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# Unbridled consumption and e-waste challenge



## THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Humanity generates an appalling amount of waste each year. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2020 the world generated around 2.25 billion tons (2.25 trillion kilos) of municipal solid waste (MSW), or everyday items that we use and then discard as garbage. Unless this crisis is addressed effectively, the total MSW is expected to nearly double to 3.34 billion tons by 2050, causing catastrophic impacts on the health of people and planet.

Worldwide, waste generated per person per day averages 0.77 kilogram, but this varies widely between countries, with more per capita waste generated in developed high-income countries and less so in developing nations. Only around 55 percent of global waste is managed in controlled facilities, the rest is either untreated or mismanaged, posing a hazard that threatens lives and livelihoods.

To put the enormity of global waste in perspective, the 2.25 billion tons generated in 2020 is equivalent to the combined weight of around 375 Great Pyramid of Giza, which is estimated to weigh around 6 million tons. Annual global waste includes, among others, around 14 million metric tonnes (Mt) of plastic waste that eventually enters our aquatic ecosystems, over 930 Mt of food that is lost or wasted at the consumer level, and more than 53



Mt of electrical and electronic waste, or e-waste.

The 53 Mt of e-waste recorded in 2020, which is predicted to increase by over 70 percent to reach 75 Mt in 2030, makes e-waste the world's fastest-growing domestic waste stream. Only around 18 percent of this e-waste is documented as being collected and recycled, the remaining 82 percent is undocumented and possibly ends up in landfills or being exported by high-income countries for unregulated and improper recycling in developing nations.

E-waste lying unattended in landfills poses a health threat to individuals and the natural habitat, as hazardous chemicals from the waste contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and could over time leach down into the soil, endangering plant life and polluting groundwater supplies. Also, with nearly 82 percent of e-waste not collected or recycled in 2020, the high-value, recoverable materials present in them such as gold, silver and copper end up in landfills or being incinerated.

Considering the impact of waste on other world crises such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, it is heartening, even if belatedly, that the UN General Assembly decided that, beginning from this year, the 30th of March will be marked annually as International Day of Zero Waste. The Day aims to raise awareness among the public on how the waste crisis is undermining the Earth's ability to sustain life in all forms.

Day of Zero Waste also draws focus on how zero-waste initiatives can foster sound waste management and minimize and prevent waste, protect environments, enhance food security, improve human health and well being, and help address various global crises. In addition, the Day seeks to encourage everyone to prevent and minimize waste, as well as promote a societal shift towards a circular and sustainable economy.

In Kuwait, a study conducted in 2020, by the Global E-waste Statistics Partnership (GESP), which is managed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), estimated that the country generated around 74,000 tonnes of e-waste, and that the electric and electronic equipment (EEE) placed on market (PoM) was 100,000 tonnes. On a per capita basis, the e-waste generated in Kuwait was 15.8 kilogram per inhabitant (kg/inh) and EEE put on market was 21.4kg/inh.

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# KIA prepares for travel rush over Eid holidays

More than 700,000 passengers transited Kuwait International Airport (KIA) on 7,800 flights since the start of Ramadan, revealed the Director General of the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Eng. Saleh Al-Fadaghi.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Ramadan Ghabga that was held by the Union of Kuwaiti Travel and Tourism Offices, Al-Fadaghi added that he expects around 220,000 passengers to travel on board 1,800 flights during the Eid Al-Fitr holiday that extends from 20 to 25 April 20 to 25.

Most of these flights are to short-distance destinations, including Dubai, Istanbul, Jeddah, Cairo and Doha.

Pointing out that the DGCA had implemented several measures to ensure smooth flow of passengers through KIA during the Eid holiday, Al-Fadaghi said that the most important step introduced was realigning the vacation schedule of employees and supervisors, so as to ensure that not more than 30 percent of total employees are on vacation at any one time. "We are also in the process of forming



a support team consisting of operations, engineering, security organization and

public relations departments to contribute to facilitating the movement of passengers and overcoming any problems that may occur suddenly," added Al-Fadaghi.

He further indicated that coordination meetings will be held after Eid Al-Fitr with concerned government agencies and ground service providers, to discuss all the negatives experienced during the holiday rush to avoid them in the upcoming summer season. He stressed that passenger traffic is expected to touch 13 million passengers during 2023.



## Indian Ambassador meets with Minister of Health

Indian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika called on the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad A. Al-Awadhi on 4 April and held cordial discussions on various issues of mutual interest between the two countries. At the onset of the meeting, Ambassador Swaika thanked the Minister for the excellent cooperation between the two countries during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He also highlighted greater opportunities for cooperation in the medical sector between the two countries, including through tie-ups between private hospitals in India and Kuwait, as well as making available high-quality Indian medicines in Kuwait, increasing medical tourism to India, and other issues pertaining to Indian doctors, paramedics and nurses in Kuwait.

## Domestic workers account for a quarter of expat workforce

Latest data from the Central Administration for Statistics show that the number of domestic workers in the country reached 753,000 at the end of 2022 and accounting for more than a quarter of the total expatriate workforce. The figures also show that female domestic workers who numbered 406,000, represented 54 percent of the total domestic workers in Kuwait.

Indians led the domestic workforce, accounting for 44.8 percent of the total domestic helpers, followed by the Philippines at 26.6 percent. Domestic workers from these two countries along with those from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka made up 94.9 percent of domestic workers in the country. Other countries sending workers to help with domestic work were Ethiopia (1.1%), Benin (0.6%), and Sudan (0.2%).

When the number of domestic workers is combined with expats working in public and the private sectors, Indians still came out on top with 835,000 workers, accounting for 29.9 percent of the total labor force, and around 35.6 percent of the total expatriate workforce.



Indians were followed in the total labor market by Egyptians in second spot with 483,000 workers and representing 17.8 percent of the total employment force; Kuwaitis came in third place with 443,000, or 15.9 percent of the total, followed by the Philippines in fourth place with 267,000 and Bangladesh is fifth spot with 241,000 workers.

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# UN agencies organize Ramadan Ghabga at WCSS



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

United Nations agencies in collaboration with the World Bank in Kuwait organized a Ramadan Ghabga at the Women's Cultural and Social Society (WCSS) on 2 April that was attended by several members of the diplomatic corps and academics, as well as many citizens and residents.

Representative of the World Health Organi-

zation in Kuwait, Dr. Asaad Hafeez, described the ghabga as a "great Kuwaiti custom that distinguishes it from other countries". He thanked the various United Nations agencies in Kuwait that had cooperated with the Women's Cultural and Social Society to arrange such an event for friends and partners during the holy month.

He praised the large attendance of heads of diplomatic missions and officials of embassies operating in the country, citizens, and residents, as this demonstrated the strength

of the relationship between the UN agencies, Kuwait, and its people.

Nisreen Rabian, the officer of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the State of Kuwait, said, "The blessed month of Ramadan in Kuwait has a special and unique touch in light of the benevolent humanitarian atmosphere that characterizes the country."

She added that the Ghabga was an opportunity for government partners and private and charitable sectors to consolidate

their relationship and communicate during these blessed days. The meanings and indications of their meetings reflect the authenticity and generosity of Kuwaiti social customs and traditions.

She extended her gratitude to everyone in charge of the Women's Social and Cultural Association for their cooperation with the United Nations organization in Kuwait to hold their first Ghabga, signaling the spirit of authentic Kuwaiti hospitality.



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# Moroccan Embassy, IWG organize cultural event



Embassy of Morocco in coordination with International Women's Group (IWG) in coordination with the Embassy of Morocco, held a cultural event titled 'Morocco Ramadan Night' on 2 April at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, in the presence of Honorary President of IWG, Sheikha Hanouf Bader Mohammed Al Sabah and attended by IWG members and special invitees.

Addressing the gathering, President of IWG, Ghada Shawky, congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the people of Kuwait on the occasion of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

She also expressed her gratitude to Ambassador of Morocco H.E. Ali Benaissa, and his spouse Aicha Al Fasi for organizing the Moroccan cultural event during the blessed month of Ramadan, adding that the event highlighted a part of Morocco's rich cultural

heritage that displayed the entwining of African, Arab and European heritages and cultures.

In his welcome speech on the occasion, Ambassador Benaissa extended sincere thanks and appreciation to the president and



members of the Executive Board of the IWG for their effective contribution to organizing the celebration.

He also extended his congratulations on the occasion of the blessed month of

Ramadan to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and to the Crown Prince, His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, wishing them continued health and wellness, and to the brotherly Kuwaiti people further progress and prosperity.

Ambassador Benaissa then gave an overview of the investment and export brand launched by Morocco under the name 'Morocco Now', through which Morocco aims to provide investors with a new competitive and carbon-free investment platform, and to highlight the Kingdom's position as a first-class industrial and export platform, in order to attract more foreign investment.

He went on to indicate that it was not possible to talk about the economic achievements in Morocco without talking about the historical and cultural framework in which this was achieved. The ambassador pointed out that Morocco is a multicultural

country in its national, linguistic and cultural components, and is characterized by an inherited tradition passed down from generation to generation. He added that culture is alive and vibrating in simple everyday gestures, in parties, in social and religious rituals or simply in daily habits.

During the event, a short film about Morocco was shown, highlighting the various economic, historical and cultural aspects of Morocco, followed by wonderful rendition of Moroccan folklore music and songs.

The event also included a visual display of traditional Moroccan costumes that were distinguished by their originality. Some participants also had the opportunity to try on the Moroccan caftan and take photos.

At the end of the special Ramadan Ghabga, raffle draws were held with prizes from the Embassy of Morocco, two gourmet products baskets from Balsamic, Tajin restaurant, and El Sehr Eldemeshky beauty salon.

# Indian Ambassador attends Iftar reception



Prominent Indian businessman, Saulat Ali Khan held an Iftar reception in honor of Indian Ambassador H.E. Adarsh Swaika. Several Indian businessmen and professionals attended the gathering to

break the fast together at the newly opened Mughal Mahal restaurant in Salmiya called Exotica.

Ambassador Swaika expressed his pleasure to join members of the Indian

community in breaking their fast and also experiencing the rich Ramadan traditions in Kuwait. Ambassador of Armenia H E Sarmen Baghdasarian also attended the reception

Mr S A Khan has spent more than 47

years in Kuwait and is a well accomplished businessman. He has also published a coffee table book *Destiny's Destinations* that documents his life in Kuwait and India and his rich and varied experiences.



## LuLu Hypermarket marks Autism Day, supports autistic individuals

LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait hosted an event to mark World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April at the hypermarket's Al-Qurain outlet, to raise awareness about autism and lend support to autistic individuals and their families.

The event featured a range of activities, including kids games and interactive workshops designed specifically for children with autism. In addition, several products and services were showcased that cater to the unique needs of individuals with autism.

In a statement on the occasion, LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait said it is committed to social responsibility and community engagement, and

recognizes the importance of creating a society that is supportive and inclusive of individuals with autism. By hosting the Autism Awareness Day, LuLu Hypermarket aims to promote greater understanding of autism, and to encourage the public to support those with autism.

The event was well-received by the community, with many attendees expressing their gratitude to the hypermarket for the opportunity to learn more about autism and to connect with others in the autistic community. LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait also said it plans to continue its efforts to support individuals with autism and their families in the future.

## PUMC to introduce Pay for Use washrooms at car parks

State Property Department of the Ministry of Finance has approved the licensing of smart bathrooms at ground-level car-parking facilities managed by the Public Utilities Management Company (PUMC), in accordance with applicable controls, regulations, and systems.

Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance for State Property and Legal Affairs, Abd al-Rahman al-Khamis, forwarded the PUMC request to Kuwait Municipality for introducing smart bathrooms within the limits of multi-storey and ground-level car parks. However, the municipality is understood to have turned down the request for such facilities at multi-storey car parks due to lack of contractual cover with the company, while giving the go-ahead for smart bathrooms at ground-level car parking venues.

It is noteworthy that the CEO of the Public Utilities Management Company, Eng. Saleh Al-Othman sent a letter to the head of the Municipal Council regarding licensing smart



bathrooms within the limits of the multi-storey and surface car parks, in line with the company's keenness to develop the services provided to the public and visitors to the multiple and surface car parks for a nominal fee for use. He added that the smart bathrooms would be constructed, equipped, and periodically maintained and cleaned by PUMC based on modern international foundations and standards.



# Payments through Apple Pay to incur costs to merchants

Commercial banks in the country are reportedly looking at increasing the commission they charge merchants for transactions made through Point of Sale (PoS) devices and to apply new commissions on purchases made through the 'KNET card'. While nothing concrete has emerged from these discussions, the fact that increase of merchant commissions is being contemplated could eventually lead to increase in price of products for customers, as most merchants will add the increase in commission to the price of products they sell to consumers.

Informed sources quoting banking sources

pointed out that with the increased use of new digital payment technologies in the local market, such as 'Apple Pay' and 'Samsung Pay' services, banks are facing an additional operational cost, as these companies impose fees on purchase payments made through their service, even if the process is carried out with a 'KNET' card. So far this additional charge is being borne by the banks. The additional fee burden is apparently what prompted discussions on increasing charges on PoS machine transactions and on transactions made through credit cards and new payment services of Apple and Samsung that are facilitated by KNET cards.



The fee collected for each transaction by Apple and others ranges between 0.05 and 0.15 percent; this is in addition to the operational fees charged by credit-card vendors such as Visa and MasterCard, which further raises the

fee borne by banks. To clarify, banks obtain from merchants a rental value for the PoS devices that they use in their sales operations, which are fixed amounts whose value varies from one merchant to another, and their average usually ranges between 7 to 20 dinars per month.

As for commissions, there are two types. The first is related to purchases through credit cards such as Visa or MasterCard, where the percentage reaches 3 percent, while this percentage increases if the payment process is made to the merchant outside Kuwait, and through KNET cards that facilitate Apple and Samsung Pay.

## CPA deplores attempts to stop selling to expats

A decision by some cooperative societies to prevent expatriates from purchasing specific discounted products during the holy month of Ramadan is illegal, said Mishaal Al-Manea, head of Kuwait's Consumer Protection Association (CPA).

He was speaking following reports that some coops prevented expatriates from entering their premises and justified their action by stating that a large number of expatriates rushed in to buy goods offered at discounted rates during Ramadan, and thereby denying the

opportunity for others to buy these products.

Commenting on these decisions, Al-Manea explained that there is absolutely no justification for the associations' refusal to sell goods to consumers, whether citizens or residents, indicating that the Consumer Protection Law punishes these decisions.

He further pointed out that cooperative societies are establishments that have a commercial license from the Ministry of Commerce and the marketing laws

apply to them just like it applies to other similar establishments.

He added, "We have informed the Ministry of Commerce and the concerned authorities of the need to intervene to prevent such ill-conceived and offensive decisions."



Meanwhile, an official at the National Guard Cooperative Society denied what is being circulated on social media about preventing sales to non-Kuwaiti consumers, stressing that the National Guard Society welcomes all segments of Kuwaiti society.

## Transfer money and multiply your chances of winning

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Al Muzaini Exchange Company, the number one money exchange in Kuwait since 1942 recently announced its "Mega Campaign 2023". Participants of the campaign must simply transfer money through Al Muzaini either by visiting any of Al Muzaini's branches and self-service kiosks, transferring online through the website and by using the Al Muzaini application. Utilizing services such as Foreign Currency Exchange, Western Union, Bill Payments, Visa Direct and Bank-to-Bank transfers for the purpose of transferring money shall make customers eligible to win with Al Muzaini.

The exciting Mega prize of the campaign is a BMW X3 2023.

The campaign lasts from March 23, 2023 to June 11, 2023

There shall be four daily winners winning cash prizes of \$100 each day until the end of the campaign, 2 weekly winners winning cash prizes of \$1000 every week until the end of the campaign and a few special campaign winners.



There shall be a special Eidayah conducted for those customers that transfer using Al Muzaini from March 23, 2023 to April 17, 2023 and the winner shall receive \$10,000.

One can multiply their chances of winning by using the Al Muzaini App for the purpose of transfers. Previous winners have the opportunity to win again during the campaign period. So, the more the transfers, the more the chances of winning big.

Mr. Hugh Fernandes, the General Manager of Al Muzaini said "We are extremely excited to bring forth our Mega Campaign and wish to reward our customers for performing transactions with us and for giving us the chance to serve them. There are lots of prizes to be won and the campaign spans the length of almost three months. This campaign is our grandest one yet and it also aims at reaching out to new customers and integrating them into our huge family and providing them with the best services to ensure that they have the best experience when it comes to the field of financial services. We will be immensely happy to see you winning big with the Al Muzaini Mega Campaign."

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## Thought “ for the week

Those who don't believe in  
magic will never find it.

– Roald Dahl

## Al-Durra to recruit Sri Lankan domestic workers



Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Durra Manpower Company, Muhammad Al-Olayan, said the company, which was established by the government to handle manpower requirements, has launched a campaign to recruit domestic workers from Sri Lanka, in what he called a breakthrough in the country's labor market.

He revealed that the company had already started receiving applications as of last week through the company's website. The cost of recruiting a Sri Lankan worker has been fixed at KD650, including the KD42 in insurance that was approved by the Sri Lankan government. This price, said Al-Olayan, is lower than that stipulated by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

He pointed out that this step would put an end to human trafficking and restore confidence in Kuwait's bright image with regard to human rights. He indicated the company is continuing to open new countries to hire

domestic workers and bring stability to the local market, while playing a leading role in providing employment and eliminating the black market.

He indicated the company has contracted with one of the leading Sri Lankan companies specialized in manpower recruitment to recruit workers who are compatible with the nature and privacy required by Kuwaiti society.

For his part, Vice-Chairman and General Manager of Al-Durra company, Muhammad Al-Zoubi, said in a statement that the door for hiring Sri Lankan domestic workers had opened and that all technical facilities had been incorporated to ensure a smooth and easy hiring process. He added that employees of the company had been fully trained to deal with all contractual and technical procedures needed to hire workers from Sri Lanka.

He explained that the maximum period for recruiting a male or female worker from Sri Lanka would be around a month, which could be reduced in the coming months. Pointing out that the cost of travel is not included in the recruitment of Sri Lankan workers, he indicated that the company is ready to offer special reduced prices on travel tickets in cooperation and coordination with approved airlines and travel agencies in Kuwait.

Stressing that the labor recruitment campaign is carried out under the auspices and coordination of Al-Durra Company, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kuwait Embassy in Colombo, he thanked all those involved at the Ministry and the embassy, as well as all government agencies and Kuwait Airways for facilitating and making the campaign a success.

## Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait Hosts Successful Festive Girgian Celebration



Lulu Kuwait, one of the leading hypermarket chains in the country, celebrated Girgian as part of the Ramadan festivities at its Qurain, egaila and jahra outlets on 5th march. The event was attended by more than 30 kids who participated in various traditional programs and enjoyed a variety of Girgian-related sweets and chocolates.

Girgian is a traditional Kuwaiti celebration that takes place during the middle of Ramadan, and is a time when children dress up in traditional costumes, sing songs and visit their neighbors to receive sweets and other treats. Lulu Kuwait's Girgian celebration was aimed at keeping this tradition alive and providing a fun-filled experience for children during the holy month of Ramadan.

The event was organized with great care and attention to detail, with special traditional Girgian programs that were designed to engage and entertain the kids. The children were given traditional costumes to wear, and they had a blast singing songs and performing traditional dances. In addition, they were also treated to a variety of sweet treats, including Girgian-related sweets, chocolates, and other goodies that were specially prepared for the occasion. This event is a great opportunity to keep the

traditional values of our culture alive and to provide a fun-filled experience for the kids during Ramadan," said, Director of Lulu Hypermarket, Kuwait.

Lulu Kuwait has always been committed to promoting the cultural values of Kuwait and the Middle East, and this Girgian celebration is just one example of their commitment. The event was a huge success and was greatly appreciated by the children and their parents, who expressed their gratitude to Lulu Kuwait for organizing such a wonderful event.



### RECIPE

## Gluten-Free Stuffed Paratha



Bajra or pearl millet is a gluten-free energy-packed grain that is rich in Biron and insoluble fiber that aids digestion and helps lower weight, cholesterol and blood sugar. The paratha or bread when stuffed with split and hulled mung beans (yellow moong dal) and spinach provides a healthy, nutritious and enjoyable meal.

**Total time :** 30 to 40 minutes

**Serving :** 5

#### Ingredients:

##### For the paratha:

- 1,1/2 cup pearl millet flour
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp clarified butter (ghee)
- Hot water to make dough
- For the stuffing :
- 1 cup soaked yellow moong dal
- 1 cup spinach washed and finely chopped
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- Pinch of asafoetida
- 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste
- 2 green chillies finely chopped
- Salt to taste
- 1/4 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp masala powder
- Butter to apply on paratha



Chef Chhaya Thakker

#### Instructions:

##### For paratha:

- Add the millet flour, salt and ghee to a mixing bowl
- Add enough warm water slowly and mix with a wooden spoon
- Knead the dough with your hand to make a soft smooth dough
- Divide the kneaded dough into small equal sized balls
- Flatten the dough ball between the palms, dust with a little flour, and roll out into a medium size circle.
- Repeat the process with the remaining dough balls

##### For stuffing

- Heat oil in a deep pan, add cumin, chopped chili, ginger-garlic paste, asafoetida and saute for a minute
- Drain soaked dal and add to the pan
- Saute on medium heat for another minute
- Add chopped spinach, salt, turmeric, masala mix and stir well
- Cover with lid and let cook for 5 minutes on low heat
- Turn off the flame and allow the flavors to settle for another 5 minutes
- Set aside to cool

##### For stuffed paratha:

- Add 1 tbsp stuffing to a rolled paratha and spread it evenly
- Place another paratha on top of the spread stuffing and close the edges of the two parathas by pressing along the edges
- Heat a tawa/griddle on low heat
- Place the stuffed paratha on the hot tawa and cook for a few seconds
- Flip the paratha and let it cook on the other side for a minute
- Repeat with the rest of the parathas and stuffing
- Apply butter on the stuffed paratha and serve with pickle or dip of choice

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](mailto:editortimeskuwait@gmail.com)



# Students cheat, teachers set example

Recent revelations that teachers and heads of department of public schools who appeared for tests conducted recently by the Ministry of Education, to select applicants for the prestigious and higher remunerative supervisory and administrative posts, cheated in their exams, was shocking beyond belief. A ministry source said the 'teachers' were reportedly caught red-

handed while using 'modern cheating methods' to answer the online tests.

News of the teachers caught cheating comes close on the heels of an ongoing case where more than 40,000 secondary school students were found involved in a cheating network run by school officials and ministry of education staff. Following an extensive investigation by the ministries of education and interior, 26 teachers and ministry officials were implicated for leaking the exam papers and sharing it through a cheating network that allegedly earned the perpetrators more than KD3 million.

Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, Osama Al-Sultan, is said to have issued orders that the teachers and department heads who were apprehended for cheating in their tests should be given a 'zero' score on their papers and they should be debarred from applying for educational positions for a period of three years.

The question that many are asking is, was the decision by the acting-undersecretary an adequate and appropriate punishment for the offenders? Is this response the only punitive and detractory measure that the ministry can implement, against what can be termed as an offense that has implications on the future generations?

A punishment depriving the right to promotion for a period of three years



is certainly not a sufficient deterrent to others who might be tempted to use the same, or better improvised 'modern cheating methods' in future tests. Sources at the ministry also added that those apprehended were not named and official reports were not filed against them, so as not to 'embarrass' and dishonor them in public.

Really? How do you embarrass someone who clearly has no shame in cheating, and thereby depriving the promotion to a more qualified candidate? How do you dishonor someone who does not honor the noble profession of 'teaching', which has entrusted them to instill in young minds the principles, values and morals that will guide them in future? The silence to these questions from the concerned authorities is deafening and is indeed embarrassing.



## Azerbaijan ambassador discusses cooperation with media

Ambassador of Azerbaijan H.E. Emil Karimov met with The Times Kuwait Managing Editor Reaven D'Souza on his visit to the embassy, and discussed various issues, including future cooperation in the field of media.

## Kuwaiti photographer wins Sheikh Saud award



The Kuwaiti photographer Mohammad Al-Kouh has won Sheikh Saud Al-Thani award for photography in Qatar for his photos of the Kuwaiti island Failaka.

He told KUNA that the award is granted to photographers who shoot in a narrative manner. He added that his photos document all houses and buildings on the island.



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# Religious harmony takes center stage at Camp Arifjan's Iftar

Camp Arifjan, the US Army installation in Kuwait held a special Iftar, (breaking the fast) event for Kuwaiti media representatives, with hundreds of soldiers and camp employees in attendance. The occasion highlighted the beauty of religious tolerance and harmony between what are known as 'heavenly religions'.

Following a religious sermon by a preacher from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and minutes before the call to prayer, a large number of soldiers, workers, and others performed ablution in preparation for the Maghrib prayer. They then ate a few dates and entered the mosque to pray Maghrib, only after which they began eating the Iftar meal. One soldier relayed the 'wonderful feeling' he experienced when he witnessed the Muslims in their prayers. He talked about how it makes him feel comfortable, safe, and peaceful.

Colonel Martin Wolgemut, the area support commander and the general supervisor of operations at Camp Buehring and Arifjan said there were around 100 Muslim American soldiers among the ranks of the American forces stationed in Camp Arifjan. He pointed out that the US Army was keen to host preachers from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs during the month of Ramadan to present sermons and share iftar with Muslim soldiers. He added that several Muslim civilians also work at the camp and mentioned that a new prayer tent was added this year to enable the Muslims, whether military or civilian, to perform their five daily prayers.

Regarding the change witnessed in the US army and possibility of shedding Islamophobia, Col. Wolgemut stressed, "Yes, there is change and there has been cooperation with preachers from Kuwait to introduce soldiers to the teachings of Islam." Meanwhile, the English preacher at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Muhammad al-Naqwi, mentioned that he visited the Arifjan camp many times, by coordinating with the Ministries of Endowments and Defense, to deliver speeches and lectures that would benefit Muslims and non-Muslims.



In a statement to reporters before the Iftar ceremony, he pointed out that these visits always benefit the Muslims as well as the American soldiers who work in Camp Arifjan. "Some visits were interspersed with questions and answers from many non-Muslims and soldiers in the US army." He said that their questions were useful, "especially since they have things they do not understand or something they do not know about, and the answers are based on reality from the Qur'an and Sunnah, and then they get acquainted with the basics of the Islamic religion."

For his part, Benjamin Heinz, the chaplain of Camp Arifjan said, "We are working closely together to promote interfaith dialogue in our

camp. We have Muslims, Christians, and Jews among our forces." He mentioned that the Muslim prayer tent holds the five daily prayers and Friday prayers, and every Friday, more than 25 soldiers participate in performing prayers. He also noted that the celebration of Ramadan this year coincided with the celebrations of other religious holidays such as the Christian Easter Sunday, the day of Resurrection.

He praised the freedom of belief within the US army, stating that the mission of all leaders is to provide religious freedom for every person. He added that Ramadan was an occasion to spread the teachings of the Islamic religion, educate soldiers about the rituals of their religion, and learn about the month of

Ramadan. Shaul Daniel, a Jewish rabbi from the US Army also attended the breakfast banquet in the camp to advise and guide the camp's Jewish soldiers. He praised the coexistence between all religions in the camp, pointing out that there are about 30 Jewish soldiers in the Buehring and Arifjan camps.

He added, "I studied various religions, and found similarities between the Islamic and the Jewish religions, for instance, when it comes to halal eating, marriage, death, and washing the dead. We have one father, the Prophet Abraham, and I invite everyone to love each other," he said, while noting that Kuwait is known for its religious tolerance and accepts all religions.



## LuLu Hypermarket and Namma Charity partner to provide free Iftar meals

LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait and Namma Charity have partnered to provide free Iftar meal kits to indigent people all over Kuwait during the entire period of Ramadan.

The partnership between LuLu Hypermarket and Namma Charity is a testament to their commitment to give back to the community and help those in need during the holy month of Ramadan. The initiative is expected to

support a number of families in Kuwait by providing them with a source of relief during Ramadan.

Speaking on the partnership, a spokesperson for LuLu Hypermarket said, "We are proud to partner with Namma Charity to provide free Iftar meal kits to those in need throughout Kuwait. Our aim is to ensure that families can break their fast with dignity and ease, and we

hope that our initiative will make a significant impact on their lives."

Meanwhile, a representative from Namma Charity said, "We are grateful for the support of LuLu Hypermarket, and we are committed to ensuring that the Iftar meal kits reach those who are in the greatest need across Kuwait. We believe that this partnership will make a significant difference in the lives of the families

that we support." The partnership between LuLu Hypermarket and Namma Charity is an excellent example of how the private sector can work with non-profit organizations to make a positive impact in the community. The initiative is expected to make a significant difference in the lives of the families that it supports, and is a testament to the commitment of both organizations to their social responsibility.



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# WHO committed to supporting health in Kuwait, region

Annual World Health Day celebrated on 7 April, this year also commemorates the 75th anniversary of the World Health Organization (WHO), which was established on 7 April, 1948. Seventy-five years ago, in the aftermath of World War II, the deadliest and most destructive war in human history, the Constitution of the World Health Organization came into force: a treaty between the nations of the world, who recognized that health was not only a fundamental human right, but also fundamental to peace and security.

Over the past seven and a half decades, there has been extraordinary progress in protecting people from diseases and destruction, including smallpox eradication, reducing the incidence of polio by 99 percent, saving millions of lives through childhood immunization, declines in maternal mortality and improving health



and well-being for millions more.

Speaking on the occasion, the WHO Representative to the State of Kuwait, Dr. Assad Hafeez, said "The WHO is proud to celebrate its longstanding collaboration with the Ministry of Health in Kuwait. This collaboration is a shining example of how partnerships can drive progress in public



health. We are proud to celebrate this partnership on World Health Day and look forward to continuing our work together to improve the health and well-being of the people of Kuwait."

In Kuwait over the years, this partnership has resulted in many successful initiatives and programs, including the establishment

of the WHO Kuwait Country Office which further strengthened the collaboration between the organization and the Ministry of Health, enabling them to work together more effectively to improve health outcomes in Kuwait.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role of public health and the need for coordinated action at all levels. WHO Kuwait and the Ministry of Health remain committed to working together to address health challenges the country may face and further enhance the sustainable development goals in Kuwait health and well-being and climate action.

On this day, WHO Kuwait and the Ministry of Health reaffirm their commitment to working together to improve the health and well-being for everyone in Kuwait. Together we can build a healthier and more resilient future for all, said Dr. Hafeez.

## Unbridled consumption and e-waste challenge

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The high per capita e-waste in Kuwait places the country among the top e-waste generators in the region. Given this less than commendable distinction, it is interesting that young people in Kuwait are taking the lead in recycling initiatives. Enviroserve Kuwait, a startup by young nationals and funded by the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises, has set out to reduce the e-waste problem in the country, as well as support local industries to decrease their waste footprint, by opening what is the country's first e-waste recycling facility.

With their public e-waste collection bins located at key locations, Enviroserve aims to reduce the irresponsible dumping of e-waste in garbage. People can also schedule the pickup of recyclable items by contacting the company directly. Among the e-waste they pick up are large equipment such as refrigerators, TVs and washing machines, as well as smaller appliances, including microwaves, blenders, computers, printers, mobile phones, tablets and lighting equipment.

A lack of awareness among the public about e-waste and its proper use and disposal has hampered e-waste management in Kuwait. The need to increase awareness was highlighted by a recent survey among citizens and residents in the country. The study revealed that, while 33 percent of people were keen to sort their electronic waste, only 10 percent were aware of appropriate ways to dispose of e-waste such as used mobile phones, or computers.

The study, conducted by the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Environmental Training at Kuwait Environmental Protection Society, also showed that nearly 40 percent of respondents did periodic sorting of e-waste at home and donated electronic items they did not need; 9.6 percent said that they just threw away the items they did not need; and less than one percent said they kept the unused items at home.

More interestingly, when asked about their knowledge of the fate of waste in Kuwait, the most-selected answer among respondents was, "I do not know". The low level of awareness among consumers about the e-waste they generate, points to a potential increase in unbridled consumption and disposal of EEE in future. The survey points to the need to increase public awareness, and to start at a young age by conducting seminars and awareness programs in schools.

This year, on the first International Day of Zero Waste, the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP-ROWA) in collaboration with the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) published the '2050 Electronic and Electrical Waste Outlook in West Asia'. The outlook provides projections of e-waste generation and challenges of managing e-waste in the economically diverse West Asia region, which encompasses Kuwait, and the other five Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, as well as Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.

The report finds that an estimated 1.5 Mt of e-waste was generated in the West Asia region in 2020, and that, without access to proper management, nearly 99.9 percent of this waste ended up in landfills causing severe health and environmental impacts. The study also warned that in a 'Business as Usual' scenario, the e-waste generated in the region over the next 30 years could more than double to between 3.1-3.9 Mt by 2050.

The UN report pointed out that rather than being sent to landfills, e-waste could be managed in an environmentally sound manner, and should be treated as a valuable resource that can be utilized for economic growth of the country. Proper e-waste management also creates new jobs and investment opportunities, and contributes to

achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially SDG 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and SDG 12 on ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The UN report puts forward several recommendations and opportunities for transitioning from a linear economy toward a circular economy. In a linear economy, which is the traditional economic model, raw materials are extracted, processed and transformed into products that consumers use until discarding them as waste, with no concern for their ecological footprint and consequences.

In contrast, a circular economy manages e-waste in an environmentally sound manner and utilizes e-waste as a source for economic, social, and environmental benefits. It reduces material use, redesigns materials, products, and services to be less resource intensive, and recaptures 'waste' as a resource to manufacture new materials and products. A transition toward a circular economy will reduce both the amount of EEE placed on the market, as well as e-waste generation.

The report, which assesses the future of e-waste management in the region up until 2050, projects two contrasting scenarios — Business as Usual (BaU), and Circular Economy (CE). Under the BaU scenario both the amount of EEE placed on market (POM) and e-waste generation in the region will more than double by 2050. In this scenario, EEE POM increases from 2.2 Mt in 2020 to reach a potential high of 7.5 Mt in the year 2050, while the e-waste generated increases from 1.5 Mt in 2020 to around 3.9 Mt in 2050.

Under the alternate CE scenario, products become more durable, are shared and reused more, and are managed in an environmentally sound manner when becoming e-waste, while the population still has access to the same functionality that EEE can offer under the BaU scenario. The CE scenario could have a 33 percent decrease in EEE POM as compared to the BaU scenario, and also have a 14 percent decrease in e-waste generated as compared to BaU by 2050.

The report notes that, to realize the benefits of the CE scenario, a considerable effort must be made in capital investments to set up e-waste management infrastructure, develop the right legislation, and raise consumer awareness of the issue across the entire West Asia region. Strong long-term binding targets, aiming to reach 100 percent e-waste collection rates by 2050 (or preferably earlier), are the only way to slow down and reverse the growth of the unmanaged e-waste.

Consumers, producers and the authorities have a key role in the sustainable and environmentally sound management of e-waste. Enhancing collection systems, increasing reuse and recycling facilities for e-waste, producing electrical and electronic equipment that have longer lifespans, and enhancing efforts to raise awareness among consumers in the region are all vital in addressing the e-waste challenge.

The UN report will hopefully inspire policymakers, the private sector, and other stakeholders in Kuwait and the region to take appropriate measures to manage their e-waste in an environmentally sound manner, thereby protecting the people and the environment from adverse impacts of e-waste, and ensuring the sustainable development of the country and region.

Unlike other challenges facing Kuwait that need intervention by the government or parliament, e-waste is one problem that we can do something about and help mitigate at the individual level. So let us all resolve to be prudent in our consumption patterns and to reduce, reuse and recycle our electrical and electronic equipment. Our children and future generations will thank us for this foresight.

## IRU raises premium for vehicle insurance

Supreme Committee of the Insurance Regulatory Unit (IRU) has issued a decision to regulate the issuance of a civil liability insurance policy arising from traffic accidents (compulsory vehicle insurance policy), whereby the qualified insurance company and the contracting broker are obligated to issue the unified insurance policy. According to the decision, the value of the basic insurance premium under the unified insurance policy for private vehicles of individuals will amount to KD32 annually, in addition to an amount of KD2 for each passenger, and KD2 as the value of supervision and control fees.

The qualified insurance company will not accept payment of the value of the unified insurance policy from the insured (participant) in cash, and collection of the value is limited to electronic payment methods, with certain exceptions. According to the decision, the IRU will review the price tariff periodically — at least once every fiscal year — or whenever the market needs it, in accordance with the actuarial principles in force in this regard. The regulatory authority will also establish an approved list of insurance companies eligible to issue the unified insurance policy, and their qualifications will be reviewed periodically or when any regulatory decisions are issued.

The qualified insurance company must undertake not to accept granting or collecting a commission for the issuance or marketing of the standardized insurance policy by the broker in excess of 10 percent of the value of the basic insurance premium of the unified insurance policy. It is also not permissible to amend the unified insurance policy form or add any appendices to it except if it is for the benefit of the insured or the beneficiary.

Subject to the international agreements ratified by Kuwait, regarding issuing insurance policy to vehicles coming into Kuwait through its land borders, the IRU may authorize one or more Kuwaiti insurance companies from a list of approved companies to issue the unified insurance policy for vehicles entering Kuwait according to a price tariff mentioned in an Appendix to the Unified Insurance Policy. The decision also mentions that the period of insurance coverage for this policy does not exceed one year.

The decision also notes that all insurance policies and their appendices issued prior to the implementation of this decision shall remain valid, including the rights, obligations and guarantees they contain, and the companies issuing these policies shall continue the administrative and technical work related to them. Also, only qualified insurance companies and contracted brokers are allowed to issue the unified insurance policy through the paper track.





# Foreign Affairs highlights country's Ramadan culture

Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Asian Affairs, Ambassador Samih Johar Hayat, held a Ramadan Ghabga in the presence of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, which was attended by heads of diplomatic missions of Asian countries, as well as from several European and African countries.

Ambassador Hayat confirmed that the purpose of holding the Ghabga was to acquaint the ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps of Asian countries to Kuwait's cultural traditions and customs.

For his part, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador of Tajikistan, Dr. Zubaidullah Zubaidov, expressed his thanks to Ambassador Hayat for the invitation, which he said was a happy occasion to meet the Deputy Foreign



Minister, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, and the ambassadors of the Asian group, during the holy month.

Ambassador Zubaidov extended his warmest congratulations on the occasion of the holy month to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, the government and the Kuwaiti people, wishing Kuwait more progress and prosperity.

He pointed out that Kuwait, which he described as a country of giving and coexistence, portrays to the international community the best images of coexistence between religions and sects. He added that the Ramadan Ghabga hosted by Ambassador Hayat and his wife, was yet another evidence of this coexistence and Kuwaiti generosity.

## Poor diet, fast foods behind rise in obesity

Record levels of obese people in Kuwait is the result of their diet and appetite for fast foods, said Chairman of the Cancer Awareness National Campaign (CAN), Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh.

Highlighting the dangerous rise in rates of obesity that lead to an increase in chronic diseases, Dr. Al-Saleh revealed that Kuwait records high rates of stomach stapling operations, compared to countries in the world. More than five thousand stomach stapling operations are performed each year, and in a country with a population of less than five million people this is an abnormally high number, said the doctor.

Pointing out that obesity is one of the most important factors that increase the risk of cancer, especially breast cancer and colorectal cancer, Dr. Al-Saleh indicated that luckily there is now an



increased awareness on the dangers of obesity among citizens and residents. He added that the holy month is an opportunity to enter the 'Lower Your Weight during Ramadan' program, to fight obesity, gain health, and avoid risks of chronic disease.

## Kuwait ICT spending to surpass \$5 billion in 2023

Spending on information and communication technologies (ICT) in Kuwait is set to reach \$5.40 billion in 2023 and \$5.71 billion by 2026, according to International Data Corporation (IDC), a leading global provider of market information and advisory services on ICT. In its forecasts on ICT spending for the region in the years ahead, IDC said it expects telecommunications services spending in Kuwait to increase, with IT spending set to grow from \$2.04 billion in 2023 to \$2.21 billion in 2026. The data corresponds to the Kuwait Vision 2035, which is committed to strengthening the digital ecosystem and transforming the country's digital infrastructure.

"To navigate disruption to their services and products, organizations in Kuwait will need to invest in strengthening their digital resiliency so they are better positioned to succeed in new market environments as conditions continue to change," said Jyoti Lalchandani, IDC's group vice president and regional managing director for the Middle East, Turkey and Africa region.

"Implementation of further digitalization in critical areas such as customer experience, operations, and financial management — together with a more rapid shift to a 'digital business' approach — will be key to separating the thrivers from the survivors. To this end, we



expect to see digital transformation spending as a share of overall IT spending continue to grow," he added.

In a digital-first economy, where an enterprise's competitiveness is tied to its digital business model, leaders will avoid wholesale cutbacks in tech. Further, new tactics will be employed as tech leaders seek to realize maximum business value from their tech investments. In Kuwait, spending on Enterprise IT is expected to reach \$0.95 billion and consumer spending to reach \$1.97 billion in 2023.

## Over 2,500 criminal cases filed in first-quarter

Latest statistics from the Ministry of justice reveals that more than 8,000 new cases were received by the Public Prosecution Office in the first quarter of this year, of which more than a quarter were related to criminal cases. The least number of cases filed were with regard to media misdemeanors.

Justice Ministry figures for the period from 1 January to 30 March of this year show

that there were 2,615 criminal cases, 1,175 trade misdemeanor cases, and 641 check misdemeanor cases filed with the Public Prosecution.

The number of environmental infractions filed were 1,873, while those related to information technology amounted to 1035 cases. In addition, there were 397 drug addiction cases and 326 juvenile misdemeanors registered in the first quarter of the year. In the meantime, only four cases were initiated for media misdemeanors.

The small number of misdemeanor cases filed against the press could be an indication of improving media freedom in the country, and a greater willingness to accept the viewpoint of others. We would like to believe this is so.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



# Graubünden, a canton brimming with more than nature



By Nourah Khan  
Exclusive to  
The Times Kuwait

the wealthy vacation, and Davos, where world leaders and decision-makers gather for their annual World Economic Forum, are in Graubünden.

Despite its fame and its bountiful natural beauty, this region is not familiar to many people in Gulf countries. When visiting Switzerland, most of us prefer to visit the usual cities of Geneva, Zurich, Lucerne and Interlaken. However, a visit to Switzerland without touring Graubünden is a missed opportunity to experience the Swiss Alpine environment in its finest elements that combine ancient history and alluring natural beauty.

Graubünden is located near the Alps, so visitors can enjoy a lot of outdoor activities or participate in a variety of winter sports as there are several ski runs, outdoor ice rinks and ski jumping.

Graubünden, the largest of 26 cantons, or federated states, that make up the Swiss Confederation, is arguably the most beautiful region in Switzerland. Located in eastern Switzerland, Graubünden is known for its dramatic Alpine scenery, charming old towns and villages, as well as exciting winter sports. Both, St. Moritz, the upscale resort town where

Incidentally, the region was also host to the Winter Olympics in 1928 and 1948. Forests cover a fifth of the region's total area and consists of mountains, valleys, rivers and lakes that offer rejuvenating nature-hiking trips

Graubünden is home to the longest toboggan run in the whole of Switzerland, with the length of this run being more than three kilometers. The region also encompasses the resort village of Vals, and the Vals Valley, which is one of the main areas for enjoying thermal baths and the source of the sparkling Vals water. The valley also has Bronze Age archaeological finds that attest to human habitation in the area since ancient times. In addition, Graubünden contains a wide range of hotels, hotel apartments and Michelin-starred restaurants, which makes it an ideal destination for us as GCC nationals.

Earlier I had seen images of the railway bridge known as Landwasser Viaduct as a background image on computer screens, as well as in images posted by travelers on their social media accounts. This was one reason why I wanted to visit the city of Davos in the Graubünden region, and I made the city my first stop on my trip to Switzerland last year.

Others may seek to see and enjoy scenes of waterfalls and blue lakes, and the picturesque nature, which undoubtedly abounds everywhere in Switzerland, but as a person interested in history and heritage, the Landwasser Viaduct was on my list of priorities when visiting Switzerland. It is a tall, curved single-track railway viaduct

in Switzerland, which is home to both the Glacier Express and Bernina Express. Railway fans such as me can enjoy a number of different experiences and trips ranging from UNESCO World Heritage sites, steam trains, luxury Pullman cars and scenic open carriages, and luxury dining cars, during a trip to Switzerland and Graubünden.

As mentioned earlier, Davos is also located in Graubünden. The city is one of the most famous Swiss cities as the world's rich and powerful gather here for their annual confab, the World Economic Forum. The city is also considered one of the most famous tourist cities in Switzerland, due to the presence of winter resorts for lovers of winter sports.

There are many other tourist places in Graubünden with shopping venues lined with international brands, many restaurants and cafes, and some of the best entertainment and leisure areas in Switzerland. The closest major city to Graubünden is Zurich, with several flights and trains running directly to and from Zurich. Chur is the capital of Graubünden and also its largest city.

I arrived in Davos by train from Zurich, at the kind invitation of the Graubünden Tourist Board. The weather was very cold, contrary to my expectations. My trip was in August, and I was bringing summer clothes with me, but the temperature reached 10 degrees! I had to buy winter clothes from there.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



with six arches made of limestone that spans the Landwasser River in Graubünden, Switzerland, and is considered one of the highest bridges in the Alps. The bridge leads directly into the Landwasser Tunnel at one end. Built between 1901 and 1903, the famous Glacier Express with its panorama cars that offer majestic views of the surrounding landscape crosses the bridge daily, and is a scene I had always dreamed of experiencing.

Lovers of railway history can find their dream destination





EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Getting Drug Development Right



**Mariana Mazzucato**

Founding Director of the University College London (UCL) Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, is Chair of the World Health Organization's Council on the Economics of Health for All and a co-author (with Rosie Collington) of *The Big Con: How the Consulting Industry Weakens Our Businesses, Infantilizes Our Governments, and Warps Our Economies*.



As political theater, it would be hard to beat US Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders' recent grilling of Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel, who was forced to explain why his company has quadrupled the price of its COVID-19 vaccine. But while Sanders is right that Moderna owes its vaccines to billions of dollars of US taxpayer support, its decision to raise the price should come as no surprise. As I warned in March 2020, drug companies will always make a killing from crises like the pandemic, and US taxpayers will always be gouged, until we fix an obviously broken system.

In those early days of the pandemic, the US federal government could have set a powerful precedent by aligning its vaccine investments with common-good principles such as equitable access and affordability. But it chose 'business as usual' instead, and now we are witnessing the predictable results: Moderna is doing everything it can to maximize profits and shareholder value, even if that comes at the expense of public health. It claims that it is raising the price for its vaccine to make up for lost revenues; but its vaccine is the fruit of collective intelligence.

The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) not only invested billions in the discovery of the vaccine; it also holds patents for the foundational mRNA modifications on which the Moderna vaccine relies. After several years of patent disputes, the NIH agreed to license its technology to Moderna for \$400 million. From Moderna's perspective, it was a great deal. That \$400 million returned \$36 billion back in global sales, a windfall reflected in enormous compensation packages for its executives. During the pandemic, Bancel himself sold \$400 million in shares, and his golden parachute (what he will receive if the company is sold and he is ousted) was raised to almost \$1 billion, a 100-fold increase from 2019.

Sanders is right to highlight the \$1.7 billion in government assistance that Moderna received for developing its COVID-19 vaccine, and to condemn the company's unjustified price hikes. Drug and vaccine pricing should reflect the full costs of research, development,

manufacturing, and supply, and in this case, that includes substantial public contributions to R&D.

But the problems with business as usual do not stop at excessive CEO pay or the privatization of gains funded by taxpayer dollars. Moderna has also refused to share its technology with others, including the South African mRNA Technology Transfer Hub, an initiative aimed at accelerating vaccine development in middle- and low-income countries. While Moderna did pledge to refrain from enforcing patent protections during the pandemic, excessive patenting is still a massive

saving products. The pandemic has already demonstrated why we need such a shift in perspective.

With a common-good approach, the state, businesses, and communities would come together to agree on the rules and obligations pertaining to ownership and knowledge-sharing, guided by the goal of maximizing the benefits to global health. This calls for an entirely new governance framework that systematically steers innovation and knowledge toward attaining specific societal goals. Guaranteeing affordability and access is essential. There is little public value in

pools, pledges, or new licensing opportunities can all be used to foster more knowledge-sharing, and compulsory licensing could help countries make the best use of the knowledge that emerges from research.

More broadly, when companies benefit from public investments, those subsidies, guarantees, loans, bailouts, or procurement contracts should come with conditions designed to achieve the greatest public benefit. The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, for example, had to meet the condition of being storable at normal temperatures, which made it far easier to transport and distribute globally. By contrast, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine came with the market-discriminating feature of requiring storage between -80° and -60° Celsius.

Likewise, procurement contracts can be made conditional on knowledge-sharing, reinvestment of profits, or better working conditions for a firm's employees. As the 'strings' attached to public funds, such conditions are the key to ensuring concrete social returns on investment.

The spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19 highlights the interconnectedness of the modern world and the importance of international coordination in achieving shared goals like health for all. Governments around the world should join efforts to impose firm rules on pharmaceutical companies' intellectual property, pricing, and manufacturing.

As the world's largest funder of health innovation and purchaser of medicine, the US government is uniquely positioned to steer the global economy toward a more inclusive and healthy future. But it will have to do more than just publicly shame pharma executives. They are operating in a system that has been designed for their benefit. When the system changes, so will their behavior.

“ Delivering on ambitious public-health missions will require governments to restore some balance between private incentives and public interest, which implies the need to devise new legal blueprints for patents and other intellectual property. ”

potential barrier to the development and distribution of treatments for other diseases, such as HIV and cancer.

Concrete measures are needed to ensure that life-saving vaccines are available and free at the point of use in all health-care systems. Protecting public health requires a fundamentally different innovation environment than the one we have, because it depends on all players working together in dynamic ways to share knowledge and accelerate progress. Health-sector governance should promote collaboration and solidarity between countries, not encourage competition and gatekeeping in the development of life-

creating vaccines that are so expensive that only a limited number of people can access them. To prevent vested interests from unduly influencing policymaking, equitable access should be established as an explicit objective of the health-innovation process from the start.

Delivering on ambitious public-health missions will require governments to restore some balance between private incentives and the public interest, which implies the need to devise new legal blueprints for patents and other intellectual property. And to create more symbiotic partnerships, governments should redesign the foundational contracts on which public-private partnerships are built. Patent



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# War for Talent Is Over



**Dalia Marin**

*Professor of International Economics at the School of Management of the Technical University of Munich, is a research fellow at the Centre for Economic Policy Research and a non-resident fellow at Bruegel.*

For nearly two decades, the battle for talent has shaped how firms around the world are run and governed. With firms deriving value mainly from their human capital, rather than from the physical assets they owned, a talented workforce came to be coveted more than plants or machines. In 2001, the celebrated management consultant Peter Drucker published an article entitled 'The Next Society', in which he argued that giving more freedom to what he called knowledge workers is essential, as the key battle of this century is the war for talent. And he was almost right.

Unlike machines, however, human capital cannot be owned. Talented workers can always leave, taking their employers' value with them. Over the years, firms responded to this threat by decentralizing decision-making processes and giving workers greater autonomy. To encourage talented employees to stay, firms introduced incentive pay and stock-based compensation packages, with the hope that equity ownership would give managers a stake in their company's future.

In other words, the empowerment of talent became the new mode by which firms organized their activities. Consequently, CEO pay has skyrocketed over the past 40 years. With human capital now the primary driver of top incomes in the United States, the 'working rich', rather than financial capitalists, have become the capitalists of the twenty-first century.

My co-author Thierry Verdier (of the Paris School of Economics) and I show that this profound change in the nature of the corporation has been largely driven by globalization. As companies entered new markets in search of talented workers to hire, the threat of losing valuable employees to foreign competitors increased, fueling a fight for talent. To attract and retain human capital, companies began offering increasingly higher wages and greater decision-making power to top performers.

In an increasingly competitive environment, new ideas take on greater importance. As Eastern European markets began to open up after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Austrian and German firms decentralized their decision-making. Talented workers were encouraged to show initiative and were given more independence, especially when it came to



researching and developing new products.

But now the war for talent appears to be winding down. Nowhere is this more evident than in Silicon Valley, where the fierce competition for human capital has given workers a massive amount of power over employers. To entice potential hires and keep their existing workforce happy, tech companies have had to offer huge pay packages, stock

According to data compiled by layoffs.fyi, more than 160,000 tech workers have been laid off since the start of this year. An additional 164,000 lost their jobs last year, with half of these cuts happening in October, November, and December.

The financial sector is undergoing a similar shift, as the ongoing market turmoil and looming crisis lead to layoffs. After two decades

This shift has been triggered by three major events. First, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent supply-chain disruptions have accelerated the process of deglobalization. This trend has likely weakened the global competition for talent, contributing to the recent decline in the college-wage premium and to unexpected wage compression.

Second, with the sharp increase in interest rates driving up the cost of capital, maintaining profitability depends more on retrenchment than on new ideas. Belt tightening is easier with a centralized organizational structure, because companies can exploit synergies across different divisions.

Third, the emergence of ChatGPT and other generative AI programs has allowed companies to automate certain management functions, such as interviewing new hires, checking references, verifying identities, and carrying out health and safety assessments.

This trend will likely accelerate over the next few years, as technological innovations enable companies to automate more high-skilled jobs. Tellingly, just days after laying off 10,000 workers, Microsoft announced plans to invest \$10 billion in OpenAI, the San-Francisco-based company that developed ChatGPT. The ultimate winners of the war for talent, it seems, will be the machines.

“

After two decades of fighting for talent, companies are clearly using the current upheaval to wrest back control and reverse years of management indulgence that have left them with a generation of entitled workers.

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options, horizontal-management structures, unlimited vacations, wellness retreats, and generous benefits.

But those days are gone. As interest rates rise and growth slows, Silicon Valley bosses have begun to reclaim power from workers by slashing perks and initiating massive layoffs.

of fighting for talent, companies are clearly using the current upheaval to wrest back control and reverse years of management indulgence that have left them with a generation of entitled workers. Bossism and recentralization of decision-making seem to be the order of the day.

## Graubünden, a canton brimming with more than nature

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Our stay at the Hard Rock Hotel was special because of the wonderful services and evening parties that the hotel provides. The highlight of the hotel is the indoor sauna which is a great retreat after a long cold day in the Alps. I stayed in Davos for three nights and did not feel satisfied, as there were many places that time did not allow me to visit. If you plan to visit Davos, do not miss visiting Davos Lake, and practicing various types of water sports in it, you have to rent a boat to enjoy the beauty of the lake.

After our visit to Davos, we went to St. Moritz, which is another major city in the same region, and undoubtedly one of the most beautiful

Swiss cities and characterized by the abundance of its winter resorts and sports. The city of St. Moritz is near Lake Geneva, overlooking the Alps from the western end of the city. The people here largely speak German and it is one of the largest tourist attractions in Switzerland, as it attracts tourists and sports enthusiasts throughout the year from around the world.

One of the places I loved in St. Moritz was the city's Lake Moritz, a prominent landmark of the city and one of the most beautiful lakes in Switzerland, but also one of the smallest lakes in the Engelden Valley. On both sides of the lake there are several famous hotels, restaurants and cafes, and snow-polo matches are held on the lake every year.

St. Moritz is a haven for shoppers, with nearly

all international brands found along one street, and you will see types of luxury cars that are difficult to see in other places. This city is the place that the rich people of the world go to to enjoy their vacation and engage in luxury shopping.

The rich and famous who want physiotherapy and relaxation always come to St. Moritz, and of course their main destination is the St. Moritz Center for Physiotherapy. At the Center visitors get to bathe in the crystal clear mineral waters from the Heilbat Springs, which are located on the highest elevations in St. Moritz, and whose waters are reputed to provide healing from several diseases.

While in St. Moritz, do not miss the fun of a horse-drawn carriage ride along the Hahnensee,

and to go for hikes down walking paths through beautiful forests. St. Moritz is called the Top of the World City as it sits 1,800 meters above sea level, and is one of the most prominent Swiss cities that attract tourists throughout the year, summer and winter, as the sun shines for more than 300 days during the year.

*Noura Khan, a Kuwaiti national, holds a degree in law from Kuwait University and has worked as a journalist prior to taking up a position in the government. In 2018 she started blogging on travel and has visited more than 57 countries since. She has more than 54K followers and her blog post @nourajtraveller is well appreciated for content and travel information. Noura writes exclusively for The Times Kuwait on her travel visits.*



# AI can predict how you vote in elections

As hype and facts surrounding the capabilities of artificial intelligence (AI) increase by the day, a new study suggests that AI could be used to predict voting preferences of people. With AI technologies like Chat-GPT seemingly doing everything these days from answering exam questions to composing music, writing computer code and even creating images that put professional photographers to shame, the question of whether AI can predict voting patterns appears mundane.

Researchers at Brigham Young University (BYU) in the United States have now removed any doubts about the 'voting-discerning' capability of AI with their new study. The study proved that AI can indeed respond to complex survey questions on political preferences just like a real human.

To determine the possibility of using AI as a substitute for human responders in exit poll survey-style research, the team of researchers at BYU tested the accuracy of programmed algorithms of a GPT-3 language model — a model that mimics the complicated relationship between human ideas, attitudes, and sociocultural contexts of subpopulations.

In one experiment, the researchers created artificial personas by assigning the AI certain characteristics like race, age, ideology, and religiosity; and then tested to see if the artificial personas would vote the same as humans did



in the US presidential elections in 2012, 2016, and 2020. Using the American National Election Studies (ANES) for their comparative human database, they found a high correspondence between how the AI and humans voted.

The results were especially interesting as the AI model was not trained to do political science — it was just trained on a hundred billion words of text downloaded from the internet. But the consistent information the researchers received from the model was very closely similar to how

people really voted.

In another experiment, they conditioned artificial personas to offer responses from a list of options in an interview-style survey, again using the ANES as their human sample. They again found high similarity between nuanced patterns in human and AI responses.

The study holds exciting prospects for researchers, marketers, and pollsters, as it could evolve to a future where AI is used to craft better survey questions, refining them to be more

accessible and representative of populations; and even simulate populations that are difficult to reach. It can also be used to test surveys, slogans, and taglines as a precursor to focus groups.

While this is not meant to replace humans in surveys, the insights provided by AI could help us to study and understand people more effectively. It is about augmenting our ability rather than replacing it and it can help us be more efficient in our work with people by allowing us to pre-test our surveys and our messaging, said the lead-author of the study.

While the expansive possibilities of large language models such as chat GPT are intriguing, the rise of artificial intelligence poses a host of questions. For instance, how much does AI really know? Which populations will benefit from this technology and which will be negatively impacted? And how can we protect ourselves from scammers and fraudsters who will manipulate AI to create more sophisticated phishing scams?

While much of that is still to be determined, the study lays out a set of criteria that future researchers can use to determine how accurate an AI model is for different subject areas. Academics and other experts will also need to come together to define the ethical boundaries of artificial intelligence surveying in research related to social science.

## Personality affects exercise routine

Research into fitness regimens now reveals that the level of satisfaction and benefits you get from a particular exercise can vary greatly depending on your personality. Your level of satisfaction is important as it can determine your motivation to stick with a specific exercise routine and benefit from it.

Motivation is an aspect of personality that influences and helps determine the forms of exercise that could provide you with the biggest benefits. Psychologists say that intrinsic motivation is necessary, as it gives us a sense of autonomy, a feeling that we are doing it for ourselves, which provides the impetus to continue doing something over the long term. They add that in addition to self-motivation, an instinctive competitive drive, introversion/extroversion levels, and self-management potential, also play a key role in the kind of activities people are drawn to and how well they will succeed at them.

Whether you are thinking about beginning a new fitness routine or shaking up your current one, knowing your personality type might help you determine which workout will be the best fit. Determining your personality type has never been easier with so many self-report tools available online. However, despite the accessibility and popularity of many online tests, experts say that not all of them can be considered scientifically valid or reliable.

A new 'Big Five Personality Scale', which is popular with numerous scientists and researchers, assesses people based on five major psychological traits, all of which exist along a continuum. These traits are: openness; conscientiousness, extroversion

(which determines how energetic, sociable and friendly a person is); agreeableness; and neuroticism (one's inability to withstand stress).

A number of websites offer versions of the Big Five personality test, with one popular online option being the 'Big Five Inventory'. This is a short test that uses your answers to 50 multiple-choice questions in order to determine where you fall on the spectrum for each of five personality traits. This in turn can help determine which of the following types of exercise will either be the best fit, or ones you may want to avoid.

**Openness:** For people with a high level of openness, hiking is a great form of exercise as openness correlates to adventure-seeking and a willingness to try new things. Hiking is a great way to burn calories, and a number of studies have highlighted its mental health benefits too. Recent research has also found that even short 5-minute walks every 30 minutes throughout an 8-hour workday can help lower both blood sugar and blood pressure.

**Conscientiousness:** For people with a high level of conscientiousness — those who display traits such as being well-organized, with strong self-control, and time-management skills — High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) would be a great fit. HIIT, which involves structure and order, and has clear targets and plans, will appeal to the conscientious person.

HIIT workouts consist of short bouts of intense activity followed by low intensity rest periods. Though they may be of short duration, HIIT workouts can burn 25–30 percent more

calories than other forms of exercise.

**Extroversion:** For people with a low level of extroversion, yoga could be a good choice as it involves spending time alone. Extroversion or extraversion describes people who tend to seek out social stimulation and opportunities to engage with others. On the other hand, introverted people who score on the lower end of the extraversion scale find social interactions more draining than extroverts.

Yoga is a great workout for introverted personality types, as the entirety of the practice is centered around turning your attention inward and offers numerous physical, mental, and spiritual health benefits that improve your body, mind and spirit through activities such as stretches, poses, meditation and breathwork. Numerous studies have found that yoga may also help reduce anxiety, improve sleep, and boost your immune system.

**Agreeableness:** People with a low level of agreeableness could consider CrossFit. Agreeableness is a willingness to go with the flow and let others lead. On the opposite end of that scale is competitiveness. If you are a person who scores low on the agreeable scale, you would likely thrive in a sport where you are either working against someone else or where you are able to gamify workouts by competing against your own personal 'bests'.

CrossFit is a form of high intensity interval training that focuses on strength and conditioning. Workouts typically consist of functional movements such as pushing, pulling, and squatting, all performed at a high



level of intensity. Competitiveness is highly encouraged among CrossFit athletes, as the focus is on your own growth in a competitive environment.

**Neuroticism:** For people with a high level of neuroticism, cycling could be an ideal choice as it helps to face different sustained challenges from steep uphill climbs to pushing against increasing resistance. While the word neuroticism can have negative connotations, studies show it to be an adaptive behavior that aids in survival of species.

Cycling is also a workout that can be performed at either high or low intensities, and assists in promoting healthy weight management, strengthening leg muscle, and even improving cognitive function in older adults. It could also help improve cholesterol levels and lower your chances of having a stroke or heart attack by boosting your cardiovascular health.





# Journalists as Activists



**Jan-Werner Mueller**

Professor of Politics at Princeton University, is the author, most recently, of *Democracy Rules*.

Should journalists say and write what they think? Recent controversies have given new urgency to old questions about journalists' professional ethics and political role in democracy.

An ongoing defamation lawsuit has exposed how, and how often, Fox News anchors lied to their viewers about claims that the 2020 US presidential election was 'stolen'. The BBC suspended former soccer striker Gary Lineker for tweets criticizing the British government's refugee policies, allegedly in violation of the broadcaster's traditional commitment to impartiality. And journalists everywhere are debating whether taking a political position crosses some dangerous line into 'activism'.

Yet the conventional distinction between 'journalist' and 'activist' is badly conceived, because there has never been anything passive about journalists' role. At a time when autocrats are consolidating power by attacking 'the media' (or dismissing all critical reporting as 'fake news'), those who refuse to call out such behavior are effectively tolerating rising authoritarianism. There is nothing neutral about their silence.

As many media critics have rightly pointed out, the traditional practice of mechanically reproducing 'both sides' of a political dispute often distorts reality. Hence, a 2014 headline in *The Atlantic* warned, 'Yes, polarization is asymmetric – and conservatives are worse'. Since then, the Republican Party has become fully Trumpified and turned against democracy itself. Portraying such an asymmetrical situation as symmetrical creates the appearance of traditional journalistic objectivity at the expense of truth.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

According to media critic Jay Rosen, this 'both-sidesism' is driven not so much by a professional ethics of objectivity as by a journalist's preemptive effort to avoid accusations of 'partisanship'. It is more about 'refuge-seeking' than 'truth-seeking', covered by a veneer of immaculate neutrality.

Conversely, a journalist who becomes a self-styled member of the democratic 'resistance' can lose credibility if such resistance translates into a particular position on issues like the proper size of unemployment benefits, which, while important, are hardly at the core of democracy as such. Since democracies will always have a host of legitimate disagreements to navigate, investing every story with an agenda, be it progressive or conservative, does more than lead to slanted reporting. It also implies contempt for one's fellow citizens, who apparently cannot be trusted to make up their own minds. There is no shortage of hand-wringing about the public's declining 'trust in the media', but this relationship goes both ways.

Rather than framing the issue as 'journalism versus activism', a more useful distinction is

that between reporting and advocacy (which is not the same as 'opinion journalism' offered by figures who routinely comment on all kinds of issues). Both practices have to rely on facts, and both ask their audiences to keep an open mind. While reporters' primary emphasis is on informing, advocates focus on reforming; but that goal need not bar them from doing investigative work — on the contrary, it is often what gives such work its force.

Critics of advocacy portray it as an alternative to faithful reportage of facts without bias. But a good advocate will of course pursue what Carl Bernstein famously called the 'best obtainable version of the truth'. One need only look to Ida B. Wells, who repeatedly risked her life to report meticulously on lynching in the American South. Careful, accurate reporting was the very basis for her campaigning, not somehow its opposite.

What distinguishes advocacy from reporting is that it goes beyond presenting the facts by building a community of followers. Maintaining continuous communication for and about a

cause has always been the best way to create and mobilize support for it. As long as the process is out in the open, there need not be any clash with professional ethics.

The crux of the Fox News scandal is not that it showed Fox to be openly partisan; it is that the network's 'stars' and producers knew that claims of a 'stolen' election were false and chose to amplify them anyway. Ratings and profits came before facts. This ordering of priorities was made manifest at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic: while Fox's on-screen personalities were clamoring for 'freedom' and 'opening the economy', Fox's offices remained closed and its employees were asked to work from home.

Professional news organizations (a category that obviously does not include Fox) can have both advocates and reporters. What matters is that a news organization's audience can assess what it is about — how it makes editorial choices and how it makes money. These criteria are easier to meet if media organizations have public editors who engage with audience concerns seriously, thereby increasing trustworthiness.

To be sure, as Pippa Norris of Harvard University notes, trust is not a good in itself. Plenty of people trusted online quacks and COVID deniers during the pandemic, and some people are still reaching for patently unsuitable medications like Ivermectin because Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro endorsed it as a 'cure'. What a democracy needs from its citizens is what Norris calls skeptical trust, based on evidence of institutions' competence and integrity, not cynical mistrust or credulity.

By engaging with audiences and being transparent about advocacy and reporting, media organizations can increase trust by proving their own trustworthiness. Reporters and advocates — alongside columnists and freelancers like Lineker — must be objective, which is to say they must strive for accuracy. But supporting a cause and building a community for it is not the same thing as 'bias'. What is more, when protections for free speech and the press are under relentless assault from autocrats, the virtue of impartiality can become a vice.

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