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# Economy revives, lack of reforms hinder growth



## THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

In a statement issued last week, following a visit by its staff to Kuwait, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted that high oil production and prices throughout 2022 has helped Kuwait's economy recover from its pandemic era lows. The country's fiscal and external balances have been strengthened, inflation has been contained, and financial stability has been maintained, said the Fund.

Other positive indicators of Kuwait's economic recovery emphasized in the IMF statement included, GDP growth that soared to 8.2 percent in 2022, up from 1.3 percent in 2021, driven mainly by higher international oil prices and increased oil output as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies in non-OPEC oil-producing nations (now together



dubbed as OPEC+) eased production cuts. Non-oil sector also witnessed brisk growth last year on

the back of strong domestic demand, growing from 3.4 percent in 2021 to 4 percent last year.

Inflation has been contained, largely due to measures undertaken by the government to limit higher global food and energy prices filtering down to consumers through price regulations and increased subsidies. Additionally, monetary policy tightening by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in line with similar action by major central banks around the world, helped keep inflation in check. Annual headline consumer price index inflation that peaked at 4.7 percent in April 2022 eased down to reach 3.7 percent by April 2023.

The IMF also noted that higher oil revenues helped strengthen both fiscal and external balances, with fiscal surplus surging to 22.5 percent of GDP in 2022, up from 6.4 percent of GDP in 2021, while current account surplus is estimated to have risen to 33 percent of GDP in 2022, up from 26.6 percent of GDP in 2021.

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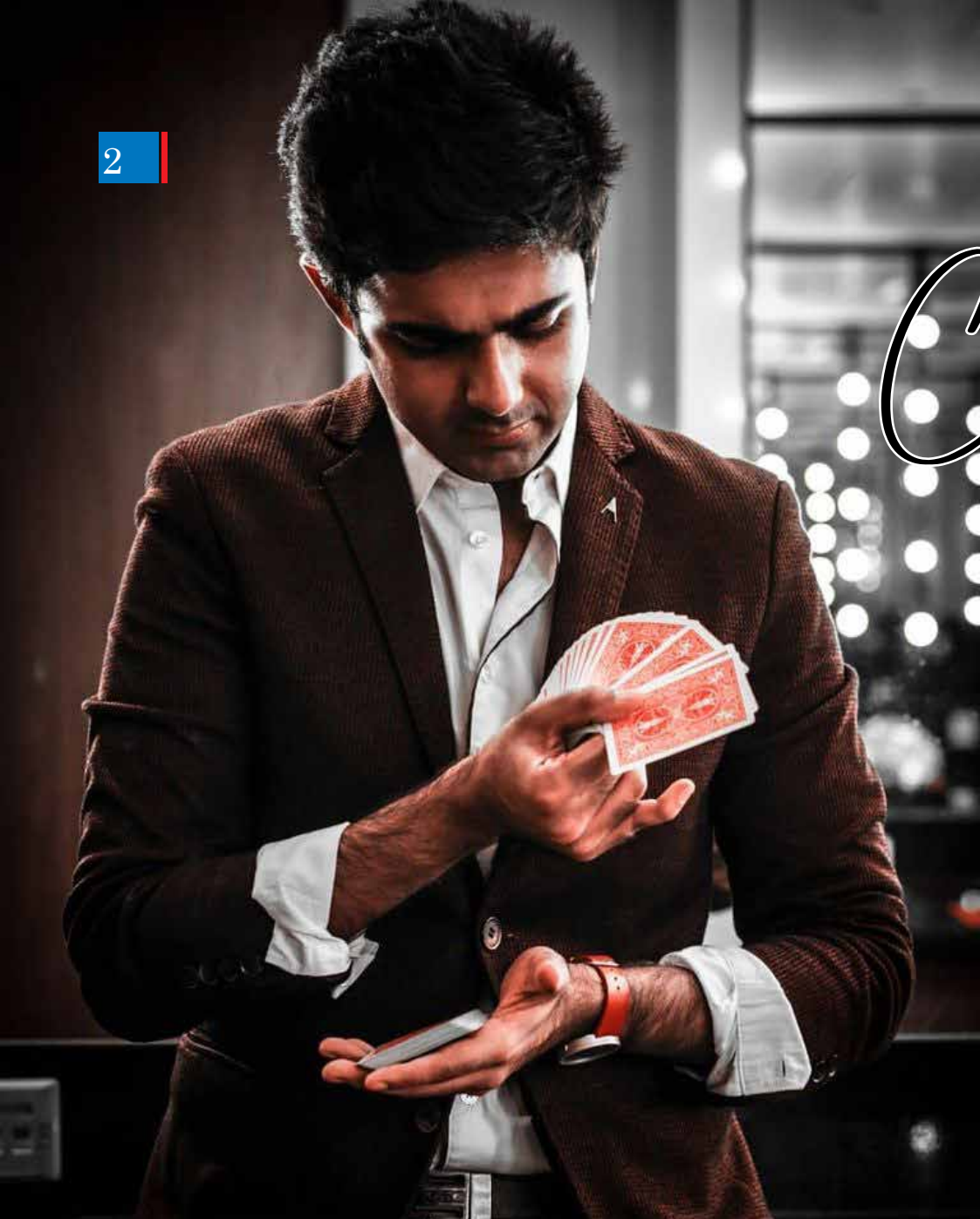
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# Chirag Jethwaney

## THE MAGIC MAN



**By Nita Bhatkar Chogle**  
Special to The Times Kuwait

Chirag Jethwaney, celebrity illusionist and mentalist from Mumbai, India was recently in Kuwait to perform at the 25th anniversary celebration of Indian Women's Association. To watch Chirag perform and not be mesmerised or even shocked with disbelief is not uncommon. During a one-hour performance at the event, attendees saw him reveal a guest's first crush, transfer a heart drawn on his hand to a young lady's palm, tickle one guest and make another one feel the tickle, and successfully reveal what was in someone's mind.

During his act, he even had guests pick out random picture cards that he then correctly called out. Moreover, when these random cards were put into the right order, they unbelievably spelt out 'Kuwait'. All of these acts were performed as more than 250 sets of eyes were focused on him, and with his every move projected on a large screen on stage.



He ended his show on a high note with a summary of different things uncovered by different guests at different times during the show. All of this was written down on a piece of paper he had handed over to a random guest in a sealed envelope before he jumped into action.

His performance is mysterious and magical with a dash of trickery and charm, all of which leaves one wondering, 'How did he do it?'

We caught up with Chirag for an exclusive interview to learn more about his journey in magic that went from passion to profession. But first, we wanted to know how he did what he did.

"I get that question a lot; it comes with the nature of my work. If I tell you they'll ban me at Hogwarts and that is a risk I can't afford. But what I will say is this, all I do is rooted in psychology, principles of magic, sleight of hand, paying attention to verbal and non-verbal cues, a little bit of science, a lot of showmanship and a hint of something else! When you bring together all these skills, you can create what looks like the impossible and hopefully amaze everyone."

Asked whether he was always interested in magic and how it became a profession, the magician said: "I've always been a fan of magic. My dad showed me a trick when I was 15 and didn't tell me how it was done. This made me want to figure it out. I pulled out graph papers, protractors, pie charts and yes, I finally found out how it was done. May I add, the protractors didn't help. I then showed my dad how it was done and his reaction was amazing."

"Over time I just wanted to learn more magic, largely as a hobby and eventually delved into books on magic. I never intended to become a professional magician; it was by accident, albeit a happy one, that I ended up making magic my profession. I had a cool job as a marketing executive, and wanted to add some color to my life over the weekends. Magic and mentalism helped me add a kaleidoscopic of colors to my life in all their hues and shades. I would approach bars and clubs, get into networking with others in the same field; and one thing led to the next and voila, here I am now."

Asked to name his role model, Jethwaney replied: "There are so many. Joshua Jay is one of my favorite magicians of all time. There are others such as David Blaine, Derren Brown, Criss Angel, and David Copperfield, who've inspired me to be a better performer



through emulating their rigorous dedication to the art of magic. Although of late it's been fictional characters like Sherlock Holmes that really help me strive to become better. It's fiction for sure, but that doesn't mean it can't be real.

He went on to explain that being a mentalist did not require any inborn talent. "All the things that I do can be learnt if one spends enough time on it. For starters, one needs to observe, absorb and trust one's instincts. That said, a little sugar, spice and all things nice can only help."

"I enjoy testing blind spots in human cognition and so I do test various principles out to see how it flies practically. This helps me be a better performer and surprise people in the best ways possible. So the advantage here is to push the art forward."

Revealing some of the celebrities in front of whom he has performed, Jethwaney said, "I have over the years performed in front of quite a few celebrities, including actors Salman Khan, Allu Arjun, Varun Dhawan, former cricket captain Kapil Dev, the Sharks from Shark Tank - India, among others."



They've all been amazing and respectful of the art. Although the one celebrity that I do want to perform for is Shah Rukh Khan, which I'm certain I will someday."

Stressing that like any other profession, to be on top of magic one needs to practice diligently and regularly, the young magician explained: "I spend 2-3 hours a day reading books on my field written by the pros, and also spend time studying this art form in detail. Not a day goes by when I don't write down a new idea for a trick. I want to do a story that I want to tell people through my art. I read a lot of fiction and watch movies as well. While the former gives me insight into the inner recesses of the human mind, the latter gives me visual themes and cues to work with. I also study various other art forms. It's brilliant how the understanding of one form of art can spill out into the other and enrich it to a great extent. Even so, sometimes I just do nothing and I feel that helps me the most."

Asked about his future plans, the artist replied: "I haven't been a big planner but I work very hard. I'm currently winging it to be honest, but I see a happy future, where I'm meeting amazing people all over the world and using my influence in my field to help a lot of animals. Protecting animals is a cause I hold dear. I also see myself amazing the person reading this right now, someday I hope our paths cross."







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# Kuwait to further boost ties with African continent



## THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah affirmed Kuwait's keenness to further strengthen cooperation and coordination with the countries of the African continent for mutual benefit, especially in light of the continent's ambitious 'Agenda 2063' that aims to transform the region into a global power.

During the ceremony organized by ambassadors and heads of African diplomatic missions in Kuwait on the occasion of 'Africa Day' which commemorates the anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity (AU), the Foreign Minister said that Kuwait has historical and strategic relations with the countries of the continent, and noted that, currently Kuwait hosts 34 accredited African diplomatic missions, making the African group the largest in the country.

He also emphasized that the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has invested heavily in infrastructure and vital development projects across the continent since its establishment in 1961. The foreign minister also pointed out that Kuwait hosted the third Arab-African Summit in 2013, which witnessed the launch of several important investment initiatives and support for development projects in the continent.

He praised the role of the African Union in promoting regional and international peace,



security and stability, as it has proven its effectiveness in mediating various conflicts and crises, and its commitment to encouraging international cooperation.

In his address on the occasion, Dean of African diplomats and Ambassador of the Republic of Togo H.E. Mohamed Saad OURO-SAMA, noted

the event was being held to commemorate 'Africa Day', which is celebrated each year on 25 May. He added that this year's celebration is of great importance for two reasons, "the first being we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the birth of the Organization of African Unity, and above all we have the honor and privilege of welcoming

this year our guest of honor, His Excellency Sheikh Salim Abdallah Al Jaber Al Sabah.

He then went on to convey on behalf of his colleagues of the whole Africa, their appreciation and profound gratitude to the highest authorities of the State of Kuwait, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may God preserve them, and to the entire Government of the State for their splendid efforts in favor of the development of the African continent".

Ambassador OURO-SAMA noted the theme for this year's Africa Day, chosen by the African Union, was 'Accelerating the Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area'. African leaders are seeking to establish this free trade area which aims to bring together all the countries of the continent in a market of 1.4 billion people. This key project will in fact become the largest market on the planet, with a domestic revenue market of \$34 billion, which would help boost intra-regional trade and attract more investment to the continent.

In conclusion he expressed the ardent wish of African countries and their authorities to strengthen cooperation with the Arab world in general and Kuwait in particular, and to promote the search for areas of cooperation which have not been explored so far, which will inevitably lead these relationships to broader horizons and help ensure a better future for future generations.



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# Kuwait to buy Bayraktar TB2 drones from Turkey



**M**inistry of Defense (MoD) announced on 13 June that it had signed a direct deal with Turkey to buy the Bayraktar TB2 drones for a total of US\$367 million (KD113 million). The ministry added that the contract, which was

signed directly between the two governments without any mediators, was intended to enhance the defense capabilities of the Kuwaiti army.

The statement indicated that the Cabinet had been kept informed about the contract signing and the deal was made in accordance with the laws and regulations and by the approval of the regulatory authorities in the country.

The Bayraktar TB2 drones have proven their capabilities in conflicts around the world and have a high technical potential in undertaking intelligence gathering, reconnaissance and targeting missions in support of military operations. They also have the ability to carry a range of weapons,

including laser-directed missiles and smart bombs.

The Bayraktar TB2 drones reportedly underwent trials in Kuwait in July 2019, flying a record 27 hours non-stop, amid difficult climatic conditions such as high summer temperatures, strong winds and sand storms. The drones, which have a length of 6.5 meters and a wingspan of 12 meters are capable of flying non-stop for 24 hours, with a load of 650kg at a maximum speed of 130km per hour.

The contract includes preparing special hangar facilities for the drones, as well as appropriate storage facilities for arms, ammunition, and electronic warfare equipment, as well as ground command

and control centers. In addition, the deal calls for maintenance support and logistical supplies for the drones, and provisions for support equipment, ground tests, and latest technical updates to the system. A separate simulation system will also be established for training national pilots and technicians and with technical support for three years.

Kuwait is among the more than two dozen countries that have signed deals for the TB2 drones, including Qatar and the UAE among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). While the number of drones that Kuwait plans to purchase was not specified in the statement, at a unit price of around US\$5 million per drone, the deal could involve over 70 drones in the order.

## Reviving National Committee to fight drug usage

**H**ead of the National Bureau for Human Rights, Ambassador Jassim Al-Mubarak, called for reviving the National Committee for Drug Control that was dissolved in 2014 for various reasons, including the lack of a budget for this purpose.

The former ambassador was speaking on the sidelines of the panel discussion organized by the Bureau last week under the title 'A healthy and safe society without addiction', which was attended by representatives of several government agencies, as well as social activists.

Ambassador Al-Mubarak stated that the Ministry of Interior, headed by First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, is currently doing an excellent job in fighting drugs, and he needs the combined support of everyone in society to tackle this scourge. He added that reviving the National Committee was important and that the lack of a budget should not be an excuse, "as a budget can be allocated for confronting a social menace, even



at the cost of a deduction from our food and beverage expenses".

He explained the scourge of drugs targets society and youth, who are the real wealth of the country, and therefore the presence of the National Committee for Drug Control to address this scourge is a necessity. He pointed

out that the committee must be composed of academics and specialists from government agencies and civil society organizations "who can help develop a vision and executive mechanisms for implementing a confrontation program, and not just give recommendations that collect dust on the shelves.

For her part, the Vice-President of the National Bureau for Human Rights and Chair of the Child Committee, Dr. Siham Al-Fraih, said the recent volume of drug seizures confirms that all Gulf countries are targeted by gangs promoting drugs and poisons, pointing out that this scourge is widespread throughout the world.

Al-Fraih called on the Ministry of Education to intensify efforts in schools to confront the scourge of drugs and raise awareness of its danger, especially since students spend more time in schools than they do at home, if we exclude periods of sleep and entertainment.

Dr. Al-Fraih added, "The drug scourge has grown to become greater than what many families can handle. In light of this situation, we must not burden the family with more responsibilities beyond their capabilities, and we, as official institutions, and in the forefront the Ministry of Education, must provide the necessary support, expertise and assistance in guiding the family and extending a helping hand at all levels."



## Al-Muzaini Exchange opens 130th branch

**A**l-Muzaini Exchange Company, the leading money exchange company in Kuwait, opened its 130th branch in Kuwait on 13 June. The new branch, located in Fahaheel, is part of the company's rapid expansion plan and reflects its endeavor to always be near its customers. It also reinforces the company's commitment to providing the highest quality of financial services such as money transfers, foreign currency exchange and bill payments with convenience, comfort and safety and at the most competitive prices, seven days a week.

The General Manager of Al Muzaini Exchange Company, Hugh Fernandes and the company's department managers and various senior personnel were present to inaugurate the new branch. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Fernandes stated: "We take great pride in strengthening our leading position in the local

market and always place focus in ensuring that we provide the best financial services experience to our customers in order to meet all their money transfer needs. We always want to stay true to our mission; to always be near to our customers and to add to their convenience, and the opening of our 130th branch is another step in that direction."

The company always strives to make its financial services accessible to all. In addition to its strong network of branches, Al Muzaini application provides simple and safe financial solutions and is packed with plenty of valuable features such as its availability on all digital platforms, new customer registration, the ability to add a new beneficiary and benefits from the Western Union service and Visa Direct services that makes it possible for customers to transfer anywhere, anytime.

## Highest rate of pediatric cancer cases due to leukemia

**M**ore than 26,000 cancer cases were recorded in Kuwait over the past 9 years, with around 4 percent of these cases being among children, and with leukemia being the leading cancer among pediatric patients. This worrying number was revealed by health experts during the 'Awareness and Follow-up Workshop for Children's Cancers', organized by the National Campaign for Cancer Awareness (CAN), with the support of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, at CAN's Palliative Care Center last week.

In his speech on the occasion, Oncology consultant and CAN Chairman, Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh emphasized that early detection of cancer greatly helps in recovery from this disease. He explained that the cause of cancer can range widely from environmental factors such as exposure to radiation or carcinogens such as benzene, or due to genetic factors.

Dr Al-Saleh pointed out that the purpose of health awareness is to guide the family, especially the mother, on ways to detect symptoms early, as well as on how to better deal with the sick child, which studies indicated was key to ensuring an increased response to treatment.

For her part, Cancer epidemiologist consultant, Dr. Amani Al-Basmi referred to the most common childhood cancers in Kuwait, explaining that out of 26,600 new cases diagnosed with cancer between 2010 and 2019, pediatric cancer cases accounted for four percent. She also revealed that the average age of children at diagnosis is 9 years



for Kuwaitis, and 8 years for non-Kuwaitis, and that leukemia represented 40 percent of cancer cases among children, and the death rate among pediatric cases was 12 percent

Stem cell transplantation and hematology consultant, Dr. Sondos Al-Sharida, then gave a lecture on risk factors during childhood and the role of educating mothers in early detection, indicating that 12 types of childhood cancers were diagnosed.

Also taking part in the awareness campaign were Patients Helping Fund Association, the Health Cities Administration, the Warba Medical Supplies Company and the Golden Sanabel Company.



# Schengen visa delays prompt change in travel plans

Citizens and residents of Kuwait have expressed frustration at the long delay in obtaining a Schengen visa to travel to European destinations, and many have made their annoyance clear by deciding to visit other countries and regions rather than Europe.

Some of the people wanting to apply for a Schengen visa decried the delay in even obtaining a date to apply for the visas at various outsourcing agencies designated by the embassies for this purpose. Moreover, the short period of the visas granted by many European embassies discouraged

travelers and made them opt for traveling to countries that do not require such onerous visa processes.

Specialists in the travel and tourism market confirm that the majority of visa-issuing offices for European Union countries do not currently have available appointment slots, while there are a few countries that have appointments available in July. This required potential travelers to apply for a Schengen visa to countries that had the available appointment slot. But this meant they had to incur additional expenses to visit a country that they did not plan to visit in the

first place, as Schengen visit visa rules state that visa holders need to enter the country that issued their visas and then travel to their intended destination.

Several travelers also complained that they suffered financial losses because they had already booked hotels and airline tickets to Europe, but they were surprised that there were no dates for submitting visa applications. In light of all these hassles in traveling to a Schengen country, many summer travelers are changing their travel destinations to Turkey, Dubai, Malaysia, Thailand, Egypt, London, India and Azerbaijan.



## Fly Arna to launch direct flights from Kuwait to Armenia

Armenian Ambassador H.E. Sarmen Baghdasarian announced that Armenian national carrier, Fly Arna, will commence twice weekly direct flights between Kuwait and Armenia from 22 June, making it easier for residents from Kuwait to visit his country.

During a press conference held at the chancery on 11 June, the Armenian envoy said the direct flights would contribute to strengthening and enriching existing relations,

especially with regard to economic, cultural and social exchange between the two peoples.

Ambassador Baghdasarian added that the direct flights provided a great opportunity to take advantage of during the coming Eid Al-Adha holidays, and called on Kuwaitis to explore Armenia as a destination for spending holidays with their families. He disclosed that more than 700,000 foreign tourists visited Armenia in just the first three months of this



year, and that there were nearly 36 direct flights per week to Armenia from the Gulf countries.

The ambassador also pointed to the numerous places of interest in Armenia, and the various travel experiences that the country provides to travelers. He noted that the distance to Armenia was just two hours, and that while Kuwaiti citizens are entitled to Visa on Arrival, other residents in Kuwait could get their visa online through <https://evisa.mfa.am/>



## ICAI holds seminar on ESG-based investments

Kuwait chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) held a seminar titled 'Rising Relevance of ESG Based Investing' at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on 3 June.

In his opening remarks at the session, which was attended by an audience of over 100 professionals, Chairperson of the Chapter CA Sriram Gopalakrishnan underscored the importance of Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) framework for businesses and attracting investments. The session was well structured explaining the broad framework around ESG, its concept and how it is attuned to business.

Keynote speaker at the event was Roopa Satish, the country head of Sustainable Banking, Portfolio Management and Data Science at India's IndusInd Bank. The speaker, through various statistical presentations, highlighted the significance of ESG and how an increasing number of organizations are applying ESG parameters as part of their analysis process to identify material risks and growth opportunities. The lecture session was followed by an interesting Q&A session, which helped among others to clarify that ESG is not mainly reporting and disclosure based but can make a real and meaningful change in the way businesses are operated.

Chapter Vice chairperson CA Rabin Gonsalves noted that the session was highly appreciated by members of ICAI as well as special invitees, given the increasing relevance of the topic. Representatives of the seminar's sponsors, NBK, Oracle and Al Mulla Exchange, who were present at the function also expressed their appreciation for the informative event.





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# Thought for the week

“ We spend money we don't have  
on things we don't need to create  
impressions that won't last on people  
we don't care about

Tim Jackson  
British Ecological Economist

## How to handle menstrual cramps

Ask Mira : Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



**M**any women have to deal with menstrual pain that can range from mild to severe, but for some, the pain is really unbearable. Changing some food choices and introducing other healthier ones can help a lot to decrease or prevent this frustrating pain. The changes should be made before or during your menstrual cycle. Here are some tips to handle menstrual pain.

**Eat healthy:** Keep a healthy diet that includes more fruits and vegetables, 72 hours prior to your periods. You need to have fiber from fruits and veggies to clean your body of the excess of estrogen which has been linked to heavier and painful periods.

**Increase your intake of calcium, vitamin D and magnesium:** These minerals are known for proper muscle function. They will relax your muscle cramps, and in turn relax your body. So before the start of your cycle, increase the consumption of dairy products (milk, cheese, and yogurt), nuts, spinach and beans. Most

Leafy greens, in particular, are one of the best vegetables to eat on your period, specifically spinach, kale, collard greens and swiss chard. This is because they are filled with iron, which helps to replenish the iron lost when you are menstruating.

**Eat bananas:** This fruit is rich in potassium and vitamin B6, which reduces muscle cramps as well. It also helps to reduce your estrogen level during your cycle.

**Avocados and olive oil:** These are excellent for you due to the presence of vitamin E, which helps to minimize pain and anxiety.

**Reduce your salt intake:** Salt can likely cause water retention and bloating that may magnify your cramps.

**Go for pumpkin seeds:** They contain a natural relaxant. Start eating a cup of these seeds two days before your periods and you will be pain free.

**Use pickle juice as a remedy:** Drain the juice from the pickle bottle and drink it. This remedy works very well for

women with menstrual cramps.

**Omega-3 prevents cramps:** It also contains natural anti-inflammatories that ease your pain. Include more fish, salmon, oysters and nuts in your diet before and during the menstrual cycle.

Some dietary changes can be really worth it to help you lead a more fulfilling life, and avoid discomfort. Another tip is to spend some time doing regular exercises which can be very helpful for you. Walking and swimming for 20 minutes during periods have shown to decrease pain in some women.

**Hello Mam, I enjoy your column a lot. Could you tell me what are liquid calories, and how they can affect your diet? - Anonymous**

Liquid calories are the calories you are taking from drinking liquids like protein shakes, juices, yogurt and so. Not only can liquid calories make you gain weight, just like calories from food, they do not make you feel full for long either. So, you end up eating more calories in addition to what you have already had to drink.

*Eat like Mira*  
Create healthy habits, not restrictions

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[www.eatlikemira.com](http://www.eatlikemira.com).



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](mailto:infotimeskuwait@gmail.com)

## RECIPE

# Milletts and more millets



**M**illetts are among the first plants to be domesticated and are considered high in nutritional content. They have served as a traditional staple for hundreds of millions of people in Africa and Asia for more than 7,000 years, and are now cultivated across the world.

Milletts are versatile and resilient crops that can grow on relatively poor soils and under adverse and arid conditions, with comparatively fewer inputs than other cereals. Increasing millet production and consumption worldwide has the potential to address climate change and strengthen global food security.

In light of their importance to meet nutritional needs and provide food security globally, as well as their role in helping to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of reducing poverty and eliminating hunger by 2030, the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly held in September 2020, endorsed a proposal from India to designate the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets.

As part of celebrations to mark the International Year of Millets and raise awareness on the range and versatility of dishes that can be cooked with millets, we are running a series of recipes on cooking with millets.



Chef Chhaya Thakker

**We start off with:**

## Puffed Sorghum Choco-Almond Clusters



### Ingredients:

- 1 cup dark chocolate chips
- 1 tbsp coconut oil
- 1 cup puffed sorghum (jowar, great millet...)
- 1/2 cup almonds

### Instructions:

- Line a baking sheet with parchment paper
- Melt chocolate chips with coconut oil over a double boiler, or you could use a microwave in short 20- to 30-second intervals, stirring well during each interval.
- Add almonds, puffed sorghum to the melted chocolate and mix until coated.
- Using a tablespoon, spoon the mixture over parchment paper to create clusters.
- Chill for at least 10 minutes before serving.

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)



# PBCK celebrates Portuguese National Day



Portuguese Business Council in Kuwait (PBCK) held a series of culturally-rich and engaging events over the past week to commemorate Portuguese National Day celebrated annually on 10 June. The events included the first-ever performance of a Fado music concert in Kuwait and a strategic networking dinner.

Interestingly, Portugal Day is not celebrated to mark the country's independence from Spain, rather, the day commemorates the death on 10 June 1580 of Luís de Camões, a poet and national literary icon. Speaking on the occasion, President of PBCK, Antonio Campos, paid tribute to Portugal's enduring history, including its unchanged borders since 1297; to Luís de Camões, a pivotal figure in Portuguese literature; and to the vibrant

Portuguese communities worldwide. "We are a modern and sophisticated nation that has successfully combined tradition with innovation," said Mr. Campos. "In a rapidly evolving nation like Kuwait, we see enormous potential for cooperation and mutual development."

A highlight of the celebrations was a concert held at the Kuwait National Library auditorium, featuring Fado, the traditional Portuguese music genre. The concert, performed by Sara Paixao, one of the most promising voices of her generation, and accompanied by two of the best guitarists in Portugal: Angelo Freire on the Portuguese guitar and Pedro Soares on the classical guitar, provided attendees with a captivating taste of Portuguese culture.

The preceding day saw a networking

dinner aimed at fostering collaboration between Portuguese and Kuwaiti industries. Emphasis was placed on sustainable practices, renewable energy, and the symbiotic potential between Portugal's innovative energy strategies and Kuwait's experience in the energy sector.

Portugal's esteemed exports, including shoes, textiles, agrifood, tech innovations, and jewelry, were presented to more than 100 attendees during the event. The home sector, including modernly designed and high-quality furniture, also drew significant recognition. Antonio Campos stressed, "Portugal is a hotbed of innovation and an attractive hub for international businesses. Our nation's high educational standards and multilingual capabilities make us an appealing destination for global enterprises

and startups." Following the networking event, attendees were treated to a gastronomic delight with the famous 'nata' pastry from Portugal.

Reflecting on the long-standing relationship between Portugal and Kuwait, dating back to the 16th century, Campos acknowledged the shared seafaring history as a stepping stone for further cooperation. The event was highly successful, serving as a valuable platform for enhancing economic and cultural ties between the two countries.

The events were made possible thanks to the invaluable support from PBCK's main sponsors: National Library of Kuwait, IFA Travel and Tourism, Marriott Executive Apartments, Toronto Trading Co., HUB2ENERGY, AJL, Al Basel, AGM, and Blue Aviation.



## Palestine Ambassador thanks Kuwait for continued support

Palestinian Ambassador H.E. Rami Tahboub, said Kuwait was and is still the largest supporter of the Palestinian cause. The ambassador was speaking at the end of the Palestinian Products Festival, which was held by the Palestine Embassy in cooperation with the Women's Cultural Association, at the association's headquarters recently.

Ambassador Tahboub praised the great success achieved by the festival, thanking the Kuwaiti citizens for their attendance at the exhibition throughout and for their confidence in the various Palestinian products and their quality.

He thanked Kuwait and its concerned ministries for all the facilities provided to the embassy, wishing Kuwait, the Amir, the government and the people, continued security, safety and prosperity.

Ambassador Tahboub also thanked the ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Kuwait, and the embassy staff, for the remarkable attendance at the opening ceremony of the festival, and their shopping at the Palestinian Products Exhibition. In addition, he expressed appreciation to the Arab, foreign and Palestinian communities for visiting the festival and purchasing Palestinian products.

## Minister reviews NCCAL strategy for 2023-38

Information Minister, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Chairperson of the National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, chaired a meeting of NCCAL officials to review the council's strategy for the 2023-2028 period.

The session, which was attended by NCCAL acting secretary general Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar, examined a preliminary report on the various tasks of the council over the next five years.

This included renovation work on the various

historic, archeological and iconic buildings that are under the council's purview.

The meeting also discussed specific plans to renovate Al-Mubarakiya School, the first school in Kuwait, and to restore it as a museum for depicting teaching history in Kuwait. Another proposal was to expand and upgrade the Sabah Al-Ahmad Cultural Center to incorporate a museum, gallery, library, convention centers, and kids area, as well as a green oasis and an outdoor theater.

Minister Al-Mutairi also discussed with the

officials a blueprint for rehabilitating the historic Abdullah Mubarak Al-Kabeer Palace (Mishref Palace) and Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Palace (formerly Sheikh Khez'el diwan), which was the first national museum in the Arabian Gulf and is designated to be listed among the UN's World Heritage Sites.

The meeting also considered views on reopening public libraries and engaging in partnership with the private sector to invest in NCCAL buildings for simulating the cultural movement in the country.



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## Nazaha provides protection to whistleblowers

Kuwait Anti-corruption Authority (Nazaha) currently provides 'protection' to 16 individuals who provided information about corruption and corrupt officials, in line with Law 2 of 2016 that established the authority and set provisions for financial disclosures and protection of whistleblowers.

A legal assistant auditor at Nazaha Fatma Blam told Al-Rai, that "The law establishing the authority and its executive regulations has put in place the rules and provisions to protect whistleblowers and witnesses to

encourage them to perform their national duty in the area of reporting and combating corruption crimes, while ensuring that they are not subjected to personal, administrative or legal harassment," said Fatma Blam, an assistant legal auditor at Nazaha, while speaking to local media recently.

She noted that the "Authority follows a specific procedural mechanism to protect the whistleblowers and witnesses, starting with personal protection by keeping the identity and whereabouts of the whistleblower secret from the moment the



informer reports wrongdoings by officials.

"The authority also provides administrative and functional protection by preventing any administrative action from

being taken against the whistleblower by his employer, ensuring salary and benefits remain untouched during the period specified by the authority. In addition, the authority provides legal protection to prevent criminal, civil, or disciplinary action being taken against the informant.

According to articles 20, 37 and 38 of the law, reporting corruption is not just a right, but an obligation. It reflects the role of society in the fight against corruption, and commitment to stamp out this corroding influence on the community.

## MNSSS launches Toyota Crown — the return of a legend



Building on the legacy of one of the world's best-loved vehicles since the 1950s, Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Company (MNSS) and Toyota launched the 16th generation Toyota Crown in Kuwait last week.

The launch event was attended by Masaru Shimada General Manager and Satoshi Yamaguchi Group Manager from Toyota Motor Corporation, Faisal Bader Al Sayer Chairman, Mubarak Naser Al Sayer CEO, Mohamed Naser Al Sayer Executive Board Member, Bengt Schultz COO, Martin Aherne Business Director Toyota Sales Division and Top Management Team at ALSAYER, in the presence of representatives from the media.

The Crown first debuted in 1955 as the 'Toyopet Crown', Toyota's first mass produced passenger vehicle. When the first generation was launched, Crown came to symbolize 'innovation' and 'pushing the limit' within Toyota. Since then, it has gained recognition in Japan as Toyota's premium sedan. It was also the first Japanese sedan to hit Middle East shores back in 1960, with the last being sold in the region in 2000.

In his comments on the occasion, Mubarak

Naser Al Sayer stated: "I must admit that the Crown brings back memories of my late father, may God have mercy on him, when he brought the first generation of Toyopet Crown to Kuwait and how it proved its worth at that time. It has earned the admiration and trust of everyone for many years. I would like to point out that the legacy of the Crown reflects a historic success that we witnessed even in Kuwait during the 1980s, and it is not surprising that many customers still appreciate Toyota Crown to this day".

According to Martin Aherne "Toyota has so far introduced fifteen different generations of Crown for Japanese as well as International markets, starting from first generation Toyopet Crown in 1955 until the fifteenth generation Toyota Crown in 2018. The re-introduction of the model in Kuwait will strengthen Toyota's exceptional line-up of vehicles and also further elevate overall brand equity".

Bader Faisal Al Sayer said "We understand that many customers of different age groups who admire stylish appearance, luxurious cabins, and powerful performance have been eagerly

awaiting the return of this prestigious car to the Kuwaiti market."

Akihiro Sarada, Chief Engineer in charge of development, said: "We are delighted to introduce the new Toyota Crown. With uncompromising passion built into its DNA, this vehicle embodies our commitment to surpassing the ever-evolving expectations of our customers. Drawing inspiration from its illustrious heritage, we infused this new model with cutting-edge technology and advanced features, all while upholding the highest standards of ride comfort, safety, maneuverability, and driving performance."



The new Toyota Crown is built around the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA-K) platform, which delivers excellent body rigidity and a low center of gravity, guaranteeing a more rewarding driving experience.

The new Toyota Crown comes with a choice of two environmentally friendly powertrains — a four-cylinder hybrid engine with a front electric motor and a 2.4-liter turbo engine that offers a combined power of 343 hp, and a second hybrid engine with two electric motors and a 2.5-liter four-cylinder petrol engine, generating a total power of 218 hp.

Striking a seamless connection between stylish design, exquisite luxury, and enhanced convenience and comfort, the new Crown's cabin is accentuated by a range of advanced convenience and safety features that includes Toyota Safety Sense, an advanced safety and driver assistance system that includes an all-speed range Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC) with a multitude of features. The new Crown also offers a selection of seven captivating exterior hues that complement the vehicle's striking visual appeal.

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## Expat remittances from Kuwait on the rise

A recent World Bank report on remittances worldwide in 2022 noted that workers in Kuwait remitted over US\$17.7 billion in 2022, making remittances from the country the sixth highest in the world and the second highest among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. There has been a steady increase in remittance from Kuwait following the dip during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Saudi Arabia, which led the region with remittances of more than \$39 billion, was also the second highest remittance spot in the world after the United States, which continued to lead the world in terms of worker remittances at US\$79 billion. The World Bank report added that official remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries are expected to increase by 1.4 percent to \$656 billion in 2023.

India continued to be the largest recipient of global remittances at \$111 billion in 2022, followed by Mexico with \$61 billion, China with \$51 billion, the Philippines with around \$38 billion, France with \$30 billion and Pakistan with \$30 billion. On the other hand, Egypt ranked seventh in the world and first in the Arab world as the highest receiving country with over \$28 billion in remittance receipts.

The World Bank report also highlighted that



global remittances surged in 2022 due to oil price hike in the GCC countries with their large migrant populations, as well as due to large financial transfers from the Russian Federation to Central Asia, and the strength of the US labor markets.

In addition, the report revealed an increase in remittance flow of 0.7 percent in East Asia and the Pacific, 19 percent in Europe and Central Asia, 11.3 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 12.2 percent in South Asia, and 6.1 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, while remittance flows decreased by 3.8 percent to the Middle East and North Africa.





# Indian Embassy organizes 'Beach Cleaning' drive

**E**mbassy of India in association with United Nations Habitat Office in Kuwait, and in coordination with the Office of the Hawally Governor, and Kuwait Municipality, as well as support from several Indian community associations, organized a 'Beach Cleaning' drive on 16 June at the beachfront opposite to Bneid Al Gar.

Speaking during the event, which was organized as part of the Mission LiFE (Lifestyle For Environment) initiative of the Government of India, the Indian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika emphasized on the importance of sustainability. For her part, the Head of UN-Habitat GCC and Kuwait Office, Dr. Ameera Alhassan applauded the beach cleaning initiative and called for adopting a lifestyle that protects the environment.

Representatives of Hawally Governor were also present on this occasion and appreciated



the environmental efforts. Ambassadors from Peru, Indonesia, Ghana, Afghanistan, Morocco, Romania, Vietnam, Cambodia, along with representatives from the US Embassy and several Heads of UN agencies in Kuwait also participated in the event.

The activities encompassed various tasks



to ensure a thorough cleaning of the entire stretch of Bneid Al Gar and Green Island beach. Participants were actively engaged in collecting and properly disposing of litter, including plastic waste and other debris that posed a threat to marine life and the ecosystem.

The event aimed to promote environmental awareness and community participation while raising the message of making LiFE a mass movement by focusing on behaviors and attitudes of individuals and communities, and leveraging climate-friendly social norms, beliefs and daily household practices of different cultures worldwide to drive the campaign.

The event witnessed a large turnout of over 400 enthusiastic volunteers, including embassy staff, members of the Indian community associations and local residents. The Indian associations that participated in the drive were the Kuwait Kerala Muslim Cultural Centre (KKMCC), Thrissur Association of Kuwait (TRASSK), Telugu Kala Samithi (TKS), Kuwait Tamil Peoples Service Centre (KTPSC), Prvasandra Reddy Association - Kuwait (PRAK), and Kuwait Kannada Koota (KKK).



## Increasing demand, decreasing supply of domestic workers

**H**ouseholds looking to hire domestic workers in the coming months could face a severe shortage in their availability, as more countries become increasingly reluctant to send female domestic workers in Kuwait.

Revealing the dearth of domestic household workers, Bassam Al-Shammari, a specialist in domestic labor affairs, told local media that the scarcity came largely from the limited number of countries willing to send workers to Kuwait, as well as from the failure of authorities to source and sign contracts with other countries that had the potential to send domestic workers.

Al-Shammari revealed that the annual average demand for female domestic labor ranged from 420,000 to 450,000, while that for male workers was around 360,000, but the supply was far short of this demand. The shortfall has been exacerbated by the development of new urban areas and the increase in Kuwaiti household units in these suburbs requiring domestic workers.

Other factors contributing to constrictions in supply of workers include the non-renewal of domestic worker contracts for two years, as well as language problems, as many of the

available workers were not able to converse in Arabic or English. Moreover, those able to speak the English language commanded a premium in salaries, and preferred to work in neighboring countries that offered higher salaries than those available in Kuwait.

Al-Shammari reported that requests at labor recruitment offices have doubled significantly this month, amid the severe shortage of labor supplies from countries such as the Philippines, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Among the reasons for the shortage of workers were a ban on issuing new visas for domestic workers from the Philippines; Ethiopia has suspended recruitment and is awaiting the signing of a bilateral agreement with Kuwait; and Indonesia has suspended the sending of workers to Kuwait since 2008.

Additionally, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find Indian domestic workers willing to come to Kuwait; workers from Nepal have to be hired either from India or the UAE; and Bangladesh has suspended the recruiting of workers from that country. The only country where workers are available and can still be recruited remains Sri Lanka, noted Al-Shammari.

## Maranao Expats in Kuwait hold induction ceremony and reception



By Ricky Laxa  
Staff Writer

**N**ewly formed organization Maranao Expats in Kuwait held an induction ceremony and reception at the Millennium Hotel. Philippine Ambassador, Labor Attaché, Assistant Labor Attaché, and other embassy officials were present to witness the occasion.

Maranao Expats in Kuwait (MEK) held its induction reception at the Millennium Hotel a month after its set of officers took their oath of office at the Embassy of the Philippines last 22nd of March 2023. The Induction Ceremony and Reception started with the Kuwait and Philippine National Anthems led by MEK Secretary Cathy Sacampong followed by a recitation from the Holy Quran by MEK Public Relations Officer Ustaz Arham Saliling. MEK Secretary Abusopiya Mautante delivered a welcome remark and Philippine Labor Attaché Atty Manuel Dimaano was invited to give a brief message on the occasion. MEK Treasurer Noraisah Pondion highlighted an introduction on the guest of honor followed by a speech from the Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait Jose Cabrera III.

In his speech Philippine Envoy highlighted the exercise of compassion for others and to stop fake news as it has negative effects on other people. He further added that actions

and words and must always take base on compassion. He urged Filipinos to secure licenses and permits from Kuwait government in any of their occasion and assured everyone that Philippines continue to find ways to mend its relationship with Kuwait. MEK President Junaid Sacampong introduced the set of officials and were given their certificates of recognition as officers of MEK.

In his welcome speech President Sacampong thanked everyone for being a part of such momentous occasion. A plaque of appreciation was presented to the Philippine Ambassador. One of the highlights of the event were the video messages sent to the organization congratulating them on the occasion. Among the clips were from very prominent personalities and politicians such were Senator Risa Hontiveros, AKO Bakwit Chairperson Samira Gutoc, Former Presidential Adviser on OFWs and Muslim Concerns Atty Dabs Mama-o, former Ambassador to Kuwait HE Mohammad Noordin Lomondot, OWWA Administrator Arnel Ignacio, OIC National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, Assistant Secretary of DMW Venecio Legaspi and Current Sultan of Marawi Dr. Abdul Hamidullah Atar.

Cultural dances and songs were presented in colorful traditional costumes during the event.





## Vietnamese Embassy launches Lychee-Week

**Ricky Laxa**  
Staff Writer

The Embassy of Vietnam organized a ceremony to mark the launch of 'Lychee-Week' in coordination with Dean & DeLuca store and support from Star Fruit company and the beverage company, Monin. The event promoted the new season of Vietnamese lychee arriving in Kuwait and now on sale at Dean & DeLuca stores in Kuwait and being supplied by the Star Fruit company.

During the event, guests were treated to the exquisite taste of the freshest lychees and encouraged to try the lychee mocktail made by Monin. There was also a lucky draw section to give out prizes to lucky participants.

Lychee is one of the juicy tropical fruits from Vietnam that cools and refreshes the body



during the hot summer in Kuwait.

While there are other variants of lychees available in Kuwait, the lychee from Vietnam called 'vải thiều' by Vietnamese is special. This particular lychee variety was planted in the Thuy Lam village, Thanh Son commune of Hai



Duong province nearly 200 years ago. The fruit of this lychee tree has redder skin than other trees, and although the fruit is small, the pulp is very thick and juicy.

Not only does lychee refresh you in summer, it also has several health benefits. One small

fruit of lychee gives 66 kcals and eating 3 to 5 lychees a day can keep the energy running for a surprisingly long time. The lychee is also a rich source of highly recommended antioxidants, stimulates blood circulation, and promotes the digestive system's health.

Lychee production in recent years has complied with VietGAP and GlobalGAP standards for Good Agriculture Products so as to ensure the export value of the fruit. Over 50 percent of lychees produced in Hai Duong province are now exported to countries around the world, and the reputation it has earned is well-deserved.

The fruit has been granted a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) certification, which emphasizes the relationship between the Vietnamese Hai Duong province and the prestigious lychee from this area.

## Festival of British Foods at LuLu Hypermarket



A week-long celebration of the best of British foods is being held at all outlets of LuLu Hypermarket from 10 - 17 June. The 'LuLu British Food Week' was inaugurated on 10 June at the Al-Qurain branch of the hypermarket by British Ambassador H.E. Belinda Lewis along with top management of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait, and in

the presence of a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers of the brand.

Adding to the lively vibe of the inauguration was a high-energy performance by a special British band that delighted guests and shoppers alike. Another major draw was an exhibition of classic vintage cars from the UK that had many classic-car enthusiasts swooning over the gleaming vehicles.

A major attraction of the seven-day food festival, which showcases the finest food products from the United Kingdom, is the amazing offers on all UK-branded products, as well as special promotions on select items. Shoppers appear spoilt for choice with hundreds of well-known British food brands being made available at one-off prices during the promotion period.

The festive and exciting backdrop to the LuLu British Food Week continued indoors at all LuLu outlets with UK-themed decorations, including flags, pennants, bunting and streamers, as well as large cut-outs and images of historic monuments and iconic buildings that underlined the rich tradition and heritage of the United Kingdom.

Kiosks offering free food samplings, and replicas of traditional British street-food stalls offering popular items such as fish, chips, cheese and gravy, are other singular attractions drawing shoppers in large numbers.

The LuLu British Food Week is part of the hypermarket's continued commitment to bring high-quality food products from around the world to shoppers in Kuwait, and to offer customers the widest selection of best of the world products at exceptional value through extremely competitive prices.



## Saravanaa Bhavan launches Millets menu



Popular Indian vegetarian restaurant Saravanaa Bhavan launched its Millets menu at their restaurant in Fahaheel on 15 June.

Chief guest on the occasion was the Indian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika, who was welcomed to the restaurant by its proprietors Ananthi Natarajan and Natrajan. The ambassador was introduced to various dishes prepared from millets for the occasion by the restaurant's talented chefs.

Saravanaa Bhavan, the largest South Indian restaurant chain in the world, which opened in Kuwait in 2012 is known for a menu that offers an extended array of vegetarian dishes. The launch of the Millets menu at the restaurant aims to raise awareness about the nutritional, and health benefits of millets, while promoting their consumption for a sustainable and healthier lifestyle.

During his speech on the occasion, Ambassador Swaika highlighted the Indian government's commitment, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to promote the production and consumption of millets as a people's movement. In 2018, the Government of India celebrated the National Year of Millets, and now, it spearheads the celebration of the International Year of Millets 2023, said the ambassador.



# Mastercard Institute releases travel industry trends for 2023

New insights from the Mastercard Economics Institute reveal that consumers, including those from Middle East and Africa (MENA), are taking advantage of a more traditional travel ecosystem in 2023, prioritizing leisure travel and pioneering new corridors around the world.

## Key findings include:

In 2023, a new dynamic emerged, with travelers exploring destinations closer to home. Egypt and Saudi Arabia made the top 10 rankings this year, in seventh and eighth place, respectively. The UK, US, UAE and France remain the most popular international destinations for travelers

leaving the Middle East.

Global leisure and business travel are now growing at the same rate. In the second half of 2022 and into early 2023, corporate flight bookings caught up to leisure in regions with a strong return to office culture.

Preference for experiences over things persists, and travelers worldwide are demonstrating new demand for the unique. Potentially influenced by social media and entertainment, travelers are landing in lesser-known destinations in search of cultural immersion. Global spending on experiences is up 65 percent while spending on things is up 12 percent compared to 2019.

In the MENA region, travel and entertainment (T&E) spending by small

businesses was on an upward trajectory from January to March 2023, rising by 56 percent compared to the same period in 2022. Large businesses observed growth as well, but at smaller rates for the corresponding periods.

"Travelers want a good experience from the time they book their plane ticket to their first step on new soil, and companies that understand that are better positioned to establish longer and more valuable relationships with their consumers. This key shift in expectations has already started to change not only how companies work with their consumers, but also the way in which we travel," said Chief Economist, Asia Pacific and EEMEA, Mastercard, David Mann.

He added, "Mastercard delivers peace of



mind, convenience and value for consumers and businesses of all sizes as they adjust to the return of travel. Whether their journey is near or far, consumer, corporate and T&E card holders have access to an expanding list of programs, platforms and partnerships."



## Saudi tourism soars, travelers shy away from Kuwait

In its latest bid to attract global travelers and facilitate their entry into the country, Saudi Arabia announced a new 'instant e-visa' option, designed to facilitate entry of US, UK, and Schengen visa holders, as well as permanent residents of US, UK and any European Union country, by obtaining tourist e-visas to Saudi through [www.mofa.gov.sa](http://www.mofa.gov.sa).

The kingdom had previously extended regulation to provide visas on arrival to the six categories, as well as extended e-visa eligibility to residents of the GCC. The new initiative is just the latest step as Saudi makes it easier than ever for visitors to experience the authentic home of Arabia and contribute to Saudi's vision of reaching 100 million visits annually by 2030.

Since opening to tourism in 2019, Saudi has become one of the fastest-growing tourism markets globally, recording 93.5 million visits in 2022. This achievement is a result of the tremendous efforts of destinations across Saudi to provide visitors with unparalleled experiences and a seamless travel journey.

On the other hand, potential visitors to Kuwait are daunted by the procedures, rules and regulations involved in obtaining a visit visa to the country. These restrictive tourism policies are being put up even as neighboring countries, including Saudi Arabia, are accelerating efforts

to make it easier for visitors from across the world to travel to the region. In recent moves, Saudi Arabia has increased accessibility procedures and connectivity options, providing simplified entry routes to visitors with the focus being on enabling all travelers to enjoy their natural and cultural diversity. The new instant e-visa is among several initiatives that Saudi has launched over the past year to improve the visitor experience.

In 2022, Saudi Tourism Authority launched the Nusuk platform in collaboration with the Pilgrim Experience Program. Nusuk, Saudi's first ever official integrated digital platform, provides pilgrims and visitors an easy-to-use planning gateway for their journeys to Makkah, Madinah, and beyond. Earlier this year, Saudi also announced the launch of a new Stopover Visa, which is free-of-charge and available to passengers traveling on national carrier Saudia and the country's budget-airline flynas. The visa is open to travelers from an even greater number of countries than the tourism e-visa, and will allow visitors to stay in the country for up to 96 hours.

Saudi Arabia is largely an under-discovered destination with a rich cultural tradition and a great deal to offer. In Diriyah, the birthplace of Saudi, travelers can experience the luxury shopping and fine dining of Bujairi Terrace and at the UNESCO World Heritage site in AlUla, they can immerse themselves in a living museum holding over 200,000 years of human history. In Jeddah, visitors can explore the old historical district, Al Balad and this year, the world's most ambitious luxury tourism destination, the Red Sea Development, will debut its first hotels including Six Senses, St. Regis and a Ritz-Carlton Reserve.

## MoH celebrates World Blood Donor Day

Every year the world celebrates World Blood Donor Day (WBDD) on 14 June, to raise awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products and to thank voluntary, unpaid blood donors for their life-saving gifts of blood. A blood service that gives patients access to safe blood and blood products in sufficient quantity is a key component of an effective health system.

Speaking at a celebration organized by the Ministry of Health (MoH) to mark WBDD on Wednesday, Director of the Blood Transfusion Services Department, Dr. Reem Al-Radwan, said that the celebration is being held to honor all the distinguished donors and entities involved in donating and organizing blood donation campaigns over the past year.



The event, held under the auspices of the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadi and in the presence of a representative of the World Health Organization, was attended by a gathering of MoH personnel, blood donors and volunteers.

Pointing out that the Blood Transfusion Services Department collected more than 85,000 bags of blood and 7,500 bags of platelets last year, Dr. Al-Radwan added that these donations were from citizens



and residents of more than 75 nationalities, with the percentage of donations by citizens being about 56 percent and that of residents around 44 percent.

She explained that Kuwait participates on June 14 of each year in the World Health Organization's celebrations of the World Blood Donor Day, which is held this year under the slogan, 'Give blood, give plasma, share life, share often'. She added that the campaign focuses on patients in need of lifelong blood transfusion support, indicating the importance of the role that each individual can play by donating precious blood or plasma.

She noted that the campaign also highlights the importance of regular blood or plasma donation to ensure a safe and sustainable supply of blood and blood products around the world so that all patients in need can receive timely treatment.

Dr. Al-Radwan also noted that Kuwait's Central Blood Bank has received international recognition from the American Blood Banks Organization since 1989 due to its achievement of the highest quality standards in blood transfusion services.



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# Kuwait's efforts in mediating Saudi-Iran reconciliation praised

Chargé d'Affaires of the Iranian Embassy, C/brahim Norouzi, praised Kuwait's efforts in helping restore his country's relations with Saudi Arabia. In a statement to local media, he also commended Kuwait's role in mediating conflicts and in strengthening regional and international relations.

The chargé d'affaires added, "In light of the importance of cordial relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia to the region, and its international implications, several mediation initiatives were made at the regional and



international level to end the seven years of stagnation in relations between the two countries. Kuwait was among the active countries in this regard to help resume ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran."

He stressed that "Saudi Arabia and Iran decided in the end to pass this stage, and our friends and brothers welcomed this agreement and greeted it warmly." He added, "The imminent visit of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan to the Islamic Republic of Iran comes within the framework of

exchanging delegations in order to discuss the development and strengthening of bilateral relations between the two countries."

"The mutual reopening of embassies, political and consular missions of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is an important step towards implementing the Beijing agreement," said the Iranian Chargé d'Affaires.

He also revealed that the new ambassador of Iran to Kuwait Muhammad Tutonji is expected to arrive in Kuwait in July.

# Economy revives, lack of reforms hinder growth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Moreover, official reserve assets increased to US\$48.2 billion by the end of 2022, which adequately covers balance of payments financing risks.

Nevertheless, the IMF statement, which was released on 5 June as part of the Fund's annual Article IV consultative meetings in Kuwait, cautioned that the dominance of oil in the economy, coupled with global decarbonization trends necessitated that the country initiate long-pending fiscal and structural reforms to reinforce sustainability, and boost non-oil private sector-led growth.

Volatility in international oil prices and in oil production cuts are two-sided risks to growth and inflation over which Kuwait has little control, but which directly impacts the country's fiscal and external balances. Oil industry analysts point out that disquiet in recent months over global economic growth in 2023 forced oil prices down, which then led OPEC+ members to agree to further production cuts over and above those approved last October.

In early April, several OPEC+ countries, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, announced additional, voluntary production cuts totaling around 1.2 million barrels per day (mb/d) effective May and to continue to December 2023. For Kuwait, the production reduction amounts to 128,000 barrels per day, which results in daily output falling to 2.55 mb/d — a drop of nearly 4.8 percent from its earlier production quota of 2.68 mb/d.

Underscoring the risks from lower oil production and subsequent fall in revenues,

the IMF statement said that fiscal expansion outlined in the draft 2023/24 budget, could result in the country's overall fiscal and current account surpluses falling in 2023. The statement also pointed out that risk factors on the domestic front include delays in implementing necessary fiscal and structural reforms, and a procyclical fiscal policy — increased spending in 'good times' and expenditure cuts during 'bad times' — that impedes Kuwait's progress towards diversifying the economy, undermines competitiveness, and dampens investor confidence.

The government's inclination towards procyclical policies is evident in the draft expansionary budget for the current fiscal year (FY2023/24). The budget, which awaits parliamentary approval, envisages a deficit of KD6.8 billion, with expenditures increasing from the previous budget by 12 percent to reach KD26.3 billion, even as revenues are expected to decline by 17 percent to KD19.5 billion — based on an average conservative oil price figure of \$70 per barrel.

While a policy of fiscal expansion is welcome, the fact that the higher current spending is concentrated primarily on non-productive public sector wage bill increases of 13 percent, and on a 34 percent hike in subsidies and social benefits, is certainly concerning. The improvident spending policy is projected to drag down the overall fiscal surplus to 6.9 percent of GDP in 2023, and cause it steadily drop thereafter into deficit over the medium term.

To reverse the projected fiscal surplus weakening beyond 2023/24, and to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability as well as support intergenerational equity, the IMF statement

recommended several measures that Kuwait could implement to ensure fiscal consolidation. These include reducing current spending by rationalizing the public-sector wage bill, as well as gradually phasing out large energy subsidies, and replacing them with targeted income support to vulnerable households.

Other remedial measures include raising non-oil revenue by introducing a 5 percent value-added tax (VAT), and levying excise taxes on tobacco and sugary drinks, as agreed by GCC countries in 2015-16, but which Kuwait has so far not implemented. In addition, the prevailing 15 percent corporate income tax should be expanded to cover domestic firms, which would bring Kuwait into conformity with the OECD-led global minimum corporate tax agreement for multinationals.

On the structural side, the IMF called for implementing a comprehensive package of well-sequenced reforms that promote strong and sustainable growth while enhancing labor productivity and diversifying the economy away from oil. These include labor market reforms needed to incentivize nationals to seek private sector employment, by gradually aligning compensation and working conditions across the public and private sectors.

Additional reforms suggested ranged from providing enhanced training programs to empower youth with necessary skills and expertise, as well as harmonizing labor market policies between nationals and expatriates. Other reforms, to make the business environment more conducive to private sector development, as well as to strengthen competition and promote investment, included relaxing foreign ownership restrictions on firms, enhancing public land allocation for commercial development, and longer lease terms.

The fiscal consolidation and reforms called for by the IMF statement reiterate what the World Bank, rating agencies, and local economic experts have been urging for ages without avail. However, it is not just the lack of fiscal and structural reforms that hamper Kuwait's growth story, there are also several institutional weaknesses that have gone unaddressed for far too long. Some of these weaknesses can be attributed to the insignificance, noncompliance and instability of many state institutions. For instance, there are many public entities that have become in most part irrelevant as they do not have the authority or capacity to implement changes even if they wanted to.

Furthermore, the presence of political and social actors who do not believe in complying with institutional rules and regulations weakens and impedes the effectiveness of many institutions. Adding to these institutional woes are instabilities arising from various factors, including indecisiveness by decision-makers that delay appointments to top posts, policy uncertainties due to parliamentary tussles, and political precariousness of repeated governments.

Inability to institute fiscal and structural reforms as well as institutional shortcomings have over the years hindered economic and social development in Kuwait and impinged on economic freedoms of citizens and residents alike. The combined impact of these economic limitations was highlighted in the latest iteration of the global index on economic freedom.

Published annually by the daily Wall Street Journal and the Heritage Foundation — a

leading Conservative advocacy think-tank in the United States — the 2023 Index on Economic Freedom, reveals Kuwait in the 108th position among 182 countries reviewed by the index last year. Kuwait, which attained a total score of 56.7 out of a possible 100, not only scored below the global average of 59.3, but was also the only country among the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to drop in its scores from the 2022 Index.

Economic freedom as defined by the Index is the fundamental right of every human being to have the freedom to control their own labor and property. In an economically free society, individuals are free to work, produce, consume, and invest in any way they please. Also, in economically free societies, governments allow labor, capital, and goods to move freely, and refrain from coercion or constraint of liberty beyond the extent necessary to protect and maintain liberty itself.

The Index on Economic Freedom, which has been published annually since 1995, measures economic freedom based on 12 quantitative and qualitative factors, grouped into four broad pillars of economic freedom: Rule of Law (property rights, government integrity, judicial effectiveness); Government Size (government spending, tax burden, fiscal health); Regulatory Efficiency (business freedom, labor freedom, monetary freedom); and Open Markets (trade freedom, investment freedom, financial freedom).

It is commendable that Kuwait improved its scorings from a year earlier in certain metrics of the index, including in property rights and business freedom, and scored a blisteringly high 99.7 in tax burden, as well as maintained its relatively high scores in being an open market. However, it fared less well in other metrics of economic freedom, most notably in labor freedom due to lack of flexibility in labor regulations, and monetary freedom arising from the government's numerous profligate subsidies, as well as its role in controlling prices through state-owned utilities and enterprises.

In its overview on Kuwait, the Economic Freedom Index noted that while there have been efforts to enhance the efficiency of the business regulatory framework, overall progress has been mixed. In addition, the lack of institutional capacity to defend property rights effectively, and the fact that corruption, despite some progress, continues to undermine prospects for long-term economic development, have been identified in the report as among institutional weaknesses that curtail the country's prospects for economic growth and development.

There is no denying that sustained policy weaknesses, a sluggish bureaucracy, and political gridlocks in parliament, have in the past thwarted attempts at any reforms, deterred investors and slowed down the stream of public-private partnership projects. Despite these bureaucratic and political obstacles, the IMF in its concluding statement suggested that with the economy currently in a stronger position, now would be an apt time to push through the much-needed fiscal and structural reforms.

But, with results from the snap general elections held on 6 June indicating that the status quo in friction between the executive and legislature is likely to continue, hopes of implementing the necessary economic reforms looks as distant as ever.

## Lulu Kuwait Director Commends Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Co. on Successful Launch of Toyota Crown 2023



Lulu Kuwait Director, Mr. Mohamad Haris, graced the launch ceremony of the highly anticipated Toyota Crown 2023, held at the prestigious Al Ardiyah-AlSayer Multipurpose Hall on 14th June 2023. In a show of support and admiration, Mr. Haris extended his warm wishes and heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer, CEO of Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Co., and Mr. Faisal Bader Al-Sayer, Chairman of the esteemed organization, on their remarkable achievement.

Mr. Haris, impressed by the unveiling of the all-new Toyota Crown 2023, expressed his admiration for Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Co.'s commitment to delivering outstanding vehicles to the discerning Kuwaiti market. He emphasized the importance of such collaborations in driving the automotive industry forward and commended the leadership of Mr. Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer and Mr. Faisal Bader Al-Sayer for their visionary approach in shaping the future of mobility.



### Exploring the Enchanting Hill Stations of India

India, with its diverse geographical features and climatic conditions, boasts a plethora of breathtaking hill stations. Nestled amidst majestic mountains, these destinations provide respite from the scorching heat and bustling city life. A series of articles over the next few weeks explores highlights of some of the most popular and captivating hill stations in India, showcasing their unique attractions and offering a glimpse into the natural beauty and cultural richness they offer to visitors in India and who come to India.

# Munnar, a Glimmering Ghats Getaway

With its unparalleled natural beauty,  
Munnar has become a sought-after destination

Nestled amidst the breathtaking Western Ghats in the southern Indian state of Kerala, Munnar stands as a testament to the state's natural wonders. Renowned for its verdant tea plantations, mist-covered hills, and serene ambiance, Munnar is a paradise for nature lovers and a respite for those seeking tranquility.

Located in the Idukki district of Kerala, Munnar is situated at an elevation of around 1,600 meters above sea level. Its name in local parlance translates to 'Three Rivers', referring to the confluence of the three rivers — Mudhirapuzha, Nallathanni, and Kundala — nearby. This unique geography gives Munnar its idyllic charm, with misty valleys, rolling hills, and gushing waterfalls that captivate visitors at every turn.

One of the highlights of Munnar is its lush tea plantations. The region's tea industry dates back to the 19th century when the British established vast tea estates. Today, Munnar is famous for its tea production, and a visit to the tea gardens is an absolute must. As you wander through the emerald-green plantations, you will witness the meticulous processes



involved in tea plucking and processing. The aroma of fresh tea leaves and the sight of tea workers adorned in traditional attire create an immersive experience that transports you to a bygone era.

The beauty of Munnar extends beyond the tea estates. Anamudi, the highest peak in South India, is a popular attraction for

trekkers and adventure enthusiasts. Rising to an impressive height of 2,695 meters, Anamudi provides breathtaking panoramic views of the surrounding valleys and forests. The Eravikulam National Park, located at the foothills of Anamudi, is another must-visit destination. This protected area is home to the endangered Nilgiri Tahr, a species of mountain goat, as well as a variety of flora and fauna.

Waterfalls add to the allure of Munnar's natural landscape. Among the notable ones are the Attukad, Lakkam, and Chinnakanal waterfalls. These cascades create a mesmerizing sight as they tumble down the hills, their crystal-clear waters reflecting the

The temperature remains mild, making it an ideal retreat for people looking to escape the scorching heat and enjoy cool, refreshing weather. It is advisable to carry warm clothing, as the temperatures can drop significantly, especially during the winter months.

Kerala is famous for its traditional Ayurvedic practices, and Munnar is no exception. Visitors can indulge in rejuvenating Ayurvedic massages, therapies, and wellness treatments offered by various resorts and spas in the region, providing a holistic and relaxing experience.



For those interested in the region's cultural heritage, the Tea Museum in Munnar is a treasure trove of information. Housed in a colonial-era tea factory, the museum showcases the history and evolution of tea production in the region. Visitors can learn about the various tea processing techniques and witness antique tea-making equipment. The museum also offers tea-tasting sessions, allowing visitors to savor the distinct flavors of Munnar's tea.

To further immerse yourself in Munnar's natural beauty, a visit to the Mattupetty Dam and the surrounding lake is highly recommended. The calm waters reflect the surrounding hills, creating a picturesque setting. The area is also known for its boating activities, where you can cruise along the reservoir, absorbing the tranquility and marveling at the scenic vistas.

Munnar's scenic beauty, tea gardens, wildlife, adventure activities, waterfalls, cultural experiences, pleasant climate, and Ayurvedic treatments make it an enticing destination for nature lovers, adventure enthusiasts, and those seeking tranquility and rejuvenation amidst nature's bounty. With its unparalleled natural beauty, Munnar has become a sought-after destination by Indians as well as foreign visitors.



sunlight. Many of these waterfalls offer picnic spots where visitors can relax and soak in the serenity of the surroundings.

Munnar's pleasant climate throughout the year is a welcome respite from the hot and humid weather in other parts of Kerala.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



# Fostering Climate Agency Where It Counts



**Rania Al-Mashat and Erik Berglöff**

Rania Al-Mashat is Egypt's Minister of International Cooperation.

Erik Berglöff is Chief Economist of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

The gap between the resources needed to achieve net-zero greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050 and the resources that are available currently amounts to trillions of dollars, and is growing. As many developing and emerging economies lose ground in the wake of the pandemic, public and private capital must be mobilized to accelerate mitigation and adaptation efforts. But this requires governments to produce credible plans for achieving global sustainability goals, to design and implement these policies themselves, and to ensure that their strategies' costs and benefits are fairly distributed.

Last November's United Nations Climate Change Conference in Egypt (COP27), dubbed the 'implementation COP', laid the groundwork for a fairer, more robust climate-finance system. The conference's 'guidebook' called on the international community to advance a transformative agenda that accounts for developing countries' national priorities and ensures equitable access to financial and technical resources. It included in its definition of climate justice "equitable access to quality

and quantity climate financing" that considers "historical responsibility for climate change" and "supports resilient development pathways, leaving no one behind."

With this in mind, Egypt launched its Nexus of Water, Food, and Energy (NWFE) investment program during COP27, providing a practical and replicable model for ensuring a just net-zero transition through the NWFE's concept of 'country platforms'.

These platforms are meant to help countries build state capacities, and emphasize the importance of developing countries' agency (or 'ownership' in aid parlance).

selected by the Egyptian government — worth a total of \$14.7 billion. The projects seek to replace existing inefficient thermal power plants with renewable energy; enhance small farmers' adaptation to climate risks; modernize farming practices to increase irrigation efficiency and boost crop yields; strengthen the resilience of vulnerable regions; create water desalination capacity; and establish early-warning systems.

By using innovative financing mechanisms to mobilize public funds, technical assistance, and private investment, Egypt seeks to leverage its partnerships with the MDBs and other development stakeholders to accelerate

emissions. These types of performance-linked financial instruments could provide many developing and emerging countries with an opportunity to lower their debt burden or obtain low-cost funds. By tying development assistance to progress on a common global target, such swaps could also prove to be significant in mitigating the worst effects of climate change.

As a 2018 report by the G20 Eminent Persons Group on Global Financial Governance notes, collective action through country platforms has the power to unlock public and private investment to achieve climate-resilient and sustainable development. Such investment platforms can take different forms. For example, Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs), first introduced during COP26 in Scotland in 2021, aim to direct private capital toward decarbonization targets in the energy sector. Since launching in South Africa, JETPs have also been established in Indonesia, India, Vietnam, and Senegal.

Egypt's NWFE initiative provides a useful model for how developing and emerging countries can expedite the implementation of their national climate agendas in line with global priorities. By encouraging coordination among domestic and external stakeholders, such programs could help bridge the information gap, establish shared standards, and increase the number of bankable projects.

But the platform's success hinges on domestic agency, transparency, and accountability in managing these partnerships. Most importantly, the green transition must be perceived as just in order to be sustainable. Predictability is particularly important for the poor, and fairness is essential to winning long-term public support for climate measures. To achieve these goals, governments must lead on climate finance. The net-zero transition depends on it.

“By encouraging coordination among domestic and external stakeholders, programs such as Egypt's NWFE could help bridge the information gap, establish shared standards, and increase the number of bankable projects.”

NWFE (pronounced 'nuafiy', which is Arabic for 'fulfilling pledges') builds on Egypt's commitments under the 2015 Paris climate agreement and aims to attract financial support for the country's development agenda while accelerating climate action. The stakeholders include multilateral development banks (MDBs) such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the African Development Bank, the European Investment Bank, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

The NWFE platform integrates several high-priority water, food, and energy projects — all

its climate agenda. This would support the country's green transition and show that climate action and economic development can go hand in hand. Egypt can also rely on these partnerships to help it phase out 'brown' oil, gas, and mineral assets. For example, partial concessional financial support from the United States will enable the country to retrain (or retire) fossil-fuel workers.

Yet, the most innovative instrument may be debt-for-climate swaps, whereby Egypt receives partial debt relief from, say, Germany, in exchange for commitments to reduce greenhouse-gas





# AI discovers drug to combat AMR

Antimicrobials, including antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiparasitics, are medicines used to prevent and treat infections in humans, animals and plants. Resistance to these antimicrobials by microbes, referred to as Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a threat to global health. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared that AMR is one of the top 10 global public health threats facing humanity.

Misuse and overuse of antimicrobials, as well as poor infection prevention and control, are the main drivers in the development of drug-resistant pathogens worldwide. Without effective antimicrobials, the success of modern medicine in treating infections, including during major surgery and cancer chemotherapy, would be at increased risk.

A growing list of infections, including pneumonia, tuberculosis, blood poisoning, gonorrhea, and foodborne diseases, are becoming harder, and sometimes impossible, to treat as antibiotics become less effective. Investment in research and development of new antibiotics, vaccines, diagnostics and other tools, has been slow in recent years due to patent restrictions, cumbersome approval measures and lengthy, expensive clinical trials before potential drugs can be marketed.

Artificial Intelligence (AI), which has in recent months received a bad rap from some in the scientific and technology community, besides being demonized by many in the media, is now being recognized as a potential protagonist in the

fight against AMR. Researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States, and at McMaster University in Canada, recently used AI algorithms to identify a new antibiotic that can kill a type of bacteria that is responsible for many drug-resistant infections.

If developed for use in patients, the drug could help to combat *Acinetobacter baumannii*, a species of bacteria that is often found in hospitals and can lead to pneumonia, meningitis, and other serious infections. The microbe is also a leading cause of infections among soldiers wounded in wars and conflict zones. The bacteria has been found to survive in hospital settings for long periods and can build antibiotic resistance genes from its environment.

The researchers identified the new drug from a library of nearly 7,000 potential drug compounds using a machine-learning model that they trained to evaluate whether a chemical compound will inhibit the growth of *A. baumannii*. The study further supports the premise that AI can significantly accelerate and expand our search for novel antibiotics that can help combat problematic pathogens.

Over the past several decades, many pathogenic bacteria have become increasingly resistant to existing antibiotics, while very few new antibiotics have been developed. Researchers behind the current finding set out to combat this growing problem by using machine learning, a type of artificial intelligence that can learn to recognize patterns in vast amounts of



data. They hoped this approach could be used to identify new antibiotics whose chemical structures are different from any existing drugs.

In their initial demonstration, the researchers trained a machine-learning algorithm to identify chemical structures that could inhibit growth of the *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), a bacteria commonly found in the lower intestine of warm-blooded organisms. In a screen of more than 100 million compounds, that algorithm yielded a molecule that the researchers called halicin. This molecule could kill not only *E. coli* but several other bacterial species that are resistant to treatment.

Once they proved that machine-learning approaches can work well for complex antibiotic discovery tasks, they turned their attention to *Acinetobacter*, what is considered to be public enemy No. 1 for multidrug-resistant bacterial infections.

To obtain training data for their computational model, the researchers first exposed *A. baumannii* grown in a lab dish to about 7,500 different chemical compounds to see which ones could inhibit growth of the microbe. Then they fed the structure of each molecule into the model. They

also told the model whether each structure could inhibit bacterial growth or not. This allowed the algorithm to learn chemical features associated with growth inhibition.

Once the model was trained, the researchers used it to analyze a set of 6,680 compounds it had not seen before. This analysis, which took less than two hours, yielded a few hundred top hits. Of these, the researchers chose 240 to test experimentally in the lab, focusing on compounds with structures that were different from those of existing antibiotics or molecules from the training data.

Those tests yielded nine antibiotics, including one that was very potent. This compound, which was originally explored as a potential diabetes drug, turned out to be extremely effective at killing *A. baumannii* but had no effect on other species of bacteria. Researchers perceive 'narrow spectrum' killing ability as a desirable feature for antibiotics because it minimizes the risk of bacteria rapidly spreading resistance against the drug. Another advantage is that the drug would likely spare the beneficial bacteria that live in the human gut.

In their studies in mice, the researchers showed that the drug, which they named abaucin, could treat wound infections caused by *A. baumannii*. They also showed, in lab tests, that it works against a variety of drug-resistant *A. baumannii* strains isolated from human patients. The scientists are now working to optimize the medicinal properties of the compound, in hopes of developing it for eventual use in patients. The researchers also plan to use their AI modeling approach to identify potential antibiotics for other types of drug-resistant infections, including those caused by *Staphylococcus aureus*, a bacteria responsible for many human diseases, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, which causes infections in blood, lungs and other parts of the body following surgery.



## Quality of relaxation affects mood

Relaxing, especially after a strenuous day at work, helps our mind and body repair, recharge and recover. A new study by researchers at the University of Mannheim in Germany indicates that the quality of time spent unwinding after work can affect our mood and how we feel the next day.

The research team found that employees who experienced good recovery following unwinding after work the previous day were more calm and awake the following day, although these feelings did decline strongly throughout the course of the day.

On the other hand, when employees experienced worse recovery, they had lower levels of calmness and wakefulness the next day. Additionally, on those days these feelings tended to remain more stable. Explaining their study, the researchers noted that recovery is the process by which our mind and body restores and rejuvenates. We need daily recovery in order to avoid excessive wear and tear and burnout.

The scientists drew their conclusion after analyzing daily diary entries maintained by 124 employees, who volunteered to participate in the study, over a period of 887 days. About two-thirds of the respondents were women and their median age was between 36 and 40 years. Ages ranged from 21 to 65. About two-thirds were college educated.

The study participants reported that their jobs had a medium-level workload and a relatively high level of complexity, autonomy, and team-member exchange. They additionally said that they experienced relatively low levels of chronic exhaustion, medium levels of job involvement, and high levels of work-related self-efficacy.

During the study, workers were asked to fill out daily surveys just prior to beginning their work, at two-hour intervals throughout the day, and after their workday had ended. These surveys assessed such things as mood, sleep quality, recovery, work events, and work breaks. The team then analyzed the relationship between recovery and people's moods the next day.

The findings indicated that psychological detachment was indirectly related to the quality of sleep, which then affected wakefulness, calmness, and pleasantness the next day. In other words, detaching from work was linked to better sleep quality and sleep quality was related to positive mood states. The results underscore the importance of getting quality sleep; the ability to psychologically detach from work to help with getting quality sleep; and experiencing relaxation.

Based on their analysis, the researchers postulated that it is important for people to engage in activities that help mentally disconnect from work, such as engaging in hobbies and other activities that require focused attention, spending time with loved ones, connecting with others socially, or practicing mindfulness. Additionally, engaging in relaxation techniques, accomplishing tasks that provide a sense of mastery, and having control over personal time can also contribute to effective recovery.

If you cannot get quality recovery the day before, do not write off the next day as a waste. You can try to incorporate relaxation techniques during the workday, such as brief moments of deep breathing, stretching, or mindfulness exercises. Another strategy is to seek out social interactions with your co-workers during breaks. You can also do work-related tasks that help you feel a sense of mastery or control over your work. Finally, individuals can try incorporating positive affirmations or visualization exercises to shift their mindset towards a more positive state, even in the absence of quality recovery.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Comparing Pain Across Species



**Peter Singer**

Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, is Founder of the charity *The Life You Can Save* and the author, most recently, of *Animal Liberation Now*

In recent weeks, I have been touring the United States and the United Kingdom, promoting Animal Liberation Now, my new book on the ways in which we are inflicting suffering on hundreds of billions of non-human animals, especially in factory farms. The persistence of this vast, entirely unnecessary suffering is one of the great moral issues of our time.

Some people doubt this claim because they think that humans matter incomparably more than animals. But it is increasingly accepted, among the general public and ethicists, that preventing suffering is morally important, irrespective of the species of the being who is suffering.

But this concern for other species raises a much more difficult question: how do we compare the suffering of animals of different species? Given our limited time and resources, how many chickens should we help instead of helping one human? An equally perplexing question can be asked about the decision to focus on preventing the suffering of some animals — for instance, pigs

“

But this concern for other species raises a more difficult question: how do we compare the suffering of animals of different species? Given our limited time and resources, how many chickens should we help instead of helping one human?

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— rather than others, when we are harming many more of the latter. For example, each year we raise, in close confinement, and then kill, without prior stunning, more than 15 times as many fish as the entire human population of the planet. What moral standing does their suffering have?

Here, we need to consider some essential philosophical and neuroscientific issues. How do our own capacities to suffer differ from those of animals, and how can we compare the capacities for suffering of different kinds of animals? We also need to ask: Is preventing suffering all that matters, or do other things matter,



too, like thwarting individuals' future-oriented preferences? If it is wrong to thwart such preferences, then the differences between humans and other animals, and between different species of nonhuman animals, may become more significant.

Rethink Priorities, an American think tank, has been studying these questions. Researchers surveyed hundreds of studies of animal sentience to provide a basis for estimating how much we should weigh the suffering of a range of animals, relative to the weight we give to the suffering of humans.

To simplify the task, they assumed the utilitarian view that promoting happiness and preventing suffering is all that matters. They also assumed that we should not care any less about suffering experienced by an animal only because it is not human. Provided that the intensity and duration of suffering are equal, we should care about it equally, no matter who experiences it.

To investigate how much animals suffer, as compared to humans, the researchers began by accepting, in accordance with current scientific understanding, that the basic neurochemistry that underlies emotional feelings is essentially similar, at least in all mammals. The researchers then looked at both behavioral and physiological evidence of the suffering of various species of animals. In *Animal Liberation Now*, I discuss one clear example of behavioral evidence. Commercially raised chickens have been bred to grow so fast that their immature leg bones have difficulty in supporting their weight. As a result, they often become lame, trying not to put weight on one leg.

In one study, chickens taken from commercial flocks were offered two differently colored foods, one of which contained an anti-inflammatory drug. Lame birds soon learned to choose more of the food with the drug, and their limping decreased in proportion to the dose they consumed. This indicates that lame chickens are likely to be in pain when they walk and suggests a close parallel with the effect that relieving pain has on humans.

Other relevant behavioral evidence indicating pain can include changes in heart rate, blood pressure, pupil

dilation, perspiration, hormonal levels, and metabolic activity. Here, too, chickens bred for rapid growth

serve as an example: the skeletal, heart, and lung problems that they experience are evidence of suffering.

Drawing on this evidence, the researchers at Rethink Priorities developed a set of estimates for how we might weigh the suffering of some representative animals.

If we assign the value 1.00 to humans (and round the estimates to two decimal places, to mitigate any misplaced sense of exactitude), their estimates suggest that we might value pigs at 0.52, chickens at 0.33, and octopuses at 0.21. They ranked all fish at less than 0.1, with carp at 0.09 and salmon at 0.06. Interestingly, they ranked bees between these two fish species, at 0.07, and crayfish lower, at 0.04.

Obviously, this effort to draw on the best available empirical research to compare the capacities of animals of different species, and even of different phyla, is open to challenge. But the importance of the effort is indisputable. The possibility of our own species' moral progress may depend on it.

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