which businesses need to prioritize, in 2023:

Sustainability: Even if by accident, people will be more sustainable. Pressure to improve an organization's environmental sustainability continues to grow. With the acute rise in energy costs, businesses are looking to reduce costs, including IT businesses running data centers on renewables. However, with the impending Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) in the EU, sensible decision makers are starting to prioritize reduced overall energy consumption,

Use of AI: Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be used for better decision making. The use of AI to support better informed decision making will undoubtedly continue to increase. But with growing regulation and governance, and a deeper understanding of AI-bias, its use will be tempered with caution around when and for what decisions it is being used and, importantly, on what data sets. No-one wants to end up like the major credit lender that was hauled over the coals a few years ago for its algorithm that was giving men significantly higher credit scores than women, due to outdated data. However, there is no doubt that hype will continue to grow as AI gets into the hands of more and more non-techie people with the release of exciting tools like ChatGPT.

Human-Robot interaction: Taking steps to ensure robots and humans can interact safely will be a priority in the coming years. With the increase in technology meeting with humans, robots have started to move out of the factory and are now interacting with humans, with mixed results and plenty of criticism. With food delivery robots being rolled out across the UK, and Tesla now almost 12 months into their Full Self-Driving beta programs in the US, it is time to take a few deep breaths and take stock. While



there have been a few crashes, let us be honest... How many times have Deliveroo drivers run into someone on their mopeds?

Instead of rushing to turn robots into heroes or villains, 2023 will be the year we evaluate the huge amounts of data we are collating and apply lessons based on their initial machine-to-human interactions, to ensure they enter the human realm safely. We are a long way from full robot-human integration but baby steps will be required for continued progress, without the alarmism that has become synonymous with robots.

Transferable tech skills to move up: While there are constantly 'new' technologies, tools and programs entering the market, nothing is 'absolutely new'. It is almost impossible to adapt skill-sets to how fast the world is changing; Universities are not pumping out enough multi-cloud architects, and security experts do not automatically understand new threats. Rather than focusing on platform- or technology specific skillsets and capabilities, there needs to be more focus on skills that are fundamentally transferable between existing and new technologies, and build upon the years of experience people already amassed. If people have the basics down and their intentions are right, there can be

more transference of skills to support the digital economy.

Metaverse apps: Still searching for that killer 'metaverse' app? The Metaverse or some version of it has been on everyone's trends list for the past decade with big brands promising to deliver a world changing virtual reality experience. Unfortunately, it has still not materialized and as such people are losing confidence. From where I sit, the potential to revolutionize is certainly there but we are still yet to find that killer use case that will really engage and change people and hook them into repeated visits and experiences.

Death of the super-app dream: Rather than the move towards a super app, more fragmentation is happening in the market. Look at what's happening in social media with Twitter, and the rise of Instagram and now TikTok. Until now many have been fixated on the rise of the super-app, which given consumer demand for smooth and seamless experiences is understandable. But EMEA is not China, and so a European version of WeChat is unlikely to take hold. It is pretty clear evidence that super-apps just will not happen — people want apps that do specific jobs and do them well. So, if anything, we are likely to see even more fragmentation in 2023.

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CBK gives nod to six banks to join AFAQ

Six local banks in Kuwait have joined the GCC Cross-border Payment System (AFAQ) after having successfully completed all the required tests and procedures, and following approval from the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

Announcing this on 2 January, the Governor of CBK, Basel Al-Haroon said in a press statement that this followed CBK's efforts to develop AFAQ in the country, so as to unify the banking systems and facilitate cross-border payments between GCC states. The AFAQ system deploys advanced technologies and security systems with the aim of enhancing efficiency, minimizing reliance on external payment platforms and financial systems, while reducing cost of such transactions.

The statement added that the six banks newly initiated into the AFAQ system were: National Bank of Kuwait, Kuwaiti Finance House, Ahli United Bank, Commercial Bank

of Kuwait, Burgan Bank and Kuwait Industrial Bank. Earlier, during the first phase of the process in March 2022, the CBK and Boubayan Bank had joined AFAQ.

Since the founding of GCC in 1981, efforts have been made to unify and bring the banking systems of the six member states closer together. To facilitate and support this ambitious goal, the Gulf Payments Company (GPC) was formed in 2016 and tasked with developing and building an integrated system that connects all GCC payment systems. The aim was to create a business system that provides safe, effective and economical cross-border payments between the GCC states, utilizing cutting-edge safety, security and data-processing technologies, and in line with internationally recognized standards and best practices in the financial field.

One of the products offered by GPC is the AFAQ system, which is a regional payment system of GCC states that aims to implement remittances in GCC local and other currencies in a short time and at low costs in a safe and stable environment.

AFAQ is also a joint regional payments platform linking real-time gross settlement systems for each GCC country, where the immediate processing of inter-GCC transfers is carried out at the end of the day, including total settlements.





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Sri Lanka and Kuwait share strong bilateral bonds

H.E. U.L. Mohammed Jauhar comes across as a soft spoken and friendly diplomat who has years of experience behind him. Ambassador Jauhar took over the Sri Lankan mission during the most challenging times of dealing with a lock down, distribution of food supplies and as well as repatriation of a large number of Sri Lankan nationals.

By Reaven D'Souza
Managing Editor

A veteran diplomat who has been representing and serving his country's interests abroad for decades, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka H.E. U.L. Mohammed Jauhar ended his successful tenure in Kuwait and returned to Colombo last week. Ahead of his imminent departure, in an exclusive interview with the Managing Editor of The Times Kuwait, Ambassador Jauhar spoke about his experiences in this country in promoting Sri Lankan affairs, ensuring the welfare of the Sri Lankan community, and working to further cement the strong bilateral relations between Sri Lanka and Kuwait in all domains.

Beginning the interview by expressing his pleasure in representing Sri Lanka in foreign countries, Ambassador Jauhar remarked that, over his years with the Sri Lankan Foreign Service, he had served in various world cities, including Washington DC, Islamabad, Geneva, Toronto, and now in Kuwait. I entered the Sri Lanka Foreign Service by chance, said the

"Each of my assignments abroad was challenging, with each station having unique and different trials to tackle. But, with the guidance of my senior colleague and diligent efforts on my part, I was able to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to me, including in areas such as looking after the welfare of Sri Lankans workers abroad, as well as defending the government and the people of Sri Lanka at international fora. In this regard, Kuwait was no different; the country presented its own set of challenges.

"I assumed duties in September 2019 as the Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Kuwait, and within six months of my arrival we had to face the COVID-19 pandemic. The embassy had to assist tens of thousands of Sri Lankans who were severely affected by the pandemic. We had to arrange distribution of food supplies to community members and to help Sri Lankans wanting to repatriate back to their homeland during the pandemic.

"However, with assistance from the Kuwait Government, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, other non-governmental organizations and well-wishers we were able to mitigate the problems faced by the Sri Lankan community during the pandemic. In particular, I would like to thank the Kuwait Red Crescent Society for its efforts in providing medical aid worth \$186,000 to Sri Lanka during the pandemic, which along with the Embassy's own contribution of \$35,000 worth of medical supplies and equipment, helped my country during the height of the pandemic."

Pointing out that Sri Lanka and Kuwait share strong bilateral bonds, and that in 2021 the two countries celebrated 50 years of flourishing diplomatic relations, the ambassador stated: "Both the Governments are very eager to bring the existing cordial and friendly bilateral ties in diplomatic, political, and economic spheres to the next level. In fact, we are in the process of finalizing many agreements and Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) to achieve our shared objectives."

Turning to bilateral economic relations and mutual investments, the ambassador said, "I



Dean of Diplomatic Corps H.E. Dr. Zubaydullo Zubaydov handing over the memento to Ambassador of Sri Lanka H.E. Mohammed Jauhar during the farewell reception.

would like to mention here that during my tenure here the Embassy was able to facilitate the signing of an agreement with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development for a loan of KD10 million, to establish the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Moratuwa in Sri Lanka.

"Regarding sectors of the Sri Lankan economy that would be of special interest to investors from Kuwait, I would like to underline that we are keen to enhance our relations with Kuwait in the energy sector, as well as in the tourism sector. For Sri Lanka, tourism is one of the most important sectors and we are looking for investments in the hospitality industry from Kuwaiti investors. I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage citizens and residents of Kuwait to visit Sri Lanka to experience the country's wonderful tropical climate.

"Sri Lanka has consistently been ranked among the world's favorite destinations for travelers seeking the experience of a lifetime. My country has everything to offer for a variety of holiday makers. The attractions vary from

beautiful beaches to lush green vegetation to well-preserved ruins of an ancient civilisation. No one will be disappointed visiting Sri Lanka. Recently Jazeera Airways had its award ceremony for its executives and travel agents and tour operators in Colombo, which was graced by our Minister of Tourism and State Minister of Foreign Affairs."

Emphasizing the role that the Sri Lankan community in Kuwait played in strengthening relations with Kuwait, the envoy noted, "There are over 110,000 Sri Lankans living and working in Kuwait, with most of our migrant workers being employed in the domestic sector. They are reliable and hard working, and very much liked by Kuwaiti and other sponsors. However, we are now striving to increase the share of skilled and semi-skilled Sri Lankan workers in Kuwait."

In closing, Ambassador Jauhar expressed his gratitude towards Kuwait and thanked His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, the Prime Minister and the government for hosting the Sri Lankan community in Kuwait.



With Managing Editor Reaven D'Souza

ambassador, adding, "A leader of the Sri Lankan Muslim community, who happened to know that I got through another island-wide exam for administrative staff officer positions, suggested that I join the Sri Lanka Foreign Service. This encouraged me to sit for the competitive examination and thank God I too got selected."

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Kuwait mourns the passing away of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

Ministers, government officials, heads of diplomatic missions, as well as heads of various religious communities in Kuwait arrived at the Vatican Embassy to express and inscribe their condolences on the demise of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI who passed away on the last day of 2022 at the age of 95.

Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Abdullah, conveyed the condolences of His Highness the Amir

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the government and the people of Kuwait on the death of the late Pope.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah who arrived in person at the Apostolic Nunciature in Yarmouk and extended his deepest condolences to the former Pope's family

and the Catholic community around the world.

The Apostolic Nuncio to the country, Archbishop Eugene Martin Nugent, stated that the late Pope was an extraordinary man not only in theology and philosophy, but in history, literature and the arts, as well. He described the relationship between Kuwait and the Vatican as long-standing, stressing that the diplomatic relations between them go back to the mid-sixties. Nugent also stated that the Vatican's

relationship with Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah is exemplary.

For his part, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador of Tajikistan Zubaidullah Zubaidov, said that the late Pope was a prominent political figure and a statesman, adding that the deceased was very peace-loving and played a major role in improving relations between peoples, as well as maintaining security and peace.



'FAIPS extraordinaire'

FAIPS- DPS conducted the Annual Day 'FAIPS EXTRAORDINAIRE' for class 4 on 20th December 2022, with a lot of zeal, zest and enthusiasm.

The programme was conducted in the Primary Block in school in 2 slots, accommodating 441 students participating in different cultural programmes. The Principal, Mr Ravi Ayanoli welcomed the special guests for the day Dr. Diwa-

stressing on the importance of discipline and values. He persuaded the parents to encourage their children to focus on co-curricular activities along with academics for the overall development of their ward.

The morning commenced with a special programme with the children displaying their talents on the drums, keyboard and guitar. This was followed by the Welcome Dance with children portraying popular dance forms from north and south India namely Kathak and Bharathanatyam. After this, the students gave a melodious rendition of songs in English, Hindi and French.

The audience were entertained with dance numbers consisting of various dance styles in colourful costumes and props. The dances ranged from a Dance Drama, Rock n' Roll, stylish Disco, trendy Hip hop, freestyle, folk, to Zumba and Fusion. They were also treated to a special dance on a Disney theme. There was a mesmerizing Arabic dance performance as well portraying the rich Egyptian culture.

The event concluded with an outstanding Grand Finale dance performance after which the special guests addressed the gathering with their inspiring words of wisdom. This was followed by the vote of thanks by the Primary School Headmistress Ms. Seema Bhatnagar thanking all teaching and non-teaching staff for their untiring efforts to make the programme a grand success and wishing all present a very happy festive season ahead.



kara Chaluvaiah, President of Indian Doctors Forum, Kuwait (in the 1st slot) and Ms. Shirley Dennis, Director - Indian School of Excellence, Kuwait and ICSK Junior (in the 2nd Slot) along with the members from the Ministry and Head Office Al- Rayan Holding Company. He also welcomed the parents with his motivating words

Badr Al Samaa felicitates Indian cyclist on expedition



Indian cyclist Fayis Ashraf Ali is a man on a mission, riding his bicycle from his native Kerala all the way to the British capital London. The epic journey of around 30,000km is expected to take about 450 days and cover 35 countries. As part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of India's independence, Mr. Ali set out this year on India's Independence Day, 15 August, and arrived in Kuwait on 24 December.

During his multi-nation cycling expedition, Mr. Ali is promote various initiatives, including raising awareness on the importance of fitness and healthcare; the 'End Polio Now' campaign of the Rotary Mission; promoting conflict resolution and peace building; imparting to the younger generation the values of Indian culture and the beauty of the Malayalam language, and the 'Go Green' campaign to focus on zero-

carbon emissions, as well as the 'Say No to Drugs' campaign in various campuses along his route.

In a media conference held at the Badr Al Samaa Clinic, Farwaniya, to introduce and felicitate Mr. Ali, the Country-head of Badr Al Samaa, Ashraf Ayyoor, handed over a memento to the cyclist in the presence of Branch Manager Abdul Razak. In a speech delivered on the occasion, Mr. Ayyoor highly appreciated the initiative and conveyed his best wishes for the challenge undertaken by the young cyclist.

The program was coordinated by Marketing Coordinator Sana Khalfe, Business Development Coordinator Ahamad Refai, Marketing Executives Rahajan and Abdul Qadir, and Marketing Coordinators Preema and Sherin.

Jazeera Airways launches direct flights to Moscow



Jazeera Airways announced the launch of a new route to Moscow, Russia, to cater to the increasing demand for travel to tourist destinations in the Middle East and beyond by Russian travelers. They will now be able to connect through Kuwait International Airport to places such as Dubai, Sharm El Sheikh and popular cities in Turkey.

Jazeera Airways Chief Executive Officer, Rohit Ramachandran, said: "We expect high demand for this route from day one, as our service comes at a time of a scarcity of flights serving Moscow. We are ideally placed in Kuwait to attract connecting leisure passengers from Russia as well as religious pilgrims to Saudi Arabia. We

hope to expand the number of flights to our schedule during 2023."

Flights are scheduled to commence from 2 February with four weekly flights leaving Kuwait on Mondays, Thursday, Fridays and Saturdays, and return flights from Moscow on Tuesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. The flights will leave Kuwait International Airport at 18:45 and arrive in Moscow at 23:45. The return flights from Moscow's Domodedovo Airport will depart at 00:45 in the morning and arrive in Kuwait at 05:50 am.

Sharp fall in number of expat workers in public sector

The latest report issued by the Central Administration for Statistics shows that the ratio of expatriate employees in the government sector decreased by 70 percent in 2022 relative to what it was four years ago. Meanwhile, the ratio of Kuwaiti employees in the public sector rose to 80 percent.

The report revealed that the number of Kuwaitis in the public-sector undertakings rose to 366,238 employees while that of expatriates fell to 91,000 in 2022. Most of the



expatriates in the government sector were concentrated in the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.

The report also indicated that the volume of employment in 16 fully state-owned enterprises stood at 29,170 workers, of whom Kuwaitis represent 71 percent. The report also added that 73 percent of the total workers in the government sector are employed in just three entities — Kuwait Oil Company, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company.



Short-term visits by Kuwaitis to UK to be visa-free

In a statement issued last week, British Ambassador H.E. Belinda Lewis stated that the electronic travel permit for Kuwaitis wishing to travel to Britain for short-duration visits will be launched in 2023. She added that once the service was launched it would facilitate travel by Kuwaitis to the UK for tourism or other specific short-term visits without the need to go to the British Visa Center to obtain a visa.

"The abolition of the visa requirement for Kuwaiti citizens who make short-term visits to the United Kingdom during 2023 reflects the long ties of friendship, trade and cooperation between the two countries, as well as strengthening the rapprochement between them, and hoping that the decision will enter into force in the near future," said the British envoy.

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Ministry shuts stores violating commercial laws

Following an intensive inspection of shops and other commercial facilities in Fahaheel and surrounding areas, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry closed down 16 shops found in violation of various commercial laws.

The inspection, which covered

commercial establishments in Fahaheel, Al-Aqila, Abu Al-Hasaniya, Al-Mangaf and Al-Qurain Markets, led to the shuttering of shops that were found engaging in commercial fraud, selling products at higher than stated prices, not displaying prices on products, charging customers higher than declared prices, and those that were in non-compliance with the commercial decisions and laws of the country.

After completing the legal procedures against the violators, the inspection team noted that



such intensive security tours would continue in the weeks ahead to ensure that shops comply with ministry regulations.



Thought for the week

“ Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

Philippine Embassy repatriates Filipino workers from hospitals and jails

Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

The Embassy of the Philippines in Kuwait repatriated one hundred and forty-four Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Kuwait currently detained at the deportation area and some are medical cases. The repatriation program is a project of the Assistance to Nationals Unit (ATNU) of the Embassy in cooperation with the Ministry of Interiors.

On December 30th and 31st under the leadership of His Excellency Jose Cabrera III, Charges D' Affaires of the Philippine Embassy, repatriated 144 OFWs, 139 were from Talha Deportation Center with existing absconding cases, travel ban due to unpaid loans, residence violators, mother/father and child were also included. Four (4) medical cases with

conditions on kidney failure and stroke plus one (1) stretcher case were among repatriated which were handled by the Embassy's Medical Response Team (MRT). All these cases were handled by the Embassy's legal team and lawyers. The Repatriation program is an ongoing project

initiated by ATNU, which provides OFWs with legal cases and medical conditions the opportunity to return home after going through the legal process in Kuwait.

OFWs with similar situations and conditions are urged to report to the Embassy's ATNU or call: 65002623



AUK, GUST host IOM Global Migration Film Festival



Kuwait office of the United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM), in coordination with the American University of Kuwait (AUK) and Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST). The two-day event that took place on 18 and 19 December at the two universities, included the screening of two short films on the issue of global migration, followed by an in-depth panel discussion with the students on the topic.

The GMFF, launched in 2016 by IOM provides an opportunity for the organization to feature films and documentaries that capture the promise and challenges of migration, and the unique contributions that migrants bring to their new host communities. The films and discussions on global migration help reduce prejudices, and prevent xenophobia, while also facilitating and encouraging positive interactions between migrants and host communities and promoting a more balanced narrative on migration.

Speaking about the film festival, IOM Kuwait's Chief of Mission Mazen AboulHosn said: "This year comes as the third consecutive year of collaborating with AUK to raise awareness on migration through the GMFF, for better outreach, we are also glad to collaborate with GUST for the first year for this initiative." He went on to



add, "IOM recognizes the importance of and takes pride in its collaboration with academia to advocate and raise awareness on migration, and the factors that push people from their home, which may either be economic, political, cultural, or environmental."

For his part, Chair of the Art and Graphic Design Department and Associate Professor of Art and Graphic Design at AUK, William Andersen said, "We wish to thank the IOM for bringing the Global Migration Film Festival to AUK for the third year in a row. Our department is honored to collaborate with the IOM on this prestigious event that is not only strikingly creative in the various filmmakers approaches every year but importantly raises awareness about the lives of migrants for our students.

"The two short films that were screened this year covered topics of asylum seekers and migrants who have fled from war and are seeking for a better place in the world to live. The film screening and the panel discussion provided GUST students with a unique opportunity to discuss issues surrounding migration in Kuwait in a very accessible way. We hope to do more fruitful collaborations like this with IOM in the future," said Assistant Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at GUST, Rania Al-Nakib.

RECIPE

Sugar-free Millet Muffins



Millet is a highly varied group of cereals that have been consumed around the world for thousands of years. Finger-millet, or ragi as it is known in India, is a well-known variety of millet that is rich in protein, fiber and minerals, especially iron. Sugar-free ragi cakes or muffins made without using eggs, but which nevertheless turns out extremely soft and spongy, are a perfect, wholesome delight that serves as a mini-meal at any time of the day.

Total time: 30-40 minutes
Serving: 6

Ingredients:

- 1 cup finger millet flour (Ragi)
- 1/3 cup oats
- 1/2 cup jaggery powder
- 1/4 cup yogurt
- 1/4 cup oil
- 1/4 cup milk + 1/2 tsp vinegar (Mixed)
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp cinnamon powder
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp cashew nut chopped (can be replaced with any other nut or seed)
- 2 tbsp choco chips



Chef Chhaya Thakker

Instructions:

- Mix together oil, jaggery powder, salt, curd, cinnamon powder, vanilla extract, milk+vinegar mix in a bowl
- Sift the ragi flour along with the baking soda and baking powder into the bowl
- Mix the wet and dry ingredients together without any lumps
- Add oats, part of choco chips and chopped cashew nuts
- Grease and line a muffin tray with paper cups
- Fill the muffin cups half full with the mixture
- Garnish with remaining choco chips, almond, walnut, cashew nut
- Bake them at 200 C for about 15 minutes
- Remove, let the muffins cool, and then serve them warm or cold
- These muffins can be stored at room temperature for 5-6 days.



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



Oncost Store rebrands as Gulfmart, opens in Shuwaikh

Oncost, the popular family market in Kuwait, has rebranded and relaunched as Gulfmart, the well-known retail brand in the country. The inauguration and relaunch was held at the Gulfmart Shuwaikh outlet on 28 December by

top Gulfmart management, in the presence of special invitees, staff and a large gathering of shoppers and supporters of the brand.

The relaunch of Gulfmart with the rebranding of Oncost is expected to consolidate the strengths and expertise of the two retailers

under one roof, and benefit customers who will now enjoy the quality services, wide selection and the array of products that the two brands were well-known for. Moreover, the extensive number of branches across the country that previously operated as Gulfmart and Oncost,

will now come under a unified Gulfmart umbrella, and thereby extend the reach of the brand and strengthen its commitment to provide customers all over Kuwait with high quality products, competitive prices and excellent services.

Expat health insurance largest revenue for MoH

Fees charged for health insurance of expatriates now constitute one of the largest revenues in the Ministry of Health budget. The latest budget figures of MoH show that in fiscal year 2021-22, the ministry received over KD100 million as insurance fees from expatriates. This income marked an increase of 15 percent, or around KD13 million, compared to the KD87 million received in fiscal 2020-21.

The figures also show that MoH netted around KD491 million over the past five years through the expat health insurance scheme. However, the ministry admitted that this 5-year figure could vary, considering accounting discrepancies and confusion in collecting these fees in the 2017-18 financial year.

In this regard it is worth noting that last week the health ministry decided to charge expats for availing medications from local clinics and hospitals, on top of the earlier fees charged for medical consultations at health facilities. The ministry imposed a fee of KD5 on expats to receive medication from public clinics and hospital emergencies, and KD10 for receiving medicines from hospital outpatient clinics.

However, it needs to be added that despite having to pay for medicines, not all medications will be available to expats, as a directive issued



in 1997 bans the prescription of over 80 medications for expats and their families.

The new charges add to the earlier charges of KD2 per visit to local clinics and KD10 for visiting hospitals. The new levies will further augment the revenues the MoH earns from expatriate health services, as all these fees are in addition to the KD50 annual fees that the government charges as part of a health insurance scheme for expat workers and their families.

Social media double-edged sword in fight against drugs

Social media platforms have become a double-edged sword in Kuwait, in that they help spread awareness on the dangers of illegal drugs, while also sparking interest among youth to try out new drugs that are promoted and purveyed through these online social sites.

Speaking to the media on the dual-sided nature of social media platforms, Psychology Professor at Kuwait University, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaileh said she believed that social media platforms could be an asset when promoting campaigns that raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse and highlighting treatment options for those afflicted with it. She also underscored the importance of utilizing these online platforms to engage with the young, and encourage addicts to reach out for help, assuring them that no legal action would be taken against them.

She maintained that it was also quite necessary to put policies in place for stopping websites and mobile apps from advertising



illegal products, while highlighting the centers where those afflicted with addiction can turn to for assistance, so as to deal with the issue in a scientific, legal and confidential manner, and in line with the work ethics of health and psychological professionals.

For his part, Chief of Public Relations Department at Kuwait Red Crescent Society, Khaled Al-Zaid, said that while there are social media sites with valuable educational material that could polish the skillsets of the young, other sites are the opposite as they distract them, ruining their attention span, and subjecting them to bullying and rumors. He indicated that to avoid the harmful impact of this matter, people should be well acquainted with the dangers and negative effects of the internet, in addition to the importance of cybersecurity and parents' involvement in the activities of their children.



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18 Isra and Miraj

25 National Day 26 Liberation Day

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on Wednesday, 22 March
and ends on Friday, 21 April.
Dates may vary*

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23 24 Eid Al-Fitr Holiday

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28 Arafat Day

29 Eid Al-Adha 30 Eid Al-Adha Holiday

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27 Prophet Muhammad's Birthday

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Brainobrain hosts National Abacus Competition

Brainobrain hosted the 2nd National Abacus Competition "Brainobrainfest 2022" on 10th December 2022 at International British School, located in Fahaheel, Kuwait. This abacus competition is designed based on skills and mathematical ability assessment to bring out the talents within the kids.

More than 135 students participated in the competition and 42 students who have already completed Brainobrain program has attended the graduation ceremony. The kids participating in Brainobrain competition solves sixty mathematical calculations within four minutes. The elder kids derive answers through mental arithmetic skills whereas the junior kids derive the answers using the abacus tool. The children who answers with maximum speed and accuracy are declared as winners in this competition.

The winners were classified into three categories: Champions, Gold toppers and Silver toppers. All the children who participated in the competition were given medals and certificates for their efforts.

The father of the student Saran said "my son lacked concentration on his studies before joining Brainobrain course but now he has improved his confidence and concentration skills, especially during the practice sessions of Brainobrain Abacus Competition. The chief guest Arul Subramaniam, Director Technical, Brainobrain International said, "As every child is unique, we at Brainobrain dedicate ourselves in understanding each child's strength and improvements need. Brainobrain teachers' ensures to meet the skill development requirement of every child.

The guest of Honour, Surour Alsamerai



said "it is an enlightening for me to see the small kids solving complex mathematical sums with accuracy and maximum speed which would definitely not possible for the normal kids. It is a first of kind skill I have ever witnessed and I am proud of Prabhu Ram, Brainobrain Director in Kuwait, who has dedicated to train and empower young

minds in Kuwait. Brainobrain's Advanced Abacus Skill Development Programme for 5-14 years children is designed to tap the hidden potentials of our young children, thus empowering the future-leaders and young-geniuses in them.

Brainobrain Course mainly focusses on developing the Brain Skills, Life Skills and NLP Skills through carefully crafted syllabus and modules. Brainobrain is empowering the young geniuses of 75+ countries through 975 franchise centres. It has transformed the lives of more than 400,000 children worldwide through its high-quality programmes.

To know more details about Brainobrain Abacus Classes: Visit www.brainobrainkuwait.com | Contact +965 94977468 | Email: brainobrainkuwait@gmail.com



Cabinet congratulates team behind satellite launch



During its weekly meeting on Monday, the Cabinet expressed its pleasure at the safe return of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah after successfully conducting a routine medical checkup in Italy, and prayed to Allah the Almighty to protect His Highness the Amir and bestow him everlasting good health.

The cabinet meeting, headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, also heard from the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Hamad Al-Adwani, who announced the planned launch of the first Kuwaiti satellite (KuwaitSat 1) aboard a rocket from the SpaceX platform in Florida, in the US on 3 January.

Briefing media on the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Barrak Al-Shaitan said in a statement that the satellite was prepared by Kuwait University's Colleges of Sciences, Engineering and Petroleum.

He noted that the project came to realization



after three years of hard work by a 45-member team of students under the guidance and training of scientists and lecturers at the university and from the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), with funding and support from the Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

The Cabinet extolled aspirations of Kuwait's participants in this national scheme that set the first Kuwaiti fingerprint in space, and added that this pivotal stage in Kuwait's space record came through a careful planning and a sound national vision based on institutional work to prepare nationals to be the nucleus of Kuwaiti space work in the future.

The Cabinet also discussed the recommendation of the education, health and youth committee on the study aiming at developing public education, and the Council of Ministers tasked the Minister of Education, and the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research with taking appropriate steps in this matter, in coordination with the relevant authorities.

What makes a good personal trainer?

Although many may not agree with this essential rule as some trainers are products and results of "monkey sees, monkey does" knowledge.

Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

As 2023 steps in, many of us are often faced with huge dilemma as to how can we achieve our fitness goals in shortest possible time and maintaining after accomplishing it. All these often boils down to one common denominator, that is finding a fitness trainer that best suit your needs and hopefully can help you attain that much coveted weight and form. In Kuwait, there exist a huge void in this aspect as gym clientele often build their trust on trainers with external forms disregarding the most important factors that make up a good trainer. Here are the some of the qualities you need to consider for when looking for a personal trainer.

On top of the list is education. Although many may not agree with this essential rule as some trainers were products and results of "monkey sees, monkey does" education, that based their knowledge's foundation with nothing but experience, thereby basing their program designs with what have been encountered in their own personal experiences. This somehow contradicts the most foundation of allowing a client to go through a series of tests to evaluate his or her physical capacities and analysis that can in some cases include medical restrictions and handicaps. It is imperative for fitness trainers to upskill their personal development by attending seminars, workshops, completion of short courses as the fitness industry is in endless change and develops and this is where the real challenge comes to surface as trainers need to know the latest developments and studies. A so-called fitness trainer was interviewed once on social media site and was asked to differentiate cardio workout with aerobics. The trainer could not at all differentiate or relate the two terms, which left the audience infuriated. Knowledge and education are essential and must for every trainer as clientele's safety, progress and commitment to their regimen hang in a balance should a trainer fail to deliver. Trainers often are fixated with programs that work for them as results are evident however, a good trainer should have the fundamentals of fitness and they can utilize this knowledge to design different



programs that best suit various goals. As general rule, "what works for one won't work for everyone"

Origym, in one of its publications included the terms "Good Communicator" as essential to qualities of good trainer. It states: Personal Trainers need to have good communication skills, these skills are essential for interactions between yourself and your clients, and yourself and your prospective clients. Some examples of tasks that require good communication skills include Instructing clients how to do exercises, understanding your client's goals, carrying out gym inductions, following up with leads over the phone, selling to clients and more generally, good communication skills are an important part of being able to create good relationships. "Trainers have to establish good relationships with their trainees as they depend on long-term, loyal clients to guarantee their livelihood," stated Kravitz. What goes and pairs with being a good communicator is to be an efficient educator. Trainers need to understand that there are more to personal sessions or providing instructions with executions of exercises. Should you want to see your clients achieve their goals then encouraging them to pursue their training outside your sessions. Providing clients with the right tools to work towards their goals in your absence is the best way to maximize their results. This adds to the benefits that they see from working with a PT, adding to your value, and making them want to continue with their training.

Among other qualities of good and effective fitness trainer include tolerance with repetitive mistakes or habitual inaccuracies of clients, flexibility or ability to adjust and adopt with clients' physical and mental conditions during sessions, competence and professionalism in dealing with clients, great source of motivation when loss of interest occur and focused with clientele's goals.

Kuwait, Google Cloud sign deal for digital transformation

Google Cloud last week signed a strategic partnership with Kuwait to develop a roadmap for a comprehensive digital transformation program in government agencies and key state-owned enterprises. The program will include the introduction of Google's innovative cloud technology and data expertise, as well as cyber security and artificial intelligence to fulfill the country's long-planned digital transformation.

Google Cloud Platform is a suite of cloud computing services, which offer the on-demand availability of computer system resources, especially data storage, security, and computing power, without direct active management by the user. Google Cloud Platform runs on the same

infrastructure that Google uses internally for its end-user products, such as Google Search, Gmail, Google Drive, and YouTube.

The partnership will see Google Cloud work within the framework specified by the government to digitize citizen services and increase the productivity of government employees. In addition, the company will participate in implementing several digital transformation initiatives in healthcare, education, disaster recovery, and smart living.

In cooperation with the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority, and the Central Agency for Information Technology, the US-based company intends to establish

a local office and modern cloud area to meet the wide demand for its services. The report specified that the new cloud computing area will support public sector institutions, businesses and startups to transform the country into a data-based economy.

CEO of Google Cloud, Thomas Kurien, said in a statement that the strategic contract supports Kuwait Vision 2035, which aims to transform the country into a digital society and diversify its economy. Google Cloud will cooperate with the Central Authority for Information Technology (CAIT) to launch a national skills program to train and hone the skills of government employees in digital technologies, advanced data analytics, machine learning,



artificial intelligence and information security solutions. Furthermore, the new cloud region aims to support the Kuwaiti government and other Google Cloud customers in the country to manage digital business tasks efficiently and enable them to securely store important data.

Jazeera Airways expands, upgrades T5 dedicated airport terminal

Following a record 1.1 million passengers flown during the summer period from July to August, Jazeera Airways announced last week the completion of a series of expansions and upgrades at its Terminal 5 (T5) at Kuwait International Airport. The changes to T5 aim to improve the travel experience, and welcome more passengers, in 2023.

The upgrades include complete separation of arriving and departing passengers, so as to increase security as well as operational efficiency. The terminal is now expanded to include additional boarding gates and aerobridges, a larger transit hall fully facilitated to serve connecting passengers, an enhanced Duty Free shop, as well as more retail and food and beverage outlets. Importantly, there will now be only one security check, with no additional screening at the boarding gates. In addition, there is a dedicated customer service team at T5 available around the clock to assist passengers, and a newly built customer service center at Jazeera's head office near the airport.



Speaking on the significance of these upgrades, CEO of Jazeera Airways, Rohit Ramachandran, said: "We witnessed a tremendous demand for travel during the summer after two years of restrictions due to the pandemic, which delayed previously planned expansions at T5. Now that the expansion program has been completed our passengers can really benefit from the convenience of flying from T5. Travelers can now go from check-in, to their gate in less than 10 minutes."



KPC spends over a billion dinars in allowances, benefits

Workers of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its upstream and downstream subsidiaries together receive KD1.1 billion in allowances and benefits each year. A new report on compensation for the nearly 21,800 oil sector employees found that these allowances and fringe benefits constituted over 72 percent of the total spending of KD1.52 billion on salaries in fiscal year 2021-22.

Media reports indicate that the average monthly salary of a worker in the oil sector is about KD6,000, including the basic salary, benefits, bonuses and allowances. A breakdown of the allowances and benefits that employees received in the last financial year show that in addition to the KD80 million paid as overtime

allowance, the workers received seven other allowances that totalled around KD440 million.

The seven allowance disbursements were KD55 million for cost of living; KD84 million as social allowance; KD36 for housing; KD9 million for transportation; KD54 million for transfer time; KD11 million as shift allowance; and KD191 under miscellaneous allowances.

Additionally, the employees also received 11 benefits amounting to a total of around KD604 million under the following categories: KD14 million as housing benefits; KD2 billion as educational assistance; KD18 million for vacation tickets; KD147 million as end-of-service bonus; KD99 million as retirement bonus; KD219 million as medical benefits for services provided at Ahmadi Hospital, and KD6 million that went as insurance benefits; KD49 million as incentives; KD11 million for social services; KD9 million as grants; and KD30 million as sundry benefits.

As part of its attempts to reduce operating expenses in line with government directives in this regard, KPC and its subsidiaries have sought to reduce spending on items such as the cost of expanding organizational structures, travel missions, sponsorships, consulting, social activities, acquisition fees, and others. However, KPC has reassured workers on more than one occasion that the measures it takes to rationalize spending will not impinge on workers' salaries and benefits that are guaranteed in accordance with the provisions of the laws. The national oil conglomerate noted that its efforts to reduce expenses had resulted in trimming KD233 million from the KD1.76 billion estimated in the approved budget for fiscal year 2021-22.

En Masse resignations at government entities

Mass resignation by top level bureaucrats that climaxed last week has left several government entities rudderless, just when firm and experienced hands at the helm of major public sector undertakings was the need of the hour.

The government offer, made in mid-November, granted senior officials choosing the voluntary retirement scheme to avail of more than 80 percent of their current salary as pension. With the last day for benefitting from this offer ending on 29 December, the last working day of 2022, there was understandably a rush to the exits on Thursday.

More than 69 senior government bureaucrats are known to have resigned over the past six weeks — an event unprecedented in the history of bureaucracy in Kuwait. The en masse resignations were reportedly prompted by government plans to cancel a decision issued in 2019 by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) that grants senior officials on retirement to receive between 80 to 95 percent of their basic salary as pension. The basic salary does not include allowances and other monetary benefits that form the total salary of senior government employees.

Prior to 2019, the monthly average pension of senior bureaucrats used to range around KD2,500, but after the revision of pensions in 2019, this amount soared to around KD3,500.

However, all senior officials who resigned will not be eligible for the 80 percent pension scheme, as the CSC stipulates that in case of termination, or referring the employee to retirement, or resignation, or non-renewal, the employee can continue to benefit from generous pension allowances only if they have spent four years in a senior position. Moreover, a number of officials are also reported to have tendered their resignation under political pressure, as some of them were linked to the previous government, or are implicated in corruption investigations.

Nevertheless, the simultaneous resignations across the public-sector landscape have left many key ministries and other government entities without leadership at the helm. According to reports, the top-level vacuum has affected, among others, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFed), the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation, Public Authority of Manpower (PAM), the Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB)

Among those who resigned on Thursday, were KCB director Salah Al-Mudhaf, after 12

years of service, director of KFAED Marwan Al-Ghanem, head of PAM Mubarak Al-Azemi and his deputy Eman Al-Ansari, and acting ministry of justice undersecretary Khaled Al-Dakheel. Others deciding to avail of the government's overly generous golden handshake include three deputies of the foreign minister, assistant undersecretaries in most ministries, Kuwait University director and a number of his assistants, director of the Civil Aviation and many others.

Political commentators, taken by surprise by this mass resignation, have criticized the government's intention to scrap the existing pension scheme for senior officials. They point out it could not have come at a more inopportune moment, considering that the country is currently facing challenges on multiple fronts, including on the economic, financial, political and social levels.



For his part, MP Faisal Al-Kandari has strongly criticized the government for encouraging the mass exodus of senior officials, which he said would lead to administrative paralysis in the country. However, other commentators have contended that the move would give His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah a free-hand to reform the administrative sector and shake-up bureaucracy, which has long been associated with red-tapism, corruption and nepotism.

His Highness the Prime Minister was appointed to head the government for the first time in July when the country was plunged in a political crisis. He was reappointed after the September general polls, where supporters of the political opposition scored a landslide victory by winning the majority of parliamentary seats. The prime minister, who is known as a reformist in political circles, has maintained a conciliatory approach in his dealings with the political opposition in parliament, and as such has not faced any heat over his policies, at least so far.

Flipping back through 2022

Continued from Page 1

in Montreal, Canada, the world was able to find consensus on matters critical to climate change and biodiversity protection.

There was obviously a lot to cheer for in 2022, but also enough to dishearten the bravest of hearts. Here is a quick look at how the year gone-by unfolded over the world in the days and months of 2022.

January 1: Yet another regional organization comes into effect. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which groups together 15 Asia-Pacific nations, forms the largest free trade area in the world. RCEP that brings together Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, accounts for nearly a third (30%) of both, the world's population (2.2 billion people), and the global GDP (\$29.7 trillion), making it the largest trade bloc in history.

February 4–20: The world gathers in Beijing, China for the 2022 Winter Olympics. The event also made Beijing the first city ever to host both the Summer Olympics and Winter Olympics. The Games featured a record 109 events across 15 disciplines, with a total of 2,871 athletes representing 91 teams competing in the Games, including Haiti and Saudi Arabia making their Winter Olympic debut.



February 21–24: Russian President Vladimir Putin signs a decree declaring the Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic as independent from Ukraine. These two areas in the Donbas region of Ukraine had announced independence from their country in a referendum held in 2014. Despite international condemnation and sanctions against the annexation, Russia began a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the aftermath of which has sent reverberations through every level of the global economy, and led to unprecedented Western sanctions on Russia.



March 31: After a 6-month run that began on 1 October 2021, Expo 2020 draws to a successful close. Originally scheduled to begin in 2020 it was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 182 days of the Expo witnessed over 24 million visitors from 178 countries, with 30 percent of visitors coming from overseas. The top five countries for international visitors were from India, Germany, Saudi Arabia, UK and Russia. A total of 192 countries, 14 multilateral organizations and 22 partners participated in the Expo.

April 4: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) releases the third and final part of its Sixth Assessment Report on climate change, warning that greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2025 at the latest and decline 43 percent by 2030, in order to limit global warming to 1.5 °C (2.7 °F). It concludes that many impacts from climate change are already on the verge of becoming 'irreversible'. Climate change related weather anomalies were behind much of the human suffering witnessed during the year, including extensive droughts, ravaging floods, widespread forest fires, and blistering heat waves in various parts of the world.

May 9: Massive street protests in Sri Lanka result in the resignation of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. The protests, which began in early March, were against the government's mismanaging of

the economy, which has spurred rising inflation, daily electricity blackouts, shortage of fuel, domestic cooking gas, and other essential goods. Three days after the ouster of Rajapaksha, his successor Ranil Wickremesinghe took office with the mandate to pull the country out of its economic crisis.

July 11: The first operational image from the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), gives the public their first detailed glimpse of the galaxy cluster SMACS 0723. The JWST, launched on 25 December 2021 is the largest optical telescope in space, and at a cost of \$10 billion is also the most expensive so far. Its high resolution and sensitivity allow it to view objects too old, distant, or faint for the other space-based telescopes, and enables observation of the first stars, the formation of the first galaxies, and detailed atmospheric characterization of potentially habitable exoplanets.

August 28: Pakistan declares a 'climate catastrophe' and appeals for international assistance, as the death toll from recent flooding in the country exceeds 1,000. Months after what is being described as the world's deadliest flood since 2017, millions of people continued to remain exposed to the floodwaters with vast tracts of cropland and entire villages still remaining under water. A report by the UN showed that over 10 million children were in need of immediate, lifesaving support.

September 8: Queen Elizabeth II dies at Balmoral Castle in Scotland at the age of 96; her son Charles III succeeds her as King. She was queen regnant of 32 sovereign states during her lifetime, and head of state of 15 realms at the time of her death. Her reign of 70 years and 214 days was the longest of any British



Kuwait in 2022

In Kuwait, although there were individual and group achievements that raised the country's flag high in 2022, the main news centered around the political arena. Below is a look at how political and other events evolved during the past year:

17 February: Ministers of Defense and the Interior, both members of the ruling Al-Sabah family, resign citing repeated and lengthy parliamentary grillings as an abuse of power by the legislature.

10 March: His Highness the Amir issues a decree appointing Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad al-Sabah as the Interior Minister, and Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as Defense Minister.

26 March: Saudi Arabia and Kuwait sign a 50-year program to explore the Arash gas field located on the maritime border between the two countries, but also extends into Iranian waters. Iran rejects the deal calling it illegal.

31 March: A fire breaks out at Al Mubarakia market, one of the oldest traditional souks in the country, gutting over 20 shops. Although around a dozen people suffered minor injuries, luckily, no lives were claimed in the incident.

10 May: Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah accepts the resignation of the government, after the request had been submitted over a month earlier. No timeline is given for when the next election will occur.

24 July: An Amiri decree was issued by Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, assigning Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as new Prime Minister. He is tasked to form the 40th government in the history of Kuwait.

29 September: General elections were held in Kuwait following the dissolution of parliament by Crown Prince Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

17 October: Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah swore in a new government headed by the incumbent Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The new government, formed following general elections in September, aims to reconcile relations with the legislative arm of parliament, and push forward much-needed investment and fiscal reforms.

monarch and the longest verified reign of any female monarch in history.

November 6–18: The 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) on climate change mitigation takes place in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. The conference which spilled over to two more days ended on 20 November with a breakthrough agreement to provide 'loss and damage' funding for vulnerable countries hit hard by climate disasters. The funding is expected to enable communities whose lives and livelihoods have been ruined by the very worst impacts of climate change, to mitigate and adapt to the changes.

November 15: The world population officially breaches the 8 billion mark, based on the United Nations' report titled 'World Population Prospects 2022'. The report, released on World Population Day on 11 July, also projected that India would surpass China as the world's most populous country in 2023, and that, with falling fertility rates and growing longevity, the world population was estimated to reach a peak of around 10.4 billion people in 2080 and remain at that level to 2100.



November 20 to December 18: Millions of football fans gather in Doha, Qatar to witness the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The football extravaganza, which cost an estimated US\$230 billion, and made it the most expensive World Cup in history, was won by Argentina in a nail-biting penalty-kickoff against France.

December 5: Researchers at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory's National Ignition Facility (NIF) in the United States, conducting the first controlled fusion experiment in history achieves 'plasma burning', a term used to describe energy breakeven — with more energy coming from the fusion reaction, than the laser energy used to drive it. Earlier this year



on 9 February, scientists at the Joint European Torus (JET) nuclear fusion research center in the UK produced 59 megajoules of energy over five seconds, demonstrating that it was possible to sustain nuclear fusion reactions for longer periods of time. The two milestone achievement could provide invaluable insights into the prospects of clean fusion energy, which would be a game-changer for efforts to achieve the goal of a net-zero carbon economy.

December 19: At the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15), nearly 200 countries agree on a landmark deal to protect a third of the planet for nature by 2030. Protecting and preserving nature is critical to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and limiting global warming to 1.50C. The conference adopted an equitable and comprehensive framework, matched by resources needed for implementation. It also set clear targets to address overexploitation, pollution, fragmentation and unsustainable agricultural practices.

December 29: Legendary footballer Pele dies at the age of 82. Regarded as one of the greatest players of all time and having won three World Cups for Brazil. Labeled by FIFA as 'the greatest', he was among the most successful and popular sports figures of the 20th century.

December 31: Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who headed the Catholic Church and was sovereign of the Vatican City State from 19 April 2005 until his resignation on 28 February 2013, dies at the age of 95. His resignation was the first by a pope in over 600 years.



Making, Achieving, New Year Resolutions

By Amina Rumani
Staff Writer

Making New Year's resolutions is a trend that appears to never go out of trend. But fast forward a few months ahead, and there lies the magnificent failure of all the strategic resolutions once made with great confidence. Irrevocably, the thought then arises, how do I fulfill my resolutions without failing?

Here are a few ways that you can make your New Year commitments, ideals, resolutions work:

Be Realistic: While everyone is individually different, it is essential that you choose

resolutions that fit you best. If you aim to truly improve your life then create goals that are specifically tailored for you; your journey is your own and so should your resolutions. There is no rulebook as to how this goes. The only essential value is to keep walking with courage and confidence. Having the right resolution is your ticket to achieving it successfully.



Be SMART: When setting goals to achieve, be SMART, an acronym for Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. This will help ensure your goals are attainable within a timeframe.

Doable and Meaningful: As mentioned above there is no universal rulebook to follow, to make the right resolution you

should essentially be in touch with the rawest parts of yourself. Self-acceptance plays a key role in this. Resolutions that revolve around societal expectations without heeding individuality tend to fail. You do not have to change who you are; set goals that will improve your life not alter it.



Address Bad Habits: Being able to accept your flaws and shortcomings with a mindset to implement improvement in these aspects, is the path to achieving your goals. No one said it will be easy, but it is possible, being kind to your inner critic eventually leads to overcoming hardships.



Overcoming Hurdles: Do not punish yourself for your shortcomings. It is important to remember that 'change is hard' no matter how thorough you are, problems will arise, yet patience is important to help step towards success. Your journey is yours, you decide the pace, you create the limit and only you yourself can achieve it.

Create a plan: Put down a basic blueprint for a list of New Year Resolutions, under subheadings of: Wishes – Plan – Obstacles – Outcome

Do not give up, have a back-up: It is critical to have a backup plan, as well as the will to



not give up. Do not engage in any possible negative mindsets, but do not resort to toxic positivity either. Whenever life gets in the way, improvise and be flexible.

Towards the end even if you miss your goal, remember, you did not fail. You are your own experiment, keep walking along your own path, in the end it will eventually work out.

Below is a list of some New Year Resolutions for 2023 that will enrich your mental and emotional health and spirit. Practice Mindfulness - Vow to save more money - Make a cleaning schedule that suits your daily routine - Commit to a healthier sleep routine - Slowly and gradually quit any bad habits - Learn to follow a healthy balanced diet - Try to overcome procrastination - Invest in your skincare routine - Write to yourself - Make your bed every morning - Tell yourself words of affirmation - Makeover your daily routine - Remove toxic aspects/people from your life - Try a social media detox - Do one thing at a time - Explore new hobbies and places - Prioritize annual health screenings - Plan a vacation- Get into a positive body mindset - Learn or hone a new skill.







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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Fuel of the Future



Jörg Haas

Head of International Politics at
the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Green hydrogen is all the rage these days. During November's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Egypt, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced that Germany will invest more than €4 billion (\$4.3 billion) in developing a market for it. In the United States, President Joe Biden's administration has made 'clean' hydrogen a centerpiece of its Inflation Reduction Act, which provides subsidies for renewable energies. China, too, is so invested in electrolysis that some observers already fear that it will take over the market the same way it did with photovoltaic panels. And even corporations like the Australian mining giant Fortescue are betting on it becoming a multibillion-dollar industry.

When a technology is hyped to such an extent, many environmental activists tend to become nervous. Is 'clean hydrogen' merely a way to greenwash so-called 'blue' and 'pink' hydrogen, generated from natural gas and nuclear energy, respectively? Is it an attempt to produce a magic techno-fix that vindicates absurd excesses like space tourism and hypersonic flight, when the world's middle and upper classes should be shrinking their energy and resource consumption? Or is this the next stage of extractivism, appropriating low-income populations' land and water under the guise of fighting climate change?

The short answer to all these questions is

yes. But that is neither inevitable nor the whole story. Yes, the green hydrogen dream could well develop into a nightmare if we do not get it right. Still, it is an indispensable building block of the global economy's transition from climate-destroying fossil fuels to sustainable models based on 100 percent renewable energies. It may be difficult to accept this ambiguity, but the urgent need to avert a climate catastrophe requires no less.

Given hydrogen's many potential applications, some leading experts estimate that it could power 20-30 percent of global energy consumption by mid-century. But that does not necessarily make it the most

many industries will clearly need vast amounts of clean hydrogen to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. To illustrate the scale of the challenge, Bloomberg New Energy Finance founder Michael Liebreich recently estimated that just replacing today's 'dirty' hydrogen, produced from fossil fuels, would require 143 percent of the wind and solar energy the world currently has.

Several countries in the Global South have been blessed with world-class solar and wind potential, enabling them to produce green hydrogen at very low cost. Some, like Namibia, have built their industrial development strategy around this competitive advantage. But how could international trade in green hydrogen and

planning, and clear standards and policies, as well as uphold local communities' right to prior informed consent. To deliver on the promise of post-fossil development and foster sustainable economies, governments must devise ambitious and realistic industrial strategies. And these strategies must be embedded in a systemic approach to sustainable development and the energy transition. Moreover, we need to consider how hydrogen is used, not just who can pay for it.

None of this will happen by itself. Achieving a sustainable future is a political choice that requires leadership and cooperation. Several countries could help make fair and sustainable trade in green hydrogen a reality. Namibia, Chile, Colombia, and now (under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva) Brazil, for example, have the right political conditions for balancing green-hydrogen production with strong environmental and social standards. Over time, Argentina and South Africa could join this list and become producer countries.

As a prospective major importer and consumer of green hydrogen, Germany would need to form partnerships with producing countries, based on strong environmental and social standards. And given its progressive government, it can be expected to engage with its long-term partners not just as resource providers, but as fellow travelers on the journey toward sustainable, inclusive prosperity.

To that end, Germany and other energy importers must also support exporting countries in their efforts to localize value creation. In this way, the emerging international trade in green hydrogen could become a harbinger of a new, equitable trading relationship between the Global North and South. That is a future worth fighting for, and renewable energy holds the key.

“ To prevent the green hydrogen dream from becoming a nightmare, we must develop the sector with territorial planning, and clear standards and policies, as well as uphold local communities' right to prior informed consent. ”

efficient choice. Electric batteries, for example, require far fewer renewable kilowatt hours per kilometer traveled to power cars and trucks than hydrogen fuel cells or e-fuels do. Similarly, using heat pumps is more efficient than converting gas boilers to hydrogen. Organic alternatives to nitrogen fertilizer should also be given much more consideration.

But there are several critical sectors with few economically viable zero-carbon alternatives to green hydrogen and its derivatives, including long-distance shipping and aviation, chemicals, and steelmaking. Notwithstanding the hype,

its derivatives become a pathway to prosperity? And how can developing countries avoid the green extractivism trap and ensure that trade is fair and sustainable?

A series of consultations and studies in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, South Africa, Morocco, and Tunisia have explored these questions at length. A new report by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Bread for the World synthesizes their findings and highlights the need to do no harm. To prevent the green hydrogen dream from becoming a nightmare, we must develop the sector with territorial



Self-gifting for stress-free holidays

The year-end holidays are a time of joyful excitement, of fun-filled family gatherings, feasting, and in general a time of relaxation and unwinding. However, for some people this period can be quite stressful. Individuals that are under constant pressure at work, or from home and family demands, may not enjoy the holiday break and could find themselves in what feels like a relentless cycle of stress and tension.

A new study on psychological behavior has found what could be a simple solution to the constant feeling of stress — self-gifting. The study found that when stressed and tensed people treated themselves with a small gift or indulgence, they were more relaxed, happier, and felt less crunched for time. However, the study also found that when people are tense, they are less likely to self-gift or treat themselves, believing they are too stressed to enjoy the benefits of the gift.

The key to getting out of the cycle of stress and tension, according to the research, is for individuals to recognize that

it is precisely during stressful time periods that they need to take solace in treating themselves.

The psychotherapists behind the study conducted in Ontario, Canada say that people feeling burnt out and having difficulty making it through each day due to stress and tension, often find it difficult to create space for self-gifting. But when they do recognize their own self worth, and learn to reward themselves just for who they are as a human being, they tend to feel less burnt out and more productive.

Encouraging people under stress to do something for themselves, is probably the best present you can give to someone who feels pressured by work or homelife.

Taking a moment for yourself can increase happiness and productivity.

The oft-quoted saying that 'Time is our most valuable asset', is quite true. But for many people under stress, knowing that once time is gone and that you can never bring it back by itself be a trigger for added pressure, as most of us wish for more time, more money, and an abundance of energy.

The study found that time, money, and mental health pressures were the main factors preventing people from self-gifting.

When the researchers showed participants fictional ads of services or products with self-care or self-gifting taglines, it was participants who were stressed, short on time or lacking funds who showed the least interest in the services and products. Those participants cited the inability to enjoy the experience of self-gifting due to busy schedules, tight budgets, or long to-do lists.

Researchers hypothesized this thinking was counterproductive and followed up the studies by analyzing the effects of self-gifting activities on those participants. The overall effect in choosing self-gifting was less stress, increased happiness and relaxation, and a feeling of being less squeezed for time. Simply acting on the decision to do something for yourself creates a rush of dopamine, which is a chemical released in the brain that makes you feel good.

Though it may appear counterintuitive, results from the study concluded that the best and most beneficial time for self-gifting is when you are most stressed or under pressure. The study found that how we feel about doing something when we are highly stressed is very different from how we feel about the same thing when on vacation or feeling more relaxed. Pushing through resistance to do something we know will eventually benefit us is what makes self-gifting successful, said the researchers. Anecdotal evidence shows that you can choose self-gifting by simple



actions, such as clicking 'purchase' on an online site for ordering something you wanted, which creates a shift in mindset. It happens even before receiving the purchased item. You feel good for simply having made the decision. However, self-gifting does not have to require spending money on yourself, as many people under stress could consider spending money on themselves even more stressful.

Self-gifting can be as simple as taking a short break at work, arranging a time to go out for a walk, or taking the time to be by yourself at home. The possibilities for self-gifting are endless. Taking walks, stretching, taking 10 minutes to sit and enjoy your favorite book, or chatting with a friend may be just the break you need.

Other forms of self-gifting can include: listening to music or a podcast, downloading a free meditation app, enjoying a favorite meal or snack, watching a favorite TV show, the possibilities are endless. So, go ahead and treat yourself this holiday season.



Managing GERD and its health impacts

Acid reflux, or acid regurgitation, is a condition that many people experience, usually after a heavy meal, when contents from your stomach move back up into your esophagus. It is something you can choose to ignore if it happens only once in a while. However, if you have symptoms of acid reflux more than twice a week, you might have a condition known as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is considered a chronic and more severe form of acid reflux, with the causes and risk factors including among others overeating and pregnancy. The main symptom of GERD is acid reflux, which can cause an uncomfortable burning feeling in the chest that then moves up to reach the throat and neck area. Although it has little to do with the heart, this feeling is often described as heartburn by some people.

Another symptom that some people suffering from GERD report is a sour or bitter taste at the back of the mouth. For some people, the acid reflux could also cause the regurgitation of food or liquid from the stomach into the mouth. Other symptoms of GERD include nausea, chest pain, pain or difficulty when swallowing, chronic cough, a hoarse voice, bad breath. Most people can manage their symptoms with lifestyle changes or medications on their own, but if the symptoms persist it is best to consult a doctor, because if GERD is left untreated for long it could lead to serious complications.

To manage GERD, doctors often start by recommending certain lifestyle changes, such as maintaining a moderate weight, quitting smoking, avoiding heavy meals in the evening, waiting a few hours after eating to lie down, elevating your head during sleep. If symptoms persist, doctors may also suggest taking over-

the-counter (OTC) medications, such as antacids, or in more severe cases, H2 receptor blockers that lower the amount of acid your stomach makes. Many H2 blockers are available OTC, while higher doses of these medicines might require a doctor's prescription.

An alternative treatment now found to be more effective than H2 blockers in lowering the amount of acid your stomach makes, are Proton pump Inhibitors (PPIs). One reason doctors now suggest PPIs is that in addition to reducing stomach acid, PPIs are also known to heal the esophageal lining, which tends to become damaged in people who have suffered from GERD for extended periods.

Many people resort to home remedies to seek relief from acid reflux. While these remedies may help to relieve occasional bouts of acid reflux, it is less effective when it comes to chronic issues of GERD that often necessitates medical intervention. Some of the home remedies suggested for GERD may in fact do more harm than good, including:

Baking soda solution: People have been known to take a baking soda and water solution to relieve acid reflux. Because baking soda is alkaline, it has the ability to help neutralize acidity, and is mostly safe to consume in small doses. But baking soda is also high in sodium, excess of which is harmful to the body. It is also possible to experience side effects if too much or too strong concentration of baking soda solution is used regularly.

Chewing gum: This is another home remedy that is widespread among many people. The reasoning behind this remedy is that since chewing gum stimulates the production of saliva, which is mildly alkaline, it may help neutralize the acidity in your mouth and throat after eating a meal. The argument in favor of chewing gum has not been scientifically studied or validated extensively, and moreover, most chewing gum has added sugars that could prove detrimental if chewing gum becomes a habit.

Consuming ginger: Taking ginger to relieve symptoms of GERD is a home-remedy that has been around for quite some time, as ginger is a common home remedy for issues like nausea and a sour stomach. But it is still unclear if ginger can actually help with occasional heartburn symptoms, as quite a few studies have shown that taking too much ginger is one of the reasons for acid reflux or heartburn.

Drinking milk: A small glass of milk to relieve acid reflux is a home remedy that has found favor among many people. Due to its natural alkalinity, milk is often touted as a way to ease heartburn symptoms. Unfortunately, even though it may feel soothing initially, the fat and protein in milk can ultimately make heartburn symptoms worse once the milk is digested. Low fat milk may be easier for some people to tolerate.

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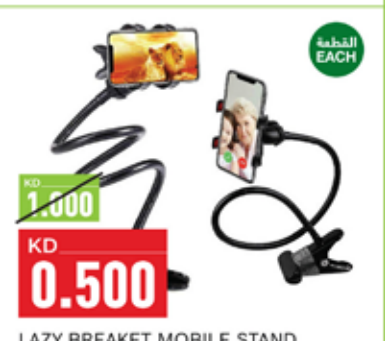
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