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## DIPLOMAT

UN Office, embassies of  
UK, Canada launch 'Young  
Ambassadors' program

3

6



## LOCAL

Kuwait in  
the year 2023

13

## TRAVEL

Viet Nam through the  
cities: Ha Noi - For the  
Love of Food & Coffee



# A lookback on 2023, a year that was...



## THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

The year 2023 saw the world at a crossroads; it needed to decide whether to pursue the road to sustainable and equitable development or continue along the path to a dystopian future for all of humanity. That the world chose to follow the sustainable path is certainly welcome. But, without effectively implementing the lofty declarations and initiating the unsavory course-corrections endorsed in 2023, the world is undeniably headed to a grim future.

In late January 2023, hands of the symbolic 'Doomsday Clock' were moved 10 seconds forward. The 'Clock', a metaphor for existential

threats to humanity, has stood at 100 seconds to midnight since 2020, but is now at 90 seconds to midnight — the closest it has ever come to global annihilation. The symbolic 'Doomsday Clock', maintained by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, began ticking in 1947. Initially the Clock tracked threats from the Cold War and nuclear annihilation, but in recent decades it has added threats from biological and technological misuse, and crises brought on by climate change.

Clocks and conjectures aside, the year 2023 will be defined by the cascade of catastrophes, challenges, and crises arising from both man-made and natural causes. Besides ongoing and new conflicts, as well as the ravaging impact of hurricanes and earthquakes, in 2023 the



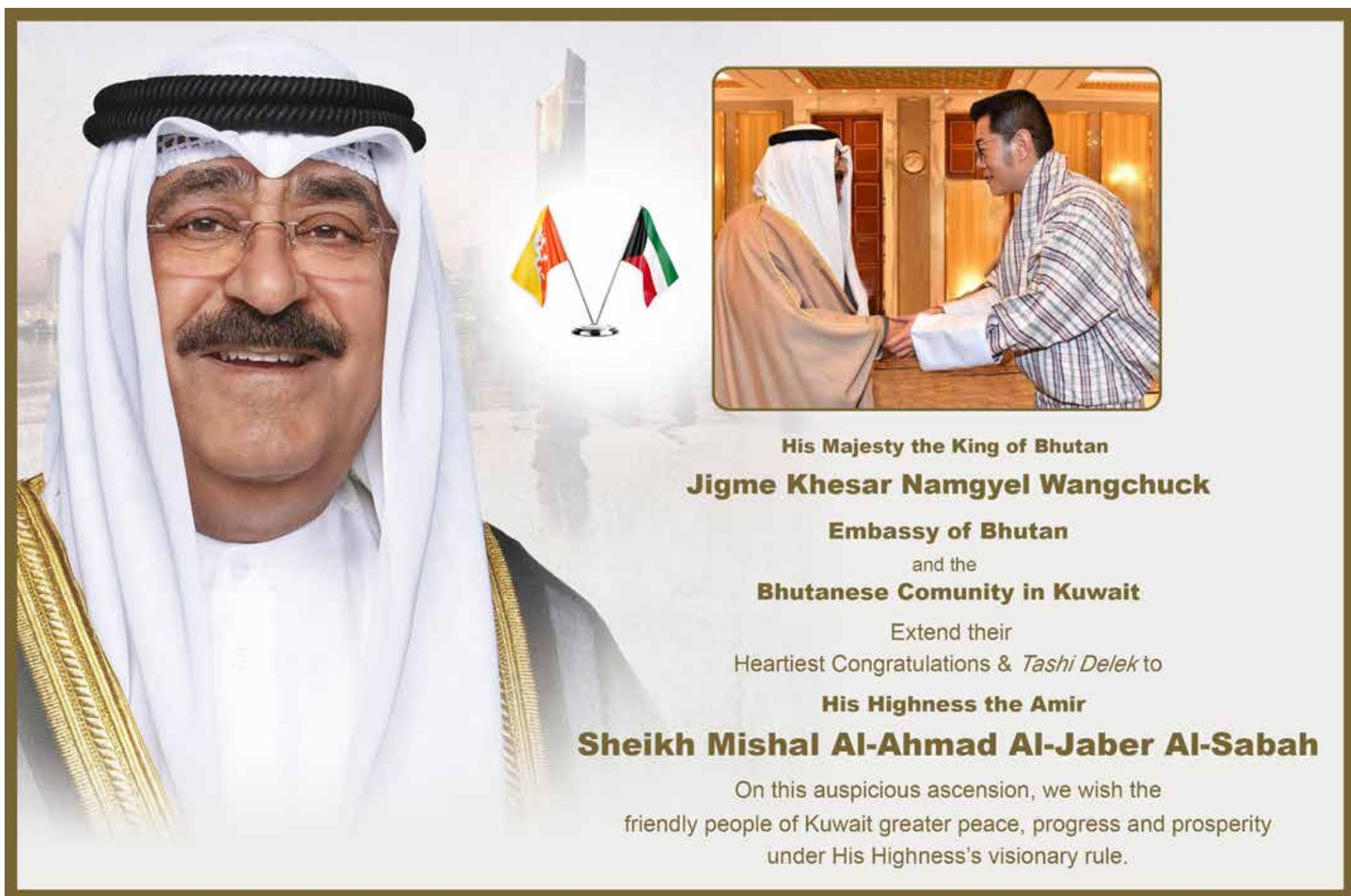
world was also buffeted by a series of disparate climate-related crises. These included scorching summer temperatures across Asia, Africa and Europe and record low ice in the Antarctic, to an unrelenting drought that has continued

to engulf the Horn of Africa since 2020, flash floods in Asia and Africa, and wildfires in Europe and North America.

The apocalyptic climate-related catastrophes and violent conflicts in 2023 inflicted devastating destruction as well as displaced and endangered the lives of millions of people, driving them into hunger, poverty and helplessness. But, at a time when global solidarity was needed like never before, the world in 2023 remained deeply polarized, making it difficult to achieve consensus on several critical issues.

The year 2023 will also go down in history as the year that Artificial Intelligence (AI), with all its novelty and promises began foraying into the mainstream.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10





## Driver license renewal, vehicle transfer, through 'Sahel'

Ministry of Interior has announced the launch of two new digital services through 'Sahel', the government's unified application for electronic services. Starting from Tuesday, 2 January, citizens can renew their driver license through the app. Also, starting from Monday, 1 February, vehicle transfer service will be accessible through the same application.

In a statement issued last week, the ministry emphasized that these services are being introduced to simplify and expedite the vehicle renewal and transfer

processes for citizens. By integrating these services into the 'Sahel' application, the ministry aims to facilitate easier access to important administrative procedures. With the vehicle driver license renewal service, citizens will now have the option to renew their licenses conveniently from the comfort of their own homes.

In related news, last week the head of Kuwait Insurance Regulatory Unit (IRU), Mohammad Al-Otaibi announced the launch of a website for issuing and renewing the mandatory third-party motor insurance certificates for private cars and motorbikes



as of 1 January.

The website, [www.beema.iru.gov.kw](http://www.beema.iru.gov.kw) allows car and motorcycle owners to obtain a new vehicle insurance, or renew their existing insurance certificate through simple steps online.

Al-Otaibi said that the move is part of the state strategy for digital transformation of government services, and that during the website's pilot-period, car and motorbike owners will have the option of renewing their insurance documents through the website or visiting an office of one of the authorized insurance firms across the country.

## Expatriate workers increase despite Kuwaitization, demographic balancing

Latest employment data from the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) show that despite the best attempts by the government at Kuwaitization of jobs as well as attempts to bring about a demographic balance in the overall population, the number of non-Kuwaiti workers in the labor market has continued to increase.

A report last week by Al-Shall Consulting, a leading financial advisory and business consultancy firm based in Kuwait, questioned the accuracy of latest employment data from the CSB. The consultancy raised concerns over the quarterly labor statistics provided by CSB noting that it was 'either inaccurately presented or requiring additional clarification'.

Accuracy of statistical data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) is critical to ministries, private businesses, and economists. So any discrepancy in the official statistics could skew the state's annual budget preparations, and have a profound impact on the planning, and allocating finances and other resources by entities, as well as the various assessments, studies and predictions made by economists and researchers.

The Al-Shall report noted that the data



provided by CSB showed that, excluding domestic sector workers, over the one-year period between 30 June 2022 and 30 June 2023 there was an increase of around 173,100 workers in the labor market. This surge in workers would mark a 9 percent increase year on year, and when domestic worker numbers were factored in, the surge in employment would go up by 11.9 percent in one year. The report noted that the figures from CSB contradicted the objectives

of the state's development plan, demographic balancing policies, and labor-market aspirations.

A detailed look at the employment table provided in the CSB report shows that as of 30 June 2023 the total number of workers in the Kuwaiti labor market was

2,088,938 with 447,064 (21.4%) of them being Kuwaitis and 1,641,874 (78.6%) being non-Kuwaitis. These figures marked a 1.5 percent decrease in the Kuwaiti workforce from the 438,559 workers during the same period in 2022. The data also showed an increase of 11 percent in non-Kuwaiti workers from the 1,477,306 workers in 2022. A gender-wise breakup of the CSB employment figures show that there were 258,860 women and 188,204 male workers in the Kuwaiti workforce, with women representing 58 percent of the total 447,064 national workers. However, any claims to gender equality in the workforce are dashed when we include women workers in the non-Kuwaiti workforce.

The data shows that among non-Kuwaiti workers the numbers were skewed largely in favor of male workers, with only 196,708 women compared to 1,445,166 male workers in the non-Kuwaiti workforce. While women represented

the larger portion of workers among Kuwaitis, the fact that women represented only 12 percent of the non-Kuwaiti workforce, resulted in women in the country having only a 22 percent share in the total labor pool in Kuwait.

Regarding employment by nationality, the CSB data showed that Indian workers accounted for nearly a quarter of the workforce followed by Egyptians (23.1%), Kuwaitis (21.4%) These percentages are provided after excluding workers in the domestic sector. However, when the share of domestic workers is added, the Indian labor force would rise to 30.2 percent of the total workers employed in Kuwait, while Egyptians would drop to 16.8 percent and Kuwaitis would account for only 15.5 percent of workers employed in Kuwait.

Al-Shall emphasizes that if these figures are accurate, they contradict the goals of government visions, development plans, and successful government programs. Even if the numbers are not entirely accurate, the report calls for a statistical revolution in the country, highlighting the need for modernization in the digital age. National statistics in the country are noted to be lagging and weak.

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3



## UN Office, embassies of UK, Canada launch 'Young Ambassadors' program



### THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

In collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UN Coordinator Office in Kuwait together with the embassies of the United Kingdom and Canada announced recently the launch of the second season of the 'Young Ambassadors' program. The youth initiative, which aims to equip young nationals with essential diplomatic skills, involved the participation of several diplomatic entities.

Gada Eltahir, representative of the UN Secretary-General in Kuwait, emphasized

that the Young Ambassadors program goes beyond being a platform, it serves as a route for change and progress. She highlighted the responsibility to protect future generations and address climate issues effectively.

Titled 'Climate Action: Justice and Climate Diplomacy', the second season of the Young Ambassadors program spans five months and includes the participation of 34 students aged 15 to 18 from various schools in Kuwait. Ms. Eltahir noted that the program seeks to prepare a new generation that is conscious of effective climate

diplomacy, and in fostering environmental awareness in society.

Speaking on the occasion, Canadian Ambassador H.E. Aliya Mawani highlighted the program's objective of creating effective advocates for a fair and just world. She stressed that climate change is a global challenge that requires collective efforts. Emphasizing the global nature of climate change, she highlighted the need for diplomatic tools to effect change through exchange of ideas and mutual relations.

For her part, British Ambassador, H.E.

Belinda Lewis, commented on the positive outcomes of the Young Ambassadors initiative, and underlined its role in building trust and in expanding the experiences of participating youth.

The Young Ambassadors, selected from 81 applicants, will be assigned to various embassies in Kuwait and UN organizations' offices. They will engage in meetings, activities, and regular gatherings until the program concludes in March next year, ensuring maximum benefit from this promising initiative.

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# MoJ launches website to raise awareness, combat human trafficking

Ministry of Justice (MoJ) website now features a dedicated section on human trafficking and migrant smuggling with the aim of raising awareness and combating this nefarious activity.

In a statement last week, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Deputy Chairman of the Permanent National Committee responsible for implementing the National Strategy to Prevent Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, Hashem Al-Qallaf, announced the launch of a dedicated website in Arabic and English, within the Ministry of Justice's online system.

The statement added that the section aims to enhance the committee's work and provide important data and information related to combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Emphasizing the significance of the website's launch in Arabic and English, Al-Qallaf highlighted the committee's commitment to evolving its operations and sharing relevant information with all stakeholders, including those who do not read Arabic.

The website features a comprehensive overview of the committee's responsibilities, powers, objectives, and vision. It also



includes pertinent legislation and agreements pertaining to anti-human traffick-

ing efforts. Additionally, the website details the role played by shelters in safeguarding victims, providing them with accommodation, and offering refuge to those in need, along with reporting mechanisms specific to these issues.

Al-Qallaf further emphasized the importance of the website in raising community awareness, as it serves as a crucial aspect of the national strategy. The platform showcases brochures prepared and issued by the committee, as well as activities implemented, such as national and regional conferences, seminars, and workshops.



## Kuwait Airways adds new Airbus to its fleet



With the touchdown of a new Airbus A320neo aircraft at Kuwait International Airport last week, the national carrier Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) has further augmented its aircraft fleet.

The new Airbus A320neo aircraft carrying the name 'Burgan' will be the ninth plane of the same model in the national fleet when it begins commercial service shortly. The aircraft is equipped with state-of-art technology and amenities that provide optimum comfort to passengers, while maintaining low fuel consumption in its operations.

In a statement released on the occasion of taking delivery of the new plane, KAC Chairman Abdulmohsen Al-Fagaan, said that with the arrival of 'Burgan' Airbus plane, the total fleet count of the company has increased to 33 aircraft, including three A330-200, seven A320-200, ten Boeing 777-300 ER and four A330-800

planes, in addition to the nine A320neo carriers,

The chairman also disclosed that KAC had reached a deal with Airbus to purchase six neo321A, and with Boeing Corporation to buy ten 777-300ER carriers in the coming years.

To provide a historical perspective, Kuwait Airways was founded in 1943 by a group of business entrepreneurs, and began to operate commercial service in 1954. The company was acquired by the Kuwait Government in 1962 and began functioning as the Kuwait Airways Corporation.

During the Iraqi invasion in 1990 and the seven-month long occupation period, KAC suffered extensive damage to its property. Most of the company's assets, including aircraft, machinery and spare parts were plundered and pillaged by the occupation forces. The company is only gradually beginning to regain its former glory as a premier airfleet in the region.

## Committee formed to solve summer energy crunch

The looming threat of a significant crisis over the next three years in power supply shortages during the peak summer months has apparently prompted the Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Dr. Jassim Al-Ustad to form a committee to study and develop strategies aimed at securing the state's energy needs for the summers from 2024 to 2026.

The committee will be tasked to focus on exploring technical initiatives to mitigate the energy crisis, including the utilization of mobile electric power generation stations and supply systems to overcome the peak summer load. The use of mobile power generation units is considered the most efficient in terms of implementation as it does not necessitate the lengthy process of constructing new power utilities and network connection lines. The committee will evaluate the feasibility of this approach, along with other potential solutions.

The committee will also evaluate the



possibility of utilizing power from the Gulf Electricity Interconnection Project, examining various technologies and initiatives to find optimal solutions for enhancing production capacity. It will also propose timetables for integrating these solutions into the existing electrical network. Delays in constructing major power production stations, combined with rapid urban growth, has contributed to the expected shortfall in electricity supplies.

Currently, the ministry's power stations have a combined production capacity of 18,727 megawatts. However, with an anticipated annual demand increase of 4.6 percent over the next three years, coupled with ongoing urban expansions, the ministry finds itself in a challenging position, where it is unable to meet demand during peak summer months.

## Kuwait, Philippines fail to resolve worker bans

Reports indicate that recent discussions held between the authorities in Kuwait and the visiting Philippine delegation have failed to resolve the issue of mutual worker bans placed by both sides.

Authorities from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Authority of Manpower and other concerned government entities have held several discussions with their counterparts in the Philippines since May, including with a visiting Philippine delegation that arrived in Kuwait to resolve the issue surrounding the visa ban on new workers by Kuwait, and the ban on sending domestic workers to Kuwait by the Philippines.

Despite initial progress and a friendly atmosphere, the talks hit a roadblock when the Philippine side insisted on the continued operation of embassy shelters, a request that was deemed illegal by Kuwait. The two sides are now said to be discussing the possibility of continuing the talks early next year in Manila.

Kuwait insists that closing the shelters for Philippine domestic workers run by the embassy is a precondition to consider lifting the ban on Filipino workers. The Philippines side maintains that they need to continue operating the shelters, as they are the only alternative to the government-run shelter, where workers were forced to remain for extended periods without being deported back home.

The expatriate worker shelter run by the Public Authority of Manpower is often overcrowded, as workers seeking shelter remain there without being deported until their disputes with their



employer can be resolved. This often involves settling the financial dues owed to workers by the employer, or the liabilities claimed from workers by their employer.

The ban on visas for the Filipino community in Kuwait was imposed in May last year by the Ministry of Interior due to a number of violations observed by the Public Authority for Manpower. These violations included housing workers in private homes or unauthorized accommodation centers, workers in violation of residency laws, and reports of worker absenteeism.

The decision also noted instances where domestic worker recruitment offices intervened in the withdrawal of workers from citizens' homes under the pretense of contract completion, which is against laws and regulations. The Philippine embassy also faced criticism for pressuring employers to comply with contractual clauses they did not desire, and for inappropriate treatment of citizens when visiting the embassy.

Thought  
for the  
week

Justice is never  
advanced in the taking  
of a human life.

— Coretta Scott King  
American author and activist



# Railway project on track for completion by 2028

The Kuwaiti section of the ambitious Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Railway network is on track for completion by the end of 2028, said Acting Director-General of Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport (PART) Khaled Dhawi. Despite a late start in green-lighting the project, compared to other countries in the GCC, Kuwait is now reported to be eager to complete the section running on its territory at the earliest.

Elaborating on the current status

of the project, the acting director-general said that last week the Authority completed studying the technical offers for the advisory study on the project, and had submitted its recommendation to the Central Agency for Public Tenders, to take the decision to award it to the appropriate bidder.

He explained that the period for implementing the advisory study is 12 months, after which the tender for implementing the project will be

issued, which is set for 30 months according to the traditional system of tenders. He indicated that "according to the proposed timetable for implementing the railway section related to Kuwait, it will be completed at the end of 2028."

Dhawi stated that 10 international consulting offices submitted offers to compete for the tender, and the study committee recommended the bidder that was technically identical and had the lowest price. He added that the authority had previously completed preparing the conditions for the detailed study and design of the railway project, and preparing the tender documents related to it.

Elaborating on the project, Dhawi stated that the Gulf route of the railway will begin from Kuwait in the north, and extends through all the countries of the GCC, to eventually terminate in Muscat, Oman, in the south. The rail network, which when fully completed will extend around 2,117 kilometers, will link all six states of the GCC, passing through Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and the Emirates.

He added that the length of railway



track within Kuwait of around 111 kilometers, will extend from the main passenger terminal in Al-Shadadiya area behind Kuwait International Airport, and run all the way to Nuwaiseeb in the south near the country's border with Saudi Arabia. The trains on this track, which would attain a maximum speed of 200 kmph and operate on diesel fuel, will run along a single line with a 200-meter long 'right-of-way' track at specified points. The track will be used for trains transporting passengers as well as goods.

Dhawi added that the genesis of the project began in 2009, with the issuance of the decision at the GCC

Summit of leaders of the GCC that year to approve the proposal for establishing a Gulf Railway project, noting the importance of the project as it would connect all six GCC countries, and facilitate the transport of people and goods within the bloc.

The project is expected to enhance trade and commercial exchange, and strengthen social ties between people of the GCC states. It would open up investment and employment opportunities, reduce the cost of transporting goods and passengers, and contribute to reducing carbon emissions by decreasing the number of vehicles on the road.



## Municipality to charge for awnings in front of buildings

Kuwait Municipality has announced that the Fatwa and Legislation Department had approved the Municipality's request to collect fees for car shade awnings erected in front of buildings.

Earlier in May 2023, the Municipal Council had approved a fee structure for the awnings, with an annual fee of 500 fils per square meter of shade erected in front of private homes, public and private sector entities, public spaces, and in front of investment, industrial and agricultural housing, and a fee of KD5 per square meter outside the boundaries of the property for commercial use.

The 'Fatwa' opinion also clarified that the prohibition contained in Law 79/1995, which states that it is not permissible to increase fees except by a law, does not apply to new fees that are imposed for the first time. Accordingly, the Municipal Council may, in accordance with Municipal Law 33/2016, impose fees according to the regulations regarding car parking shades.



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## Al Muzaini Exchange empowers students and families at Higher Education Fair 2023

Al Muzaini Exchange, the number one exchange company in Kuwait had recently participated as the exchange partner of an Higher Education Fair 2023. Over the course of the two-day event, Al Muzaini engaged with the attending students and their families with fun-filled activities and games. The company also promoted its new service, pay various bills in India via BBPS service now available in the Al Muzaini app. Bill payments is now at your fingertips with Al Muzaini.

The company also conducted a draw for an iPhone 14. Hundreds participated in the draw and the winner, Mr. Vincent Rodrigues was elated to receive the iPhone from the Head of Operations, Mr. Bassam Salah and Operations Manager, Mr. Guruprasad Kadri.

The General Manager of Al Muzaini, Mr. Hugh Fernandes said, "We are pleased to support events that focus on helping students and shaping their future. We are also pleased to give back to our customers in whatever way possible. We have plenty of services and features aimed at assisting parents to support their child studying abroad and taking care of all their financial needs. We aim to always add to the convenience of our customers."



# Kuwait in the year 2023

**T**he year 2023 was a tumultuous and challenging year for the country on various fronts. The year was also marked by several triumphs and recognitions in various domains, including launching the country's first satellite, Kuwait Sat-I in early January.

Nevertheless, media attention tended to center around political happenings, of which there were plenty. Political landscape in 2023 was marked by legislative grillings, cabinet resignations, court annulment and reinstatement of parliament, a general election, and the swearing-in of a new parliament.

On the leadership front, the tail-end of the year witnessed the sad demise of the late Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who ably guided the country over the past three years. The year also saw a smooth transition in leadership with the ascension of His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as the 17th Amir of Kuwait.

Below is a look at some of the important happenings in the country in 2023, at the leadership level, and on the government and parliament front, as well as in the field of Kuwait's foreign relations.

## His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

**Jan 26:** Amiri order accepted the resignation of the government and assigned His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his cabinet to act as caretaker government.

**Feb 6:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, issued directives to dispatch aid and medical equipment to Turkey after a devastating earthquake that hit the southern part of the country.

**March 5:** An Amiri order appointed His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as Prime Minister and tasked him with forming the government.

**June 7:** An Amiri Order was published accepting the resignation of His Highness the Prime Minister and his government, assigning them to act as caretakers.

**June 13:** An Amiri Order published naming His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Sabah as Prime Minister and assigning him to form a government.

**Sept 9:** His Highness the Amir ordered concerned bodies to send relief to Morocco following a series of quakes shaking the southern part of the country.

**Nov 29:** His Highness the Amir was admitted to the hospital due to an emergency health problem to receive the necessary treatment and undergo medical examinations.

**Dec 16:** The Amiri Diwan announced the demise of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the government announced closure of public and private institutions for three days and a 40-day mourning period.

## His Highness the Crown Prince

## Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

**April 10:** His Highness the Crown Prince receives, at Bayan Palace, His Highness the Prime Minister and his ministers for taking oath.

**April 17:** His Highness the Crown Prince represented His Highness the Amir in giving a speech marking the last 10 days of Ramadan and announced he would dissolve the 2020 National Assembly based on Article 107 of the Constitution.

**May 4:** His Highness the Crown Prince arrived in London to attend the inauguration ceremony of King Charles III.

**July 19:** His Highness the Crown Prince received at Bayan Palace His Highness the Prime Minister and his government for taking the constitutional oath.

**July 20:** His Highness Crown Prince inaugurated the National Assembly's first regular term of the 17th legislative session, urging MPs not to waste time to settle scores and irresponsible practices, but to achieve and develop.

**Aug 28:** His Highness Kuwait's Crown Prince headed to the UK at the invitation of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. During the visit: His Highness the Crown Prince held talks with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, focusing on bilateral relations, which date back more than a century. He also attended the celebration of Kuwait Investment Office (KIO) 70th anniversary.

**Sept 20:** His Highness the Crown Prince begins a visit to China at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping. During the visit, His Highness the Crown Prince met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and held official talks. His Highness the Crown Prince also met with the Kuwaiti athletic mission participating at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Oct 3: His Highness the Crown Prince received at Bayan Palace judge Dr. Adel Bouresli who swore in as the new president of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the head of the Court of Cassation.

Oct 25: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad paid a visit to the King of Britain and Northern Ireland, Charles III.

Oct 31: His Highness the Amir Representative, His Highness the Crown Prince gave a speech at the inauguration of the second session of the 17th legislative term.

Dec 18: His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah took oath at a special National Assembly session becoming the 17th Amir of the State of Kuwait.

Dec. 20: His Highness the Amir accepted the government's resignation.

## Council of Ministers

**Jan 17:** Kuwait's Cabinet issued a statement regarding a decree pardoning the freedom-restricting penalty imposed on a number of individuals in a court ruling.

**Jan 24:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah handed the government's resignation letter to His Highness the Crown Prince.

**March 5:** Minister of commerce and industry and state minister for communication affairs

and information technology, Mazen Al-Nahedh, issued a decision banning cash transactions of more than KD10 in private pharmacies.

**May 1:** The government, in a meeting, approved a draft decree to dissolve the National Assembly and referred it to His Highness the Crown Prince

**May 3:** The government approved a draft decree to call on eligible voters to cast ballots on the June 6, 2023 legislative elections.

**June 18:** A decree issued regarding formation of a government headed by His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Sabah.

**June 19:** The government formed a ministerial committee with a mandate of coordinating priorities and laws with the National Assembly.

**July 10:** The council of ministers approved the government work plan for the 17th legislative term and referred it to the National Assembly.

**Sept 21:** His Highness the Prime Minister Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah gave Kuwait's speech to the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

**Oct 12:** All celebratory manifestations in the country halted in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

**Oct 31:** His Highness the Prime Minister delivered the Amiri speech at the inauguration of the second session of the 17th legislative term.

**Dec 16:** Kuwait government mourned Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and named Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah 17th Amir.

## National Assembly

**March 19:** The constitutional court annulled the 2022 national assembly and reinstated the 2020 formation.

**March 20:** The National Assembly bureau under the reinstated 2020 Assembly held a meeting headed by the reinstated speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim.

**May 5:** Ministry of Interior began receiving applications from citizens wishing to run for the June 6 elections.

**June 6:** General elections held for 50 parliamentary seats

**June 20:** The parliament elected MP Ahmad Al-Saadoun as Speaker.

**July 13:** National Assembly approved in special session the residential cities law and a law on amending pensioners health insurance law to include housewives.

**July 26:** National Assembly approved amending constitutional court law.

**Aug 1:** National Assembly approved law on National Assembly elections (Elections General Commission),

**Aug 2:** National Assembly approved a number of draft bills on government budgets, ministries, administrations, as well as recommendations relating to paychecks.

**Sept 23:** Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun stated that the verdict of the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court, rescinding the agreement on maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah with Kuwait, runs counter to the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and is inconsistent with

previously signed agreements.

**Nov 21:** The legislative parliamentary committee organized a forum on a modified electoral system.

**Dec 18:** National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun called for a special public session to be held for Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to be sworn in as the country's Amir.

## Foreign Ministry

**Jan 30:** Kuwaiti Ambassador Jassem Al-Budaiwi was appointed Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General.

**Feb 19:** The Kuwaiti-Iraqi joint technical committee held its fifth meeting in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, with the Kuwaiti side headed by deputy foreign minister Mansour Al-Otaibi.

**Feb 27:** Foreign Minister heads the Kuwaiti delegation to the donors' conference for the humanitarian situation in Yemen held at the UN headquarters in Geneva, March 2: Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah headed the state's delegation to the non-aligned movement summit in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan.

**March 21:** Foreign Minister participated in the first round of strategic dialogue meetings between Kuwait and the United Kingdom in London.

**March 23:** Kuwait's Ambassador to India Jassem Al-Najem delivered Kuwait's speech at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization international conference.

**April 30:** Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah submitted her credentials to US President Joe Biden as Kuwait's Ambassador in Washington.

**May 6:** Kuwait signed an MoU to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as an observer.

**July 3:** In response to Iranian claims, the Foreign Ministry asserted that the natural resources of the Durra field are fully owned by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia

**July 10:** Foreign Minister headed the Kuwaiti delegation to the sixth ministerial meeting for strategic dialogue between GCC and Russia held in Moscow.

**Sept 4:** Kuwait inked the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) during the 43rd ASEAN summit in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta.

**Oct 10:** Kuwait is elected to serve in the United Nations' Human Rights Council.

**Oct 22:** Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah announced the launch of Kuwaiti relief operations via an air bridge to Palestinians in Gaza.

**Dec 5:** The 44th Session of the Supreme Council of GCC adopted the Doha Declaration underscoring among others the importance of Iraq's respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait.

**Dec 19:** Members of the UNSC stand for a moment of silence in mourning of late Kuwait Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

**Dec 20:** UNGA paid tribute to the late Amir during a special session.

## National Diwan for Human Rights' complaints committee completes 146 tasks in 2023

**T**he National Diwan for Human Rights' standing committee for complaints issued its statistical review for 2023 as stipulated in the provisions of law 67/2015 that established the Diwan.

Chairman of the committee Dr. Abdulredha Assiri said that the committee had completed 146 tasks in 2023, of them were 39 complaints.

The committee, said added in a statement, also presented two researches about human rights issues, two seminar, and 19 field visits to correctional and social care centers.

The committee also visited 12 police

stations and released 13 reports of its work and collaborated with three organizations of the civil society, as well as participating in six events and media interviews, nine meetings and conferences abroad, and 26 meetings inside Kuwait. Dr. Assiri added that through the committees work they were able to initiate different practical activities for prisoners in cooperation with a number of the civil society organizations and charities including the Human Construction Society for Social Development.

The committee also raised public awareness about human rights issues by collaborating with



the Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies, and handled the complaints positively, said

Assiri. The committee has different educational and discussion programs to be announced in due time, directed to social care homes' residents including the elderly, children with unknown parents, juveniles, as well as law enforcement officials through collaborating with official institutions in the country, Dr. Assiri added.

The Committee is also keen on interacting with regional and international organizations by participating in various formal meetings and training programs to gain experience and learn about new policies and programs regarding humanitarian issues.



# Part-time work allowed for Article 18 visa holders

In a landmark decision that ushers in a new era of employment flexibility, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled approved part-time work for workers in the private sector (holding Article 18 work permit) starting from January 2024.

However, the worker will have to first obtain

approval from their original employer and then a 'part-time work permit' from the Public authority of Manpower. The maximum work hours under the part-time work permit is limited to four hours a day, with the contracting sector excluded from this limit due to the increased need for workers in this sector.

## LuLu Exchange Marks Milestone with Grand Opening of the 100th Customer Engagement Centre in the UAE



LuLu Exchange, a leading financial services provider, proudly commemorates its growth and success with the inauguration of the 100th customer engagement centre at Q1 Mall, Al Warqa, Dubai. This historic achievement reinstates the company's commitment to enhancing customer experience and expanding its reach in the region. The newly opened customer engagement centre takes the tally of global engagement centres under LuLu Financial Holdings to 314.

The milestone 100th Customer Engagement Centre was inaugurated by H.E. Satish Kumar Sivan, Consul General of India, Dubai, alongside Mr. Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings and Mr. Richard Wason, CEO, LuLu Financial Holdings in the esteemed presence of the company's senior management and key dignitaries from the financial industry.

Speaking at the event, H.E. Satish Kumar Sivan expressed, "LuLu Exchange's remarkable growth is a testament to its dedication to providing essential financial services. This 100th Customer Engagement Centre is a significant step forward, reflecting the company's commitment to the community."

Mr. Adeeb Ahamed remarked, "Our commitment to a value-driven approach is evident in every aspect of our operations, ensuring that integrity and customer satisfaction guide our actions. We actively work towards financial inclusion, recognizing the importance of accessible financial services for all. This commitment aligns with our broader vision of making a positive impact on the communities and environment with a focus on sustainability. The persistent support from the leadership and governance of the UAE has been instrumental in our growth journey. Their strategic vision and commitment to excellence have provided a solid foundation for our success. As we celebrate this milestone, LuLu Exchange remains dedicated to upholding high standards in financial services, with gratitude for the trust placed in us by millions."

Since its establishment in 2009, marked by the inauguration of the first Customer Engagement Centre in Abu Dhabi, LuLu Exchange has undergone a significant transformation, evolving into a diversified leader within the

global payments industry. Over the past 15 years, the company has expanded its presence across all seven emirates of the UAE, making a substantial impact on the financial landscape.

LuLu Exchange has consistently demonstrated remarkable growth over the last decade, aligning with the growing demand for remittance services, and established itself as a trusted global financial service provider. The 2023 World Bank report validates this upward trajectory, revealing a substantial surge in global remittances to an impressive \$860 billion. Amidst this growth, the resilience exhibited by labour markets in advanced economies and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has played a vital role in supporting migrants and facilitating crucial fund transfers back to their home countries. In 2023, India topped the charts in remittances, and LuLu Exchange, with its extensive global operations, played a pivotal role as a major facilitator of cross-border payments into India. LuLu Exchange processed \$9.4 billion in the year 2023, leveraging its global payout network covering over 100 countries. This underscores LuLu Exchange's integral part in the global financial landscape and further reinforces its unwavering dedication to providing secure and transparent cross-border payment solutions.

LuLu Exchange's strategic focus on digital transformation and platform-based innovations has positioned it as a key player in cross-border payments, foreign exchange, WPS payroll solutions, and wholesale banknotes. With a customer base spanning millions of individuals from diverse nationalities each year, LuLu Exchange has consistently delivered prompt, transparent, and reliable services.

This accomplishment is made possible through its extensive network of customer engagement centres throughout the UAE and the proprietary LuLu Money digital payments app, reflecting the company's unwavering commitment to excellence in financial services. As LuLu Exchange continues to evolve and grow, its legacy of innovation and customer-centric initiatives remains a driving force in the dynamic landscape of global financial services.

For more details, visit  
- www.luluexchange.com

## UK to begin ETA for GCC nationals

An announcement by the British Foreign Office last week noted that as of February 2024, citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states will be able to travel to the UK using an electronic travel authorization (ETA) system.

Elaborating on the new visa mechanism, the British Ambassador H.E. Belinda Lewis stated that application of the ETA for Kuwaiti citizens will make travel to the United Kingdom much easier and more flexible, as there will be no need for a visit visa. She expressed hope that the new visa system would encourage more Kuwaitis to visit the United Kingdom.

Ambassador Lewis explained that Kuwaitis can apply for an electronic travel permit, which will be valid for a period of two years at a cost of 10 British pounds, equivalent to KD3.75 for every member of a family, whether adult, children or infants. She added that it would take about three working days to process the application and issue an ETA.

On another note, the ambassador praised the depth of bilateral relations between the two countries, explaining that the United Kingdom and Kuwait will continue to benefit from the close friendship we share to develop new areas of cooperation, noting that the volume of trade has witnessed remarkable growth after reaching 5.1 billion pounds sterling, an increase of 66.8 percent over the past year.



She continued: Our defense and security partnerships have also flourished, including cybersecurity, air and maritime security, military cooperation, and counter-terrorism cooperation, and ties between individuals have strengthened, which is reflected in the presence of about 10,000 Kuwaiti students in world-class UK universities.

The British Ambassador also praised the four visits made by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad to the United Kingdom, the last of which was in October to attend a special meeting with the King of Britain, considering that these visits represent a prominent and important point.



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## January 2024

01

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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## February 2024

02

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## March 2024

03

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## April 2024

04

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## May 2024

05

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## June 2024

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## July 2024

07

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## August 2024

08

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## September 2024

09

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## October 2024

10

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## November 2024

11

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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## December 2024

12

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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29	30	31				

## Public Holidays 2024

**01 January** New Year's Day

**07 February** Isra and Miraj

**25 February** Kuwait National Day

**26 February**

**10 April**

**11 - 12 April**

**Kuwait Liberation Day**

**Eid Al Fitr**

**Eid Al Fitr Holiday**

**16 June**

**17 June**

**18 - 19 June**

**Arafat Day**

**Eid Al Adha**

**Eid Al Adha Holiday**

**08 July**

**Islamic New Year**

**15 September**

**The Prophet's Birthday**



Ramadan 2024 begins  
on Sunday, 10 March  
and ends on Tuesday, 09 April.  
Dates may vary\*



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# A lookback on 2023, a year that was...

Continued from Page 1

Despite misgivings over its unbridled proliferation and inherent dangers, AI made significant inroads into various aspects of work and home life. Meanwhile, rising population and increasing resource crunches led to higher energy and food prices that were further aggravated by tightening financial conditions.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its assessment report published in March identified global population growth as among the biggest drivers of growing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. But, in 2023, the world hosted more people than ever before; with UN data showing the global population crossed the 8 billion mark in November 2022. Studies also showed that annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are estimated to grow by 1.1 percent to exceed 40 billion tons in 2023, of which 30 billion tons will be from burning fossil fuels.

The growth in global population is also driving a monumental demographic shift, with more young people in the world today than ever before in history. By 2050, the current youth boom across Africa will lead to a quarter of people worldwide being African. It is estimated that Africa, along with India, which in 2023 surpassed China to become the world's most populous country with 1.43 billion people, will account for over 40 percent of the 9.7 billion global population in 2050.

In 2023, the world also marked the midway point to three pivotal agreements signed by the global community in 2015 — the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Development Finance, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Over three days from 18 to 20 September, world leaders and global stakeholders gathered at the UN Headquarters in New York to attend the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development.

The third midway gathering came at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 28) in the United Arab Emirates from 30 November to 12 December, where a 'Global Stocktake' on progress, or lack thereof, in addressing climate change was held. Importantly, reports released by the UN and other agencies ahead of the gatherings underlined that at the midway point to the target year of 2030, the world was nowhere close to achieving the goals outlined in the pacts.

Although the consensus declarations at the conclusion of these three events were heartening, previous declarations made at many such high-level forums reveal that without credible implementation the goals agreed upon at these conferences often remain unrealized. Effective implementation has always been the stumbling block in realizing global goals for an equitable and sustainable future for all.

But it was not all doom and gloom in 2023, there were triumphs and celebrations of achievements, as well as glimmers of hope for peace and prosperity for countries, communities and for humanity. In 2023, the world came together to reach three major diplomatic wins for the environment — the Vanuatu Resolution, the High Seas Treaty, and an agreement by the International Maritime Organization. And, in 2023, for the first time in 30 years of climate talks, the world finally reached consensus on 'transitioning away from fossil fuels' at the COP28 talks in Dubai.

The Vanuatu Resolution, spearheaded by the island-state of Vanuatu and passed by the UN General Assembly in March, was a win for climate justice. It will allow the Assembly to seek the opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legal consequences for states that damage the climate in such a way that it affects others. In another win for the environment, in June, the UN adopted the High Seas Treaty, which will see nearly one-third of the world's international waters becoming protected marine reserves. This was followed in July by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the UN entity charged with regulating shipping, agreeing to reach net-zero emissions in global shipping around 2050.

Additionally, the year 2023 featured several inspiring stories of solidarity on issues and challenges facing the world at the grassroots level, within and across borders. Often led by youth, women, and those facing discrimination, many of these initiatives that began locally gradually morphed into transnational movements, presenting small but discernible signs that kindle hopes of a brighter future.

But as the world enters 2024, global solidarity can no longer be just another buzzword; it remains our only option for survival of the planet and all species on it.

As we ponder on the year that was, let us take a look at some of the other major events and happenings around the world in 2023:

**5 Jan:** Five days after his demise on 31 December 2022, the funeral for Pope Benedict XVI is held at St. Peter's Square in the Vatican City.



**5 Feb:** The longest lasting tropical cyclone in history, Cyclone Freddy, develops in the Indian Ocean before moving across southeastern Africa causing over 1,400 deaths, innumerable injuries and widespread damage.

**6 Feb:** An earthquake measuring 7.8 Mww strikes southern and central Turkey and northern and western Syria followed by a 7.7 Mww aftershock on the same day, causing more than 59,000 fatalities and injuring over 121,000, besides inflicting extensive damage in both countries.

**14 Feb:** European Parliament bans the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles across the European Union from 2035, citing the need to combat climate change and promote electric vehicle use in Europe

**14 Mar:** Artificial Intelligence research firm OpenAI launches GPT-4, a large language model for ChatGPT, which can process up to 25,000 words and respond to images and can process up to 25,000 words.

**20 Mar:** The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) releases the synthesis report of its Sixth Assessment Report on climate change, which shows that human-induced global warming has spurred changes to the Earth's climate unprecedented in human history.



**15 Apr:** Germany shuts down its last three nuclear power stations as part of its move away from unsustainable power and the promotion of green energy.

**5 May:** The World Health Organization ends its declaration of COVID-19 being a global health emergency, but continues to refer to it as a pandemic.

**6 Jun:** Kuwait holds a general election following the annulment of the 2022 snap elections by the Constitutional Court. Polling for the 50-member National Assembly results in 38 members from the annulled 2022 session retaining their seats, two being returned from the 2020 session, and 10 first-time entrants to parliament.

**14 Jun:** Scientists report the creation of the first synthetic human embryo from stem cells, without the need for sperm or egg cells



**19 Jun:** The United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopts the High Seas Treaty, which aims to protect 30 percent of the world's oceans by 2030.

**23 Jul:** Tens of thousands of tourists flee Rhodes, Greece,

amid wildfires and a major heatwave, in what was the largest evacuation in the country's history.

**1 Aug:** The world's oceans reach a new record high temperature of 20.96 °C exceeding the previous record in 2016. July is also the hottest month on record for globally averaged surface air temperatures by a considerable margin (0.3 °C)



**8 Aug:** More than 17,000 acres of land are burned and at least 100 people are killed, when a series of wildfires break out on the island of Maui in Hawaii.

**21 Aug:** Nearly 68 percent of Canada's Northwest Territories are forced to evacuate to other parts of the country due to wildfires

**23 Aug:** Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Chandrayaan-3 becomes the first spacecraft to land near the south pole of the Moon, carrying a lunar lander named Vikram and a lunar rover named Pragyan. Ten days later, ISRO followed this up with the successful launch of Aditya-L1, India's first solar observation mission.



**8 Sep:** A 6.9 magnitude earthquake strikes Marrakech-Safi province in western Morocco, killing at least 2,960 people and causing extensive damage, including to several historic buildings.

**9 Sep:** The African Union becomes the 21st permanent member of the G20 after its induction at the 18th G20 summit in India.

**10 Sep:** Storm Daniel, a Mediterranean tropical-like cyclone kills at least 5,000 people in Libya, with a further 10,000 to 100,000 reported missing. In the city of Derna, two dams collapse, resulting in a quarter of the city being destroyed

**7 Oct:** Hamas launches an incursion into southern Israel from the Gaza Strip, prompting a military response from the Israel Defense Forces. The ongoing military offensive has so far killed over 20,000 people and injured many more in Gaza

**7 Oct:** A series of earthquakes occur in Herat Province in Afghanistan, killing over 1,000 people and injuring nearly 2,000, with tremors felt in Iran and Turkmenistan. The earthquakes are the deadliest in the country since 1998.

**30 Nov:** The annual global climate conference gets underway at Dubai Expo City in the United Arab Emirates, with the first day of the COP28 summit witnessing an agreement to operationalize the long elusive Loss and Damage Fund.



**12 Dec:** On the last day of the COP28 climate summit in Dubai, a consensus is reached for countries to 'transition away' from fossil fuels, the first such agreement in the conference's 30-year history

**16 Dec:** The Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah dies at the age of 86 and is succeeded by His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who becomes the 17th Amir of Kuwait.





# Ambassadors wish Kuwait a happy, safe and prosperous year

*A number of ambassadors expressed their deepest congratulations to the leadership, government and people of Kuwait on the occasion of the new Gregorian year, wishing progress, prosperity and well-being for Kuwait, and for goodness and peace to spread throughout the world in the new year.*

## Antigua and Barbuda

**Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda H.E. Mohammed Al-Zoubi** extended his sincere congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad and all the Kuwaiti people on the occasion of the New Year, wishing it to be a safe and happy year for them. He expressed hope that bilateral relations between his country and Kuwait will develop during 2024 in all political, economic and cultural fields, stressing that there are many opportunities available to investors in his country, and as we begin a new year with new hope, I wish everyone health, success and happiness."



## Hungary

**Hungarian Ambassador H.E. András Szábó** said, "I wish everyone a Happy New Year. The year 2024 will be a special year, as Kuwait and Hungary celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between them. We look forward to continuing fruitful cooperation during this year and deepening the friendly bilateral relations between the two countries, with the promise of many bilateral activities that will link economic, political, cultural, tourism, educational, sports and social relations between the two countries."



## Kazakhstan

**Ambassador of Kazakhstan H.E. Azamat Berdibai**, congratulated the Kuwaiti government and people, led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, wishing His Highness and Kuwait continued success, progress, peace and prosperity. He added, "We have turned the page on the year 2023, with its good and bad, and I hope that the new year will be a good omen for everyone and a favorable opportunity to achieve peace and progress for various countries of the world. Kazakh-Kuwaiti relations are developing significantly and we hope to invest in them and explore new horizons for them in what is in the interest of the two friendly peoples."



## Malta

**Ambassador H.E. George Said Zammit**, said: "While the year 2024 has a sad beginning, and we continue to mourn the death of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, I take the opportunity, on behalf of the President of the Republic and the Government of Malta, to wish a happy year to everyone on the land of Kuwait. Hope the New Year will be a year full of prosperity, and important for the unique and long-term partnership between Malta and Kuwait under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, and I am sure that our cooperation in various fields will be further strengthened in the coming years for the benefit of the two countries."



## Britain

**British Ambassador H.E. Belinda Lewis**, said Year 2024 has begun on a sad note, as we continue to mourn the death of His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad. She added, "I wish everyone in Kuwait a happy New Year. The next 12 months will be a busy and important period for the special and historic partnership between the United Kingdom and Kuwait, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, and I am confident that our cooperation will be further strengthened during the 125th year of official diplomatic relations between our two countries."



## India

**Indian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika** congratulated the Kuwaiti leadership, government and people on the occasion of the New Year, and said, "I extend my sincere wishes and warm greetings to the leadership and people of the friendly State of Kuwait, and I also congratulate the large and vibrant Indian community in Kuwait." He added, "I believe that in the year 2024, Kuwait will enter a new era of development and prosperity under the wise leadership of the Amir of the country, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, and the prospective new government. I am also confident that bilateral relations between India and Kuwait will achieve new heights this year."



## Switzerland

**Swiss Ambassador H.E. Tiziano Palmelli** congratulated, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, the Kuwaiti authorities and all the brotherly Kuwaiti people, on the occasion of the New Year and extended his best wishes for good health, peace, and prosperity. He prayed for "the existence of a common desire to achieve peace and justice in the region."



## Bulgaria

**Bulgarian Ambassador H.E. Dimitar Dimitrov** said: "With the advent of the new Gregorian year, we are filled with hope that it will be a year in which peace, stability and security prevail. We wish the State of Kuwait and its friendly people more progress, prosperity and development, and for the leader of its path, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, good health and wellness, success and progress in serving his people and his country. We hope that in the new year our bilateral relations will witness a strong push towards further development and closer cooperation."



## Italy

**Italian Ambassador H.E. Lorenzo Morini**, said: "As we bid farewell to a difficult and challenging year, I am pleased to extend, on my own behalf and on behalf of the members of the Italian community residing in Kuwait, my sincerest congratulations to the friendly State of Kuwait, the leadership, government and people, led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, on the occasion of the new Gregorian year, wishing Kuwait, more progress and prosperity. Italy and Kuwait are linked by historical, friendly, long-term and dynamic relations and look forward to more opportunities between the two countries at all levels, and to enhance communication and exchanges between the two friendly peoples, wishing the State of Kuwait continued security and stability for its government and its people."



## Tajikistan

**Ambassador of Tajikistan and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, H.E. Dr. Zubaidullah Zubaidov** said: "I extend to the sisterly State of Kuwait, the leadership, government and people, my warmest congratulations and best wishes on the occasion of the New Year, and wish Kuwait further progress and prosperity. The historical partnership between Tajikistan and Kuwait, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, will be further strengthened and developed. This year, our embassy will also continue its efforts with our Kuwaiti friends, to advance our relations to a higher level, in the interest of the two peoples, as under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, Kuwait embarks on a new era of development and prosperity."



## China

**Chinese Ambassador H.E. Zhang Jianwei**, said, "As the year 2024 dawns, and on my own behalf and on behalf of the employees of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, I extend to the leadership, government and people of friendly Kuwait my warmest congratulations and best



wishes. In 2023, Chinese-Kuwaiti relations witnessed steady progress under the auspices of the leaders of the two countries, especially with the successful visit of His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, to China. In the new year, the Chinese embassy will make joint efforts with all Kuwaiti friends to implement important agreements and cooperation documents between the two countries to raise our strategic partnership relations to a higher level, in the interest of the two peoples."

## Vietnam

**Vietnamese Ambassador, H.E. Tuan Thang Anjo**, expressed his best wishes to the Amir His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, to the Kuwaiti people and to those residing here, and I hope that this year will be filled with happiness, peace and lasting prosperity." He went on to say, "There are many dreams and hopes that must come true in 2024. Long live the friendly relationship between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the State of Kuwait as we celebrate the forty-eighth anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations."





EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Pillars of Green Wisdom



**Emmanuel Macron**  
President of France.

The ongoing war in Ukraine and the fighting in Gaza following Hamas's October 7 terrorist attack must not distract the world from our collective priorities: reducing our CO2 emissions, aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050, preserving biodiversity, and fighting poverty and inequality.

This is the doctrine France is implementing at an international level, through the Paris Pact for People and the Planet and the One Planet summits. The cornerstone of our strategy must be to speed up the ecological transition as well as the fight against poverty. After all, it is now crystal clear that no country will work to protect the planet if the price it must pay leads its citizens into a socioeconomic dead-end.

The world's most advanced economies, which have also been the main CO2 emitters since the industrial revolution, must move away from fossil fuels. If we want to meet the goals of the Paris climate agreement, this is



nonnegotiable. Science has set the trajectory: we must move away from coal by 2030, from oil by 2045, and from gas by 2050. While the G7 countries bear the greatest responsibility, China, which is now the second-largest emitter in history, must be fully committed, too.

The threat posed by coal must be addressed

first. Today, the 2,000 gigawatts of installed capacity emit enough CO2 to take us above 1.5°C. While the International Energy Agency recommends withdrawing 92 GW per year, 500 GW of additional capacity is already planned.

While it is the G7's responsibility to move away from coal by 2030 (France will have done so in 2027), emerging economies are now the biggest coal consumers. In these countries, we need to speed up the financing of renewables, as well as nuclear power, which, as a manageable and a decarbonized energy source, must play a key role.

We must also put private financing and trade at the service of the Paris agreement. The cost of investment must be higher for players in the fossil-fuel sector. We need a green interest rate and a brown interest rate. Similarly, we need a climate clause in our trade agreements, because we cannot simultaneously demand that our industries become greener while supporting the liberalization of international trade in polluting products.

For the most vulnerable countries, we must create conditions that enable them to finance their climate-change mitigation and adaptation efforts and access the green technologies that are the new engines of growth. This implies going further than traditional 'official development assistance' and doing for vulnerable countries what rich countries did for themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic: pursue an unorthodox fiscal and monetary policy.

The results are already there: in two years, following the initiative we took in Paris in the spring of 2021, we have released over \$100 billion in special drawing rights (SDRs), the International Monetary Fund's reserve asset) for vulnerable countries. By activating this 'dormant asset', we are extending 20-year loans at near-zero interest rates to finance climate action and pandemic preparedness in the poorest countries. We have begun to change debt rules to suspend payments for such countries, should a climate shock occur. And we have changed the mandate of multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank, so that they take more risks and mobilize more private money.

We are going to continue working on this, including within the framework of the new loss and damage fund, where we must mobilize new private insurance mechanisms in the face of climate risk. We will start from the specific needs of the hardest-hit countries. In the first half of 2024, France and Bangladesh will sign an agreement to finance climate-change adaptation and loss and damage, with the French development agency contributing €1 billion (\$1.1 billion) in investment, and the IMF

extending up to \$1 billion worth of SDRs in new loans.

This also implies identifying, on a global scale, governance mechanisms for the most crucial challenges we will have to face in the coming years, access to water being one of the most pressing. In this regard, France and Kazakhstan will convene a One Water Summit during the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024.

Moreover, we must focus on building the basis of a 'bio-economy' that will pay for the services provided by nature. Nature is our best technology to sequester carbon on a large scale. The countries with the most important carbon and biodiversity reserves, especially in the three main tropical forest basins, must obtain much greater resources, determined on a country-by-country basis, in exchange for their stewardship of these vital reserves. France has already launched three contracts of this type at COP28, with Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Congo, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

But reform of the voluntary carbon market is essential. We need to create an international carbon and biodiversity exchange that will allow governmental and private actors to organize voluntary carbon credit swaps, based on sufficiently ambitious criteria to avoid greenwashing, and to remunerate local communities.

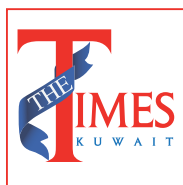
The ocean is our most important carbon sink, and we must protect it. France and Costa Rica will convene the third United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice in June 2025, with the aim of updating international law, including on the prohibition of plastic pollution and on protection of the deep sea and seabed. These reforms would also enable the development of national strategies for seaboard protection by countries with exclusive economic zones.

“

We need a climate clause in our trade agreements, because we cannot simultaneously demand that our industries become greener while supporting the liberalization of international trade in polluting products.

”

Finally, we will not succeed if we cannot reform the World Bank and the IMF, which play a prominent role in establishing the norms and financing the green transition on a global scale. Eighty years after their creation, these institutions remain underfunded, relative to the size of the global economy and population, and emerging and developing countries continue to be shut out of their governance. But we will not be able to agree on goals and financing until every country negotiating is on an equal footing. To this end, we must review Bretton Woods governance, and ask emerging countries to assume their share of accountability in financing global public goods.



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# Viet Nam through the cities Ha Noi - For the Love of Food & Coffee

West Lake  
and Truc Bach Lake



Spring rolls in Republique



Beef Pho



Coffilia in Ha Noi



Coffilia in Kuwait

The capital city of Viet Nam, Ha Noi, is famous for everything that exists, from the weather to the atmosphere. Among them, however, lies two things that connect everything: food and coffee. If you choose to sign up for a juicy, tasty adventure in Ha Noi, the chances are high that you will fall in love with the city. What will be needed? An empty stomach, a mind filled with passion, and a body ready for adventure.

## Dine in these streets

Street food is a culture. It has been already defined by the Food & Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization as "ready-to-eat foods and beverages prepared and/or sold by vendors or hawkers, especially in the streets and other similar places". Many people will agree that it represents the typical culinary culture of each region and country.

In Ha Noi, the street kitchens of the Old Quarter will provide you with the authentic taste of how street food should be cooked. Steaming pots of its star anise-infused pho broth simmer on every corner; while every day, the scent of bun cha fills the air to charm

the walkers from near and far. Walk to the south of the Old Quarter and you will also find spacious streets, and verdant parks, together with restored cathedrals and villas, insightful museums, and lovely lakes.

The surrounding areas are no less interesting. Take a quick stroll to Ly Van Phuc for barbecue chicken with a side of grilled honey bread and spicy chili sauce. Or grab a cab to Ngu Xa Street on Truc Bach Lake to try the capital's famous pho cuon rolls and other local favorites. There are hundreds of reasons why tourist agencies always recommend you allocate a single day for the "food tour" around the capital city, and it lies in the thumb-ups of all the people who have tried it.

If you want to have a first impression of how delicious Vietnamese cuisine can be, the Republique restaurant in Kuwait City is the place to try. There you will find in the menu the Vietnamese fried rolls, fresh rolls, and beef pho, catered to you with the care and craftiness of the chef.

## "Philiias" of coffee, assemble

Whether you are a passionate coffee-philias (a made-up word for people who are crazy about this drink) or just curious about

Vietnamese culture, you should not miss out on an opportunity to try the best cup of coffee in Ha Noi.

There are many ways to feel the rhythm during your coffee journey. One way is to take a stroll to the terrace of the Metropole Hotel and enjoy the fine coffee there. You will realize that the true rhythm of Hanoi life is far from hurried and is reflected well in every taste of your precious cup.

Another way to explore the coffee culture in the city is through the cafes with unique architectural styles. Historically diverse influence, together with subsidy phase austerity and modern practicalities have resulted in a compelling jumble of lovingly converted cafe shops. The list is long, but I am sure that you will find it worthy to come and give it a try.

If you want to have a sip of Vietnamese coffee in Kuwait, I also recommend you to wander along the beach to Manqaf, find the Al-Kout Beach Hotel and you will catch sight of Coffilia (coffee and philias, get it?) - the all-new Vietnamese coffee brand now available in Kuwait. The owner of the shop is waiting there for you to tell the story of how he discovered the finest coffee in the

world in Viet Nam.

Coffee means much more than just the taste of it. Coffee now serves as a bridge connecting people and cultures from different parts of the world. The presence of the Coffilia coffee shop in Kuwait is a vivid testimony that the coffee culture of Ha Noi has a place in the Kuwaiti people's hearts.

Take a sip of the coffee and for the love of it, we are pretty sure you will want to take all your luggage to Ha Noi.

- Images from Viet Nam Tourism Board, Republique Restaurant and Coffilia



Xich lo (cyclo)



Phung Hung Street paintings



Phung Hung Street paintings



# Karlovy Vary

## A Haven of spas, tranquility and culture



By Nourah Khan  
Travel Writer  
The Times Kuwait

Karlovy Vary, a picturesque spa town nestled in the western part of the Czech Republic, is renowned for its therapeutic hot springs and charming architecture. The city's name, meaning 'Charles' Bath', pays homage to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV, who allegedly discovered the springs in the 14th century.

People usually visit Karlovy Vary during the spring and summer to enjoy its nature and stunning views, but my experience was different, as I went there in winter to enjoy the city's winter charms and its activities.

You can get to Karlovy Vary from the capital, Prague, either by train or by car, and when it comes to finding the perfect hotel in Karlovy Vary, there are plenty of options to choose from.

For those looking for a historical experience, the Hotel Thermal where I stayed is the perfect choice. The hotel offers stunning views of the surrounding countryside, and has a range of amenities, including a spa, wellness center, and indoor and outdoor pools. The rooms are spacious and beautifully decorated, and the service is impeccable.

The Thermal Hotel has the advantage of direct access from the hotel to Saonia, which is the largest swimming pool with natural hot water spring, and swimming in the outdoor pool at minus 6 degrees temperature was an enjoyable and unforgettable experience.

There are plenty of things to see and do in Karlovy Vary, whether you are interested in history, culture, or outdoor activities. Visitors usually flock to Karlovy Vary to indulge in the healing properties of its mineral-rich waters, which are said to alleviate various ailments.

One of the town's most famous attractions is the Hot Spring Colonnade, which is home to several of the town's mineral springs. You can take a sip of the water from the springs, which is said to have healing properties, and explore the beautiful architecture of the colonnade. Other colonnades, such as



the Mill Colonnade and the Market Colonnade, showcase the town's elegant spa architecture and provide the perfect backdrop for leisurely strolls.

At the Vřídlo Hot Spring, you can engage in Karlovy Vary's unique tradition of sipping mineral water from distinctively shaped cups called 'křižáky'. The water, naturally warm and imbued with minerals, is believed to have therapeutic effects on digestion and overall well-being.

Another must-see attraction in town is the Diana Lookout Tower, which offers stunning views of the town and the surrounding countryside. You can take a cable car to the top of the tower and enjoy the panoramic views from up there.

The International Film Festival, hosted annually in Karlovy Vary, adds a cultural flair to the town, attracting filmmakers

and cinephiles worldwide. This event has become a significant platform for showcasing both emerging talent and established cinematic achievements.

Exploring the historic heart of Karlovy Vary, one encounters landmarks like the Orthodox Church of Saint Peter and Paul. The lively atmosphere around the Teplá River, lined with vibrant houses, further enhances the town's charm.

Visiting the Moser Glass Museum in Karlovy Vary promises an immersive journey into the world of exquisite glass craftsmanship. The museum showcases the legacy of Moser, a renowned glass-making company with a history dating back to 1857.



One of the highlights of the museum is the opportunity to witness skilled artisans in action, demonstrating the meticulous techniques involved in creating Moser's signature pieces. This firsthand experience adds depth to your understanding of the artistry and craftsmanship behind each glass creation.

In conclusion, Karlovy Vary stands as a haven for those seeking a retreat into wellness, culture, and natural beauty. With its healing waters, architectural marvels, and cultural festivities, this charming town invites travelers to immerse themselves in a tapestry of experiences, leaving them with indelible memories and a renewed sense of tranquility.

**Noura Khan**, a travel influencer and content creator, is a Kuwaiti national, holds a degree in law from Kuwait University and has worked as a journalist prior to taking up a position in the government. In 2018 she started blogging on travel and visited more than 60 countries since. She has around 100k followers on her blog post. @nourajtraveller is well appreciated for content and travel information. Noura writes exclusively for The Times Kuwait on her travel visits.





# Delaying first and last meals adds to risk of CVD

Cardiovascular disease (CVD), a general term for conditions affecting the heart or blood vessels, is the leading cause of death globally. The disease leads to an estimated 18 million deaths each year, of which nearly 80 percent are due to heart attacks and stroke. While the exact cause of CVD is not clear, there are several factors that increase the risk of developing the disease, and, the more risk factors you have the greater the chance of developing CVD.

Behavioral risk factors of CVD, including unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity, smoking and alcohol abuse, raise blood pressure, blood glucose and blood lipid levels, as well as promote overweight and obesity, all of which individually or together raise the risk of CVDs. Unhealthy diets in particular have long been identified as a major risk factor for CVDs, accounting for an

estimated 8 million deaths each year.

A new study by researchers at multiple universities and institutes in Spain and France adds to the list of risk factors for developing CVD, by showing that not only unhealthy diets but also the time we consume our foods have a bearing on raising the risk of CVDs. The accelerated pace of our modern lifestyles lead to an increase in unhealthy diets and mistimed nutritional behaviors, such as skipping breakfast, gorging on fast foods during the day, and having late night meals.

The new study found that mistimed meals, in particular having later times for the first and last meals of the day, was linked to a higher overall risk of cardiovascular diseases. The study builds on the growing body of literature that shows eating earlier in the morning and in the evening — earlier breakfast times and earlier dinner

times — is beneficial in terms of metabolism.

Data from observational and interventional studies have also indicated that breakfast consumption is an important habit for cardiometabolic health, while its omission has been associated in meta-analyses with overweight and obesity, both of which are risk factors for CVD and diabetes. Similarly, late-night eating has been linked in prospective studies to cardiovascular risk factors such as arterial stiffness, obesity, imbalance of lipoproteins and triglycerides, and to a higher risk of coronary heart disease.

In their study, researchers looked at the link between when people ate their meals throughout the day and their risk of cardiovascular disease.

The cohort study included 103,389 adults participating in the NutriNet-Santé study, an ongoing web-based study in France that began in 2009 and looks at the link between nutrition and health. The mean age of participants was around 42 years old, and almost 8 out of 10 were women. Researchers used dietary records submitted online by participants to estimate when and how often people ate during the day. They followed participants for an average of around 7 years.

The researchers found that each additional hour in delaying the time of the first meal of the day in the morning was associated with a higher risk of overall cardiovascular disease. And, that each additional hour in delaying the time of the last meal in the evening was associated with an 8 percent increased risk of cerebrovascular disease. People eating their last meal after 9pm were also shown to have a 28 percent higher risk of cerebrovascular disease compared to people who ate their last meal before 8pm.

Additionally the study showed that the number of times the participants ate during the day did not appear to have an effect on overall risk of cardiovascular disease or coronary heart disease. The study results suggest a potential



benefit of adopting earlier eating timing patterns, and coupling a longer nighttime fasting period with an early last meal, rather than breakfast skipping, in preventing cardiovascular disease.

The researchers noted that while their study had several strengths, such as the large number of participants, the extended follow-up, and that they took into account other variables that could affect cardiovascular risk, more research was needed on an individual person's preferences, lifestyles, and health characteristics

before affirmative conclusions could be drawn on the link between eating times and cardiovascular health.

One potential explanation for the lower cardiovascular risk with earlier meal times is the effects of meal timing on circadian rhythms in the organs. Research shows that the daily eating and fasting cycle helps synchronize circadian rhythms in organs such as the liver, heart, kidney, and pancreas. Circadian rhythms are the roughly 24-hour cycles that form the body's internal clock. One of the best-known circadian rhythms is the sleep-wake cycle, which is tied to the cycle of day and night. Other environmental cues can also affect the circadian rhythms.



## Walking faster found beneficial in treating type2 diabetes

Being physically active has been linked to a range of health benefits. Every activity, from engaging in active sports, games, and strenuous physical exercises, all the way to going for a light jog or taking a leisurely walk down a park have been associated with providing positive mental and physical health outcomes.

While walking outdoors even at a slow pace beats sitting idly at home, a new study finds that picking up the speed in walking can lower the risk of developing type2 diabetes. Compared to a slower walking pace, a faster walking rate has been linked to better cardio-respiratory health and fewer heart disease risk factors, including higher insulin resistance, higher body weight, and higher blood pressure, as well as better lower limb and core strength, and better overall functional capacity.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that currently affects over half a billion people around the world, of whom, over 95 percent are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. Doctors typically recommend medications, as well as lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise to manage diabetes. However, three in four adults with diabetes live in low- and middle-income countries where their access and affordability to diabetes medication and treatment, as well as choice of diet is often limited.

The new study which shows that walking helps improve type 2 diabetes could benefit everyone, especially those unable to access or afford appropriate and regular medication for treating diabetes. The study findings demonstrated that when the walking pace was around 4 km per hour, the risk for developing type 2 diabetes decreased, and that as the speed went up by 1 km per hour the risk was lowered by 9 percent.

The cohort study, by researchers at Semnan University in Iran who analyzed data of more than 500,000 adults over a period from 1999 to 2022, found that people who walked at an

average or normal speed of around 4 km per hour — equal to 87 steps per minute for males and 100 steps per minute for females — were associated with a 15 percent reduced risk of type 2 diabetes compared to people who walked at a slower pace.



Of the 10 studies included in the longitudinal review, 5 used timed walking-pace tests and 5 used self-reported questionnaires to measure walking speed. Studies with self-reported methods reported weaker, but still significant associations, so the researchers suggested that prospective cohort studies in future should use more objective methods to measure walking speed, such as timed walking-pace tests so as to present more robust evidence. They also called for future studies to investigate the potential association between time of walking (morning, evening, or night) and diabetes risk.

People who walk faster were found to have greater cardiac health and overall better functional capacity, as well as better lower limb and core strength. Health experts say the study reiterates that walking strengthens the heart and helps it relax so it is a more efficient pump. Fast walking also promotes vascular health by boosting the production of nitric oxide, a chemical that helps improve blood flow and lowers blood pressure. Higher intensity walking also requires greater contribution from blood glucose.

Other health benefits of walking at a faster pace include reduced insulin resistance, lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and triglycerides, and higher HDL (good) cholesterol. Another advantage of going faster is that you can do less of the same exercise. For instance, in place of 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity walking, you can do 75 minutes of rapid vigorous walking.

To start walking faster, either use a wearable pacer device that has a pace function or use an electronic metronome and keep up with a certain frequency of beats with each step. Also, force yourself to do your same walk distance in a shorter time,

To gauge your walking speed, you can use a pace device such as a wearable monitor that helps to make sure you are keeping at the correct faster pace, and warn you to speed up if you are falling behind.




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