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hosts diplomats, members
of diplomatic missions

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budget-friendly
country to live in

LOCAL
Optical fiber coverage
still distant dream
for most areas



Sizzling summer, a foretaste of future weather



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Reports of cities in many countries broiling under the onslaught of record high summer temperatures were reminiscent of similar reports last year, and the year before that. According to the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES), a global climate and energy think-tank, hot days in a year are getting more intense, more frequent, and lasting longer. Further confirmation of heat intensity this summer came from the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), which reported that July 2023 was the hottest month since 1880, and that for four consecutive days in July the average temperature exceeded previous records..

Sizzling summer heat seared countries across Europe, North Africa, and Asia, as well as in parts of North and South America. The intense temperatures sent people and animals scurrying to seek shelter in the shade, while infrastructure and utilities buckled under the heat. In towns and cities hit by heatwaves, warped roads disrupted transportation networks, and overstrained power grids and depleted water supplies struggled to keep pace with increased demand. The fiery heat also ignited blazing wildfires, dried up watering holes, destroyed entire herds of livestock, and withered crops on farmlands. All-time high temperatures also impacted surface waters of the Mediterranean Sea, parts of North Atlantic



Ocean, and in seas elsewhere, decimating vast tracts of coral reefs and marine life forms.

But scorching temperatures were just one of the many climate-related miseries that the world has had to confront in recent years. Coming on the back of unprecedented heatwaves since last year, the torrential rains that lashed mainland China in early August were the heaviest recorded in over 140 years. Severe downpours were also recorded in places across Asia, and in Europe, entire areas in countries stretching from Slovenia to Spain and Sweden were submerged by floodwaters. Canada also witnessed record heavy rains and flooding last summer, while parts of Alaska were inundated by waters from glacial melting.

Kuwait was no exception to the high temperatures witnessed elsewhere in summer. Although we in Kuwait are accustomed to high summer temperatures, the intensity and longer duration of peak temperatures over the last few

years have surprised many, and become a major cause for concern to health authorities and

to policy- and decision-makers. Temperatures in June and July of this year were, once again, above decadal averages, and mirrored the record setting temperatures registered in 2022 and 2021, when Kuwait earned the daunting distinction of being among the hottest places on the planet.

Scorching summer temperatures in early August also strained electricity and water supplies, with the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy (MEW) forced to tap into its strategic reserves on 2 August when water consumption outpaced production by 29 million gallons.

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Expats in Kuwait ordered to pay traffic fines before departure



Ministry of Interior has directed its General Traffic Department (GTD) to ensure that traffic fines levied against vehicles plying Kuwait's roads are expeditiously collected.

In line with this directive, the GTD has decided that from Saturday, 19 August, expatriate vehicle owners will have to pay all traffic fines registered against them before exiting Kuwait for whatever reason.

In a statement released on Friday, the ministry's General Directorate of Security

Relations and Media noted that the decision, which falls within the framework of measures to collect the ministry's debts owed by expatriates pursuant to Act 17 (1959) and Act 67 (1976).

The statement added that payment for the penalties could be made online or through the various traffic departments around the country, or through GTD offices at land, maritime and air border outlets, including at Kuwait airport.

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LuLu Hypermarket to promote Thai products in Kuwait

In a significant step towards enhancing economic relations with Kuwait, officials from the Thailand Embassy in Kuwait visited the regional office of LuLu Hypermarket on 14 August. The focus of the visit was to hold talks with the management of Kuwait's leading retailer and discuss ways to enhance the pivotal role that LuLu Hypermarket plays in promoting Thai products within the Kuwait market.

The delegation was welcomed by Director of Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait, Mohmad Haris along with top management officials. Following the welcome, the two sides engaged in productive discussions that centered around the substantial trade partnership between Kuwait and Thailand, with particular emphasis on the expansive assortment of Thai goods featured within LuLu Hypermarket's diverse product range.

LuLu Group's establishment of product sourcing centers in Thailand underscores its unwavering commitment to bringing premium Thai merchandise to Kuwaiti consumers. Notably, LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait forms a cornerstone in the economic alliance between the two countries, importing a diverse array of over 1,000 products from Thailand. These encompass a wide spectrum of categories such as food, fresh produce, non-food items, garments, accessories,



and more. The meeting provided an opportune platform for the exchange of ideas and visions. The embassy officials expressed their admiration for the flourishing partnership between Lulu Hypermarket and Thailand, stressing the significance of such collaborations in fostering cultural exchange and bolstering economic ties between the two nations. They highlighted Thailand's steadfast dedication to providing top-notch products tailored to the preferences of Kuwaiti consumers.

Mr. Haris extended his appreciation for the

pivotal role played by Thai products in enriching Lulu Hypermarket's offerings. He reiterated Lulu Hypermarket's unwavering commitment to sustaining the import of an eclectic range of Thai goods, thereby enriching the shopping experience for Kuwaiti residents.

Amidst discussions, a momentous decision was made to host a dedicated Thailand Promotion Festival at the end of September 2023, in collaboration with the Thailand Embassy in Kuwait. This initiative aims to celebrate the richness of Thai culture and products, with

the embassy providing a Thai chef to prepare authentic dishes for the public during the promotion period. The festivities align with Thailand's national day celebrations in December, where Lulu Hypermarket will host events across its hypermarkets, spotlighting Thai fresh items such as fruits, vegetables, groceries, and fresh juices among others.

In line with its commitment to cultural diversity, Lulu Hypermarket traditionally conducts an annual ASEAN Festival, highlighting the products and culture of ASEAN member countries. This year, the festival is planned for the month of September, showcasing the vibrant tapestry of ASEAN nations and further enhancing cultural exchange.

The meeting concluded on a note of optimism, underlining the shared commitment of both parties to nurturing mutual growth and cooperation. It marks the beginning of a strengthened relationship that not only fosters economic ties but also celebrates the cultural tapestry shared by Kuwait and Thailand. The collaborative efforts between LuLu Hypermarket and the Thailand Embassy in Kuwait are set to invigorate the market and provide Kuwaiti residents with an enhanced selection of superior Thai products.

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AmCham Kuwait and the US Military host MATOC Day



AmCham Kuwait hosted the Multiple Award Task Order Contracts (MATOC) Industry Day in partnership with the 408th Brigade, the Regional Contracting Center (RCC-KU), and the 386th ECONS. This event showcased an exceptional upcoming opportunity for construction companies to compete on various requirements for the US military in Kuwait.

This event was aimed to highlight the potential opportunity, as well as increase the number of competitive bids received, and provide attendees with the information required to compete in these efforts. This was also a unique chance for companies to provide their company profiles and capabilities, and to ask specific questions regarding the overview of this five-year construction contract.

During the event, the US Air Force presented their own Multiple Award Construction Contract (MACC), a multiple award Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract, with the prospect award to up to five contractors with a contract threshold of \$75 million. Expected solicitations are to be posted as early as FY 25 (October 1, 2024), with a contract duration of five years.

The primary objective of the event was to educate vendors on effective participation in the MATOC and MACC. Knowing essential prerequisites of these contracts provided attendees with valuable insights that empower them to confidently navigate the processes involved in contracting with the US Army and Airforce. The initiative also underscored AmCham Kuwait's unwavering commitment to equipping businesses with essential knowledge and tools, enabling seamless engagement in endeavors that reinforce Kuwait-US relations.



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Saudi Embassy Diwaniya hosts diplomats, members of diplomatic missions



The Saudi embassy hosted its "Third Diplomatic Diwaniya," an event aimed at fostering stronger connections among members of diplomatic missions accredited to Kuwait. Diplomats from a range of friendly nations, as well as regional and international organizations were part of this esteemed gathering.

The Deputy Saudi Ambassador, H.E. Yahya Hassan Al-Qahtani, along with Dr. Jamil bin Musa Al-Hamid, the cultural attaché, and other Saudi embassy representatives, extended a warm welcome to the attendees. All the attendees expressed deep satisfaction with their involvement in this Diwaniya event. They lauded it as a platform for fruitful meetings,

exchange of ideas, and meaningful social interactions among mission members.

This event offered an opportunity for the diplomatic community to reinforce their connections and collaborations within the society. Attendees also praised the initiative behind the establishment of the diplomatic Diwaniya, which has evolved into a significant

social and political forum.

An interesting note is that Prince Sultan bin Saad, the Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Kuwait, took the lead in founding this Diwaniya. It was inaugurated in Kuwait last year and has since become a unique platform for diplomats and embassy staff to convene and engage in a unified space.



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Co-op societies publish prices, availability of products online



President of the Federation of Consumer Cooperative Societies, Abdel Wahhab Al-Faris, has unveiled the launch of a comprehensive website featuring over 139,000 authorized products

available in cooperative societies, along with their latest prices.

The new initiative aims to provide citizens and residents with access to availability and accurate pricing information for various items sold in the cooperative societies, said Al-Faris. He added that individuals who come across discrepancies between prices displayed on coop shelves and those published online by the Federation, are urged to report these mismatches to the Consumer Protection Department.

Al-Faris emphasized the Federation's commitment to combating arbitrary and unwarranted price increases in cooperatives, in order to safeguard the pockets of low and middle-income communities and bolster their purchasing capabilities. He stressed

that the new initiative was not intended to undermine the prices charged by merchants and suppliers, but rather to prioritize price stability and ensure affordability for all.

He underscored that, in an open economy, entities that are unable to consistently meet market demands eventually exit the market, allowing for financially sound individuals to step in as suppliers of quality goods at appropriate prices.

Al-Faris went on to add that the Federation will not endorse any price hikes until the official inflation rate recedes according to state data. This approach calls for comprehensive and equitable solutions that address citizens' concerns in conjunction with merchants' commercial interests.

Noting that the Federation conducts routine inspections of cooperative societies to monitor if any products not approved by the federation are on sale, Al Faris urged co-op society management to abstain from stocking and selling unapproved items unless they are officially integrated into the associations' and federation's systems.

He pointed out that, in this regard, the Federation regularly communicates directives to associations, urging adherence to circulars and ministerial resolutions designed to maintain market prices. The initiative also extends to encouraging alternative markets to offer items at union-established prices as part of the effort to combat inflation and unwarranted price hikes in the market.



Alpha Kappa Rho celebrate Golden Anniversary

Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

The Kuwait affiliate of Alpha Kappa Rho, the international humanitarian service fraternity and sorority, celebrated the group's 50th anniversary recently at the Carlton Tower Hotel with the full attendance of its registered members. The event was graced by Catholic cleric Ben Barrameda.

The function began with rgw Kuwait and Philippine National anthems, followed by the

AKRHO hymn and preamble. The opening remarks were delivered by Tony Paguibitan Jr. Grand Skeptron. Among the highlights of the event were, introduction of its set of officers from 2022-2024 period, intermission number showcased by the group's tiktokers, rendering of the group's history and congratulatory messages.

The second part of the event included a grand dinner, raffle draw, and the distribution of certificates, slide show featuring a former member, performance by Strawberry band and the ceremonial cutting of the cake.

The new study by Proxyrack, a leading proxy service provider, analyzed the percentage of the population using VPNs, the state's restrictions on accessing pornography, using VPN, and torrent services, as well as the percentage of internet users in each country, to determine which countries use VPNs the most. The study found that 19.2 percent of the population in Kuwait use VPN services to secure and ensure privacy of their connection. The rate of VPN adoption as a percentage of the population was found to be the highest in the United Arab Emirates at 43.2 percent, followed by Qatar in second spot with 39.2 percent adoption. Singapore came in 3rd place with an adoption rate of 37.1 percent.

Other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states that ranked in the top-ten were Saudi Arabia, which came in 4th spot with 27.1 percent of population using VPN services, and Oman in 5th place, with 26.5 percent of people adopting VPN.

The Proxyrack findings confirmed that the top three countries that use the internet the most are the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, with all at 100 percent internet usage. All three countries have also restricted use of VPNs. In addition the United Arab Emirates has also banned any form of torrents, where residents in the country could face a fine or even jail time if caught torrenting files.



Kuwait ranks among top-ten in VPN usage

New research reveals that Kuwait ranked ninth among the top ten countries in the world in terms of adopting virtual private networks (VPN) by citizens and residents.

Virtual private networks are created to secure a connection between a computing device and a computer network while using the public Internet. While the major benefits of VPN include increased privacy and security in internet connections, it is also used to bypass internet censorship by some governments, institutions and companies.

Government to face heat in parliament over extraordinary pensions

Recent decision by the Council of Ministers on new regulations and criteria for awarding exceptional pensions to those holding leadership positions, has been roundly criticized by several lawmakers. Some of these MPs have demanded the scrapping of Article 80 of the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) law, and called for making it a priority issue to be discussed in the upcoming session of parliament.

Article 80 of the Social Insurance Law stipulates that "The Council of Ministers is authorized to grant extraordinary pensions or bonuses to insured individuals, pension recipients, beneficiaries, or other Kuwaiti citizens, even if they aren't subject to the provisions of this law."

In this regard, representative Dr. Jenan Bushehri has announced her intention to interrogate Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Minister of National Assembly Affairs, Isa Al-Kandari, in the upcoming parliamentary session. She also expressed her disappointment at the government's recent guidelines for granting extraordinary pensions, and said that it was regrettable that the government failed to rectify the situation in due time, and once again chose to pamper ministers and leaders over the well-being of citizens and retirees.

It is worth noting that last January, Dr. Bushehri had submitted a similar interrogation concerning 'extraordinary pensions' to



the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Barak Al-Shitan. However, the government resigned a week later thereby nullifying the interrogation plan.

Adding to the demand by Dr. Bushehri, representative Abdullah Al-Mudhaf emphasized, "Our stance against these salaries remains resolute, and we are committed to the proposal of repealing Article 80 of the Insurance Law. This proposal takes precedence in the upcoming session, and it serves as the foundation for collaboration between us and the government."

Providing a contrary viewpoint, Representative Saud Al-Asfour contended that "any discussions about a complete abolition of Article 80 is unacceptable," adding that, "establishing a cap and an upper limit for salaries is the only viable option that avoids adversely affecting numerous Kuwaiti families."

Beach barbecues permitted under strict guidelines

New regulations and amendments to the law governing municipal waste management and cleanliness of public spaces, now permit the barbecuing of foods on beaches subject to guidelines and permissions.

A ministerial decree issued last week by Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Fahd Al-Shula, introduced 33 additional articles that render null and void Ministerial Resolution 190 of 2008 on waste management and cleanliness of public spaces.

One of the pivotal elements within the new set of regulations is found in Article 10, subsection (b), which permits beachside barbecues in accordance with stipulated guidelines and designated areas, subject to the issuance of a directive by the Director General of the Municipality.



However, the regulations strictly prohibit barbecuing on sidewalks, streets, roads, plazas, public spaces, state-owned properties, and public parks.

Furthermore, Article 12 of the regulations expressly forbids individuals from leaving neglected or damaged vehicles, marine vessels, mobile prefab chalets, and the like on streets, sidewalks, and open public plazas or squares.

Kuwait ranked as most budget-friendly country to live in

A new study that analyzed 20 selected cities around the world on the earning potential and the cost of living for residents in those cities, found Kuwait to rank in top position.

The list, published by 'Workyard', a US-based workforce management solutions provider, based its findings on an analysis of data from 20 cities where individuals can secure substantial earnings without a commensurate expenditure on living costs.



Workyard found that residents in Kuwait had an average per capita income of KD1,900 (\$6,199), and the cost of living in the city amounted to just KD232 (\$752.70). This exceptional positioning solidifies Kuwait as the foremost city globally for offering residents a highly favorable and budget-friendly environment, enabling them to retain a substantial portion of their earnings after fulfilling essential expenses, said the firm in its report. The company clarified that the data originated from authoritative government employment sources. It compared the average monthly income for each city with the corresponding living expenses for the year 2023. The resultant rankings highlight cities

that offer enticing prospects for those seeking a lifestyle characterized by both high income and low expenses. Notwithstanding the clarification on authenticity provided by Workyard, the data fallacies and shoddy research on Kuwait are too glaring to ignore. To begin with, the publishers were apparently unaware that Kuwait is a country and not a city, or that taking per capita income as representative of the earning potential of residents, would grossly deviate results from reality.

The Workyard report will undoubtedly provide yet another byte of inaccurate information that is likely to be widely shared, and probably 'liked', on social media platforms.

The so-called 'research and analysis' goes on to note that three cities in the United Arab Emirates, namely Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah, have also retained their positions in the list of the top 10 most affordable global cities, with Kuwait securing the coveted first place.

Abu Dhabi clinches the second spot, boasting a high income and a low cost of living at \$7,154 per month in contrast to expenditures of approximately \$873.10. Meanwhile, Riyadh secures the third place, featuring an average monthly income of \$6,245, juxtaposed with living costs amounting to \$814.90.

Beyond the Middle East, the Australian city of Melbourne stands out as an attractive location to reside in, offering an average monthly income of \$7,312 alongside living expenses totaling about \$1,079.20. In the global list, London and San Francisco occupy the eighth and ninth positions, with monthly incomes of \$8,411 and \$9,249 respectively, while sustaining living costs of \$1,260.80 and \$1,440.10 per month. Notably, Zurich and the Norwegian city of Oslo also hover near the top ten.

Cabinet approves social allowance for micro enterprise owners

During its regular weekly meeting last week, the Council of Ministers approved a ministerial proposal to pay monthly social allowance and children allowance to Kuwaiti owners of micro-enterprises and businesses of a special nature.

In a statement following the cabinet meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Issa Al-Kandari noted that the ministerial proposal to grant the allowances was made by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and in line with the decision of the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Muhammad Othman Al-Aiban in this regard.

The move aims to improve the business environment in Kuwait, encourage young nationals to open and operate their own micro-enterprises and practice activities of a special nature. It also aims to cut the financial burdens on the state budget through reducing the number of applicants for employment in the public sector.

During its weekly meeting the Cabinet also reviewed a number of reports submitted by the Head of the Government Performance Follow-up Agency Sheikh Ahmad Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, including a report on the agency's performance for the year 2022 on



its follow-up to enforcement of ministerial decisions and the implementation of government projects, as well as on the public opinion poll conducted by the agency to improve the quality of services provided by some government agencies.

The ministers also studied the agency's report on the State Audit Bureau's report on the implementation of the state budget for the fiscal year 2022-2023, and its recommendations for ministries and government agencies to upgrade performance and address shortcomings.

The Cabinet assigned all ministries and government agencies to work on addressing the observations and implementing the recommendations contained in the SAB report to improve the level of government performance.



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Indian Embassy celebrates Independence Day

Embassy of India in Kuwait celebrated the 77th Independence Day of India on Monday, 15th August 2023. The event took place in the Embassy of India premises in Daeya Diplomatic area.

The official programme started at the Embassy premises by paying floral tribute to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi followed by hoisting

the National Tricolor flag and singing of the Indian National Anthem.

On this occasion, Hon'ble President of India's message to the nation was read out by the Ambassador who also addressed all the participants. In his address, Ambassador thanked the leadership and Government of the friendly State of Kuwait for the continued

support in further deepening and strengthening of India-Kuwait bilateral relations and for taking special care of the Indian Community in Kuwait.

Moreover, in his address to the Indian Community, Ambassador highlighted the efforts of the Embassy to work along with community in promoting India-Kuwait relations and addressing the issues of concern to the

Community.

He highlighted the efforts undertaken by the Embassy on various fronts, including promotion of trade, investment, culture and tourism, expansion and deepening of institutional cooperation in different domains, and various measures to ensure the welfare of the Indian Community in Kuwait.

Visa and ITC SheTrades to hold virtual seminar

Visa's 'She's Next' grant program, a unique initiative to support women-owned and led businesses in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, has received an overwhelming response with over 880 applications. In its next phase, the program is set to launch an engaging virtual training seminar, titled 'Elevate Your Business', in partnership with ITC's SheTrades Initiative.

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The seminar, designed to address the specific needs of women entrepreneurs, aims to help women entrepreneurs realize their potential and achieve their business ambitions. It includes virtual on-boarding and tools for business diagnosis and self-assessment, as well as in-country workshops and one-to-one advisory services that provide them with targeted guidance.

According to findings from the recent 'Women SMB Digitalization Study' survey, conducted by Visa in the region, women entrepreneurs surveyed in Kuwait showed

interest in a host of topics ranging from developing business missions (48%) to setting business profitability goals (45%). Almost everyone displayed interest in payment related training (95%). The workshop topics that garnered most interest included digital marketing (45%) and dealing with stress in crisis (40%).

Carl Manlan, head of Inclusive Impact & Sustainability at Visa said: "Collaborating with ITC to elevate the competitiveness of women entrepreneurs in the GCC region is part of our commitment to transform economies by including more women in business across the globe. Women entrepreneurs are the foundation of thriving societies and by enabling them, we make business and communities better for current and future generations."

The She's Next grant program will host closing ceremonies in Kuwait on 27 September. During the ceremonies five shortlisted candidates from Kuwait will pitch their ideas, and one winner will be selected to receive a US\$50,000 grant and a tailored training program.

The 5 candidates from Kuwait are: Dalal Al Tawheed (Cleans Eats), Zain AlKhaled (Emanmoon), Hind AlKhat (Leap Loves Green), Yuser Almutawa Almutawa (Seeds Co), Juliette Zeidan (Toofoola).

Additionally, Visa is set to launch the Kuwait People's Favorite Award Ceremony. The award underscores Visa's commitment to women entrepreneurs who continue to inspire and uplift their communities. The recipient of this

award will also receive a prize of US\$10,000.

National Bank of Kuwait and Amazon Web Services have partnered with Visa for this initiative with a common goal to support women entrepreneurs in Kuwait.



GTD ramps up collection of traffic fines

The recent decision, the recent decision to link traffic departments across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states through an online network has reportedly started to yield positive outcomes. The linkage allows traffic authorities in the six-nation bloc to share information on traffic violations committed by drivers of vehicles registered in one GCC state while visiting a neighboring state.

The GCC-wide linkage ensures that GCC drivers who incur traffic fines while visiting another state pay the traffic fines before exiting the borders of the visited country. The sharing of data between the six states also allows traffic authorities in one state to collect fines from their citizens and residents for traffic violations they commit while visiting another state, and to forward the collected fines to the respective authorities in the country where the traffic violation was perpetrated.

In the past, such collections were nearly non-existent, leading to significant revenue loss for the state treasuries in each country.

Records from the General Traffic Department in Kuwait reveal that since the start of 2023 there were over 400,000 traffic violations registered against vehicles from other GCC states. The figures also show that the total fines levied against vehicles registered in other GCC states amounted to more than KD8 million during the first seven months of the year.

The violations included serious offenses such as speeding, reckless driving and disregard for traffic rules. The monitoring was done by traffic cameras and radar systems. Additionally, in cases of severe violations, vehicles have been impounded and towed to a traffic garage for up to two months, with their departure being prohibited until the stipulated traffic regulations are followed.

The strict adherence to ensuring GCC motorists pay their due fines before departing the country of visit has led to such drivers becoming more attentive to their driving and to adhere to traffic rules and respect traffic regulations in the countries they visit.

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Optical fiber coverage still distant dream for most areas

Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) aim of enhancing internet speed using optical fiber networks has still a long way to go before all regions in the country are linked to this network.

The initial phase of the project has so far encompassed 28 areas, including Salwa, Rumaithiya, Al-Bida'a, Salmiya, Ras Al-Salmiya, Kuwait City, and Al-Fintas Agricultural area. In the next phase, a total of 34 areas are planned to be integrated into the network, including Jaber Al-Ahmad, Al-Naseem, Al-Ardiya Industrial, Amghara Industrial, South Al-Sabahiya, Al-Mangaf, Bayan, Mishref, Mubarak Al-Abdullah, the coastal strip, Al-Maseelah, Al-Mahboula,

Al-Aqila, Northwest Sulaibikhat, and Al-Qusour. This phase will, when completed, cover around 122,000 residential units, equivalent to 55 percent of Kuwait's population across its various governorates.

People living and working in areas that are currently outside the fiber network will not be able to enjoy the higher bandwidth and speed provided by optical fiber. As per information from CITRA, the project's third phase is presently in the preparatory stage and is expected to be finalized only by 2027, adhering to the schedule outlined in the national development plan. This upcoming phase targets providing 110,000 subscriptions within 64 areas, encompassing both established and newly developed regions.



CITRA emphasized the importance of covering the country with fiber networks by pointing out the distinct advantages of the optical fiber network compared to wireless networks. These include the stability and steadiness of speed on the fiber network, unlike the variable and often unstable speeds observed in wireless networks. The speed fluctuations in wireless networks are influenced by factors such as tower proximity, distance from users, and the number of users sharing the network.

Moreover, the internet service offered through the fiber network is independent of the wireless network provided by the private sector, added CITRA

Electricity, water reserves strained by high temperatures

Scorching summer temperatures in early August strained the electricity and water supplies to the extent that the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy (MEW) had to access its strategic reserves to meet increased demand.

With mercury soaring to over 50 degrees Celsius in the first week of August, the demand for electricity surpassed the record 16,262 megawatts

in South Surra, resulting in power disruptions to areas in the Zahra'a region within the Hawalli Governorate.

The authorities at MEW put on a brave face and assured citizens that the country's electricity grid could safely provide up to 17,660 megawatts out of the available 18,250 megawatts this summer, and that there was no need to panic over supplies. Nevertheless, there is no denying that the water and power situation in the country is heading towards the red line mark, and that urgent measures to ramp up production are sorely needed.

Releasing water and electricity from strategic reserves to meet demand surges can at best be viewed as a stop-gap solution to a problem that will only keep growing in the coming years. In response to the surge in demand this summer, the MEW has, in coordination with the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP), once again revived its long-pending contracts for the construction of two integrated water and electricity production projects in North Az-Zour and Al-Khairan.

These initiatives, which have been in the planning and procurement stages since 2017, collectively possess the potential to generate 4,500 megawatts of electricity and over 150 million gallons of water daily. Speeding up the completion of these two projects on a priority basis will help alleviate Kuwait's precarious electricity and water situation over the short term, until more power and water generation units can be commissioned.



set last year and surged to a new record of 16,940 megawatts. This not only exceeded the maximum expected load in summer of 16,830 megawatts but also edged close to the total available power generation capacity of 18,250 megawatts.

The emergency situation forced MEW to tap into its strategic reserves by 2 August when water consumption outpaced production by 29 million gallons. The increase in electricity demand also led to the disconnection of two key transformers



Chef Kids accomplish culinary workshop, receive certificates

Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Six children of different ages received their certificates as Chef Kids during a graduation ceremony held by Masterclass Culinary Arts Lifestyle Workshops at its studio in Salmiya last week. Master Chefs and trainers were present to sign and award the certificates to the young chefs.

The course consisted of four sessions of three hours each. Two sessions were dedicated to baking basic breads and pastries with the remaining two sessions concentrating on cooking basic dishes among which are pastas and sauces to the delight of the students.

"The children were very attentive and accomplished their cooking and baking

projects successfully at the end of each session. We are grateful to the parents who gave their support to their children and their schools. We hope to open the next batch for Chef Kids after the resumption of regular school classes," stated Beth Osorio, Masterchef.

Valerie Quillon, a mother of one of the graduates added that she did not hesitate to enroll her daughter in the workshop because she wanted her daughter to experience the exciting class. Quillon is also at present a student of one of the courses.

Workshops available at present are Breads and Pastries for Bakeries, Art of Cake Baking and Decorating, Art of Chocolate Making, Japanese Cuisine, International Cuisines and Filipino Delicacies workshops.

Each of the courses are held four days in a month, once per week and with three hours per session. Each course is designated to a leading master Chef and a trainer, and certificates are awarded at the end of each course.

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Indian Naval Ship visits Kuwait

Indian Naval Ship (INS) VISAKHAPATNAM with Rear Admiral Vineet S. McCarthy, Flag Officer Commanding, Western Fleet onboard arrived at Al-Shuwaikh Port for an Operational Turnaround visit on 19 August.

The visit of the ship adds a new chapter to the bilateral navy to navy cooperation between the two countries, and is a continuation of the increased maritime cooperation witnessed during 2021 with five Indian Naval Ships visiting Kuwait for transporting liquid medical oxygen followed by visit of INS TEG in July 2022 and three ships from First Training Squadron having a port call at Kuwait in October 2022.

INS VISAKHAPATNAM is the lead ship and the first of the Visakhapatnam class stealth guided missile destroyers. Built indigenously by Mazagon Dock Limited in India, the ship was commissioned on 21 November 2021 and is one of the largest destroyers in service with the Indian Navy. The 164 meter long ship is

fitted with the most advanced state of the art navigation and communication equipment, sensors, radars and electronic warfare capability.

The ship is equipped to carry two helicopters.

During its three day port-call the ship and crew will engage in various professional and

training interactions with Kuwait Naval forces. The Ship will also welcome visits by Indian citizens and school children, besides hosting various cultural activities. On 22 August, there will be an international Passage Exercise (PASSEX) conducted with the Kuwait Navy. A passage exercise is normally undertaken whenever an opportunity arises, in contrast to pre-planned maritime drills.

Visit of INS Visakhapatnam to Kuwait is a testimony of the historic maritime relations between the two countries, which has contributed towards building a strong India-Kuwait partnership.

The visit highlights the Indian Navy's commitment to establish cooperative partnerships with friendly countries, particularly in the Indian Ocean region to combat maritime challenges together. It is also expected to further strengthen the defense ties between the two countries.



Sizzling summer, a foretaste of future weather

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The increase in electricity demand also led to the disconnection of two key transformers in South Surra, resulting in power disruptions to several areas in the Zahra'a region within the Hawalli Governorate. The alarming power and water fragility is likely to be repeated in coming years as the intensity of summer temperatures increase and new utility constructions continue to lag far behind annual growth in demand.

Increasing mean annual temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, and potential rise in sea-level, along with changes brought on by extreme weather events are likely to have a severe impact on Kuwait in the decades ahead. In particular, high temperatures are likely to negatively impact the country's economy, food security, power and water supplies, as well as the health and wellbeing of people in the country.

A health profiling of countries worldwide by the World Health Organization (WHO) titled 'Climate and Health Country Profile' found that under a 'business as usual' scenario and without effective measures to mitigate global greenhouse gas emissions, mean annual temperature in Kuwait could rise by about 6.2 degrees Celsius (°C) on average from 1990 to 2100. Also, without large investments in adaptation techniques and technologies, over half a million people in Kuwait could be affected annually by flooding caused by rise in sea-level between 2070 and 2100.

The WHO study also noted that climate change related hikes in mean annual temperature and the increase in intensity and frequency of heatwaves could result in a greater number of people being at risk of heat-related medical conditions. The elderly, children, pregnant women, the chronically ill, the socially isolated and at-risk occupational groups are particularly vulnerable to heat-related conditions. In Kuwait, under unmitigated global warming conditions, heat-related deaths in the elderly is projected to increase to about 51 deaths per 100,000 by 2080 compared to a baseline of under 3 deaths per 100,000 annually

between 1961 and 1990.

Another international study, funded by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and led by Assistant Professor at the College of Public Health in Kuwait University, Dr. Barak AlAhmad, largely mirrored the WHO findings. The study warned that continued rise in temperatures in Kuwait will negatively affect people's health, and increase the annual death rate. The study added that, relative to the temperatures in the first decade of this century from 2000 to 2009, the pace of temperature rise in Kuwait seen since 2010 has been 'unprecedented'. In 2021, the average maximum temperature reached an all time high of 34.5°C.

The study estimated that Kuwait could witness an increase in average temperatures by 1.8 to 2.6°C by 2059, and 2.7 to 5.5°C by 2099. The researchers surmised that the expected increase in temperature could result in summer temperatures exceeding the 40°C mark in more than four months of a year. The study also indicated that exposure to high temperatures could lead to a deterioration in the health condition of those who have chronic diseases. Moreover, as a direct or indirect result of poor health outcomes caused by rising temperatures, there could be an increase by 5 to 11 percent in the country's annual death rate.

Deleterious health effects of high temperature are compounded when combined with high relative humidity, with several studies confirming the strong correlation between high temperatures and increased humidity. In Kuwait, the high humidity and temperature witnessed since the start of August has already led to several stiflingly sultry days. With more of such days predicted in the weeks ahead, the authorities have issued health advisories that urge vulnerable people to remain in controlled temperature environments, so as to avoid or reduce exposure to the high moisture content in the air. People susceptible to chronic illnesses, as well as the elderly, children, pregnant women, and those with limited access to cooling resources are especially vulnerable to high humid temperatures.

Health authorities often refer to the heat index, also called 'apparent temperature', to indicate what the temperature feels like to the human body when relative humidity is combined with the high air temperature. The apparent temperature has several ramifications on the human body's comfort. They point out that when ambient temperature rises and the body begins to get hot, it starts to perspire to cool itself off, but when the atmospheric moisture content is high, the perspiration rate decreases and the body gets warmer.

Studies show that prolonged exposure or physical activities when the heat index is at, or exceeds 40°C can lead to dangerous heat-related disorders that could culminate in death. It is also important to keep in mind that the heat index values reported by meteorologists and in the media are for shady locations. If a person is exposed to direct sunlight, the heat index value will be increased by as much as 10 degrees. Working, or engaging in other physical activities, outdoors during peak sunlight hours when both temperature and humidity are high can prove fatal.

In its initial submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Kuwait had stated that the average daily temperatures in the summer typically range above 40°C and humidity in August and September months can reach levels above 95 percent. Considering this official data from Kuwait, it is only appropriate that the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) extend its current ban on laborers working outdoors from 11am to 4pm from 1 June to 31 August, to the end of September.

With global summer temperatures projected to rise in the years ahead, and with increasing evidence of extreme weather patterns being linked to global climate change, scientists and research institutions have been keen to gain a better understanding of the temperature limit that humans can safely tolerate.

Studies conducted recently in the United Kingdom have found that at an outdoor temperature of 40 degrees Celsius, the body's

metabolic rate increased by 35 percent compared to the baseline 'normal temperature'. Metabolic rate is the amount of energy our body uses to maintain its basic life-sustaining functions.

The study showed that the metabolic rate increased by a further 13 percent at 50 degrees C, or an increase of 48 percent compared to the 'normal'. In other words, the hotter the outside temperature, the harder the body has to work to maintain basic body functions. The findings also set a theoretical limit to the temperature under which the body can continue to function normally. The findings are especially pertinent for places such as Kuwait where expected higher temperatures and humidity in the decades ahead are likely to make the large portions of the country uninhabitable for months at a stretch.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world has recorded a 1.1°C rise in temperature compared with the pre-industrial average in 1850-1900. The Paris Climate Accords signed by nations around the world in 2015 aims to limit this rise to below 2°C while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C. However, new studies show that the world will likely reach the 1.5°C threshold between 2033 and 2035, and likely warm up by two degrees Celsius by 2050.

Latest scientific observations and available data leaves no room for doubt that long-term global warming trend is due to human activities, largely from the burning of fossil-fuels, which have increased emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere. As human-generated GHG emissions continue to flood the atmosphere, heatwaves and other intense weather patterns are projected to become more frequent and more extreme.

Humanity must clearly curb its use of fossil-fuels and cut the output of heat-trapping gases to limit the onset of extreme temperatures in future. It may take years or decades before the effects of reducing GHG begin to manifest in the climate system, but we need to start right now.

Tourism offices in Kuwait to attend ITE-HCMC 2023 in Vietnam



International businesses in the tourism industry, including several leading tourism industry businesses from Kuwait, will convene in Viet Nam's Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), for the 17th International Travel Expo 2023 (ITE HCMC 2023) being held from 7 to 9 September.

The theme of this year's event 'Connectivity, Growth, Sustainability' is aimed to create breakthrough solutions that could accelerate Viet Nam's tourism industry, while still keeping the code on sustainable development and promoting the beautiful image of Viet Nam.

"The ITE HCMC 2023 will focus on promoting commercial activities to

connect with key tourism markets as well as expand new markets", said Deputy Director of Ho Chi Minh City Department of Tourism, Le Truong Hien Hoa, at the press conference held to announce the event.

This year's edition of the ITE HCMC will feature a record number of more than 400 booths, exhibiting products and solutions from a variety of companies and brands, 30 of which come from regional and global destinations such as Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Kuwait,..., along with 46 provinces of Viet Nam.

Being the only international travel expo in Viet Nam with the International Buyers

Program, ITE HCMC 2023 can provide opportunities for many businesses to



expand the market and bring more tourists to the Southeast Asian country. According to the country's National Authority of Tourism in July 2023, Viet Nam welcomed more than 1.04 million international visitors, up 6.5 percent compared to June.

The expo takes place in the context of new visa policies from Viet Nam, which will allow foreigners to enter, and exit by e-visa from 15 August. With about 6000 trade appointments to be conducted during the three-day expo, ITE HCMC 2023 is considered a fundamental event to promote the image of the country and people of Viet Nam in general, and Ho Chi Minh City in particular.

Project aims to equip youth with in-demand skills

In line with the government's strategy of enhancing human resources as part of the country's New Kuwait 2035, the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) launched a training initiative during spring-summer season that targeted students seeking employment in the private sector.

The initiative, guided and supported by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Talal Al-Khalid, aims to nurture professionally-trained youth and equip them with the requisite skill-sets that are in-demand by the labor market, so as to enable them to successfully integrate into private sector and thereby contribute meaningfully to national development,

A statement issued by PAM on the

occasion noted that by encouraging school-going youth to engage in practical training programs during their spring-summer break, the initiative aims to develop their knowledge and practical experience in skill-sets that are currently demanded by the labor market. The project also aims to cultivate an awareness among youth of the importance of private sector employment and its positive influence on personal and career growth.

PAM added that it appreciated the private sector's role in channeling the energies and free time of students away from negative pursuits, and instead encouraging them to spend time honing their skills and preparing them to enter and



successfully integrate in the labor market, while also bolstering their self-confidence.

The project also strives to instill a sense of enthusiasm for work and a spirit of embracing challenges, by expanding

work horizons and furnishing technical and practical readiness aligned with diverse labor market demands.

The statement from PAM noted that during the spring and summer of 2023, a substantial number of students participated in training, in collaboration with various private sector entities, including banking, insurance, retail, legal, and oil industries, along with factories, cooperative societies, and other sectors.

The authority expressed gratitude and appreciation to all parties that contributed to the success of the project, and acknowledged their unwavering efforts in supporting the Authority's annual endeavor since 2005.



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



From Trade War to Subsidy War



Anne O. Krueger

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To the dismay of many economists, US President Joe Biden's administration has retained most of its predecessor's tariffs and trade barriers. In fact, contrary to most analysts' expectations, the United States has imposed additional protectionist measures, such as Biden's 'buy American' policies, resulting in higher costs for American consumers and taxpayers.

During Donald Trump's presidency, the US imposed a 25 percent tariff on steel imports and a 10 percent tariff on imported aluminum. Trump's administration initiated a trade war with China, withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) that former US Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama negotiated with 12 Pacific Rim countries, and 'renegotiated' the North American Free Trade Agreement, rebranding it as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

Trump chose to take these and other actions unilaterally, even though pursuing a multilateral approach through the World Trade Organization would have been far more effective and less likely to harm US allies. The Biden administration, however, has gone even further, fully embracing industrial policy by enacting the \$430 billion Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which includes hundreds of billions of dollars in subsidies for green technologies and renewable energies, and the \$280 billion CHIPS and Science Act, aimed at fostering a robust US semiconductor industry.

Similarly, the IRA provides a \$7,500 subsidy to purchasers of US-made electric vehicles (EVs), giving American-made models an advantage over their Chinese and Japanese rivals.

But studies have repeatedly shown that subsidies often harm the countries implementing them. Such measures tend to reduce competition, stifle innovation, raise costs, and disadvantage exporters who rely on imported inputs.

Worse yet, when one country introduces subsidies to enhance the competitiveness of

recently greenlit a €43 billion (\$47 billion) plan to bolster its semiconductor industry, while South Korea and Japan have also rolled out plans to subsidize domestic chip production. Meanwhile, European, Japanese, and South Korean companies are establishing or investing in US facilities to qualify for IRA subsidies and tax credits.

While Biden's subsidies might enhance domestic semiconductor manufacturing capacity, especially given America's ability to out-subsidize most rivals, this will come at a cost. Morris Chang, founder of the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, has recently estimated that chip manufacturing is 50 percent more expensive in the US than in Taiwan, where more than 90 percent of the world's high-end chips are currently produced. Chang is skeptical that the existing US subsidies would be enough to close this cost gap. But as Adam Posen of the Peterson Institute for International Economics notes, the true price of economic decoupling is "not so much trade barriers, bad as they are, but reduced productivity growth."

Moreover, a significant portion of the money spent on industrial subsidies will likely go to waste, increasing the burden on all taxpayers. Redirecting these funds toward education, job training, research, and infrastructure would do far more to enhance industrial competitiveness, both domestically and globally. Regrettably, US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo has recently touted the CHIPS Act as a blueprint for supporting other domestic sectors. Given that other countries will almost certainly respond in kind, it appears that Trump's trade war with China has morphed into a budget-busting global subsidy war that no one can win.

“

Subsidies often harm the countries implementing them. Such measures tend to reduce competition, stifle innovation, raise costs, and disadvantage exporters who rely on imported inputs.

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According to the White House, the CHIPS Act will bolster domestic semiconductor production and create "tens of thousands of good-paying, union construction jobs and thousands more high-skilled manufacturing jobs" while mobilizing hundreds of billions of dollars in additional private investments. To facilitate the reshoring of chip production, the act allocates \$52 billion to research and development and workforce training and provides a 25 percent tax credit to domestic manufacturers. By subsidizing US-based companies, however, the bill effectively discriminates against foreign and overseas

domestic producers, other countries typically counter with protectionist policies of their own. And retaliation and tit-for-tat escalation damages the economies of other countries and their trading partners.

It is already clear that the coming subsidy war will have no clear winners. Depending on the size of retaliatory foreign subsidies, they may nullify some (if not all) of the competitive gains that the initial subsidy aimed to provide.

This dynamic is particularly evident in sectors such as semiconductors, batteries, and EVs. In response to Biden's industrial policies, for example, the European Union has

Skin Perfection

Latest trends, techniques revolutionizing beauty



By Hermoine Macura-Noble
Special to The Times Kuwait

The Gulf region has always been at the forefront of embracing cutting-edge technologies designed to maintain youthful appearances and counter the effects of aging. In recent years, a significant shift has occurred with the region witnessing the emergence of advanced invasive and non-invasive anti-aging technologies in the beauty and skincare industry. These groundbreaking innovations are transforming the way residents approach their beauty routines by providing them with effective solutions to combat the signs of aging.



Dr. Maurizio Viel,
Cosmetic surgeon
at Cornerstone Clinic

"I always say your skin and your body is an investment... The Gulf region is similar to countries like Korea, Brazil and Lebanon where the pressure to look good is higher than many other nations. Gulf patients are educated on what they want and are willing to invest in beauty," explains Dr. Maurizio Viel,

cosmetic surgeon at Cornerstone Clinic.

Traditional cosmetic procedures often involved invasive surgeries, resulting in lengthy recovery periods and potential risks. However, with the introduction of non-invasive facial treatments, many residents can now achieve remarkable anti-aging results without going under the knife. Advanced technologies such as laser therapy, microdermabrasion, and ultrasound treatments have gained popularity



due to their ability to stimulate collagen production, reduce wrinkles, and improve skin texture.

A doctor of choice for many high-profile men and women in the Gulf, Dr. Viel shares that there are several treatments that have come out recently on the market that offer amazing results when it comes to various ageing concerns.

"Cutera Xcel V Plus is a Federal Drug Administration (FDA) approved laser from the US that can treat more than twenty dermatologic and aesthetic skin concerns. This advanced laser system addresses both vascular and pigmentation concerns with two wavelengths and can be even effective for darker skin types. Typical issues that the treatment can tackle include rosacea, red veins, leg veins, melasma and port wine stains," says Dr. Viel.

Exosomes is another trending skin rejuvenation treatment currently on the market which has been scientifically proven to be more effective than Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) treatment. Exosomes are nano-sized sacs released by almost all cells and are responsible for intracellular communication in the body and can transmit genetic information from one cell to another. In addition, they also carry various proteins, RNA, growth factors and signaling cell responses. The cells that receive these exosomes help with cell repair and this is the reason why they are so effective with facial skin rejuvenation as well as hair rejuvenation. "Exosomes are very powerful and can help stimulate collagen and elastin production, resulting in tighter pores, reduction in fine lines, pigmentation, inflammation and irritations. Usually 3-4 sessions are required every 2 weeks for the best results," shares Dr. Viel.

Stem cell therapy has also revolutionized the field of regenerative medicine, offering promising applications in the anti-aging domain. The Gulf has embraced this innovative technology, utilizing stem cells to promote skin rejuvenation and enhance collagen production. Stem cell-based treatments stimulate the body's natural healing process, resulting in improved

skin elasticity, reduced wrinkles, and a youthful glow. Many Gulf residents seeking a more holistic and long-lasting approach to anti-aging are increasingly turning to stem cell therapy as a viable option.

"The stem cells that are used are extracted from the patient's fat. These particular stem cells are also responsible for producing collagen and elastin, and have anti-inflammatory properties. There are several ways in which stem cells can now be used for anti-ageing purposes. One of the most expensive methods would be stem cell IV drips, however, there are also more affordable and effective ways to use stem cells such as facial stem cell rejuvenation, where your surgeon will reintroduce these stem cells to the face using micro needling techniques. In addition, stem cells can be used for hair rejuvenation and hair growth," explains Dr. Viel.

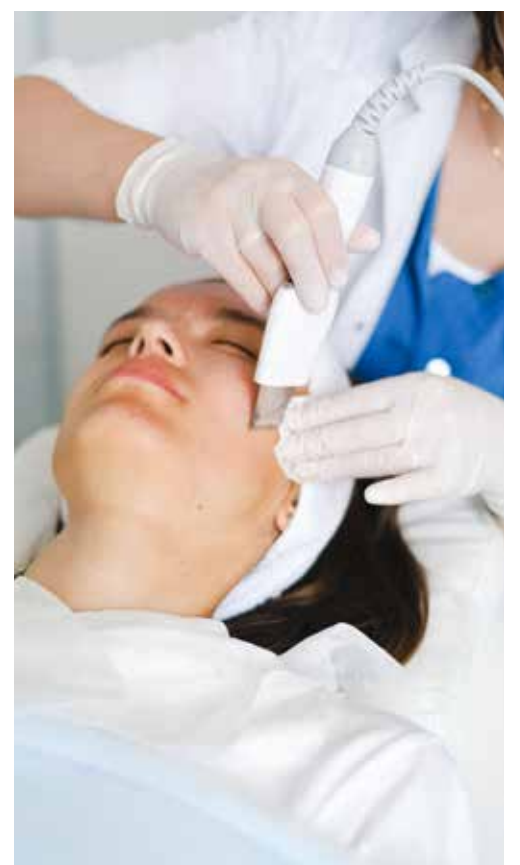
Even with all these cutting-edge treatments, many men and women still choose to go under the knife. When it comes to surgical treatments, liposuction, breast augmentation and tummy tucks are still the most sought-after surgeries. "In London, we do more face lifts, but we don't see much of an aging population in places like Dubai but that's changing slowly as some are choosing the Gulf area as their forever home... Patients suited for procedures like 360 Lipo are those who have experienced a sudden weight loss due to diet or from multiple pregnancies, leaving them with an excess of skin. My technique involves reshaping all the front, sides and back of the torso area with VASER Liposuction and at the same time, sculpting the body to maintain proportions and the right curves to create a waistline. At the same time, due to the excess weight loss there is excess skin on the front and stretched abdominal muscles that require tightening. An incision is made below the bikini line to remove the excess skin and tighten the muscles to give a flatter tummy," explains Dr. Viel.

According to data, more men are also seeking treatments with men making up 35 percent of patients at Cornerstone Clinic. "Men too like botox and proflilo treatments when it comes

to non-invasive procedures. Botox for men requires specialized skills, as it must be done completely differently from that for women. When considering surgical procedures for men, the most popular would include liposuction, facelifts and penoplasty," concludes Dr. Viel.

Hermoine Macura-Noble

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



A new OPEC for critical minerals



Ludovic Subran
Chief Economist at Allianz.

We know that the future will be powered by metals, but it remains to be seen if those metals will be fenced in by iron curtains. After all, most critical minerals come from only a handful of countries: China controls nearly all heavy rare-earth materials (including 91% of magnesium and 76% of silicon metal), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) accounts for over 60 percent of the global cobalt market, and South Africa controls 71 percent of the world's platinum supply.

These metals and critical minerals are crucial for the green transition, because they are used in everything from electric vehicles to wind turbines. The International Energy Agency estimates that the global critical minerals market has already doubled over the past five years, and will (at least) double again by 2040, owing to rising demand for EVs, battery storage, low-emissions power generation, and electricity networks.

The DRC, Chile, Peru, China, Russia, South Africa, and even Australia all stand to benefit from surging demand for critical raw materials. With every other country determined to secure its own supply, mineral-rich ones could follow the OPEC model and try to form an Organization of Metal-Exporting Countries (OMEC).

There is also talk of extending the informal BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) group to include other relevant emerging markets, notably commodity producers. In this

scenario, a metals cartel could span the Global South, uniting some countries in Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos, and Sri Lanka), some in Africa (Nigeria, Kenya, and Angola), and some in Latin America (Bolivia and Argentina).

If mineral-rich countries were to join forces, they could shake global markets in three ways, starting with price manipulation. Like OPEC, an OMEC could use production or export quotas to drive up prices, which in turn would make clean-energy technologies more expensive, potentially slowing the green transition. Moreover, a new cartel could pursue strategic

in prices further cemented its supremacy in production and processing.

Today, Chinese export embargos would likely be far more effective, because the concentration of value chains means that the government can easily enforce its orders (and not only in the rare-earth sector). For China's trade partners, 'de-risking' will require a lot of time and government support, because alternative sources tend to be costlier.

Complicating matters further, many governments have been introducing new export restrictions on critical raw materials, especially aluminum, cobalt, and helium. Such

for magnesium, germanium, and rare-earth elements, and Turkey for borate. The EU thus could face critical shortages if supply chains are disrupted for economic or geopolitical reasons.

Yet another risk lies in the concentration of leading supply-chain firms. Even though cobalt is found mainly in the DRC, control of the supply of cobalt products has shifted from the DRC government and Russian companies to Chinese and South African firms. Similarly, only one EU-based company ranks among the top ten producers of copper, and six companies from four countries (the US, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Canada) account for about one-third of global copper output.

Clearly, there is a growing need to diversify supply relationships, and to make more concrete investments abroad to prevent further concentration over the long term. Among the more immediate solutions, the quickest fix is to increase the plurality of shareholders in dominant companies, whether public or private, by supporting conducive trade and foreign investment policies. The EU's Global Gateway is a valuable platform and can be further harnessed to partnerships with resource-rich countries to enhance supply-chain resilience.

For countries heavily dependent on imported critical minerals, playing the long game will require stepping up domestic production and recycling capabilities, promoting sustainable extraction practices, and investing in the development of recycling technologies. New technological developments will play a key role by reducing material intensity and promoting substitution. Sodium-ion batteries, for example, could ease the pressure on lithium supplies. Given what is at stake in the global green transition, however, the top priority must be to maintain free, fair, and open trade. A new cartel would be inimical to that goal.

“Countries deemed ‘unfriendly’ by the cartel could have trouble securing the resources they need. We got a preview of these dynamics in 2010, when China banned some rare-earth exports to Japan as part of a territorial dispute.”

supply disruptions to gain geopolitical leverage over countries that are highly reliant on these metals. And it could enter exclusive trade agreements with strategically chosen partners, further concentrating its market power and tilting global supply as it sees fit.

All these risks imply that countries deemed ‘unfriendly’ by the cartel could have trouble securing the resources they need. We got a preview of these dynamics in 2010, when China banned some rare-earth exports to Japan as part of a territorial dispute. Prices exploded, and it took years for the issue to be resolved at the World Trade Organization. By that time, rare-earth-based value chains had already migrated to China, and the subsequent drop

measures have increased more than fivefold over the past decade, especially in China, India, Pakistan, Argentina, and Russia, but also in the United States. This development poses a particular threat to import-dependent countries such as Japan, South Korea, and EU members.

The European Union, for example, is completely dependent on imported antimony and borate — which are essential for large-scale energy storage and wind turbines, respectively — and more than 80 percent dependent on imports of six other raw materials. At the refining stage, it is 100 percent import dependent for six key materials, and 80 percent dependent for another seven. It also relies primarily on a single supplier for certain minerals, such as China



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Generative AI could Make or Break Democracy



Kelly Born
A former director of Stanford University's Cyber Policy Center, is Director of the Democracy, Rights, and Governance initiative at the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

Predicting how generative artificial intelligence might affect democracy is a formidable challenge, given that its potential applications are still largely unknown – and seem virtually limitless. While narrow AI tools, designed for specific tasks like reconciling voter records, are already in use in various countries, the impact of generative AI is harder to foresee. This technology is not merely another app, like a social-media platform, but rather a foundational technology more akin to the emergence of the internet itself. It will influence democracy both directly, transforming the mechanics of elections and governance, and indirectly, as it threatens to shift the very foundations of information ecosystems, public trust, and opinion.

In terms of direct impact, generative AI could revolutionize policymaking by enabling a more accurate and nuanced understanding of potential policy outcomes. Organizations like Climate Change AI, for example, already use this technology to explore how roads, power grids, and water mains must be designed to account for the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Law-enforcement agencies use it for surveillance and predictive policing. More recently, lawyers and judges have begun to employ generative AIs like ChatGPT to assist them in filing cases and even in issuing court rulings.

“Generative AI will also almost certainly exacerbate today’s disinformation crisis, making it easier to craft highly personalized, persuasive content that can be tested, tweaked, tailored, and targeted across all media.”

Meanwhile, concerns are growing regarding how generative AI will affect elections. At least 45 countries will hold elections in 2024, including globally consequential races in the United States and the European Union. While narrow AI is already helping to streamline election administration, generative AI could introduce new biases and uncertainties. America’s highly decentralized election system, for example, encompasses 10,000 jurisdictions, with each state maintaining separate voter records that must be constantly updated as voters move, die, or otherwise become ineligible. Narrow AI systems are now extensively used in this process, and while they can boost efficiency, early evidence suggests that the algorithms used to maintain voter rolls struggle with matching Asian names and may



be biased against minorities in general. Similar biases have been identified in the use of AI for signature verification, a common requirement for mail-in ballots.

But AI’s influence could easily extend beyond merely administering elections; it could also be used to help shape electoral rules and structures, affecting how competitive elections are, the degree of political polarization, voter turnout, and candidate incentives. As many as 90% of US Congressional districts are considered “safe” from a partisan perspective – meaning that the outcome is typically predictable, favoring either Republicans or Democrats. There are now dozens of apps helping legislators draw district lines. While advanced generative AI programs could be used to improve the fairness and representativeness of the US political system, they could just as easily enable even more repressive partisan gerrymandering by political incumbents, further shielding parties and candidates from genuine competition.

Beyond redistricting, generative AI could facilitate other structural reforms. European countries, for example, use a mix of closed and preferential voting. By contrast, the US uses single-member winner-take-all districts. Reformers seeking to promote moderation and reduce polarization debate the merits of reforms such as ranked-choice voting, open primaries, and proportional representation. Yet the potential impact of these changes across diverse political environments and contexts, and their potential interaction effects when combined, remain unclear. Generative AI could shed light on these complex dynamics, enhancing our ability to estimate electoral reforms’ long-term effects.

While these changes would directly influence the mechanics of democracy, the indirect effects are perhaps more concerning. AI is likely to disrupt labor markets profoundly, with all of the attendant political fallout. It may also reshape the information ecosystems that governments, candidates, and voters rely on. Generative AI could prove to be a valuable asset for journalists, streamlining tasks such as summarizing government hearings, organizing contributions from various sources, and even assisting in the drafting and editing of articles. And it could result in even more journalists being laid off.

Social-media platforms could use AI to moderate online content, combating the spread of election disinformation and sparing human content moderators from the often traumatic task of screening the internet’s most offensive content. But generative AI will also almost certainly exacerbate today’s disinformation crisis, making it easier to craft highly personalized, persuasive content that can be tested, tweaked, tailored, and targeted across all media. In April, the Republican Party released its first-ever AI-generated attack ad against US President Joe Biden. It is not far-fetched to imagine a political landscape flooded

with cheaply produced ads (or even podcasts) using the voices or images of trusted sources and crafted to manipulate specific audiences, using personal online histories to identify and exploit psychological vulnerabilities. Whether this really is a game-changer remains to be seen.

Generative AI’s capacity to create persuasive disinformation in multiple languages could also be a boon for foreign adversaries, previously plagued by a lack of language and cultural fluency. At the same time, pro-democracy

advocates could use these tools to develop more persuasive anti-authoritarian messaging micro-targeted at the most vulnerable communities. As it stands, however, democratic voices are significantly outnumbered and outgunned.

That said, although AI can generate content, it still requires distributors like Facebook to reach an audience. AI labs and social-media platforms must work together to develop effective mechanisms to prevent the spread of disinformation.

It is important to note that these foundational language-learning models are as biased as the corpus of human history on which they are trained. As such, they favor cultures with a larger body of written and digitized materials (English and Cantonese are the preferred languages), and the histories of conquerors are overrepresented. Such biases can be extremely dangerous, particularly at a time when political polarization is on the rise across liberal democracies and 40% of Americans deny the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.

At its core, democracy depends on citizens’ trust in both leaders and institutions to represent their interests. But trust is fragile and must be safeguarded. While generative AI could offer significant benefits in fields such as medicine, manufacturing, and education, its impact on democracy must be carefully considered. Otherwise, it will undermine, rather than strengthen, rule by the people.



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Thought for the week

“Your vision will inspire you to look beyond the false perceptions of fear and obstacles and help you focus on your life that waits ahead.

— Sheron Brown



Arancini is an Italian dish made of stuffed rice balls coated with breadcrumbs and deep fried, resulting in gold colored arancinis that are crispy on the outside and creamy and cheesy on the inside. The golden arancinis go well with black rice, which, though less well known, is one of the healthiest versions of rice available. Black rice is loaded with antioxidants, iron, fibers, and protein, and is known to help lower blood sugar, cholesterol, and triglycerides.

Ingredients:

For arancini:

- Chicken stock 100ml
- Risotto rice/long US basmati rice 100g
- Whole eggs 2
- Shredded mozzarella cheese 50g
- Chopped parsley 20g.
- Parmesans cheese 20g
- Breadcrumbs 50g
- Oil for frying 250ml
- Salt 5g
- Pepper 5g
- For black rice:
- Black rice 200g
- Water
- Salt
- Olive oil 20ml
- Potato 200g

For tomato sauce:

- Tomato puree 100ml
- Rosemary 5g
- Garlic 10g
- Cream 50ml
- White onion 100g
- Basil leaves 10g
- Salt
- Pepper

Instructions:

For arancini:

- Bring chicken stock and 1/4 teaspoon salt to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir in the rice, reduce the heat to low and simmer until tender, about 20 minutes. let cool completely.
- Combine mozzarella, parmesan cheese and parsley in a bowl; set aside.

- Beat the eggs in a large bowl, then stir in the cooled rice, the parmesan and 2/3 cup breadcrumbs. Shape the mixture into sixteen 1 1/2-inch balls.
- Place the remaining breadcrumbs in a shallow bowl. Press your finger into the center of each rice ball, insert 2 teaspoons of the mozzarella mixture, then pinch the rice around the filling to enclose. Roll the balls in the breadcrumbs and place on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Loosely cover and refrigerate, at least 1 hour or overnight. (If refrigerating overnight, roll in more breadcrumbs before frying.)
- Heat 1/2-inch vegetable oil in a large saucepan over medium heat.
- Working in batches, deep-fry the rice balls for about four minutes, turning, until golden brown on all sides. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels, season with salt.

For black rice:

- Rinse the rice to help remove starches that can cause clumping during cooking
- Add the rice to a saucepan, stir in 1 3/4 cups of water for every cup of rice, along with 1 teaspoon olive oil.
- Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes.
- Allow the rice to steam.
- Remove it from the heat and let it sit, covered, for 10 more minutes.

For gratin potato:

- Thinly slice the potatoes and arrange in a layer.
- Apply butter to a layer, sprinkle with seasoning
- Add another layer of potato slices and repeat the above until all slices are used
- Roast the layered potatoes along with a sprinkling of rosemary or any other herbs.
- For creamy tomato sauce:
- Sauté the garlic and onion and add tomato puree and cook it well
- Add the cream along with herbs and other seasoning.

For plating:

- Place the black rice on a plate using a mold or small plate to portion. and near rice Place the arancini balls and roast potatoes next to the rice. Add sauce to the center of the rice. Serve hot.



Creative, enthusiastic and with a passion for food, Chef Binu Joseph is currently Chef at The Regency Hotel Kuwait. With over 17 years of experience serving in luxury five-star properties in the region, Chef Joseph has an in-depth knowledge in preparing multiple cuisines, including Arabic, Asian, American, Continental and Indian dishes. In addition, his culinary skills in putting his own

stamp on traditional dishes to create new combinations of flavors, textures and tastes allows him to prepare dishes that meet the tastes of the most discerning patrons. Chef Joseph now brings his versatility and 5-star culinary creativity to the pages of The Times Kuwait, with simple recipes that anyone can prepare using ingredients that are readily available in Kuwait.

RECIPE

Crispy honeycomb Ghewars



Ghewar, a popular dessert from the western Indian state of Rajasthan, is a crispy disc-shaped, honeycomb patterned sweet served soaked in sweet syrup. This delectable dessert is usually prepared on festivals and special occasions across North India.

Total time: 1 hour

Serving : 6 to 8 pieces

Ingredients:

For ghewar:

- 2 cups plain flour
- 2 tbsp gram flour
- 1/2 cup clarified butter (ghee)
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1/2 cup chilled milk
- 3 cups chilled water
- 4-5 ice cubes
- Oil for frying

For syrup:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup water
- 2 tbsp sliced almonds, pistachios
- 1 tsp. cardamom powder
- Few string saffron

Instructions:

Making sugar syrup:

- Add water and sugar to pan and bring to boil to dissolve sugar
- Lower to medium heat and occasionally stir the liquid to prevent burning, but not too frequently so that the sugar does not crystallize
- Keep stirring until the liquid turns syrupy and attains a one-string consistency
- Add cardamom powder and the saffron strings
- Remove from flame and set aside to cool

Making ghewar:

- Add the clarified butter along with ice cubes to a bowl
- Mix the two together for about 5 minutes until it turns white, fluffy and creamy
- Add plain flour over the creamed ghee and mix well
- Pour in the chilled milk and stir to form a lump-free batter
- Add water and lemon juice to the batter, and stir to a smooth-flow consistency
- Half fill a thick bottomed pan with oil and bring to heat
- Using a sauce dispenser, pour the batter from a relative height on to the hot ghee Bubbles start spluttering over the oil surface
- Once the spluttering settles use a ladle to make an indent in center of the batter
- Keep pouring the batter until the desired thickness is reached
- Fry the ghewar until it turns a light brown color
- Using a knife prise the ghewar from the sides of the pan
- Using a fork, lift and hold the ghewar over the pan so the excess oil drips into pan
- Transfer to a serving plate and pour the warm sugar syrup over each ghewar
- Garnish with sliced nuts and rose petals before serving.
- The ghewars can be safely stored at room temperatures for about a week.



Chef Chhaya Thakker

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

Walking reduces risk of death from various causes

More doctors should be recommending walking as an antidote to many of the ailments besieging people today, as new studies reveal the significant health benefits to be derived from engaging in this simple activity. While most people are aware of the advantages of walking regularly for physical and mental health, not many would know that walking also boosts the functioning of the body in several underlying ways.

Reports on studies by researchers at Harvard Medical School in the United States and elsewhere have shown some of the surprising benefits of walking. These include that a bout of brisk walking daily counters the effects of weight-promoting genes by half; it reduces the craving for sugary snacks; lowers risk of developing breast cancer among women; it eases joint pain, especially pains related to arthritis; and it has been shown to improve immune function.

The above benefits of walking are not anecdotal reports but studies by researchers in renowned academic and research institutes. For instance, a study of over 1,000 men and women found that those who walked at least 20 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week, had 43 percent fewer sick days than those who exercised once a week or less. Another study into breast cancer found that women who walked seven or more hours a week had a 14 percent lower risk of breast cancer than those who walked three hours or fewer per week.

On a similar note, a pair of studies from the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom found that a 15-minute walk can curb cravings for chocolate and even reduce the amount of chocolate you eat in stressful situations, while another study showed it markedly decreases

craving for sugary snacks. Walking has also been shown to protect the joints — especially the knees and hips, which are most susceptible to osteoarthritis — by lubricating them and strengthening the muscles that support them.

The most recent research on the health benefits of walking regularly indicate that the number of steps you should walk every day to start seeing benefits to your health is lower than previously thought. In a report published last week in the European Journal of Preventive Cardiology, researchers behind one of the largest analysis on the advantages of walking to health found that walking at least 3967 steps a day started to reduce the risk of dying from any cause, and 2337 steps a day reduced the risk of dying from cardiovascular diseases of the heart and blood vessels.

The new analysis of 226,889 people from 17 different studies around the world has shown that the more you walk, the greater the health benefits. The risk of dying from any cause or from cardiovascular disease decreases significantly with every 500 to 1000 extra steps you walk. An increase of 1000 steps a day was associated with a 15 percent reduction in the risk of dying from any cause, and an increase of 500 steps a day was associated with a 7 percent reduction in dying from cardiovascular disease.

The team behind the analysis, led by professors at the Medical University of Lodz, Poland, and at the Ciccarone Center for the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, found that even if people walked as many as 20,000 steps a day, the health benefits continued to increase. They have not found an upper limit yet.

The study not only confirmed that the more



you walk, the better the health outcomes, but also that this applied to both men and women, irrespective of age, and irrespective of whether a person lived in a temperate, subtropical or subpolar region of the world, or a region with a mixture of climates. In addition, the analysis indicated that as little as 4,000 steps a day are needed to significantly reduce deaths from any cause, and even fewer to reduce deaths from cardiovascular disease.

There is strong evidence that a sedentary lifestyle may contribute to an increase in cardiovascular disease and a shorter life. Studies have shown that insufficient physical activity affects more than a quarter of the world's population. More women than men (32% versus 23%), and people in higher income countries compared to low-income countries (37% versus 16%) do not undertake a sufficient amount of physical activity. According to World Health Organization data, insufficient physical activity is the fourth most frequent cause of death in the world, with 3.2 million deaths a

year related to physical inactivity. The COVID-19 pandemic also resulted in a reduction in physical activity, and activity levels have not recovered two years on from it.

Until this new analysis there was no in-depth study that clarified the optimal number of steps, both in terms of the cut-off points over which health benefits became apparent, and the upper limit, if any, and the role this plays in people's health. Strengths of this latest meta-analysis include its size and that it was not restricted to studies that limited the maximum steps a day to 16,000 steps.

However, the analysis also had its limitations in that it was an observational study and so cannot prove that increased step counts cause the reduction in the risk of death, only that it is associated with it. The researchers also said that, despite their study involved analysis of data from a significantly large and varied population, their findings needed to be confirmed in even larger groups of people before it could become part of clinical recommendation.

In a world where scientists are finding, and doctors are prescribing more advanced drugs to target specific health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, it is important to keep in mind that lifestyle changes, including diet and exercise might be at least as, or even more effective in reducing cardiovascular risk and prolonging lives. Admittedly, more studies are needed to investigate whether these benefits may exist for intensive types of exertion, such as marathon running and iron man challenges, and in different populations of different ages, and with different associated health problems, before beginning to recommend personalized lifestyle changes for better health outcomes.



Impact of fat burning exercise

Though commercial exercise machines often tout a 'fat-burning zone' setting in their devices that can be set based on the user's age, gender, heart rate or other physical measures, new studies show that the best heart rate for burning fat does not align with the markers on these machines, and differs widely among people within the same age or gender group.

Researchers at the Mount Sinai Hospital in the United States say that, rather than rely on settings provided by these machines, people looking to lose weight or fat should follow the recommendations of a clinical exercise test — a diagnostic procedure to measure a person's physiological response to exercise. They note that the clinical test may be a more useful tool to help individuals achieve intended fat loss goals.

The study, which used a machine learning-based modeling approach, found that people with a goal of weight or fat loss may be better served by exercising at the intensity which

allows for the maximal rate of fat burning, found by undergoing a clinical exercise test. The researchers added that the fat-burning zone mark on exercise machines has not been scientifically validated, and could leave individuals exercising at intensities that are not aligned with their personalized weight loss goals, and cause people to exercise at intensities that are not aligned with their personalized weight loss goals.

The term FATmax is sometimes used to represent the exercise intensity and associated heart rate at which the body reaches its highest fat-burning rate during aerobic exercise. At this point, fat is a significant fuel source and therefore this intensity may be of interest to those seeking to optimize fat loss during workouts.

As part of the study, the researchers compared heart rate at FATmax, as measured during a clinical exercise test, to predicted heart rate at percentages of maximal effort within the typically recommended 'fat-burning zone'. In a sample of 26 individuals, the researchers found that there was poor agreement between measured and predicted heart rate, with a mean difference of 23 beats per minute between the two measures. This suggests that general recommendations for a 'fat-burning zone' may not provide accurate guidance.

Next, the researchers plan to study whether individuals who receive a more personalized exercise prescription demonstrate more weight and fat loss, as well as improvement of metabolic health markers that identify health risks like type 2 diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.

"We hope that this work will inspire more individuals and trainers to utilize clinical exercise testing to prescribe personalized exercise routines tailored to fat loss. It also emphasizes the role that data-driven approaches can have toward precision exercise," said the research team in their published report.





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