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Transforming Education, a long-neglected need



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

The world marks International Day of Education each year on 24 January. The day aims to raise awareness on the importance of education, and the need to expedite transformative actions for inclusive, equitable, and quality education for everyone, everywhere.



Education is a fundamental human right and its significance to individuals, to societies, and to the overall development of humanity cannot be over-emphasized. Education advances learning and acquiring knowledge, promotes values, and virtues, improves confidence and helps develop critical skills like problem-solving, decision-making, mental agility, and logical thinking. In addition, education is considered a force-multiplier in sustainable development of nations and one of the most potent enablers to

help young people become active, responsible global citizens.

Despite the primacy of education and its enabling influence on society, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, in his address to the 'Transforming Education Summit' held at the United Nations last September, lamented that, "With nearly 70 percent of 10-year-olds in poor countries unable to read and barely learning, instead of being the great enabler, education is fast becoming a great divider".

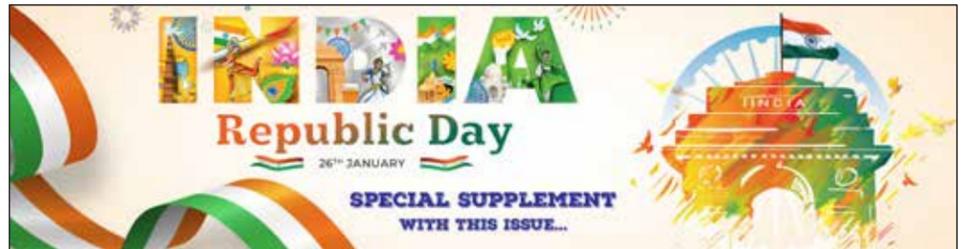
He went on to add that while with their access to finances and educational resources, "the rich get the best jobs, the poor, especially girls, displaced people, and those with disabilities, face huge obstacles to getting the qualifications that could change their lives".

Kuwait was among the 130 countries that attended the 'Transforming Education Summit' at the UN in New York last September. Addressing the gathering on behalf of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, said that Kuwait was keen on developing and transforming education within its borders and around the world.

The prime minister added that Kuwait was cultivating the skills of its youth in order to enable them to lead the country, as the nation steadily advanced along the path of its 2035 New Kuwait development plan.

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Mughal Mahal enchants with new restaurant Exotica



Mughal Mahal, the 'numero uno' when it comes to Indian fine-dining restaurants in Kuwait, has added yet another jewel to its crown with the launch of a new concept in casual dining at its newest branch, Exotica.

Located in Salmiya Terrace Mall, Exotica is a refreshing new take on casual dining, with the best quality of food and service one can experience in a casual ambience.

Serving the finest Indian cuisine to its patrons over the past four decades, the Mughal Mahal brand has become synonymous with quality, value and service. Based on demand by discerning customers, the newly opened branch offers traditional

dishes that have undergone exquisite improvisation in terms of texture, flavor and combinations to come up with exotic and enticing new fusion fare. The new menu will not only wow guests with the creative variety of its offerings but also surprise them with the taste.

Among the new selections on the menu are Pesto Hummus and Tikka Bites, as well as traditional mouth-watering delicacies, such as White Butter Chicken and Curried lamb Chops, now offered alongside Chicken Tikka Pizza, Bruschetta, Pan-Seared Chicken and Butter Chicken Penne Pasta.

One thing is for sure, Mughal Mahal will never fail to impress you with their

quality and taste, and now with a newly added variety of options, guests are in for a veritable feast. Exotica has taken some of the most popular dishes guests ask for and turned them into delicious delicacies that will leave them asking for more. The well-crafted and eclectic selections on the menu are the handiwork of an experienced team of chefs who have wielded their culinary expertise to perfection.

Over the years, the Mughal Mahal has developed a vast following of food connoisseurs with their delectable and quality Indian cuisine that has popularized Indian food and made it a cuisine of choice in the country. Their multiple branches,

located all over Kuwait, cater to both citizens and expatriates and makes the brand the most popular Indian restaurant chain in Kuwait.

Bringing the best out of Indian Mughlai cuisine and using the finest and freshest ingredients and spices, the Mughal Mahal offers a wide variety of dishes that will surely excite the palate of discerning diners with their taste and flavor.

The opening of Exotica as the newest addition to the Mughal Mahal brand is rekindling the passion for Indian food in the country. As always, the Mughal Mahal experience never fails to amaze guests, who will surely return for more.

Kuwait, UNWTO holds talks to overhaul tourism sector

Kuwait has held talks with the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) seeking its expertise to overhaul the tourism sector

in the country. Assistant Undersecretary of Tourism, Saud Al-Khaldi, held the discussions with the organization secretary general, Zurab Pololikashvili, and Basmah Al-Mayman, the Middle East regional director at UNWTO, on the fringes of the International Tourism Trade Fair (FITUR), hosted by Madrid.

In remarks to media following his discussions, Al-Khaldi explained that the talks

examined the possibility of UNWTO providing consultation and expertise to Kuwait's tourism sector, as well as the dispatch of a delegation from the Organization to Kuwait so as to examine the country's needs in the sector.

He added that among other ideas exchanged between the two sides, was on holding an exhibition in Kuwait to promote

the country's tourist potentials and means of developing the sector, in addition to training national cadres and a potential overhaul of the hotels sector.

Noting that Kuwait was one of the founding members of UNWTO, Al-Khaldi expressed hope that cooperation with the Organization would help Kuwait revive its tourism sector and attract more visitors to the country.

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Australia and Kuwait share strong bonds of friendship

Australian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Melissa Kelly

By Reaven D'Souza
Managing Editor

Australian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Melissa Kelly plans to further strengthen the already strong bonds of friendship between the two countries and realize the full potential that lies in Australia's relations with Kuwait.

In her first interview since taking charge of the embassy in Kuwait, the charming and graceful Ambassador Kelly spoke candidly to media persons on several dimensions of relations between the two countries.

She began by noting that Kuwait was her first ambassadorial posting, and that as the first Australian woman ambassador to Kuwait she was very pleased at the warm and friendly welcome she has received since her arrival in August last year.

Describing bilateral relations as warm and strong, the ambassador highlighted that the partnership in food security between Australia and Kuwait spans over 60 years. She added that during her tenure in Kuwait, she intended to focus on reducing barriers in the commercial sectors, improving relations between business people in both countries and encouraging new investment in Australia.

Speaking about bilateral investment cooperation centered on current and future goals, Ambassador Kelly stressed that there was enormous potential in boosting Australian-Kuwait bilateral ties in all domains to new levels.

Among her many priorities Ambassador Kelly said, she planned to develop cooperation in the field of climate technology and renewable energy, encourage more research cooperation in the field of technology, and support the continuity and development of the ongoing food security partnership.

On the issue of exports of Australian meat to Kuwait, the ambassador pointed out that in 2022, the Australian government decided to gradually stop exports of live sheep by sea to all countries. She explained that the Australian government had also announced this gradual abolition would however not occur in the current mandate of the government, whose term is scheduled to end in 2025.



“

Australia and Kuwait will celebrate their 50th anniversary of bilateral friendship next year, the ambassador said she plans to raise the cultural collaboration with a series of events and celebrations, including bringing the best Australian artists and creatives to Kuwait.

”

She also noted that meat shipments to Kuwait are stopped every year during the summer due to the hot weather, and that this policy was being followed for a long

time. Expressing her pride in the role played by Australia in ensuring food security of Kuwait over the past six decades, she added that continuing this aspect of security was important in the bilateral relations between the two countries.

The ambassador explained that the export of meat from her country was not limited to live livestock, but there was halal chilled meat among others that would continue to be available. She went on to note that the volume of trade exchange between the two countries amounted to about 800 million Australian dollars, most of which are from the export of meat, while the volume of Kuwaiti investments in Australia is about 12 billion Australian dollars. Turning to women's empowerment, Ambassador Kelly stressed on the high priority that Australia placed on gender equality and added that diversity in leadership makes for stronger teams. She further emphasized the strong impression Kuwait women made on her with their contributions to the country in various sectors.

Disclosing that Australia and Kuwait will celebrate their 50th anniversary of bilateral friendship next year, the ambassador said she plans to raise the cultural collaboration with a series of events and celebrations, including bringing the best Australian artists and creatives to Kuwait.

Pointing to the thriving education relationship she noted that almost 2,000 Kuwaitis have graduated from Australian Universities so far, and the number of students seeking admission was growing. At present there are almost 700 students studying in Australia.

Ambassador Kelly also pointed at the presence of a large number of Australian companies operating in Kuwait, the largest of which was Worley, which was engaged in the



field of oil and gas, in addition to the presence of two Australian universities in Kuwait.

She also revealed that the number of the Australian citizens residing in Kuwait is about 800, most of whom are working in the fields of oil and gas, health and education.

On the defense relations between the two countries she noted that Australia and Kuwait enjoyed a close

defense relationship supported by their participation in the coalition during the liberation of Kuwait in 1991.

Adding that both countries had a common commitment to strengthen regional security and cooperation, she stressed that "both countries are natural and reliable partners, and their warm relationships produce meaningful results for both."

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Visa cancellation if stay outside Kuwait exceeds 180 days

Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) for Residency Affairs, Fawaz Al-Masha'an, has ordered the automatic cancellation of the residence permit of all expatriates who have been outside the country for 6 months at the end of this month, saying their residence permit will be automatically canceled from that date and they will not be entitled to re-enter except with completely new procedures and approvals.

Nationality and Residency Affairs sector

at MoI has also announced that it will not extend the campaign for family visa holders who have been outside the country for more than six months to rejoin their families beyond the deadline of 31 January.

It will be remembered that during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Interior had taken the humanitarian decision to renew the residence permits online, for those outside the country for over six months. This privilege is set to end on 31 January.

Electronic cancellation of the residency



of workers who have been outside the country for over six months will apply to

workers under Article 17 (government sector), Article 18 (private sector) Article 19 (partner in the private sector), Article 22 (joining a family), Article 23 (student), and Article 24 (self sponsor).

The ministry clarified that the period of an expat's presence outside the country will be calculated, especially for the family visa holders, starting from 1 August, 2022 until 31 January 2023, and then their residency will be automatically canceled, as per provisions of Article 12, paragraph 3 of the Foreigners' Residence Law.



Ukrainian Embassy launches book on footballer

Embassy of Ukraine organized the launch of a book on the legendary Ukrainian football player, manager and coach, Valeriy Lobanovskiy, at the embassy premises on 15 January. The event was attended by various Ukrainian football functionaries and special guests from Ukraine, including football referee Myroslav Stupar, and Vice President of 'Dynamo' FC Oleksiy Semenenko.

In a media briefing held on the occasion, Ukrainian Ambassador H.E. Oleksandr Balanutsa pointed out that football is no longer just a mediocre sport, it has evolved gradually into a global force that brings together different regions of the world. He added that Valeriy Lobanovskiy is a prime example of

this, as he worked in Kuwait from 1994 to 1996 underlining his strong ties with this country.

Ambassador Balanutsa praised the Ukrainian-Kuwaiti bonds, and thanked Kuwait for hosting this event which will further develop the bilateral ties and increase cooperation between the two countries in sports dynamics.

For his part, football referee Mr. Stupar said that football acts as a bridge between nations of distinct individuality, bringing everyone on an equal footing and helping create a sense of belonging. He further expressed his pleasure at the launch of a book on Valeriy Lobanovskiy, which details various aspects about football in general and the differences in the roles of a referee and a player.

Prominent Indian Community worker bids farewell to Kuwait

Prominent Indian community welfare worker Muriel Alphonso leaves Kuwait after more than 45 long years. A finance executive with an impressive career trajectory in the FMCG business, Muriel also expanded her horizons to manage the IT functions of the business for many years.

Despite having a busy career, Muriel always made time for social causes. She served as the President of the Indian Women's Association (IWA) Kuwait, for over 20 years, working relentlessly with her team to 'Lend a Helping Hand' to the less fortunate. Over the years, under Muriel's able leadership, IWA has become a beacon of hope for the less privileged in Kuwait, India and other parts of the sub-continent.

Muriel was also a member of the Kuwait chapter of Soroptimist International, a



worldwide service organization for professional women. She was actively involved in several other community organizations, which highlight her compassion and passion for service to the less privileged.

She always found time in her busy schedule to offer assistance, or a sympathetic ear to friends who needed it. Brimming with energy and ideas, Muriel has the tact of a diplomat and the strength of a fearless leader. She will be remembered for her contribution to the Indian community members over the years.

A talented musician in her own right, friends have shared many pleasant evenings enjoying her piano skills and singing.

Muriel and her husband Tony Alphonso, have made Canada their new home, to be closer to their children in Toronto and the US.



LuLu Hypermarket, Talabat ink deal to facilitate home deliveries



LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, signed a contract with Talabat, the premier home-delivery chain in the GCC, to facilitate the distribution of the hypermarket's products in Kuwait.

The contract was signed on behalf of LuLu Hypermarket by Director Mohamed Haris, and for Talabat by Badder Al Ghanim Managing Director - Kuwait, in the presence of senior officials of the two brands, at the LuLu Hypermarket head office in AlRai on 19 January.

In a statement released on the occasion, LuLu Hypermarket noted that the signing of the contract with Talabat will strengthen our efforts to provide customers with the best shopping experience with high quality

products, widest range of choices, and the most competitive prices. The cooperation with Talabat will also further our endeavor to make shopping for LuLu products easy, convenient and accessible to all, from anywhere in Kuwait.

The statement added that digital shopping and e-commerce is a fast growing platform in Kuwait, and more people than ever-before are now turning to online ordering of goods. Online buyers expect delivery of their purchases quickly and efficiently, and to their place of choice.

LuLu Hypermarket already has an online marketplace and delivery service. However, with the growing demand for online deliveries, it has become imperative for the

hypermarket to choose a reliable partner to facilitate home-deliveries. Certainly it will be Talabat in Kuwait who is standing in the top most rank in home delivery services.

The statement noted that the deal with Talabat will see more than 17,000 stock keeping units (SKUs) of the hypermarket's products being made available through the Talabat platform. Moreover, to ensure speed of delivery, seven stores of the hypermarket have been designated specifically to procure products for online delivery, and highly experienced staff have been assigned to product picking services in order to make sure that the products being delivered are as per the order in terms of quality, quantity and value.

The new agreement will see LuLu products being delivered to all parts of the country, with the possible exception of Al-Khiran area; and that, with the launch of five more stores in 2023, the hypermarket would further expand the product range available for home-delivery through the Talabat platform.

The statement concluded by emphasizing that the agreement between LuLu Hypermarket and Talabat would add value to shopping for customers in Kuwait, as it brings together the extraordinary delivery capabilities and wide reach of Talabat, with the exceptional range of quality products and price options of LuLu Hypermarket.

Embassy of Thailand organizes seminar on medical treatment, tourism

By Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Embassy of Thailand recently hosted a seminar on medical treatment and tourism in Thailand under the theme 'Sawasdee Good Health' at the Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel.

The three-hour seminar featured guest speakers from the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Dubai and The Middle East offices along with representatives from prominent hospitals in Thailand.

In his opening remarks Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the Royal Thai Embassy in Kuwait, Honorable Wattanachai Nirundorn, stated that Thailand is one of the top medical hubs of the world with a wide variety of advanced medical centers offering specialized medical experts and world-renowned hospitality. There are 59 Thai hospitals accredited by Joint Commission International (JCI), which is the highest number among Asia Pacific and South Asian countries, and ranks the country 4th in the world.

"Thailand is also well-known for our specialization in the treatment of various diseases and symptoms. I would say that



there are no diseases or symptoms that cannot be treated in Thailand since our doctors possess great expertise, experience, and professionalism in various fields of medical treatment. Thailand is also the location of many great medical schools that have produced generations of outstanding doctors for many decades and the years to come" added CDA Nirundorn.

Present on the occasion was Tourism Authority of Thailand's Director of Dubai and Middle East Office Chaiwat Tamthai, who mentioned in his welcome address that according to Global Health Security (GHS) Index 2019, Thailand was ranked first in Asia and sixth among 195 countries in the world's strongest health security,

especially during the pandemic. The largest segment of health and wellness tourism in Thailand was its spa tourism, with over US\$795 million being spent in 2019 followed by medical tourism with

\$663 million being spent, and with 27 million visitors in 2019.

"Thailand welcomed more than 39 million global visitors, of whom more than 78,199 were Kuwaitis. Now the COVID situation worldwide is being improved and the tourism momentum is returning once again. I'm pleased to announce that Thailand has been welcoming more than 40,000 Kuwaitis since May 2022," commented Tamthai. Furthermore, he added that the main reason why Middle East and other foreigners seek medical treatment in Thailand is the reasonable cost that is usually 20-50 percent lower than that in USA and Europe allowing medical tourists to have a budget left for recuperation and even recreation.

MoE fires five expat teachers over exam scandal

Ministry of Education is planning to terminate the contracts of five

expatriate teachers whose names were mentioned in the Public Prosecution investigations and proven to have managed the high school exam leakage groups.

In addition, the ministry will withhold the suspects' end-of-service gratuities, while they are being detained pending investigation.

WEF: LuLu Financial Holdings discusses 'Financial Inclusion and Literacy'



As the world's leaders, social scientists and business community converge on this year's World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, the gathering's key theme of 'Cooperation in a fragmented world', has resonated with stakeholders of MENA's financial services sector.

Building upon this message, UAE based LuLu Financial Holdings and Eastnets organized a special event around the role of fully compliant technologies in achieving financial inclusion. Speaking at the event, Adeb Ahamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, said that co-opetition, or competition through collaboration requires the collective action of all stakeholders, including governments, fintechs and traditional players.

He stressed on the role of fully compliant solutions in helping companies tap into each other's benefits, adding, "The foundation of interoperable solutions depends on fully compliant platforms that adhere to regulations and simplify processes for interconnected entities. The significance of such platforms is set to increase as consumer behavior undergoes further evolution and regulations are put in place to ensure proper data ownership."

The session also saw subject matter experts Hazem Mulhim, Founder and CEO of Eastnets, Christos Christou, Chief Compliance Officer of LuLu Financial Holdings, and Joel Lange, General Manager of Dow Jones Risk & Compliance, discuss the role of compliance in plugging gaps in financial services, especially cross-border remittances.

Christos said that the strategic role of compliant systems is gaining relevance, and that companies such as LuLu Financial Holdings are enabling platform-based services to fintechs and traditional players, that can bridge the gap between the underbanked and technologically advanced financial products. Calling for inclusion to be responsible and sustainable, Hazem Mulhim said that access to digital financial services should create financial stability and not lead to a debt trap situation. "Financial inclusion needs to be supported by consumer needs & financial education and should be guarded against fraud, data privacy issues and financial crime."

The session was attended by dignitaries from the UAE government and financial services sector, including H.E. Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri, UAE Minister of Economy, MA Yusuff Ali, Chairman & Managing Director, LuLu Group International, Dr. Shamsheer Vayalil, Founder & Chairman, Burjeel Holdings, Mark Büsler, Chairman, IMTF, Hatem Dowidar, Group CEO, E&, and Brooks Entwistle, SVP, Ripple Services, among others.

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thinks he becomes

- Maya Angelou

Eat Well on the Cheap

Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



With all the price rises, global warnings and financial crises, shoppers are looking for ways to save money without sacrificing nutrition.

Not every fancy food means it is healthy and provides our body with all the essential nutrients. Sometimes when a food item is expensive, it could mean it is rich in fat, and nitrates that cause different kinds of cancer. So people are in fact spending more money to buy unhealthy 'extras' that add calories but are of little nutritional value, such as sodas, bakery items, and chips.

This article is intended to help you save money while getting the best and nutritious food.

First, when going to any coop or supermarket, plan ahead and make a list of what you want to buy, and stick to the list; do not indulge in impulse buying. Also, do not go shopping on an empty stomach, as the inclination to purchase unhealthy, ready-to-eat foods increases when you are hungry. Have a light snack before you go out shopping.

On a related note, a study published in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, found that when families went on weight loss diets, they not only lost weight but reduced their food budgets.

The research found that the savings came from reducing portion sizes and from buying fewer of the high-calorie foods that tend to increase the amount spent at the grocery store.

The ideal food should be nutrient-dense, not calorie-dense. Nutrient-rich foods include:

Grains like lentils, beans and peas: These are among the most versatile and nutritious foods available. Legumes are typically low in fat, contain no cholesterol, and are high in folate, potassium, iron and magnesium. They also contain soluble and insoluble fiber. Because they are a great source of protein, legumes can be a healthy substitute for meat, which has fatter and cholesterol, and surely more expensive.

Fresh seasonal fruits: Save money by skipping calorie-dense cakes and cookies, opt instead for seasonal fruits that are rich in fiber, high in nutrients, sodium-free and fat-free.

Tuna: Tuna is safe, low in mercury and super cheap. There are no excuses not to have it when it is always available. Tuna is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which decrease triglycerides levels. Canned tuna is a great addition to the diet for good proteins and fats without a lot of calories. Note that tuna in water is richer in omega-3 than the one in oil.

Brown rice and multi-cereal bread: Comparing to the other food, brown rice and multi-cereal bread are a smart and cheap food options to choose. They are rich in fiber, and diabetic-friendly, as they are slowly absorbed in the bloodstream. And we all know how important fiber is for digestive health, as well as maintaining a healthy weight.

Studies show that six servings of whole grains weekly can lower the creation of arterial plaque build-up and reduce chances of developing heart disease and high cholesterol levels.

Frozen food: They may be less expensive than fresh, yet are equally nutritious. Fish and poultry are often frozen to minimize freezer damage and retain freshness. With frozen foods, you can use only the amount you need and return the rest to the freezer. If it is properly stored, there is no waste.

So, the next time you go out shopping to your local supermarket, cut food costs by choosing only the healthiest foods. And, the good news is that cheap food is not necessarily unhealthy food.

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Mira is a go-to source for nutrition and wellness and has joined The Times Kuwait team in a new weekly column discussing nutrition and answering queries. You can send in your questions to infotimeskuwait@gmail.com

RECIPE

Kodo Millet Risotto



Millet, one of the earliest cultivated crops of humankind, is often referred to as a grain, but it is actually a seed, and a very versatile one at that. Though sold as bird food in some countries, millets form the staple food for over a third of the world's population across Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. These tiny round seeds are rich in antioxidants, protein, fiber and other nutrients, and are cooked like any other grain such as rice or quinoa, and can replace these ingredients in porridges and pilafs. The mild, slightly sweet flavor of millet also lends itself to a variety of uses: It can be milled into flour and used to make gluten-free cake, salads and sweets, or cooked whole and served like a risotto. Consider making millet your go-to ingredient for any occasion.

Total time 20-25 minutes.

Serving 5 :

Ingredients:

- 2 cups cooked kodo millet
- 1/2 cup white beans (soaked and boiled with salt)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 cup finely chopped tomatoes
- 2 green chillies
- 1/4 cup onion (finely chopped)
- 1/4 cup yellow bell pepper (finely chopped)
- 1 tsp ginger (finely chopped)
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp chili flakes
- 5-6 black pepper whole
- 1 tsp hot chili sauce
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp sugar
- Salt to taste

* For Garnishing:
ginger jullians



Chef Chhaya Thakker

Instructions:

- Place oil in a pan and heat at medium-high
- Add cumin seeds, pepper, chillies, onion, yellow capsicum, ginger and saute
- Add tomatoes and continue sauteing
- When the oil separates, add boiled beans and cooked kodo millet, along with chili flakes, hot chili sauce, sugar, lemon juice, salt and mint leaves.
- Stir the mixture gently so to not break the millet seeds
- The end product should be creamy, not soupy and it should be very chewy and not mushy.
- Garnish with ginger julienne and serve with mango-dill raita.

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

Central Bank freezes accounts of individuals, companies

Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has asked all Kuwaiti banks and branches of foreign banks in the country to freeze the accounts of five people and four companies suspected of involvement in illegal activities. The Central Bank has ordered the freezing of all funds in these accounts as well as asked the banks to provide details of transactions conducted by these individuals and firms.

The five people involved include three Kuwaitis and two Emiratis, while the companies suspected of involvement include a real estate company, a consulting firm, an advertising firm and a marketing company.

Central Bank's decision to freeze these accounts follows a request by the Public

Prosecution for details of funds deposited in all local bank accounts, of the two Emiratis, as well as funds deposited in a family name, in addition to that of three real estate and consulting companies, as part of investigation into a case of misappropriation of public funds.

Reports indicate that the decision also freezes any other securities deposited in the suspected accounts or in investment funds with the stock market. The directive also included the disclosure of all transactions conducted in the suspected accounts during the period between 2011 and 2012.

On a similar vein, the CBK has requested all exchange companies to urgently provide a statement on their 'high-risk' customers, including those who conduct

money transfers to countries included in the international red-list classification of high-risk countries, as well as the number of suspected cases of money laundering or terrorist financing that it has monitored during the last three years.

The move by the Central Bank comes within its broader supervisory coordination to ensure the ability of exchange companies, banks and finance companies to successfully meet the expected assessment to be conducted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in May. The task force plans to examine the extent of compliance by financial institutions in Kuwait with global anti-money laundering and terrorist financing requirements.

Central Bank's request to exchange



companies to provide the required data within 10 working days is based on provisions of Law No.106/2013 on combating money laundering and terrorist financing, its executive regulations, and related decisions and instructions.

Awqaf launches platform to facilitate Haj pilgrimages

As part of the Council of Ministers' endeavor to facilitate citizens wishing to perform Hajj this year, the Ministry of Awqaf has launched an online platform that could ensure services are provided to citizens at a reduced price of about 40 percent.

Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf, Abdulaziz Al-Majed, has reportedly requested

the Hajj administration officials at the Awqaf Ministry to prepare a comprehensive memorandum on the most important mechanisms by which prices would be reduced. The plan would include provisions to provide integrated services to citizens, and enable everyone to perform the ritual with ease by registering on the online platform.

The central registration platform will provide everyone wishing to perform Hajj with detailed information on the prices and caravans available, in order to enable them to choose what is suitable for them before registering on the site. The site will also allow the registration of 250 to 300 pilgrims with each caravan.

IWG delegation visits 'Alexander the Great' exhibition



A delegation from the International Women's Group (IWG) headed by its president Ghada Shawky, wife of the ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt, visited the Contemporary Art Platform (CAP) on 17 January, to view the exhibition titled 'Alexander the Great', which is being held under the patronage of the Greek Ambassador H.E. Konstantinos Piperigos, on the theme, 'Building Bridges of Communication between East and West'.

The delegation was received by the Greek Ambassador, along with the Director of CAP, Amer Huneidi, and the exhibition curator Parlos Trochopoulos.

Known for his empire, which spanned Ancient Greece, Macedonia and all the way to modern Afghanistan, Alexander the Great was able to change the world and create a new world, the influence of which we continue to feel today. The collection of paintings by the Greek painter Makis Warlamis portrays the emperor with great care, and brings out the connection between the East and the West.

According to Ambassador Piperigos, the aim of this exhibition is to acquaint Kuwaitis with the spirit of Alexander the Great, who with his companions established a naval base on Failaka Island, which arguably marks the beginning of Kuwait's history and the first form of cultural exchange between the two nations.

At the end of the visit, Mrs. Shawky extended IWG's grateful thanks and appreciation to the Greek embassy and the organizers of CAP.



Filipino team arrives to help tackle worker issues

A high-ranking delegation from the Philippine Ministry of Labor that arrived in Kuwait last week aims to find radical solutions to the problem of overcrowding of more than 500 Filipino workers who have sought refuge in a building in South Surra leased by the Embassy.

The delegation is expected to hold a series of separate meetings with officials of the employment file at the embassy, representatives of the Federation of Recruitment Agencies, and officials of the Public Authority of Manpower's (PAM) Department for Regulating the Recruitment of Domestic Workers.

The delegation will also visit the labor shelter center in the Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area, to inspect the workers who are held there until they leave the country. The problem of overcrowding at the embassy building was due to the refusal by PAM officials to receive workers at the shelter,



against whom absconding reports have been filed by their employers. The Philippine embassy is reportedly in contact with the concerned government agencies in Kuwait, including the ministries of foreign affairs and the interior, to solve the problem of 'women workers' as quickly as possible.



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ILOA honors outgoing Class 12 students

Indian Learners Own Academy (ILOA) organized a farewell function for the outgoing batch of grade XII, on 19 January at the school auditorium. The event witnessed high fervor and spirited enthusiasm, bringing the cherished moments alive in the minds of the audience.

The event began at 9:00 AM with an auspicious prayer song, seeking the divine grace of the Almighty followed by the Kuwait National Anthem and Indian National Anthem. Managing Editor of The Times Kuwait, Reaven D'souza, graced the occasion as chief guest, and lit the auspicious traditional lamp along with the School Chairman D.K. Sharma, Principal Asha Sharma, and the well-known Indian philanthropist. Manju Nandha.

Principal Sharma welcomed the gathering and motivated students with her



thought-provoking words. She advised the students to stay focused in their studies and to achieve their goal with persistent efforts. The class representatives of various classes

wished their seniors good luck and urged them to uphold the ethics and morals they imbibed from their alma mater.

The students of Class 12I were then

presented with the course completion certificate by the chief guest Mr. D'Souza, who congratulated the students on their accomplishments pointing at the ILOA slogan, 'Dare to dream, Strive for excellence'. He also advised the students to inculcate empathy in their character as they move on to further successes in their life.

The chief guest also lauded the exceptional dedication and hard work put in by Mrs Sharma over the years in the educational field in Kuwait. He noted her passion in education and the outstanding results that ILOA has achieved since its inception just a decade ago. The students were then taken along memory lane by reliving some of the best moments of their lives spent at ILOA. The program came to an end with the vote of thanks proposed by the Head Boy and Head Girl.



ICS hosts 'Winter Beats Carnival'

Indian Central School organized the much-awaited Carnival, 'Winter Beats' on Friday 16 December. The Program was inaugurated by lighting of the Traditional Lamp with the accompaniment of melodious instrumental tunes that set the ambient mood of the day.

Principal of Indian Central School, Sujata Sivakrishnan welcomed the audience to the delightful and meticulously planned Event.



DAS Schools Chairman, Mr. KO Mathew, Corporate Manager Mr. K. Sundaram and Community Affairs, CSR Executive, Ms. Stephanie Mathew graced the Inaugural Function and released a colorful Souvenir to commemorate this exciting Carnival.

History was made when the 29-year-old School launched the first ever Alumni Forum, 'ICS Forever', to reach out to ICS ians dotting the Globe with their Alma Mater. The endearing thematic message was Reconnect, Reflect, Reroot. More than 100 ex-ICS students responded with great excitement to meet at an exclusive Program at the Carnival.

The Day unfolded with scintillating Stage performances by the Kindergartners, Primary Wing, Middle and Senior Wing students most ably trained and supported by their teachers. Dance Performances from various Dance Schools in Kuwait City- Renegades, Stedison, Dancing Divas, Zero Gravity, Tanima Dance Academy, a Violin Recital by Irene Mariam Biju, Vocals by the talented students and Music Teachers of DAS Academy and an electrifying Egyptian Dance to the accompaniment of soulful Sufi music were the highlights of the evening.

The immensely popular TOTO Club with the most gifted siblings Tojan, Moses and Ruth Toby took Centerstage from 6 PM onwards, singing their way into the hearts of the audience and kept the pulsating crowd jiving and singing along with their popular lilting numbers.

The Emcees of the day, Ms. Luciya and Rajesh Nair kept everyone suitably entertained. Exciting Stalls, Games and rides, delicious food, Bingo and Magic Show, all ensured that the Winter Beats Carnival was a family entertainer.

The Grand Finale was the most exciting Raffle Draw with a Bumper First Prize of 25 gm gold sponsored by the Dar Al Saha Group, Second Prize was iPhone 13 by Bahrain Exchange Company, Third Prize of Return Air Tickets to India was sponsored by Go Air, Fourth Prize of 2 Nights stay in Dubai by Cozmo Travels, Fifth Prize of Travel Trolleys from American Tourister and 40 more attractive prizes and Gift Coupons sponsored by Lulu Group and Dwaihi Restaurant.

'Maurya Manch 2023' by Maurya Kala Parisar



An enchanting night of Music and Dance performances along with some comedy at Maurya Manch that was held on Friday 13 January at Indian School of Excellence Salmiya. Wageesha Jha from Bihar, a SaReGaMa Mumbai Round contestant performed some Bollywood melodies. President of Maurya Kala Parisar said Wageesha is the best Hindi Singer in Kuwait and he was proud to have her as a member.

Abhay Kashyap President Maurya Kala Parisar welcomed the guests. Performances on Kesariya, Manwa Lage and a medley of other songs were the highlight of the musical night. Couples performed a parody of a dance on Mere Samne wali khidki pe Jag Suna Suna and others. Then the memories of old Bollywood came alive when Sujata sang a couple of songs. Male voices were Sabir Ansari who did a medley of songs and Ramesh Kumar Vijay Arora performed Rote hue aate hain sab and tum bin jaun kahan.

Late in the evening Devesh Kumar and

Rajan Mishra did stand up comedies. Comic relief was also provided by the kids' classroom humour by Shahzaib Shahana Reyansh

Avika Avani and Lavanya and a skit by Devesh Kumar and Nivedita Sinha.

The show ended with a fashion show with couples Neeraj and Supriya, Ramesh and Shruti Vivek and Supriya Vijay and Sharmila and Zafar Kainat enacting famous Bollywood Jodis. Then the raffle draws first and second prizes were announced. Mr Manoj & Mrs. Radhika Mishra, Mr Uday Prakash & Mrs. Nivedita Sinha and Mr Sabir and Mrs Bushra Ansari were felicitated for their families long service to Maurya Kala Parisar. Aarush Pandey,

Siddhant Bhardwaj Umnag Prakash Avika Sinha Tanishi Yashita Bhardwaj Avni Sinha Aarya Pandey Lavanya Sanjivini Rai Divya Das received cups for their academic and extracurricular achievement. Vivek Sinha, General Secretary, then concluded the program with a Vote of thanks.

Cyber attackers target Kuwait, other GCC states



A recently published cyber-security report on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states revealed that between the second half of 2021 and the

first half of 2022, cyber attackers targeted 42 companies in the GCC region, 33 percent of which were in the UAE, 29 percent in Saudi Arabia, 21 percent in Kuwait, 10 percent in Qatar, 5 percent in Oman and 2 percent in Bahrain.

The report, published by Group-IB, a Singapore-headquartered company, specializing in cyber security services, also showed that during the same period organizations in Saudi Arabia and the UAE experienced the highest number of ransomware attacks.

According to the report, ransomware remained the main cyber threat to businesses and organizations around the world, including the Middle East and

North Africa region. The report added that Saudi Arabia and the UAE experienced the highest number of ransomware attacks among the GCC countries between mid-2021 and mid-2022.

Ransomware is a type of malware that encrypts the victim's files, and demands payment of a ransom in exchange for the decryption key. If the ransom is not paid, attackers often threaten to delete the encrypted files or release them publicly.

The report indicated that such attacks could have a significant impact on both individuals and institutions, leading to the loss of important data, as well as financial losses to the involved company from having to pay the ransom, in addition to suffering

disruptions to their business operations. Among industries, ransomware attackers were found to frequently target the sectors of energy, communications, information technology, and manufacturing.

The report stated that Iran is considered a major cybersecurity threat to companies in the GCC, especially the region's telecommunications and energy industries. Late last year, Dubai-based US company CrowdStrike reported that it was tracking 20 groups in Iran that could target the GCC region for potential espionage or cyberattacks. In another report at the end of last year, Group-IB said thousands of computers in the Gulf had been hacked by Russian-speaking fraudsters.

CSC announces holidays in February

Civil Service Commission (CSC) has announced that Sunday, 19 February, will be an additional holiday for public sector undertakings on the occasion of Al-Israa wal Miraaj (Prophet's Ascension), which falls on Saturday 18 February. Similarly, Monday, 27 February, will be an additional holiday on account of the National and Liberation Days

that fall on 25 and 26 February.

The Commission noted that this holiday decision applies to "all ministries, government agencies, public bodies and institutions". Announcing the holidays, the Undersecretary of CSC, Abeer Al-Duaij, said the commission's statement follows a decision taken in this regard by the Cabinet during its regular meeting. She clarified that holidays for workers in government bodies with a 'special work nature' will be determined by their own internal management, taking into consideration public interest.



UN coordinator praises global role of Kuwait

Outgoing United Nations Resident Coordinator and Representative of the UN Secretary-General for development operations, Tarek Al-Sheikh said that Kuwait has always played an integral role regionally and globally, and propelled its status as an important country with strong international presence.

Speaking during an exclusive interview with state media ahead of the end of his mandate in Kuwait, Al-Sheikh also praised Kuwait's efforts and investments in its diplomats, who over the years have proven their abilities and excelled

through their participation worldwide.

"As the world changes, Kuwait must continue to invest in the future based on cooperation and relation building amongst others," said the top UN official in Kuwait. He added that investing and supporting leadership in various sectors would earn Kuwait a stronger place in international affairs.

"Since starting my mission in 2018, I have witnessed a strong welcome and support from the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry. And, in the first month of assuming my post, I had the honor to meet with the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. I also had the privilege to work with the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres in preparation for the successful Kuwait-hosted conference to rebuild Iraq, which was held in February 2018," said Al-Sheikh.

The UN Coordinator thanked all Kuwaiti state entities for their support and assistance during his mission, commending Kuwait for its efforts in promoting human rights and boosting transparency and accountability. He also noted that the UN had signed with Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) an agreement to realize the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, which came in line with Kuwait's own 2035 Development vision.

electricity supplies to consumers during the peak of summer, with the power cuts affecting all regions equally at different periods.

Sources at the ministry point out that the planned Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Interconnection Grid project, will not contribute to providing the required electrical shortage in Kuwait, as it is intended for emergencies and has only limited operational capacity, in addition to the high cost of buying energy in peak summer time, when all other GCC countries will need their productions to meet domestic needs.

Among the reasons that could cause power shortages in future are: Poor planning and forecasting of energy needs; Delays by the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects to tender for the construction of new power plants; the long documentary cycle involved in approving power plant projects; the lack of sufficient budget for power plants; and the termination of international experts from the electricity ministry, as part of the Kuwaitization program.



Power cuts a distinct possibility from 2024

Unless urgent solutions to the power situation in the country is found, Kuwait may find itself in the same predicament that it was in 2006, when power cuts at the height of summer affected people's lives and the economy.

According to figures available, the country is expected to face a shortage of power supplies in the summer of 2024 and 2025, which could extend to 2027. Reasons cited for this include a shortfall in the supply of electric power, due to the decision by the Planning Committee in the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to postpone some vital power plant projects.

In the event of such a shortfall in electricity production, the ministry would have to resort to reducing electrical loads by cutting

ALSAYER Group earns GSAS Platinum Certification for the Toyota mega delivery Center- Ardiyah, Kuwait



As part of our mission to achieve the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and in line with Kuwait National Development Plan 2035, The Gulf Organization for Research & Development (GORD) has awarded ALSAYER Group's TOYOTA MEGA DELIVERY CENTER-ARDIYAH in Kuwait a Platinum rating for GSAS Operations Certification, aligning with the objective to create an environment toward a sustainable future.

The award was handed over by Dr. Yousef Alhorr, Founding Chairman of Gulf Organization for Research & Development (GORD) to ALSAYER Chairman, Mr. Faisal Bader Al-Sayer along with Mr. Bengt Schultz, COO, Mr. Ibrahim Al-Fouzan, Senior Business Director, Service, Mr. Nehad Al-Haj Ali, Group Manager, Corporate Excellence.

GSAS Operations certification was awarded in recognition of implementing sustainable measures such as:

- The building's roof houses the biggest PV Solar Project in private sector. Serving ALSAYER Delivery Center with a capacity of 1 MWp, the system generates around 1.5 Gigawatt hrs annually. Covering 25% of the building consumption and reducing the carbon footprint by 950 Metric tons of CO2 emissions.
- A two-tunnel automated car wash technology which incorporates water recycling reverse osmosis system reducing out environmental impact. With this technology up to 80% of the water used is recycled and reused.
- Energy efficient HVAC system consisting of water-cooled chillers
- High-performance large glass facades for natural day light,
- Healthy Indoor Environment for employees & visitors.
- Efficient heat insulation for the external walls and the upper roofs for effective air conditioning system
- Latest energy saving light fittings,
- Photocell water mixers.

In addition to above, sorting waste at the source and facilitating the recycling of paper

and engine oil, ALSAYER Delivery Center is diverting a significant amount of waste from landfills.

According to Mr. Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer, Executive Board Member and Chairman of Sustainability Committee at ALSAYER Group "In ALSAYER Group, we realize that one of the most important pieces in the climate-change puzzle is achieving a balance between natural resources and human consumption that is respectful of the nature yet fuels our modern way of life. For the future of our planet and the humans who populate it, it is vital to weigh the competing needs of environmental protection and human development so both the nature and society are able to flourish.

Previously, three projects of ALSAYER have achieved GSAS Operations with Platinum rating for ALSAYER Head Office 1 in Free Trade Zone, ALSAYER Showroom located in Aswaq AlQurain, and Fahaheel After Sales Center. And now is the fourth Building: TOYOTA MEGA DELIVERY CENTER- ARDIYAH and still we shall work on more buildings to reinforce sustainability in our coming projects.

The Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS) is MENA's first performance-based green buildings certification system aimed at improving the design, construction and operations of buildings while also addressing sustainability challenges specific to the region's built environment. GSAS Operations (GSAS-OP) is one of the three certifications under GSAS framework. Specifically meant for post-occupancy stage, the certification is designed to recognize a project's achievement in terms of sustainable operational practices.

Unlike GSAS Design & Build and GSAS Construction Management, GSAS Operations deals with the environmental footprint of projects in post-construction stage. Accordingly, the achievements of projects are acknowledged through five certification ratings i.e., Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, and Diamond with Diamond representing the highest score.

In that context ALSAYER's projects have achieved the second highest rating.

Philippines Embassy addresses medical concerns of Filipinos

Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Since 2018, Assistance to Nationals Unit Medical Response Team (ATNU-MRT) at the Embassy of Philippines, has been providing every possible medical assistance to the more than 230,000 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Kuwait. The services have ranged from medical referrals to hospitals and clinics, to frequent repatriation of medical patients to the Philippines for treatment when necessary. In a brief interview with The Times Kuwait, Luiz Carlos Osorio, an embassy official and member of the MRT, highlighted the organization's functions and services provided to Filipinos in Kuwait.

He began by noting that the MRT has encountered several medical conditions among Filipinos, including strokes, high blood pressure, cancer, diabetes, fractured body parts, psychiatric cases, and those affected by the COVID-19 among others.

In reply to what were the most difficult cases to handle, Mr. Osorio said that patients requiring the use of stretchers for their repatriation were the most difficult type of medical cases to tackle as the logistical requirements involved were several, including coordination with the airline



company, doctors, hospitals to obtain a fit to travel approval. Requirements on whether the patient must travel with a doctor, nurse or a companion have also to be considered. Coordination too with other government agencies in the Philippines such as OWWA, DOH and now DMW must also be taken into consideration. In addition, we also have medical equipment such as oxygen tanks or portable ventilators if needed.

Outlining the processes that an OFW must go through in order to apply for the service, Mr. Osorio explained: Medical cases vary so the ATNU-MRT evaluates the documents such as medical report, passport, civil id. The team also verifies whether the patients are documented or undocumented. If documented and employed in a company, they are referred



to the medical counterpart DMW (POLO -OWWA) which evaluates the case for the necessary assistance. However, for undocumented patients, the MRT verifies if pending cases are existent such as absconding, travel ban due to unpaid loans, residence violations then they are referred to the ATNU. Such assistance is done in coordination with Kuwait authorities such as the CID and Talha Deportation center.

He added that "even though we do not want to put limitations or boundaries on repatriation services, there are certain processes at the Embassy and Kuwait government that have to coincide. Collaboration also with DMW and the country's hospitals is essential, and if all these conditions are met, the patient is allowed to return to the Philippines, which

is when we begin the repatriation process.

Providing numbers on the repatriation process, Mr. Osorio indicated that since 2018, the ATNU-MRT have provided assistance to thousands of Filipinos in Kuwait with various medical conditions, including some who were terminally ill.

Currently, there are only a handful of cases pending, including patients with stroke, and acute appendicitis, who will be repatriated shortly, as well as three Intensive Care Unit patients, and one patient requiring the use of a stretcher, who are still being monitored.

Concluding the interview, Mr. Osorio, on behalf of the Charge d' Affaires, a.i. Hon. Jose Cabrera III and all the officers and staff of the Philippine Embassy, urged all Filipinos in Kuwait to live healthy, go for regular check ups and avoid eating in excess. He added that the Philippine Embassy will always be there for the safety and welfare of Filipinos in the country..

Created in 2018, the ATNU-MRT is an initiative by former Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Mohammad Noordin Pendosina Lomondot, which aims to address and focus on various medical concerns of Filipinos in Kuwait. Mr. Osorio and Milva Sauti Akilan, who is also an embassy official, are members of the ATNU -MRT.

Transforming Education, a long-neglected need

Continued from Page 1

He pointed out that "Kuwait's national policy gave precedence to developing human resources, and that the country allocates 12 percent of its domestic spending to develop education, including through new modes of education supported by the government, the private sector, and civil society."

Kuwait's keenness to ensure quality educational output is no doubt laudable, and the country's spending of a relatively high 6.6 percent of its GDP on education in 2021, is certainly commendable. But unfortunately, the outcomes from education are far less than that aspired for. The need to transform education, due to the poor quality of its outcomes, is evident everywhere one looks. The most egregious manifestation of this was in the rampant cheating that takes place during secondary school exams.

Last week it came to light that more than 40,000 secondary school students from various public schools were involved in an exam-cheating network that included teachers, supervisors, other school staff and employees of the Ministry of Education. Media reports on the case, which is currently before the Public Prosecutor's office, indicates that exam question papers were leaked to a select group of students in exchange for monetary benefits. The students then subsequently sold these questions to other students for cash, with a total of over KD1 million said to have been transacted for this illegal process.

The widespread cheating once again brings to the fore the poor quality of education in the country and reiterates the finding of numerous reports, by local and international entities that have attested to the dismally low outcomes of education in Kuwait. A report in January 2022 by the Ministry of Education, following a survey of over 260 public and private schools found that the education imparted and outcomes received in the country's schools were 'disappointing'.

In a bid to improve education, governments over the years have conducted multi-year integrated modernization programs to address critical issues in Kuwait's education system. The most recent attempt conducted by the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the World Bank, was the five-year 'Integrated Education Reform Program' that began in 2015. The program aimed to reform curricula,

develop national assessment systems, improve school leadership, and create professional standards.

However, an assessment report on the program by the World Bank, following the conclusion of the program in 2020, found that due to lack of timely and comprehensive implementation of recommendations, the program had in large measure failed to achieve many of its objectives. The educational shortcoming and inadequateness of youth in Kuwait to compete effectively in the knowledge economy of today was again underlined by the 2021 publication titled, 'Unlocking Human Capital Potential in Kuwait as Global Actor in the Knowledge Economy', prepared by the United Nations Kuwait office.

Pointing out that in the new knowledge economy, wealth is based on the knowledge acquired and its use, and not on material factors of production, the report contended that Kuwaiti youth were ill-prepared to participate in this new economy.

Noting that that the contribution of human capital accumulation to wealth in high-income countries (HICs) is over 70 percent, in the US (79%), in South Korea (69%), and the world average is 64 percent, the report added, in Kuwait the share of human capital to wealth was only around 24 percent. The report asserted that underperformance in terms of the Human Capital Index, relative to nations with similar incomes, in Kuwait is associated with the country's weak "human capital generating capacity for wealth".

Additionally, the report in its assessment of human resource qualification systems and their outputs, highlighted several shortcomings, including that pre-primary enrollment rate in the country remains low at 60 percent, compared to the average of 83 percent for other high-income countries. Also, despite increased government expenditure on early years' education, and children expected to stay 12 out of 14 years in school, a child learns the equivalent of only 7.4 years. In other words, a high-school graduate in Kuwait learns the equivalent of a middle-school graduate in Singapore, said the UN report.

The UN analysis also went on to note that a quarter of the human capital accumulated is not currently being utilized in the labor market, largely because of low economic participation by females. This results in a broadly persistent gender gap that placed Kuwait 122 out of 153

countries in the Gender Gap Index produced by the World Economic Forum.

The labor market segmentation has also led to higher unemployment rates among Kuwaitis (6.4%) compared to migrants (1.7%). The report attributed this discrepancy

in employment to the fact that nearly 58 percent of unemployed Kuwaitis said they would refuse to work in the private sector. Also, Kuwaiti graduates showed only a limited willingness to adapt their skills to labor market needs.

One reason for the low quality of education in Kuwait can be attributed to the state's policies since the country's independence in 1961. The welfare state that emerged following independence, backed by new-found oil wealth, resulted in the government guaranteeing secure and lucrative jobs in the public sector for all working age citizens. The perpetuation of this policy over the past six decades — where the government sector serves as the employer of first and last choice for most nationals — has resulted in a lopsided and fragmented labor market and distorted labor allocation.

This policy has also resulted in a public sector bursting at the seams with overemployment, and an unsustainable public wage bill that accounts for over 70 percent of annual budget expenditure. Providing secure sinecure employment for all adult nationals, has also inadvertently undermined the education system. Today, students emerge from educational institutions with nominal degrees and mediocre capabilities that are out of sync with labor market demands, and make them ill-equipped for the current knowledge economy.

Maintaining the outdated policy of implementing slow, incremental educational improvements has clearly not succeeded and will no longer suffice. What is needed is a paradigm transformation of the education system through deep and far-reaching systemic changes to the educational process, conducted simultaneously at multiple levels, and in a concerted, consistent and sustained manner.

However, in a country where nearly everyone involved in the education process has a stake in maintaining the status quo, it is doubtful whether such a drastic intervention and transformation of the education process will ever be implemented, let alone succeed.

The thinking, 'why replace what is not broken', appears to percolate down the education pyramid.

It begins with the lawmakers at the top who decide what reforms get introduced and implemented. However, while publicly voicing support for enhancing educational levels in the country, they do not relish the prospects of an educated and empowered youth that could demand long-due answers from their elected representatives and appointed executives in parliament.

It is also in the interests of erstwhile employees and managers in the public sector to maintain the status quo in employment processes. Even though they are aware of the need for well-educated youths possessing job-oriented skill-sets, these decision-makers are also wary that the hiring of talented youth could pose a challenge to their own jobs down the line.

Teachers and administrators who are ultimately responsible for improving student training and outcomes, prefer to continue teaching and administering using outdated models and modalities. Rather than undergo fresh training in new education and administrative processes that would benefit students and outcomes, many of these employees prefer to obstruct and obfuscate any educational reforms that have the potential to infringe on their current cushy jobs.

Finally, the students at the bottom of the education pyramid are quite happy to continue the learning by rote and exam-oriented learning process. Rather than putting in extra-effort to imbibe new experiential learning techniques, they favor the current learning process, knowing fully well that even with a middling education the state will ensure their comfortable life and livelihood in future.

The UN Kuwait office report concluded by noting that in order to yield greater rates of return on educational spending, and to transform the labor force to become more productive and creative so as to effectively participate in the knowledge economy, it is critical for Kuwait to invest in public health, nutrition, education and vocational training of youth, especially of young women, as well as invest in creating an innovative environment through internal and external partnerships.

Let us hope that the people responsible for education in the country will read the UN report, and, more importantly, act on it.

Empowerment of Women through Insurance



Resilient, resolute, and nurturing, women the world over are innervated with an immense inner strength that allows them to deftly juggle between self, family, work and society. There is no denying that women have achieved much in today's world, overcoming the mushrooming obstacles that hindered her way forward.

A woman takes care of the household, the family, upholding its values, and is the connection for uplifting the family and society. Though they have many responsibilities to attend to as a woman, there are many who have worked tenaciously to become financially independent and make a mark for themselves.

As a working woman, I have always had this nagging question at the back of my mind: although I am financially independent, am I financially strong? Financial strength comes not only from the money we earn, but also from gaining the knowledge on how to manage money. And this, dear readers, begins with small steps.

As a working lady, you need to start by realizing that because you are your own vehicle in life, if for any reason — accident, death or any illness — your vehicle stops running, your money should still continue to work for you. For this, you need to first begin by investing in yourself. If you are well, you can take care of yourself and then those around you. If not, everything collapses. After all, our life is in our control to a large extent solely by the choices we make. No excuses on this one.

Choose to insure yourself to have peace of mind so that in case of any challenges you are not dependent on your spouse, friend, family member, or your children. Often, we have experienced, most women are not aware of the insurance policies their husbands have taken. This can be attributed to two things; either the husband feels it is not necessary to educate the spouse, as she will not understand it, or why bother her. And, a woman might feel it unmannerly to discuss a topic that touches on life after the death of her husband.

And this is the crux of the problem for which I largely hold a woman responsible. Women need to accept the fact that no one lives forever, everyone dies at one time or another. Even when a husband dies, life still goes on for the wife, and she will be called on to assume new financial duties for which she may not be fully prepared.

The only solution for this is for women to enhance their knowledge on the existing policies taken by the husband and ensure the family is adequately insured against various financial threats, such as loss of income due to — untimely death, critical illnesses, disability and last but not the least retirement.

When we are faced with some health issues, we ask friends and family for advice, and do research on the best doctor available to treat us. When our child is unwell, we scout for the best pediatrician shortlisting after many reviews from various sources. So too, when faced with financial issues, we must seek out a specialist insurance consultant to take care of your insurance portfolio which will help you your entire life?

Consult a specialist to do a financial need analysis based on your income to identify if there are any gaps and find an insurance provider who can offer multiple solutions to fill those gaps. Then allocate funds monthly, quarterly, or yearly and

set aside these amounts for the areas you wish to insure yourself in — whether it is life insurance, investment, critical illness, retirement or others.

Decide and begin this journey towards financial strength, right today. Otherwise, you could be haunted by the words, 'what if...'; or, 'I should have done this or that...'

Being an insurance specialist consultant, it gives me immense pride to be in an industry that directly touches the lives of people. With our intention to safeguard one's family by just educating a client and then customizing a solution which takes care of them and their loved ones in case of dire circumstance, is fulfilling to say the least. I leave you with a thought on this fact of life: "Insurance cannot be bought with wealth, it can only be bought with health".



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Kuwait, EU keen to combat terrorism

A three-day specialized workshop titled, 'Strategic Communication in Combating Terrorism', was organized jointly by the Ministry of Information and the European Union (EU), at the National Library on 16 January.

The first day of the workshop was held in the presence of the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Development and International Cooperation, Ambassador Hamad Al-Mashaan, the head of the Anti-Extremism Team, Assistant Undersecretary for the Foreign Media Affairs

shed light on methods and means of combating extremist ideology, including by harnessing social and traditional media and means of communication, as well as by using the latest information and communication technologies to serve this goal.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Al-Mashaan, confirmed that the workshop is very important and comes as part of cooperation between the EU and Kuwait given the ministry's interest in combating terrorism and renouncing violence

For his part, the Chargé d'affaires of the European Union Mission, Gediminas Varanavicius, said both Kuwait and the EU face common global challenges, including security. He expressed the Union's conviction that exchanging experiences and knowledge with the Gulf region and Kuwait in particular, is important to overcome these challenges together. He also revealed a program to combat financing of terrorism and money laundering in a way that best suits the needs of Kuwait.

Varanavicius added that the workshop comes within the framework of the new EU strategy towards the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, which was adopted last year and aims to strengthen European cooperation with the GCC countries on a range of global challenges, including security and combating terrorism.

He pointed out that the workshop relies on the strong and excellent relations between the EU and Kuwait, which remains a reliable partner and ally of the European Union. He explained the EU's partnership with Kuwait in the field of security and combating terrorism is based on three pillars: Combating the financing of terrorism and money laundering; Judicial cooperation between the EU and the GCC states, an area in which Kuwait plays a pioneering and vital role; and, combating extremism.

Experts from the EU participating in the

workshop included the EU's Regional Adviser for the Gulf States and Counter-Terrorism, Philip Cormier; team Leader of the Enhanced Political Dialogue Project between the EU and GCC states, Mary Jo Char; Strategic communication

expert and member of the EU's Radicalization Awareness Network, Giulia Dino Giacomelli; Strategic communications consultant Hugo MacPherson, and expert in countering extremism and radicalism, Elliot Grainger.



Sector at the Information Ministry, Mazen Al-Ansari, the Chargé d'affaires of the European Union Mission, Gediminas Varanavicius, and a number of Arab and foreign ambassadors and diplomats accredited to the country.

Among others, the workshop focused on strategies to combat extremism-based discourse in social and traditional media. Addressing the gathering, Al-Ansari said that Kuwait has always been keen to play its role in combating terrorism by developing strategic plans to promote moderation and raise awareness among the public on the dangers of terrorism. He added that the workshop aims to

Long-time resident in Kuwait, John Mathew, passes away

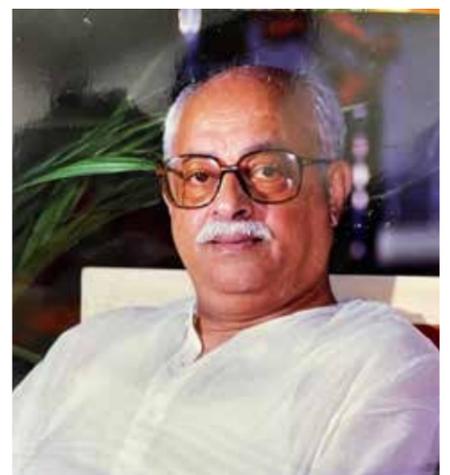
Long-time resident in Kuwait and prominent Indian community member John Mathew, passed away in his home state of Kerala on Monday, 23 January, at the age of 85. John who spent 60 years working in Kuwait returned to India in 2022.

Following a recent illness, John was hospitalized and passed away in his sleep peacefully. He leaves behind his wife Ramani and three daughters, Anna, Sarah and Maria.

A well-respected and successful entrepreneur, John arrived in Kuwait in 1962 and for 60 long years had made Kuwait his home. A chemical engineer by profession, John retired as a capital investor and board member in three companies in Kuwait.

In 1981, with his entrepreneurial spirit taking charge and spurring him to strike out on his own, he started his own company, providing employment to more than 7,000 people in the years since.

In an exclusive interview with The Times Kuwait, prior to his departure from Kuwait last year, John reminisced about his life in Kuwait and concluded by saying that he had finally decided to return back home



because, "... my social life has died out, most of my friends have either moved back home or are no longer with us".

Rest in Peace, John; the Indian diaspora here in Kuwait will sorely miss your presence, your humanitarian efforts, and your vast experience that you so generously contributed to the Indian community and to Kuwait.





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