



DIPLOMAT

Deep gratitude to the leadership and friendly people of Kuwait

3

7



LOCAL

MoI suspends decision allowing violators to rectify status

11

TRAVEL

Viet Nam - Into the Islands: Ha Long Bay for the Year of the Dragon



www.timeskuwait.com

250 Fils

A new year, a new government, a new beginning



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

A day after taking their constitutional oath before His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Council of Ministers held their first cabinet meeting at the Al Seef Palace on 18 January. At its onset, the meeting, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Dr. Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah reviewed the speech by His Highness the Amir to the National Assembly on 20 December.

In a profound address to parliament following his constitutional oath-taking ceremony, His Highness the Amir stressed his keenness on maintaining national unity and working for the progress, development and prosperity of the homeland, as well as expressed his abiding commitment to religious, national and constitutional constants.

He called for a heightened focus on strengthening governance, enhancing accountability, combating corruption, and applying the law



equally to everyone in pursuit of effective governance. His Highness also reiterated his deep respect for the constitution and the law, and warned against negligence and tampering with the interest of citizens and the homeland.

The cabinet in its first meeting also heard from His Highness the Prime Minister, who thanked the ministers for accepting national responsibility, and

the burden of government actions that will aim to gain the confidence of His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people. In his address to cabinet colleagues the premier also outlined the policies and priorities that would guide the government going forward.

In line with the advice provided by His Highness the Amir in his earlier speech, the prime minister reiterated his commitment to maintaining the State's prestige and enhancing confidence in government performance through respecting and enforcing the law on all in a just and transparent way. He also called for combating corruption and applying a reward, punishment, and accountability approach to all.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 08

The ICJ ruling could be a catalyst for progress

*From The Hague to the Holy Land
How the International Court of Justice ruling will affect*



By Tareq Yousef AlShumaimry

Abuse of power ranging from environmentally dangerous initiatives to crimes against humanity is increasingly the norm as states seek justice from institutions such as the United Nations, the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

However, these international institutions constantly face obstacles to implementing the rulings of the International Court of Justice. Although they are considered the most prominent organizations in the world, their perceived authority is threatened by states that choose to reject their suggestions and directives or withdraw from international jurisdiction, as evidenced by Australia's actions in 2002 to evade mandatory provisions in large maritime disputes.

Since their inception, these institutions have served as essential references for states to consult with, and in theory abide by. However, an

inherent weakness lies in their non-binding nature. The United Nations, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice operate on the basis of mere rulings, suggestions, advisory opinions or investigations, and their reliance on Flexible language lacks the concrete enforcement power needed to significantly change state behavior.

The long-awaited ruling of the International Court of Justice in the coming weeks on the landmark case for us as Arabs and Muslims of South Africa's lawsuit against Israel will have little impact on the ongoing genocide committed by Israel and any ruling issued by the International Court of Justice lacks legal enforceability.

International bodies lack the ability to intervene directly in international conflicts, even in the face of increasing levels of violence. This limitation is particularly troubling in long-term conflicts that do not show great prospects for resolution through the efforts of the two countries concerned alone, necessitating international assistance.

This weakness becomes particularly disturbing in the context of ongoing global conflicts that include human rights violations, crimes against humanity, acts of terrorism, and disturbances of international peace, and these events are in direct conflict with the basic principles and objectives of justice.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

THE LUXURY SHOW

22-24
FEBRUARY 2024

JUMEIRAH MESSILAH
BEACH HOTEL, KUWAIT

INNOVATION,
LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE
IN ALL ITS FACETS

Show Days

THURSDAY - SATURDAY

22-24 FEBRUARY 2024, 11:00 AM TO 9:00 PM

www.luxuryshowkuwait.com

Organised by
atex

Premier, Cabinet take constitutional oath of office

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received, at Bayan Palace on Wednesday, 17 January, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, who took the constitutional oath as Prime Minister, as well as presented his cabinet members who also took their oath of office in front of His Highness the Amir.

Below is a list of members of the Cabinet along with their brief curriculum vitae :

Prime Minister, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah: Born in 1955, he holds a PhD in economics from Harvard University and has previously served as Kuwait's ambassador to the US in 1993, in addition to tenures as foreign minister (2001, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011), as well as deputy prime minister and acting oil minister.

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior, Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah: Born in 1959, he graduated from the Kuwaiti military academy and previously served as an Amiri Guard officer.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil: Dr. Emad Mohammad Al-Atiqi: He holds a PhD in chemical engineering from Leahy Pennsylvania College and has previously served in numerous academic roles in Kuwait University, including research department chief.

Minister of Information and Culture, Abdulrahman Badah Al-Mutairi: He holds a BA degree in Psychology from Kuwait University. He served as a Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs in the cabinets of December 2020, March 2021 and April 2023.

Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahhab Al-Awadhi: He holds PhD in Pediatrics (Kuwait Board) from the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization, a PhD in Medicine (MD) from the Arab Gulf University in the Kingdom of Bahrain, and BA in basic sciences from the same university. He served as a Minister of Health in the cabinets formed in October 2022 and April 2023.

Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Acting Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Feras Saud Al-Sabah: He served as Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for National Assembly Affairs.



Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf: He holds a PhD in business management from Claremont College and has been the chairman of Kuwait's Al-Ahli United Bank since 2014.

Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Minister of State for Housing Affairs, Dr. Salem Falah Al-Hajraf: He holds a PhD in mechanical engineering from the UK's Cranfield University and has completed more than 30 researches across scientific fields.

Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Minister of State for Communications, Dawood Sulaiman Marafi: He holds a Master's degree in business management and served in various roles in the banking sector and the global stock market.

Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Adel Mohammad Al-Adwani: He previously served as professor in Kuwait University's faculty of Administrative Sciences.

Minister of Commerce and Industry, Abdullah Hamad Al-Jo'an: He also serves as the chief of Kuwait's National Fund for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya: Born in 1966, he holds a bachelor's degree in business management from Western Oregon University in the US. Previously served as Kuwait's ambassador to a number of Latin American countries, including Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.

Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs: Faisal Saeed Al-Ghareeb: Born

in 1958, he holds a bachelor's degree in law and Islamic Sharia from Kuwait University. He has been national carrier Kuwait Airways' deputy chief since 2020.

Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipality Affairs, Dr. Nora Mohammad Khaled Al-Mashaan: She previously served as Associate Professor in the Department of Civil Engineering at the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University.

There have been 23 governments in office since Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah became Amir of Kuwait in January 2006, including 15 cabinets during the era of Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, and eight during the reign of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The eight cabinets during the era of Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad are:

- 37th Government (14 December 2020 – 18 January 2021) headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled
- 38th Government (2 March 2021 – 18 November 2021) headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled
- 39th Government (28 December 2021 – 10 May 2022) headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled
- 40th Government (1 August 2022 – 2 October 2022) headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad
- 41st Government (6 October 2022 – 15 October 2022) headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf
- 42nd Government (16 October 2022 – 26 January 2023) headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad
- 43rd Government (9 April 2023 – 6 June 2023) headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad
- 44th Government (18 June 2023 – 20 December 2023) headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad.

The Cabinet line-up presented by His Highness the Prime Minister on Wednesday is the 45th in the country's democratic march since it attained independence in 1961.

Some people would say that the 23 governments in office in just 17 years is an attestation of the vibrancy of democracy in Kuwait, however, there are others who would contend that it is also a demonstration of the continued growing pains of an immature democracy.

Week 1 of year witnesses 200 marriages, 150 divorces

Initial figures from the Ministry of Justice department reveal that during the first week of 2024, a total of 200 marriages were solemnized among couples from various nationalities, of whom 150 marriages were between Kuwaiti nationals. In the same time period, there were a total 150 divorces by



couples from various nationalities, with 100 of the couples being Kuwaiti men and women.

Other marriage-related data show that four Kuwaiti men married Saudi women, two were married to Syrian women, two to Moroccan women, two to Asian women, and two Kuwaitis were married to American women. Additionally, one Kuwaiti married an Iraqi woman, and another chose a Lebanese partner.

Examining the educational backgrounds of the newlyweds, the statistics indicated that the majority were university graduates, followed by diploma holders, high school graduates, and those with intermediate education. The most common age groups for marriage among Kuwaitis were individuals aged 25 to 29 years and those between 20 and 24 years.

Most of the divorces were shown to occur within the first year of marriage, and notably the highest occurrence of divorces among Kuwaitis fell within the age group of 25 to 29 years. Marriage statistics from the ministry spanning a period from 2007 to the first week of 2024 reveal that 10,000 Kuwaitis had two wives, 800 had three wives each, and 90 had four wives each.

KIB commits to safeguarding customer data

Kuwait International Bank (KIB) has underscored its commitment to safeguarding the financial assets and personal data of customers, exert all efforts to combat online fraud, and raise awareness among customers on safe online practices..

The commitment is part of KIB's active support for the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign initiated by the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association, in collaboration with local banks. It also reflects KIB's dedication to upholding data security and ensuring safety of banking transactions.

Elaborating on the bank's anti-fraud campaign, General Manager of the Information Security, Privacy, and Anti-Fraud Department at KIB, Basil Al-Suwaidan, emphasized the importance of customers adhering to the best standards and procedures to fortify the protection of their personal and banking data.

He pointed out that despite banks implementing extensive measures and employing advanced cybersecurity systems to secure their technological infrastructure, not enough emphasis is placed on the vital role of



customer awareness in data protection.

He urged customers to protect their digital devices from viruses and security vulnerabilities by using approved anti-virus programs and regularly updating their mobile phones, especially when employing remote access applications that fraudsters exploit to ensnare victims and pilfer their data.

To enhance security further, Al-Suwaidan urged the public to activate notifications from banks to provide scrutinizing and verifying details of each banking transaction, especially when conducting electronic and digital payments. Additionally, he underscored the importance of routinely checking account and credit card balances to ensure comprehensive security.



مستشفى رويال حياة
ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

Presents

DIPLOMAT

21 - 27 January 2024 | The Times Kuwait
www.timeskuwait.com

3

Deep gratitude to the leadership and friendly people of Kuwait

Ambassador of Kyrgyz Republic H.E. Azamat Karagulov

By Reaven D'Souza
Executive Managing Editor

In an exclusive interview with The Times Kuwait last week, the Ambassador of Kyrgyz Republic H.E. Azamat Karagulov, spoke at length about his country's robust relations with Kuwait in the diplomatic field, and his plans to further elevate these ties to higher level in all domains.

"As you know, the State of Kuwait recognized the independence of the Kyrgyz Republic on 26 December 1991. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on 14 December 1994 in Moscow. The Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic to Kuwait opened in July 2013.

"Since 21 May 2021, I have been the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kyrgyz Republic to the State of Kuwait. Since January 2023, the post of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Kuwait to the Kyrgyz Republic has been held by H.E. Omar Murad Al-Kandari, who presented his credentials on 7 July 2023 in Astana, the capital of our country."

Expanding on his country's economic ties with Kuwait, the ambassador said: "Last year, from 6 to 8 March, the Third meeting of the Kyrgyz-Kuwaiti Intergovernmental Joint Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation was held in Kuwait with the participation of the Minister of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic. As a result of the meeting, a protocol and program of activities in the field of culture was signed between the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic and the General Secretariat of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Literature of the State of Kuwait for the 2023-2025 period.

"As part of this meeting, bilateral meetings were organized with the heads of the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), during which several important projects were discussed and agreements were reached.

"The volume of trade between Kyrgyzstan and Kuwait in 2023 reached over USD3.6 million, of which exports from Kyrgyzstan amounted to \$3.5 million. In addition, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development is the main bridge, creating economic ties between the two



countries, through which many major projects are being implemented."

Turning to tourism in Kyrgyzstan and its potential to attract more tourists from Kuwait, the envoy noted: "Kyrgyzstan has unique travel and recreation sites for tourists. International tourism experts note the amazing combination of cultural and natural heritage in the country. Kyrgyzstan is a high-mountainous country, more than 90 percent of the territory is at an altitude of more than 1000 m above sea level. Some of the highest mountain peaks in the country include Pobeda Peak (7439 m) and Lenin Peak (7134 m), and others.

"The majestic silence of the snowy ridges in the mountains, shady forests of slender Tien Shan spruces, foamy waterfalls, numerous crystal-clear alpine lakes, colorful green landscapes, including the Suusamyr Valley, with yurts, herds of horses, numerous species of flora and fauna attract numerous tourists to Kyrgyzstan.

"One of the most famous and popular resorts is Lake Issyk-Kul, which means 'warm lake'. Even though the lake is located high in the mountains,

it never freezes; the water temperature in summer reaches +24 degrees Celsius. The entire coast of the lake is surrounded by sandy beaches, which along with; the crystal-clear surface of the reservoir, and the cool mountain air, creates a unique microclimate, as close as possible to the sea. It should also be noted that near the lake coast there are many hot mineral springs and healing mud spas. In addition, now there are daily direct flights from Kuwait to two main cities of Kyrgyzstan, by Kuwait's Jazeera Airways."

"On the cultural front, our relations with Kuwait have been boosted within the framework of the third meeting of the Kyrgyz-Kuwaiti Intergovernmental Joint Commission on economic and technical cooperation held in Kuwait on 6-8, March 2023. During the meeting the Minister of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic also signed a program of cultural events for 2023-2025 between the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic and The General Secretariat of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature of the State

of Kuwait. In addition to this, several business trips by leading investment companies in Kuwait to Kyrgyzstan were also organized."

Asked about his experience in Kuwait and his thoughts about this country, Ambassador Karagulov said: "Since 21 May, 2021, I have been serving as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kyrgyz Republic to the State of Kuwait. This is the first time in my career that I am working as an ambassador. In terms of working trips, I am in Kuwait for the second time. For me, the State of Kuwait is a country with a very high culture and a stable economy. I am always impressed by the generosity, hospitality, and especially the high culture of the country's people.

Elaborating on his plans to further strengthen relations between Kyrgyzstan and Kuwait in 2024 in various domains, the ambassador revealed: "In 2024, a visit by an investment delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Kuwait, Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al Sabah is expected to visit Kyrgyzstan. Also in 2024, in collaboration with the National Council of Culture, Arts and Literature of the State of Kuwait, a 'Kyrgyzstan Culture Week in Kuwait' is planned to be held.

"Apart from this, in 2024, we plan to organize an exhibition of Kyrgyz eco-products in Kuwait, as well as hold a reception on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Kyrgyz Republic. We will also celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Kyrgyz Republic and the State of Kuwait in 2024."

Concluding the interview, Ambassador Karagulov expressed his hope that relations between the two countries would witness further growth in the years ahead. He added, "We are also proud of our humanitarian cooperation with Kuwait, which is a recognized Center for Humanitarian Diplomacy by the United Nations and the international community.

"Through the Government of Kuwait and leading Kuwaiti charitable organizations such as 'As-Salam', 'As-Safa' and others, projects in the social sphere worth \$20 million were implemented in Kyrgyzstan in 2023. In this regard, this interview is a great opportunity for me to express my deep gratitude to the leadership and friendly people of Kuwait, and also wish them further prosperity and development."

ROYALE HAYAT DENTAL DEPARTMENT

A BETTER YEAR STARTS
WITH A BEAUTIFUL SMILE



مستشفى رويال حياة
ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL
Celebrating Life

royalehayat royale_hayat /royalehayathospital 2536 0000 www.royalehayat.com

Whatsapp
+965 25360084



India seeks to reinforce relations with Kuwait

By Abrar Aloqaili
Staff Writer

India's Foreign Secretary for Gulf, West Asia and North Africa, Ambassador Muktesh Pardeshi, revealed that his country is preparing for high-level visits between India and Kuwait once the new Kuwaiti government is formed. He noted that these high-level bilateral visits would help to strengthen and consolidate the mutual relationship and to explore new ideas.

Ambassador Pardeshi also indicated that a memorandum of understanding (MoU), which would help develop economic relations between India and Kuwait, is ready for signature between the two countries. He added that the MoU would be of mutual benefit to the two countries and their friendly peoples.

The foreign-secretary made these comments recently while attending a press conference with representatives from a number of Kuwait and Gulf newspapers, at the headquarters of the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi.

During the press conference, he emphasized that there are many opportunities and areas for cooperation, especially in the field of security and defense, depending on the needs and requirements of Kuwait, in addition to the fields of pharmaceutical industries and information technology, in which India has long and accumulated experience.

Pointing out that relations between the people of India and Kuwait are long-standing and dates back to more than two centuries, the foreign-secretary said that India offers an attractive investment climate with stable returns.



Noting that the trade volume between India and Kuwait reached about USD13.8 billion in 2023, he added, "There has also been a significant increase in the volume of Gulf investments in India, and there are many opportunities for Gulf investors in India in the fields of food industries, petrochemicals, as well as defense and information technology."



On the level of India-Gulf relations, Ambassador Pardeshi pointed out that they are historic, noting that the trade exchange between the two sides reached \$184 billion last year, marking an increase of 20 percent in the past two years. He added that Gulf countries are India's largest regional trading partner, and the relations between India and

Gulf countries are a success story."

He stated that the past period has seen mutual efforts between the two sides to diversify the basket of trade exchange. This was because in the past it had been focused on the energy sector.

Efforts are now being made to include engineering equipment, rice, oil products, textiles, and organic products in the trade mix. The partnership in the field of energy is of great importance to India, as India imported crude oil worth \$58 billion in 2023, while Indian imports of gas were worth \$26 billion in the same period.

Pardeshi also pointed out that there are over nine million Indian citizens working in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, stressing that they are skilled and semi-skilled workers.

He also drew attention to the fact that India is considered the largest and fastest-growing center for start-ups in the field of technology, and that the country is the fifth fastest-growing economy in the world, and the largest democracy in the world.

CONDOLENCES

**The Owners,
Management and Staff of**



**Al-Rashed International
Shipping Co ksc**

**Extend our Heartfelt
condolences to**

**Mr. Joel Fernandez & Family
(Project Manager)**

on the sad demise

of his Mother

who passed away in India

on 17th January 2024

May her soul Rest in Peace

MoCI bans livestock export over disruptions in sea trade

Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has imposed a ban on the export of local and imported livestock until further notice, in an effort to safeguard the local market.

Media reports indicate that recent developments in the region, particularly in the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz that have impaired the safe and secure transport of sea freight, is reportedly the reason for the ministry's precautionary measure.

The decision aims to ensure a consistent and abundant supply of livestock and meat in the Kuwaiti market. Sources say that the ongoing developments in the region will be closely monitored and assessed periodically to ensure an uninterrupted flow of livestock, especially with the approach of the holy month of Ramadan when meat consumption typically increases.

The ministry's decision reflects its commitment to maintaining a stable and



well-supplied market, particularly in light of potential disruptions caused by geopolitical circumstances. By temporarily halting the export of live livestock, the ministry aims to protect local consumers and ensure their continued access to a wide range of meat products.

AI technologies help improve government performance

Implementation of artificial Intelligence technologies will have a positive impact on government performance and in the work environment, as well as bring about an overall improvement in public sector services, said Acting Director-General of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT), Dr. Amar Al-Hussieni.

Dr. Al-Hussieni was speaking to the media on the sidelines of the third workshop organized by the agency in cooperation with Chinese multinational technology corporation, Huawei Technologies Company. The workshops are part of the forum launched last December on AI applications in the government sector. The workshops aim to deepen understanding of AI technologies, keep up with the rapidly



changing field, as well as examine mechanisms of adopting such technologies in various government bodies. Dr. Al-Hussieni indicated that several government entities had already adopted the use of AI in their work environment, including the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

The previous two workshops handled machine learning and AI development with a number of public sector employees present. The ongoing cooperation between CAIT and Huawei aims to promote more effective use of technological systems, explore AI capabilities, and stimulate innovation and creative solutions to face current and future challenges.

Youth Council supports traffic safety initiatives

In light of the increase in traffic accidents and loss of lives, especially among youth in the country, the National Committee for Promoting Peace and Security within the Youth Public Authority has carefully examined various strategies to enhance traffic safety in Kuwait.

Members of the committee, including Abdul Rahman Al-Saidi, Wael Al-Anzi, and Latifa Al-Furaih, collaborated with the Ministry of Interior, to improve traffic safety and raise awareness among youth on adhering to traffic rules and regulations.

Representing the Ministry of Interior, Lieutenant Colonel Salem Abdullah Al-Radaan, the head of

the Farwaniya traffic regulation department, noted that there were several major reasons for increase in traffic accidents, including the use of mobile phones while driving, lack of attention, disregard for traffic rules, recklessness, and speeding. He linked these issues to a decline in traffic culture and the outdated nature of existing traffic violation penalties. He pointed out that the prevailing fine for using mobile phones while driving is a mere KD5.

Speaking on behalf of the youth committee, Latifa Al-Furaih highlighted that the committee examined the solutions proposed by the Ministry of Interior, and has made several key recommendations,

including:

Increase the fines for traffic violations through approval of a law, endorsed by the Interior and Defense Committee in the National Assembly

Launch a comprehensive media campaign, under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior and with the participation of government and non-government institutions, to introduce the new law.

Integrate traffic culture as a mandatory subject in secondary and university education.

Conduct intensive educational seminars and media campaigns in collaboration with various media outlets and social media influencers.

Address road infrastructure issues, particularly repairing widespread potholes across the country.

In answer to concerns among sections of the public to raising traffic fines for traffic violations, Al-Furaih pointed out that a survey conducted by the committee revealed that 70 percent of a random sample of



980 citizens supported increasing the fines, especially for mobile phone usage, from KD5 to KD70. She explained that this result was anticipated, considering the number of citizens who have been adversely affected by reckless behavior and violations.

The committee was established in line with the objectives and terms of

reference outlined by the Youth Public Authority, and focuses on studying issues, addressing problems, and fostering constructive cooperation between institutions to confront challenges. The committee also aligns with United Nations Resolution No. 2250 from the Security Council, which emphasizes the involvement of youth in promoting peace and security.

Banks adopt stringent rules on lending to expats

Starting with the new year, many commercial banks in Kuwait have begun adopting more stringent lending policies with regard to loans offered to expatriates. The tightening of credit criteria reportedly follows a shift in focus by banks towards lending to Kuwaiti customers and a select group of non-citizens, notably those in elite professions, while excluding low-income individuals and clients, especially those employed in top companies, and with salaries below KD600 per month.

The banks' preferred list for lending to expatriates has also been streamlined by limiting it to those expats employed in public sector as professors, doctors, nurses and senior technicians, and experts working in specialized jobs in the government as well as those holding managerial roles in reputable companies, and professionals in stable, secure positions.

Banks are ensuring that the customers they target have a robust credit history and adequate end-of-service benefits. For non-Kuwaitis, the consumer loan limit is capped at KD25,000 for those earning salaries around KD1,250 per month and possessing service periods exceeding 10 continuous years.

In 2023, Kuwaitization drive in the public sector and policy changes regarding employment criteria in the private sector had led many banks to refrain from lending to low-to medium income expats in government and private services. Banks were also cautious of lending to newly appointed expatriates, individuals over 55 years old with salaries below KD1,000, and those with non-university educational certificates. Loans to this segment are selective, with low-risk credit limits. The policy of discouraging credit to non-Kuwaitis is likely to continue, at least until the end of the first-quarter of this year. Only the relatively smaller banks that are unable to compete in the Kuwaiti retail banking sector are likely to continue providing finance to expats under favorable terms to drive credit growth in their portfolio.


Market studies indicate that the default rate among expatriates is not alarming, leading these banks to accept a broader risk, and impose fewer conditions on lending to expats. These banks are open to lending to non-Kuwaitis with salaries around KD300 with reliable credit history, and even to those who have a shorter employment period of four months in a company, which is the legally required stabilization period for employees. One stipulation made by these banks is that the expatriate should be working in a reputable company which is a client of the bank.

Decree removes need for local agent in public tenders


The government last week issued a decree amending the Public Tenders Law, to remove the need for a local agent in order to participate in public tenders. The decision, which aims to open up increased competition in public tenders, was approved by the National Assembly last December.

Abolishing the need to participate in public tenders only through a local agent, is part of the government's efforts to foster a more competitive business environment and stimulate economic growth. International participation in public tenders is expected to have a positive impact on enhancing the quality of services provided in both commercial sectors and government tender offerings. By removing this requirement, the door is widened for a wider variety of international businesses and service providers to participate in tenders and offer their services directly, without the need for a local intermediary. This change is expected to encourage greater innovation, efficiency, and quality in services delivered throughout the country.

The local agent requirement had previously been introduced as a means to regulate and oversee foreign businesses operating in Kuwait. It had been criticized as yet another rent-seeking mechanism for local agents that created inefficiencies by limiting competition and discouraging the introduction of specialized cost-effective techniques and services in projects



INTRODUCING Biryani Buckets



Your Choice

- CHICKEN • MUTTON
- PRAWN • VEGETABLE

☎ 1800 188
www.mughalmahal.com

India, a treasure trove of craftsmen, skill, talent and tradition

Asif Ali, Innovator, Dreamer, Co-founder of Kashmir Loom



By Sangeeta Jamwal
Special to The Times Kuwait

Kashmir Loom, the luxury brand from India showcased a unique, bespoke collection of exquisitely woven and embroidered cashmere shawls, home furnishings and papier mâché artifacts at the Sadu House, in downtown Kuwait over four days in January.

I had the good fortune of speaking to co-founder of Kashmir Loom, Asaf Ali, an unassuming gentleman who seemed to house decades of secrets of the breathtaking Kashmir valley in his heart.

Seated amongst the finest pieces of artistry, painstakingly crafted by artisans of Kashmir, a magical and mysterious land, I was reminded of the great poet Amir Khusro's famous words 'Gar firdaus bar-rue zameen ast, hami asto hami asto, hami ast!' (If there is paradise on Earth, it's here, it's here, it's here) Indeed, as Asaf Ali started speaking on the origin and history of Kashmir Loom I sat in rapt attention.

Jenny Housego, an Englishwoman and Asaf Ali, co-founders created the brand Kashmir Loom, bringing to life unconventional woven luxury that was hugely impactful. Housego came to India 38 years ago with her then husband, journalist David Housego. Housego's intense passion for color, texture and textile led to establishing 'Shades of India' with him.

Housego's contribution to creating global awareness on tribal rugs is unparalleled. In 1977 she penned a book 'Tribal Rugs of Iran' that is till date considered a bible on tribal rugs. The nomadic Shahsavan tribe from Persia wove the most visually appealing rugs featuring vibrant colors and bold, geometric patterns, notes Housego in her book over which she worked painstakingly doing the needful research and gaining understanding of tribal rugs. She also co-authored a book 'Bridal Durries of India' with Ann Shankar, a member of the Far Eastern Department of the Royal Ontario Museum. Shankar is a textile historian and an enthusiast, passionate about the source of yarn, she is also known for reviving the use of natural dyes in durrie weaving in the State of Punjab. Traditionally, in India women wove durries which they carried as part of their trousseau. The durries, each one uniquely crafted by the brides themselves, were given pride of place in their new homes. Housego and Shankar visited some of the brides to learn the rich history behind these flat-weave durries.

Housego was known to learn from and be inspired by craftsmen, at the same time she imprinted and enthused her indelible stamp on any project she undertook. Her love of designing, creating, and play of color are legendary and formed the backbone of her next baby, Kashmir Loom. Asaf Ali was all of 16 years old, apprenticing with his uncle who dealt in rugs when Housego chanced upon him. She placed blind faith in him to refurbish her expensive rugs and he did a great job, exceeding Housego's expectations and prompting her to notice his raw potential. The rest, as they say, is history. Kashmir Loom was formed in 1999 with Housego and Ali as co-founders, and Ali roped in his two brothers for the fair amount of leg work involved in setting it up.

Housego was the creative brain behind the



designs, each weft and weave of every item that Kashmir Loom crafted from scratch. She was also ambitious and passionate about displaying the hand-woven pieces, the rich tapestry of India in museums. While this was falling in place, in 2006 Housego unfortunately suffered a stroke resulting in left side paralysis. Moved by this unexpected predicament, Asaf Ali decided to dedicate his life to her, nurture her and give her the love she selflessly gave everyone. She touched a million hearts with her book 'The Woven Life' as her memoir, a book co-edited by journalist Maya Mirchandani.

Asaf Ali found himself at a vulnerable crossroad, how could he keep the Kashmir Loom dream going with Housego indisposed? At this point Samina Zaidi from the well reputed Aga family in Kashmir joined Ali to carry Housego's dream forward.

Asaf Ali was very open about his love for the country he belongs to — "there's no other place in the world that houses so many categories of craftsmen, who can work magic with their hands. India is the treasure trove of craftsmen, skill, talent and tradition, we have so much to offer the world. Kashmir Loom did everything differently, all while staying within the core idea of remaining original. It is also our responsibility to

ensure the sustainability of the craft, but in order to sustain you have to reach the larger audience. We are constantly adapting to changing times; especially as Indian craftsmanship is making a significant impact globally. Our mission is to maintain quality but innovate constantly.

What sets us apart is that Kashmir Loom invests heavily back into the craft, into the 'karkhanas' (workshops), the 'nakshas' (looms), the process, making them more streamlined, more sustainable, and the final product more attainable in the market. Jenny is an academician, a teacher who has collected hundreds of books and diagrams. She gives of herself to everything created, enthuses her own spirit and knowledge and makes the craft her own. Yes, craftsmen occasionally resist change, as when Jenny introduced the metallic yarn for pashmina weaving, it took the craftsmen some time to come around."

Kashmir Loom collections have been displayed in museums globally. One of the recent showings was at the 'Museum of Fine Arts' at Houston, Texas, where Gary Tinterow the director of the museum is very passionate about Indian textiles and extended full support to Kashmir Loom.

After this interesting chat I had one last

question for Asaf Ali; what is your dream for Kashmir Loom?

"We are backed by a legacy of 300 odd years, we need to convert this legacy into motivating and inspiring our next generations. We should create new galleries, concepts, collaborations and not let the legacy be forgotten.

India is not cheap, Indian craft is not cheap. My dream is to create an 'atelier', to create a resource center, a house where ideas are exchanged, a place that holds old collections, infinite books, where students can exchange ideas.

Now, we even have the power of social media, which means there is no mystery remaining. Artisans sometimes resent social media, but then they realize that it cuts out the middlemen. I firmly believe that everyone should grow together, our craftsmen should grow with us. On principle, Kashmir Loom looks after our master craftsmen very well.

After all, it is their invaluable contribution that has made Kashmir Loom a brand of global repute today. Our competition is no longer with Indian brands, we would like to be the first among international brands that create woven luxury. Kashmir Loom should remain the best luxury brand of India and be among the finest in the world."



Kashmiri textile exhibition held at Sadu House

The renowned Kuwaiti cultural center, Sadu House and the Kashmir Loom collaborated with the Indian Embassy to host a dazzling exhibition of Kashmiri textiles in Kuwait City last week.

The event, which served as a platform for cultural exchange, artistic appreciation, and strengthening the ties between India and Kuwait. Besides showcasing the superb Kashmiri textiles, the exhibition also provided a glimpse into Kashmir's breathtaking nature, carpet-making traditions, and diverse food products that provided a deeper appreciation for the region's cultural tapestry.

In a press statement on the sidelines of the opening of the exhibition, Indian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika lauded the intricate designs and quality of Indian textiles, particularly highlighting Kashmir's rich textile heritage.

Pointing to the efforts made by the embassy to bring the finest Indian products and innovations to Kuwait, fostering cultural understanding, the



ambassador expressed his happiness over the continued interest of generations of Kuwaitis in Indian culture, including its cuisine, creative arts, music, cinema, and others.

Dr. Swaika also revealed the robust trade ties between India and Kuwait, with textiles playing a significant role in the \$13.8 billion annual trade volume between the two countries. He also acknowledged the contributions of the skilled Indian workforce in Kuwait.

Highlighting the embassy's efforts in streamlining the visa process, the Indian ambassador noted that the consular section of the embassy issued 6,000 visas last year, and that visas are issued within one day.

For his part, Vice-Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Asian Affairs Khalid Al-Yasin said, "I was pleased to attend this event held by the Indian embassy in cooperation with the House of Sadu. Indian textiles are known worldwide for their fine craftsmanship and beautiful designs."

Mol suspends decision allowing residence violators to rectify status

On Thursday, shortly after taking office, the new government suspended the decision, taken just last week by the Ministry of Interior (Mol), to allow residency violators who entered the country before 2020 to legalize their status and pay the prescribed legal fines.

The new decision, which marks a potential shift in the approach towards expatriate residency violators by the new government, effectively ends this practice. Sources at Mol reiterated the ministry's commitment to its previous policy of expelling residency violators from the country, and added that security campaigns to address

residency violations will continue vigorously.

The now-suspended decision aimed to cancel Resolution No. 288, which was implemented in 2020 during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Resolution 288 called for the deportation of residency violators who entered the country before 2020, and allowed only those violators who arrived after 1 March 2020 to rectify their status.

However, with the latest suspension, the fate of expatriates who violated residency laws prior to 2020 remains uncertain. The move suggests a potential recalibration of policies aimed



at dealing with residency violators, possibly indicating a stricter approach in the future. The move also signifies a commitment to reinforcing law and order and ensuring the integrity of the country's residency system.

The suspension could also indicate that the authorities are devising alternative methods to tackle the long-standing issue of residency violations in the country. As the situation continues to develop, it is essential for expatriates and residents to stay updated on any potential changes in residency rules and regulations to avoid any unintended violations.

DDI conducts awareness outreach at Scientific Center

Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI) recently organized an awareness outreach at the Scientific Center. Speaking to the media on the occasion, Director of Public Relations and Media Services at Dasman Diabetes Institute, Tarek Aleryan, stated that the Institute believes in the importance of conducting early checks and spreading awareness on diabetes to contribute to the prevention of this disease and its complications.

He noted that in this regard, the DDI participated in the campaign with its mobile clinic which allowed the institute to conduct various preventative medical testing such as blood glucose, pressure, and vital signs of people at the Scientific Center. He added that in addition, booklets, leaflets, flyers, and other material on educational topics such as the healthy plate, intermittent fasting, how to prevent diabetes, insulin doses and several other subjects were distributed to the Center's staff.

"The Institute spares no effort in spreading awareness among all

segments of society," said Aleryan while noting the importance of the role played by the Institute through these awareness outreach campaigns.



BDO conducts seminar on ESG, sustainability



BDO, a leading audit, tax accounting and consulting firm in Kuwait, with support from AmCham Kuwait, held a seminar last week on Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) practices and sustainability.

In his keynote presentation, Dipankar Ghosh, partner – ESG & Sustainability Services at BDO, elaborated on the dynamic landscape of ESG practices, including on the intricacies of ESG disclosure and the regulatory landscape. He also described sectoral trends and their impacts, along with implications and directions stemming from the recently concluded COP28 climate talks in Dubai. The address provided key takeaways, offering actionable insights for businesses in the ever-evolving world of ESG and sustainability.

The seminar articulated the reasons for embracing sustainability beyond regulatory compulsion, emphasizing its role as a business imperative. The focus was on enhancing shareholder value through good governance, and ethical practices, meeting environmental and social regulations, and navigating emerging regulations worldwide.

The event delved into Kuwait's ambitions for achieving net zero carbon emissions and the implications on businesses. Specific case studies from Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (Oil & Gas), National Bank of Kuwait (Financial Services), and Mabaneer (Real Estate) showcased sustainability

in action. In her address to the gathering, Asmaa Al-Zimami, an engineer at the Environment Public Authority (EPA), provided an overview of EPA waste management objectives and the Asbestos Waste Removal Program in Kuwait.


The seminar included an effective panel discussion session led by Ketan Puri, manager of Regulatory Services at BDO, during which insightful thoughts were exchanged by the panelists. The panelists included leaders from Boursa Kuwait, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, the private sector, and researchers in the economic sustainability field.

Other presentations explored various other aspects of ESG and sustainability.

The final presentation by Rami Alhadhrami and Ketan Puri, explored the crucial role of Tax in ESG. They highlighted the need for taxes to fund and maintain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).




They emphasized that tax is a fiscal tool that can drive sustainability activities, tackle climate change, and meet societal expectations for corporations to pay their fair share of taxes.


Aligning tax with ESG approaches, Alhadhrami presented guidelines for developing Tax ESG principles, including responsible tax policies and impact testing. He concluded with key takeaways on transparent tax reporting, sustainable tax policies, and tax risk and governance framework.




NON-STOP LIFE. NON-STOP MUNCHING!

Spicy, crunchy and full of life. Haldiram's delightful and authentic Indian Namkeens are sure to send your taste buds in a tizzy, 24x7!





Sole distributor in Kuwait

Al-Othman & Al-Bisher Trd. Co. W.L.L.
P.O. Box: 22984 Safat 13090 Kuwait
Tel: 22284335 | 22284336 | 22284337
22284338 | 22284339
Email: obtc@qualitynet.net
www.obtc.kwt.com

@obtc_kwt

Al Shaya Group closes stores in Egypt as the country's economy struggles

The Egyptian economy is currently experiencing difficulties, including currency depreciation, exchange rate pressures and high inflation. In this context, the Kuwaiti retail group Al Shaya has taken the decision to close some of its stores in Egypt, Egyptian media reported.

Present for more than 20 years in Egypt, the Al Shaya group has more than 200 stores in the country. The decision to close some of these stores represents a serious setback, both for the group and for the Egyptian economy.

Al Shaya Group clarified that it will continue to operate the remaining stores in Egypt and is committed to the Egyptian market. However, the

closure of some stores risks job losses and lower consumer spending.

Al Shaya Group also announced the withdrawal of the Debenhams brand in Egypt, both for physical stores and e-commerce operations, by the end of January until March. Debenhams is a British department store chain that has been present in Egypt for over 20 years.

The closure of its stores is a major setback for the company and the Egyptian economy.

Additionally, several other stores will also be closed in Egypt, including The Body Shop, Mothercare and Bankbury. The group will also reduce the number of stores it operates for brands including H&M, Victoria's Secret,



American Eagle and Bath & Body Works.

The Kuwaiti Al Shaya Group, founded in 1890, is one of the oldest companies in Kuwait.

It is also one of the largest operators of famous retail brands in the Middle East. It operates more than 4,000 stores across the region, from Dubai to Turkey and Russia, and has a digital footprint including more than 100 websites and apps, while employing more than 50,000 people.

The announcement of the closure of certain stores in Egypt by the Al Shaya group highlights the economic difficulties facing the country. This situation is worrying, because it risks having an impact on employment and consumption of Egyptian households. It is essential that economic authorities take measures to address these issues and support the retail sector in Egypt.



Villa Hegra holds an exceptional artistic performance in AlUla

As part of the launch of the preopening program of Villa Hegra, artists from around the world, trained at the Académie de l'Opéra national de Paris, performed for the first time in AlUla, in the Northwest of Saudi Arabia. The unique event was made possible by the collaboration of the two cultural institutions.

Combining opera and ballet, the performance was thought as a dialogue between artists from all backgrounds, and saw the participation of Étoile dancer Alice Renavand, Soprano Marianne Croux, mezzo-soprano Farrah El Dibany, Tenor Yu Shao, Baritone Vladimir Kapshuk, and Pianist Benjamin Laurent, joined by the singer Sawsan Albahiti, the first Saudi Soprano.

An exceptional evening of lyrical and choreographic art in AlUla

On 17 January, for one evening, the performance hall of Maraya, in AlUla – the world's largest mirrored building – took on the appearance of the Palais Garnier, resonating with masterpieces of lyrical heritage.

Celebrating artistic creation and dialogue between cultures, the evening offered some of the most beautiful pages of the lyrical repertoire to the Saudi and international audience who attended the performance in the heart of the desert canyon of the Ashar Valley.

In the first part of the concert, the audience heard the great arias from operas such as Jules Massenet's "Manon" or Camille Saint-Saëns's "Samson et Dalila", as well as the beautiful duet from Georges Bizet's "Les Pêcheurs de perles".

In the second part, the show continued with an original choreographic creation by Étoile dancer Alice Renavand on Ludwig van Beethoven's "Sonate au Clair de Lune", interpreted on the piano by Benjamin Laurent. The last part highlighted arias from the world's most famous and performed opera, Georges Bizet's "Carmen".

The evening concluded with the famous Barcarolle from Jacques Offenbach's "Les Contes d'Hoffmann", performed in chorus by all the artists.

To immerse the audience in the atmosphere of the Opéra, an exhibition of twelve costumes, created by the workshops of the Opéra national de Paris took place in the Maraya lobby. Selected and staged by the Opéra's Costume

Department, the costumes from major classical ballets – such as Rudolf Nureyev's "La Belle au bois dormant" designed by Franca Squarciapino, or Balanchine's "Joyaux" designed by Christian Lacroix – engaged in a dialogue with the impressive opera costumes, from Marc-André Dalbavie's "Le Soulier de satin" designed by Raoul Fernandez, and Mozart's "La Clémence de Titus" designed by John McFarlane.

The Opéra national de Paris and Villa Hegra, committed to cultural exchange and dialogue

The visit of artists from the Opéra national de Paris to AlUla marks a significant first step in a long-term partnership between the prestigious French institution and Villa Hegra, with the aim of fostering creation through artistic and cultural dialogue.

Thus, an exchange between the French artists of the Opéra national de Paris and Saudi student artists, training at the Music Hub in AlUla, was set up after the performance, taking the form of an introduction to music, singing, and dance, followed by a presentation of the history and activities of the Opéra national de Paris – enriched by inspiring testimonials from the guest artists.

According to Fériel Fodil, General Director of Villa Hegra: "At Villa Hegra, we are committed to showcasing the performing arts and highlighting the creative energy of French, Saudi, and international talents. Our partnership represents a unique opportunity to offer to a diverse audience a culture that is experienced in an exceptional setting and to contribute significantly to intercultural dialogue between Saudi Arabia and France, and more broadly between the Arab world and Europe."

Alexander Neef, General Director of the Opéra national de Paris stated: "We are very proud to put our values, expertise, and commitment to artistic excellence at the service of intercultural dialogue and exchange between artists from all backgrounds. This new partnership confirms the openness of the Opéra national de Paris to the world and its desire to promote French creation internationally."

Myriam Mazouzi, Director of the Académie de l'Opéra national de Paris added: "Transmission is a dialogue between generations that builds the future. That's what the partnership between Villa Hegra and the Opéra national de Paris is all about."

A new year, a new government, a new beginning

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Pointing out that Kuwait had begun a new era, and an exceptional phase in the path of national action, he added that confronting the prevailing regional and international challenges would require a new thinking and a modern approach. He urged his cabinet colleagues to focus on developing public services and infrastructure, reviewing laws to enhance legislative reforms, as well as giving momentum to construction and development in the country.

The premier also called for elevating Kuwait's status regionally and internationally, preparing a government action program based on Kuwait's Vision 2035 and protecting the Kuwaiti family. In addition, he underlined the need to restructure the state's apparatus, and launch national strategies for digital transformation and leadership excellence, as well as strengthen the national economy and ensure food and water security.

The prime minister affirmed that one of the government's priorities, during the next stage, would be to present a vision about the future of economy and investment in Kuwait, with a view to maximizing value added to the national economy and focusing on logistics, digital and knowledge services' sectors. He added, it envisages developing the northern region to be an international hub for providing solutions and transformative services to promote regional trade.

Sheikh Mohammad Sabah said that implementing these policies and plans would require each minister to assume his responsibilities towards implementing strategic objectives during the next stage, and reviewing all legislations, policies, plans, decision-making mechanisms, as well as restructuring government agencies concerned with economic matters to meet requirements of the next stage.

Commenting on the Premier's speech, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah emphasized that the ministers remain dedicated to their responsibility towards the country and the political leadership. He underlined the need to work on the requirements of the next phase and achieve government solidarity as well as exert diligent efforts, while adhering to provisions of the constitution and consolidating the state of law.

"In line with the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the instructions of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the government would work on achieving the aspirations of citizens by improving the country's public services and pushing ahead development and reform in all fields," said Sheikh Fahad Saud Al-Sabah.

There are a host of challenges facing the new ministers as they take charge of their ministries and related entities. From projects to develop infrastructure and utilities to improving quality of education, finding gainful employment for a growing youth population, and implementing

social, administrative, financial and economic reforms, the government will have to find solutions that have evaded positive outcomes for far too long.

A major issue for the government would be filling the senior posts that have been lying vacant for quite a while in various ministries and institutions. The ministers will also need to resolve the festering issue of salary discrepancies that exist between similar job profiles in different ministries, which underpins the move by some employees to seek transfer to other ministries.

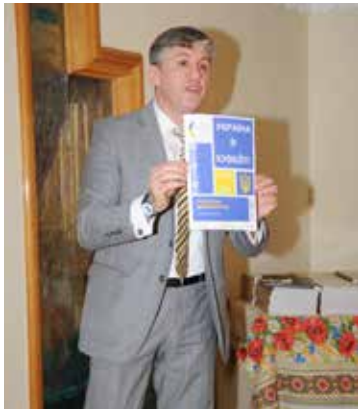
Transfers and appointments made by the previous government had been stopped through an Amiri decision last year. In his speech to the National Assembly after taking his constitutional oath, on 20 December last year, His Highness the Amir had pointed out that legislators and the government had a collective responsibility not to take decisions that would be harmful to the nation.

His Highness the Amir had cited unfair appointments, naturalizations that "change Kuwait's identity", the amnesty file "and its consequences", and the rehabilitation file, as decisions that were "evidence of the harm to the interests of the nation". He had added, "Therefore, we issued a decision to stop the appointments and transfer of people between jobs, and the rest of the files will be addressed to serve the interest of the nation". In line with addressing 'other files', the new government is also likely to revisit the 'nationality file', as well as some of the more contentious decisions taken by the previous cabinet. To make a clean break from the past the new government needs a fresh narrative. It needs a mission-oriented approach in implementing clearly defined plans and policies that drive sustainable economic growth and development in a time-bound manner. The government will need to make economic diversification the central plank of its growth strategy and promote greater private sector engagement.

Aligning public sector priorities and private sector interests will allow the government to crowd-in investments in productive and innovative non-oil projects that spur cross-sectoral economic activity. A result-oriented public-private investment strategy could lead to creation of innovative new jobs, empower the national cadre by developing and upskilling their latent capabilities, and ensure all-around productivity gains that are in the interests of the nation and citizens.

With 11 out of 14 ministers being new entrants to the cabinet and half of them holding a PhD, the council of ministers this time around is clearly tilted towards academics and fresh faces. While this is certainly a welcome change, whether the novelty of the cabinet line-up, or their academic qualifications and experience will equip the executive arm of government to tide over a parliamentary process that has over the years become an often chaotic environment, only the weeks ahead will reveal.

In the meantime, we wish the new government the very best in its endeavors to forge a new era of stability and growth for Kuwait and its people.



Ukraine embassy celebrates Day of Unity

Ambassador of Ukraine H.E. Dr. Oleksandr Balanutsa held a gathering at the embassy premises to mark the Day of Unity of Ukraine. Friends of Ukraine as well as diplomats attended the event to show solidarity with Ukraine.

Speaking on the occasion Ambassador Balanutsa said today we honor one of the most significant dates in modern Ukrainian history, the Day of Unity. On 22 January 1919, the Ukrainian People's Republic and the West Ukrainian People's Republic united, laying the foundation for modern Ukrainian statehood.

He pointed out that this event symbolized their indomitable spirit, their desire to live in their own, independent, and united state. It reminds them of the importance of preserving our identity, culture, and traditions.

Russia's actions demonstrate a lack of desire for peace, leaving Ukraine no option but to continue fighting for victory. This is why, now more than ever, we recognize the immense value of unity. A unity that goes beyond just territorial amalgamation, but also encompasses the spiritual unity of our people. This is key to our continued development and prosperity. I would say that unity is the goal of our victory.



For decades, Russian propaganda has been trying to disconnect Ukrainians from their culture, historical memory, and language. However, they have failed, as Ukrainians today stand united against any external threat.

He further pointed out at the words of one of the great Ukrainians, writer Ivan Franko, who said in 1905: "We must understand what it feels like to be Ukrainian, with no artificial borders between us". Even then, more than a hundred years ago, Ukrainians clearly understood the strength and significance of unity.

Inspired by their words, we are committed to fighting for the restoration of peace and



stability in Ukraine. There should be no illusion: if international law and Ukraine's territorial integrity are not restored, any aggressor in different world regions could seize parts of any country and conduct sham elections under the threat of force.

On the contrary, Ukraine seeks peace that ensures its survival, integrity, sovereignty, and development opportunities, and prevents the recurrence of aggression. A mere ceasefire will not end Russian aggression in Ukraine but will only give the aggressor time to accumulate forces for new strikes.

In conclusion, he said that there was a



growing number of countries, including those from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, joining the work on a common action plan based on the Ukrainian Peace Formula. The recent meetings on the level of national security advisors prove the steadiness of international solidarity with Ukraine.

Ambassador also praised the Kuwaiti support to the cause as well as the Ukrainian community, who remained steadfast in their support to Ukraine. He thanked the leadership and the people of Kuwait and the entire diplomatic community for their continuous support and feelings towards Ukraine.



VIV Terminal Hosts Networking Brunch

Kuwait's first private VIP terminal for departures and arrivals

The VIV Terminal, Kuwait's first private VIP terminal today hosted a networking brunch for executives from airlines operating at Kuwait International Airport – Terminal 1 and Jazeera Terminal 5.

The brunch provided a unique opportunity for airline executives to come together in a relaxed and sophisticated setting to foster meaningful connections, share insights, and explore potential collaborations within the aviation industry. The airline officials also got a taste of the VIV Terminal that offers privacy and exclusivity to departing or arriving passengers in a luxury setting.

Laila Al-Mukhtar, General Manager, VIV Terminal said: "Our VIV Terminal is aimed at providing a seamless travel experience and offers you the perfect start or end to a business trip or holiday getaway. We welcome passengers travelling through Terminal 1 and Jazeera Terminal 5 as well as on private jets. By handling all your airport procedures, we make your journey more comfortable. Whether you are traveling alone, with colleagues, friends or family, VIV Terminal provides you with privacy and peace of mind throughout."

Passengers opting to travel through the VIV Terminal benefit from a private check-in reception and handling services, refreshments, a private customs and immigration area, luxury amenities, and chauffeured transportation to and from the aircraft in a luxury vehicle. The Terminal also includes two private suites and a large private lounge.

Al-Mukhtar added: "Our guests are able to avoid long queues and check-in procedures by allowing us to take care of their departure process for them."

Our professional staff take care of checking passengers in, collecting the boarding pass on their behalf, coordinating with the airlines for their departure and catering to their needs while they wait in their private suite. When arriving in Kuwait, passengers are greeted at the aircraft gate or stairs and guided directly to The VIV for their private immigration process. They can then relax in their suite while waiting for their luggage to be collected for them."

The VIV Terminal services require reservation 24 hours prior to departure or arrival of the passengers' flights and can be book through their website: www.viv.com.kw.

Court of Appeal acquits Engineer and Syrian National in High School exam leak case

The Court of Appeal, led by Counselor Nasr Salem Al-Heid, has acquitted a citizen working as an engineer in the Ministry of Electricity and a Syrian expatriate. The ruling overturns their previous conviction, which sentenced them to 10 years in prison along

with a fine of 241 thousand dinars for leaking high school exams on social networking sites. The Public Prosecution had initially charged the citizen, an engineer in the Ministry of Electricity, with divulging secrets of the Ministry of Education. It was alleged that he had published high school exams, complete with correct answers, on various social media platforms. In return, the second accused, a Syrian national residing in the country, allegedly received more than 241 thousand dinars as payment for their involvement in the fraud.

مجموعة فنادق كويت كونتيننتال

KUWAIT CONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP

Special Delicious

FOOD

Week end

1986

5kd

66346677

Mixed Seafood Meal
SeaFood Soup+

وجبة المكس سي فود
+ شوربة سي فود

5kd

94075442

Saturday
Arabic Buffet

السبت
البويفة العربي

4.5kd

94075445

Thursday-Friday
Indian Buffet

الخميس - الجمعة
البويفة الهندي

Samsung S24, AI to be a gamechanger in mobile communications

Empowering everyday experiences, from barrier-free communication to awe-inspiring creativity to the power for even more possibilities, Galaxy AI transforms the iconic S series for the future.

Samsung Electronics Co. last week unveiled the Galaxy S24 Ultra, Galaxy S24+ and Galaxy S24, unleashing new mobile experiences with Galaxy AI. Galaxy S series leads the way into a new era that will forever change how mobile devices empower users. AI amplifies nearly every experience on Galaxy S24 series, from enabling barrier-free communication with intelligent text and call translations, to maximizing creative freedom with Galaxy's ProVisual Engine, to setting a new standard for search that will change how Galaxy users discover the world around them.



"The Galaxy S24 series transforms our connection with the world and ignites the next decade of mobile innovation," said TM Roh, President and Head of Mobile eXperience Business at Samsung Electronics. "Galaxy AI is built on our innovation heritage and deep understanding of how people use their phones. We're excited to see how our users around the world empower their everyday lives with Galaxy AI to open up new possibilities."

Make Everyday Experiences Epic

Galaxy AI introduces meaningful intelligence aimed at enhancing every part of life, especially the phone's most fundamental role: communication. When you need to defy language barriers, Galaxy S24 makes it easier than ever. Chat with another student or colleague from abroad. Book a reservation while on vacation in another country. It's all possible with Live Translate, two-way, real-time voice and text translations of phone calls within the native app. No third-party apps are required, and on-device AI keeps conversations completely private.

With Interpreter, live conversations can be instantly translated on a split-screen view so people standing opposite each other can read a text transcription of what the other person has said. It even works without cellular data or Wi-Fi.

For messages and other apps, Chat Assist can help perfect conversational tones to ensure communication sounds as it was intended: like a polite message to a coworker or a short and catchy phrase for a social media caption. AI built into Samsung Keyboard can also translate messages in real-time in 13 languages. In the car, Android Auto will automatically summarize incoming messages and suggest relevant replies and actions, like sending someone your ETA, so you can stay connected while staying focused on the road.

Organization also gets a big boost with Note Assist in Samsung Notes, featuring AI-generated summaries, template creation that streamlines notes with pre-made formats, and cover creation to make notes easy to spot with a brief preview. For voice recordings, even when there are multiple speakers, Transcript Assist uses AI and Speech-to-Text technology to transcribe, summarize and even translate recordings.

Communication isn't the only way Galaxy S24 Series takes the fundamental benefits of the phone into the future. Online search has transformed nearly every aspect of life. Galaxy S24 marks a milestone in the history of search as the first phone to debut intuitive, gesture-driven Circle to Search with Google.

To give Galaxy users an incredible new tool, Galaxy turned to the worldwide leader of search, Google, and opened up new forms of discovery with a simple gesture. With a long press on the home button, users can circle, highlight, scribble on, or tap anything on Galaxy S24's screen to see helpful, high-quality search results. Seeing a beautiful landmark in the background of a friend's social media post or a surprising fun fact on YouTube Shorts can quickly become an accurate search to learn more – without having to leave that app. It's that easy. And that epic.

Unleash Creativity to Discover the World in New Ways

Galaxy S24 Series's ProVisual Engine is a comprehensive suite of AI-powered tools that transform image capturing abilities and maximize creative freedom every step of the way, from setting up a shot all the way to sharing it on social. Gone are shaky, pixelated images taken from far away. Galaxy S24 Ultra's Quad Tele System, with new 5x optical zoom lens, works with the 50MP sensor to enable optical-quality performance at zoom levels from 2x, 3x, 5x to 10x magnification thanks to Adaptive Pixel Sensor. Images also show crystal clear results at 100x with enhanced digital zoom.

With upgraded Nightography capabilities, photos and videos shot on Galaxy S24 Space Zoom are brilliant in any conditions, even when zoomed in. Capture more light in dim conditions with Galaxy S24 Ultra's larger pixel size, now 1.4 µm, which is 60% bigger compared to the previous model. Blur is reduced on Galaxy S24 Ultra with wider optical image stabilizer (OIS) angles and enhanced hand-shake compensation.

When recording videos, both front and rear cameras are equipped with Dedicated ISP Block for noise reduction, and Galaxy S24 analyzes gyro information to distinguish between the filmer's movement and the subject's. This allows more effective noise removal and clear videos in the dark, even from far away.

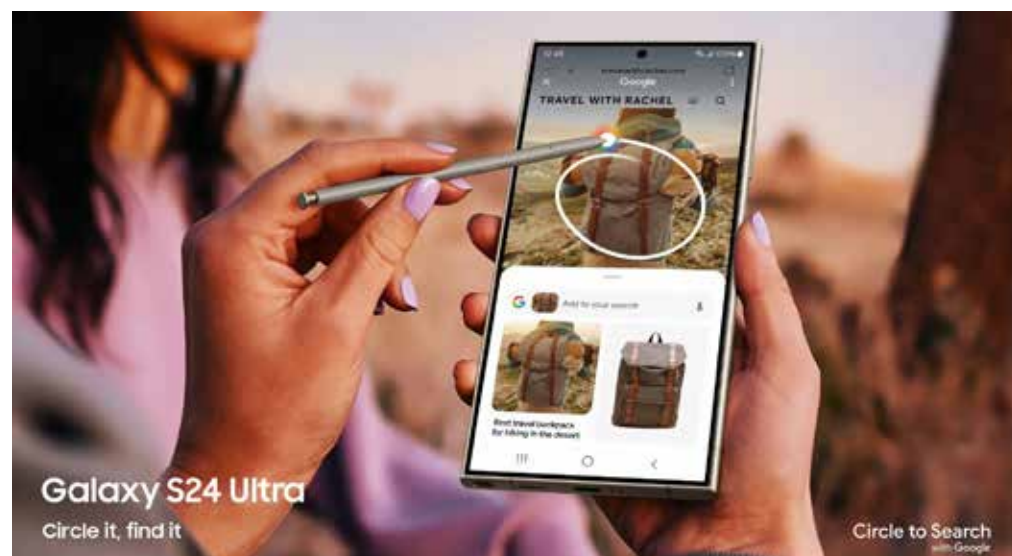


After great shots are captured, innovative Galaxy AI editing tools enable simple edits like erase, re-compose, and remaster. For easier and more efficient optimizations, Edit Suggestion uses Galaxy AI to suggest perfectly suitable tweaks for each photo. To give users even more creative control and freedom, Generative Edit can fill in parts of an image background with generative AI.

When a picture is crooked, AI will fill in the borders. When an object needs to be slightly moved to be in the perfect position, AI lets users adjust the position of the subject and generates a perfectly blended background in its original spot.

Anytime Galaxy S24 deploys generative AI to amplify an image, a watermark will appear on the image and in metadata. And if an action-packed video needs to be slowed down, new Instant Slow-mo can generate additional frames based on movements to smoothly slow down action-packed moments for a more detailed look.

To ensure every image stuns at every stage, Super HDR reveals lifelike previews before the shutter is ever pressed. And while capturing memories is an essential phone feature, sharing memories with the world is just as meaningful. Now, third-party social apps make the most of Galaxy's AI-powered camera system.



Premium Galaxy S series camera features now integrate directly with mobile apps in HDR to level up social sharing. When it's time to find an image in Gallery or Instagram feed and reels, photos and videos are also shown in Super HDR for a more lifelike range of brightness, color and contrast by analyzing highlighted section of the images.

Galaxy's Most Intelligent Experience Ever, Powered by Premium Performance

As AI becomes a more prominent part of everyday life, performance power must excel to meet the demands. Gaming. Heavy-duty video recording and editing. Jumping between five apps to plan a trip. Whatever the task, Galaxy S24 provides an incredible experience thanks to enhancements in its chipset, display and more. Every Galaxy S24 Ultra is equipped with Snapdragon® 8 Gen 3 Mobile Platform for Galaxy.

Optimized especially for Galaxy users, this chipset delivers remarkable NPU improvement for incredibly efficient AI processing. In all three Galaxy S24 models, 1-120 Hz adaptive refresh rates also improve performance efficiency.

Galaxy gaming is more powerful thanks to hardware and software improvements. Galaxy S24 Ultra boast an optimal thermal control system with a 1.9 times larger vapor chamber, improving device surface temperature while also maximizing sustained performance power. Ray tracing enables life-like visuals with superior shadow and reflection effect. And through collaboration with industry-leading gaming partners, Galaxy S24 lets users enjoy more optimized popular global mobile games.

Visuals are more vibrant and captivating on the brightest Galaxy display ever. Galaxy S24 reaches 2,600nit peak brightness and delivers improved outdoor visibility with Vision Booster.

On the display, Corning® Gorilla® Armor on the Galaxy S24 Ultra is optically enhanced and demonstrates superior durability against damage caused by everyday scratches. It delivers dramatically reduced reflection by up to 75% in a wide range of lighting conditions, ensuring a smooth, comfortable viewing experience.

Across the Galaxy S24 series, design enhancements with slimmer and even bezels make it easier to immerse in any viewing experience and enable larger screen sizes on Galaxy S24+'s 6.7-inch and Galaxy S24's 6.2-inch displays within nearly the same size specifications. Galaxy S24 Ultra has a 6.8-inch flatter display, optimized not just for viewing but also for productivity. Plus, the Galaxy S24+ now supports the same level of QHD+ found on the Galaxy S24 Ultra.

Advanced Security and Privacy Empowers User Choice and Trust

Secured by Samsung Knox, Galaxy's defense-grade, multi-layer security platform, Galaxy S24 safeguards critical information and protects against vulnerabilities with end-to-end secure hardware, real-time threat detection and

collaborative protection.

Samsung's long-standing commitment to provide users choice and control over their device continues in the era of AI. Galaxy S24 users have full controllability over how much they allow their data to enhance AI experiences, through Advanced Intelligence settings which can disable online processing of data for AI features.

The Knox Matrix vision of a secure, connected and password-less future is also advanced with passkeys. Passkeys enable convenient and secure access to a users' registered websites and apps across all their trusted devices through digital credentials, helping protect against phishing attacks. Enhanced Data Protection offers end-to-end encryption when users backup, sync or restore their data with Samsung Cloud, allowing Galaxy S24 users to connect to other devices while staying synchronized and secure.

This ensures the data can only be encrypted or decrypted on a user's devices, meaning nobody can see it but the user, even if a server is compromised or account details are stolen. And if access to a trusted device is lost, a recovery code can help prevent loss of data. Galaxy S24 is also protected with Samsung's expansive list of innovative security and privacy features including Knox Vault, Security & Privacy Dashboard, Auto Blocker, Secure Wi-Fi, Private Share, Maintenance Mode and more.

The Next Phase of Samsung's Environmental Journey

Establishing a new category of mobile experiences also means reimagining how Galaxy technology is designed and packaged to do more with less for people and the planet. Galaxy S24 continues to scale the variety of recycled materials in Galaxy devices by applying recycled plastics, glass and aluminium to internal and external components. It also takes these efforts one step further. For the first time, Galaxy S24 features components made with recycled cobalt and rare earth elements. In Galaxy S24 Ultra, a minimum of 50% recycled cobalt was used in the battery, and 100% recycled rare earth elements were incorporated into the speakers. Galaxy S24 is also the first Galaxy S Series to be designed with recycled steel and Thermoplastic Polyurethane (TPU). Galaxy S24 Ultra features a minimum of 40% recycled steel in the speakers, and it includes a minimum of 10% pre-consumer recycled TPU in the side and volume keys. Additionally, every Galaxy S24 comes in a packaging box made from 100% recycled paper material.

The latest flagship continues Samsung's commitment to extending the product lifecycle, offering seven generations of OS upgrades and seven years of security updates to help users reliably experience the optimized performance of their Galaxy devices for even longer. Lastly, Galaxy S24 is UL ECOLOGO® certified, and its carbon footprint has been measured and verified by The Carbon Trust.

Viet Nam - Into the Islands

Ha Long Bay

— for the Year of the Dragon —

The seascape of Ha Long Bay is synonymous with Vietnam. Cruises sail emerald green waters among thousands of rugged islands and islets, stopping at spectacular caves where visitors can wander, viewing impressive, centuries-old formations.

Before you travel, here is a fun fact, updated for the coming Lunar New Year: The word "Ha Long" can be understood as "Descending Dragon", and it's no coincidence that the dragon is the zodiac animal for 2024 in the Vietnamese lunar calendar. Now, let us introduce the beauty of this heavenly place.

From all the angles

Ha Long Bay looks great no matter where you choose to look from. For many travelers, spending 24 hours on the water in Ha

Long Bay is still the quintessential Vietnam experience. There's nothing like waking up and stepping outside to the fresh sea breeze and an inspiring panorama of turquoise water, tiny fishing boats, and rocky karsts. Choose a traditional wooden junk to tick off all the essential boxes: warm and elegant cabins, delicious Vietnamese food, and insightful excursions.

In recent years, another interesting choice to look at this place is from above. With seaplanes and helicopters, those who want to take things from a new perspective can swoop between limestone karsts and glide over shimmering beaches, while listening about the geographical features that make Ha Long Bay so wonderful.

Explore for more

Ha Long Bay is not just about the nature. Here we provide every possible way to explore the sea life in northern Viet Nam.

For starters, Ha Long Bay is best explored from a boat. Some companies offer half-day cruises on traditional junk boats that allow you to experience the bay with sails and slow speeds. Others offer faster yachts that can quickly shuttle passengers between different islands and back. It is possible to take a quick half-day or full-day cruise through Ha Long Bay, but a longer trip is ideal. Book for two or three days with a ship that can plan for food, beverages, cocktails, and sightseeing so that you can just relax and enjoy the trip.

You can also spelunk in dozens of caves of varying sizes, each one a unique archeological remnant of Ha Long's millions of years in development. They are either massive in size, populated by strangely shaped stalactites and stalagmites, or shockingly old, with soft colored lights that cast strange shadows and lend

dramatic believability to the mythical stories, while openings in the ceiling are pierced by heavenly beams of light

Near Ha Long is Cat Ba Island, whose surface is almost entirely blanketed by rainforest. You can book a homestay there and spend your days visiting farming villages, hiking to the hilltop cannon fort, and cycling along pretty lanes. You can even go rock-climbing on the karsts, or sleep under the stars on a deserted beach on a multi-day tour.

The beauty of the bay and about two thousand islets and caves have earned many esteem recognitions for Ha Long Bay - a two-time UNESCO World Heritage, one of the New 7 Natural Wonders of the World, and so on. For mythical, dragon-related reasons, we believe this will be the year to come to Ha Long, sail the sea, see the islands, and fall in love with it.

— Images from Viet Nam Tourism Board



Small boats



Fishing villages



Cruises



Kayaking



Small beaches

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



What It Takes to Build Democratic Institutions

**Daron Acemoglu**

Institute Professor of Economics at MIT, is a co-author (with Simon Johnson) of Power and Progress: Our Thousand-Year Struggle Over Technology and Prosperity

There are plenty of good models around to help both developing and industrialized countries build better democratic institutions. But with its abortive attempts to draft a new constitution, Chile is offering a lesson in what to avoid.

Though it is one of the richest countries in Latin America, Chile is still suffering from the legacy of General Augusto Pinochet's brutal dictatorship and historic inequalities. The country has made some progress in building democratic institutions since the 1988 plebiscite that began the transition from authoritarianism, and education and social programs have reduced income inequality. But major problems remain. There are deep inequalities not just in income, but also in access to government services, high-quality educational resources, and labor-market opportunities. Moreover, Chile still has the constitution that Pinochet imposed in 1980.

Yet while it seems natural to start anew, Chile has gone about it the wrong way. Following a 2020 referendum that showed overwhelming support for drafting a new constitution, it entrusted the process to a convention of elected delegates. But only 43% of voters turned out for the 2021 election to fill the convention, and many of the candidates were from far-left circles with strong ideological commitments to draft a constitution that would crack down on business and establish myriad new rights for different communities. When the resulting document was put to a vote, 62% of Chileans rejected it.

A second attempt repeated the same failings,

only from the other direction. A right-wing convention majority, emboldened by the public's reaction to the first version, drafted a constitution that also was rejected as a step too far. This experience should sound familiar, because Chile is hardly the only country where an activist body has pushed for measures that a majority of voters oppose. Similar episodes are occurring around the world – not least in the United States – and trust in institutions is suffering as a result.

Can support for democracy be rebuilt? My own recent work with Nicolás Ajzenman, Cevat Aksoy, Martin Fiszbein, and Carlos Molina may provide some clues. We find that people who have experience with democratic institutions tend to support them, but only if they deem democracies to be successful in delivering the kinds of economic performance, public services, and other outcomes that they expect.

What people appear to want from

redistribution and stronger protections for disadvantaged groups. But, again, the right and the left will go about this in different ways.

In Chile's case, the left's hardline anti-business agenda seems ill-advised. A better alternative is the model pioneered by Scandinavia's social democratic parties, which rose to power after the 1929 stock-market crash and the Great Depression, when there was a palpable need for major institutional changes and policies to restore the economy to health and curb inequality.

There are many misperceptions about the origins of Nordic social democracy. While some commentators seem to believe that these countries were always predisposed toward equality and cooperation, others view them as 'democratic socialist' role models. Neither perception seems to be true. Both Sweden and Norway were highly unequal at the beginning of the twentieth century. Norway's pre-tax income

umbrella, promising sound macroeconomic management and egalitarian reform of the labor market and education.

For its part, the Norwegian Labour Party made its U-turn from a hardline Marxist agenda after its poor showing in Norway's 1930 election. Like Danish and Swedish workers' parties at the time, it redirected its focus to more practical matters, implementing policies that people wanted. The party also promised a major educational reform to improve the quality of schooling in rural areas that were falling behind. After coming to power again in 1935, the party moved quickly to implement its 'Folk School Law' the following year.

In recent work with Tuomas Pekkarinen, Kjell Salvanes, and Matti Sarvimäki, we show that Norway's school reform did more than improve the quality of rural schooling. It also had a profound effect on Norwegian politics, because many of those who benefited from the reform (starting with parents) shifted their allegiances to the Labour Party, thus helping to create the coalition that would sustain Norway's now-famous model of social democracy. Simply put, the party provided the services voters wanted, and voters rewarded it with electoral support.

The Swedish case is broadly similar. After its first election victory in 1932, the Swedish Social Democratic Party delivered on its promise of higher wages, industrial peace, and a stable macroeconomic environment. It was then rewarded at the polls for the next several decades.

There are lessons here for those who want to strengthen democracy and build new institutions to combat inequality and protect the disadvantaged. The first step must be to show that democracy works by forging a reformist agenda that will succeed in delivering services to the population. Attempts to impose extremist policies (of the left or right) on voters are doomed to fail — and are likely to reduce trust in democratic institutions even further.

“ Support for democracy wanes during economic crises, wars, or other periods of instability, and improves when the public enjoys the benefits of good public services, low inequality, and limited to no corruption. ”

democracies is telling. Support for democracy wanes during economic crises, wars, or other periods of instability, and improves when the public enjoys the benefits of good public services, low inequality, and limited to no corruption. The lessons seem clear. If we want to build a better democracy, we must start with democratic institutions' ability to deliver what people want.

With inequality rising in many countries and global corporations becoming more powerful, it is reasonable for democracies to offer more

Gini coefficient (a measure of inequality on a scale of zero to one) was 0.57 in 1930, which means that it was more unequal than anywhere in Latin America today.

Both countries also experienced frequent industrial conflict. The workers' parties that later became social-democratic parties were rooted in Marxism. But by the time they came to power, they had started moving away from their earlier commitments to revolution and rigid ideology. Instead, they campaigned under a broad



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Global Mental-Health Crisis Demands New Thinking



Dixon Chibanda

A professor of psychiatry and global mental health at the University of Zimbabwe and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, is Founder of the Friendship Bench and the recipient of the 2023 McNulty Prize.

The world is in the grips of a mental-health crisis. From rising climate anxiety in rich countries like the United States to intense trauma in conflict zones like Ukraine and Gaza, especially among children, psychological suffering has become widespread, and traditional health-care services cannot keep up. This leaves tens of millions of people at risk of serious pathologies and suicide.

As it stands, more than 25 percent of the world's population reports feelings of social isolation and loneliness, and more than 150,000 people aged 15-29 die by suicide each year. Climate change threatens to increase these bleak figures. As the American Psychiatric Association reports, climate change can "lead to job loss, force people to move, and harm social cohesion and community resources, all of which have mental-health consequences." Moreover, contemplating climate change and its consequences for both "national security and individual well-being" can cause "significant distress."

No groups are spared. Young people fear for their future; older people grieve the destruction of the world of their childhoods; and activists and climate scientists suffer from emotional

“Even rich-country health systems lack the capacity to offer one-on-one doctor-psychiatric patient therapy services as widely as is needed: in the US, more than 150 million people live in areas with too few mental-health professionals.”

burnout and despair. And this is to say nothing of the post-traumatic stress and depression experienced by those already affected by climate-related disasters, particularly in vulnerable developing economies.

Traditionally, a psychiatric patient would engage in one-on-one therapy with a trained doctor. But even rich-country health systems lack the capacity to offer such services as widely as is needed: in the US, more than 150 million people live in areas with too few mental-health professionals. Within a few years, the country could be short by as many as 31,100 psychiatrists.

The situation is even worse in poor and conflict-affected countries, where traditional



psychiatric interventions are often very difficult to access, if they are available at all. Consider my home country, Zimbabwe: despite being a country of 16 million, it has just 13 psychiatrists and 20 clinical psychologists.

The consequences of this shortfall became starkly apparent in 2019, when Cyclone Idai tore through parts of Zimbabwe. The storm's powerful winds and heavy rains, and the massive flooding and landslides they triggered, led to hundreds of deaths, displaced about 60,000 people, and demolished 50,000 homes. It also decimated unharvested crops, destroyed seed stocks, and killed livestock, leaving people without food or livelihoods. All of this contributed to mental-health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder.

Barely a year later, things got much worse: the COVID-19 pandemic forced nationwide lockdowns that further undermined people's socio-economic well-being. The resulting mental-health problems were well beyond the health-care system's capacity to handle.

But that did not mean Zimbabwe had no options. The Friendship Bench project, which I founded, trains community volunteers without any prior medical or mental-health training to provide talk therapy from wooden park benches in all ten provinces of the country. We have so far trained more than 2,000 of these 'grandmothers' to provide counseling to their local communities.

The program works. In 2016, a randomized clinical trial found that patients with common mental disorders and indicators of depression who received Friendship Bench counseling had a significant decrease in symptoms. Communities with access to Friendship Bench services also experienced improvements in other areas, from HIV outcomes to maternal and child health. Even the grandmothers delivering the therapy report that they have benefited from a stronger sense of belonging and resilience.

Others in lower-resource countries have also been pioneering new, scalable models for delivering high-quality, low-cost psychiatric care to communities where it was not previously available.

One trailblazer is Sangath, an NGO headquartered in the Indian state of Goa that trains ordinary people to deliver psychosocial treatments, particularly in areas with little access to mental-health services. Clinical trials have consistently shown that these 'lay counselors' are effective in addressing a wide range of mental-health conditions, from depression and anxiety to alcohol-use disorders.

Similarly, StrongMinds trains 'mental-health facilitators' to provide free group therapy to low-income women and adolescents with depression in Uganda and Zambia. The organization reports a powerful impact, not least in supporting communities affected by

climate-related environmental disasters. And this impact is set to grow: StrongMinds founder and CEO Sean Mayberry expects the program to reach 335,000 people this year.

Western models of psychiatric care are too resource-intensive to be rolled out across the world, particularly in Africa and South Asia, where fast-growing populations and accelerating climate risks pose huge challenges. But well-crafted community-based initiatives are both cost-effective and highly scalable. Beyond improving individual mental health and resilience, such programs strengthen community cohesion and encourage collective problem-solving, both of which will become increasingly important as the climate crisis intensifies.

Tackling the global mental-health crisis effectively will require greater engagement from the international community. The World Health Organization's Special Initiative for Mental Health, which sought to deliver greater access to mental-health services across its six regions in 2019-23, was a step in the right direction. But it must be sustained and expanded. Meanwhile, local and national governments and philanthropies should embrace new, locally-based approaches that have proved their ability to help communities cope with growing risks to their lives, livelihoods, and well-being.

The ICJ ruling could be a catalyst for progress

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

United Nations bodies have been entrusted with the task of implementing international judicial rulings issued by the International Court of Justice in accordance with Article 94 of its Charter in Paragraph 2, through the Security Council, which is considered a competent body at the United Nations level to implement these rulings and decisions of the International Court of Justice in favor of one of the parties or based on a decision by it.

If it deems it necessary to intervene. In light of the international criticism directed at the UN Security Council, I believe that among the reasons for failure is the restriction of the United Nations bodies in the implementation process as a result of assigning veto power to the five permanent members, in addition to the lack of a central international authority, which leads to the lack of authority to issue executive measures immediately. Issuance of a ruling or decision in favor of the right holder.

International precedent has made clear that the International Court of Justice is not empowered to impose provisional measures, as demonstrated by the Anglo-Iranian case on jurisdiction. In submitting its complaints to the UN Security Council, Britain invoked Article 41 of the UN Charter, asserting the Security Council's authority to deal with with orders relating to precautionary measures, this reliance on the provisions of the UN Charter was intended to highlight the practical limitations faced by the International Court of Justice in implementing such measures.

Likewise, in my follow-up to the case of Ukraine against Russia, the International Court of Justice has already indicated, within its interim procedures, that the Russian Federation must immediately suspend the military operations that it began on February 24, 2022 in the territory of Ukraine. Russia objected to the ruling as the war continues to date.

The President of the International Court of Justice, Judge Joan E. Donoghue, representing the United States, will retire in February

2024, and this may be her last ruling, her replacement Judge Sarah Selivland will take over as one of the fifteen judges on the committee.

In either case, even if the interim ruling that is expected to favor South Africa is pronounced, there will be little relief for the Palestinians in Gaza, but it will be a major moral victory over the aggressor and perhaps the beginning of an opportunity to reform the system. If the International Court of Justice finds Israel guilty of human rights violations or unlawful military rule, as has been the case in the past, there is hope that powerful states will feel pressure to modify their current positions.

At the very least, it adds to an important global discourse that can put pressure on society. In cases where other actors have failed to alleviate the plight of Palestinians, the International Court of Justice can serve as the catalyst needed to ignite the flame of progress.



Tareq Yousef AlShumaimry, served as Chairman of the Finance Committee and Chairman of the General Budget Committee of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague (PCA) and an observer in the 124th Administrative Council of the Court and the Consular at the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in the Netherlands during this period from 2013 to 2020.

Email: tareq@alshumaimry.com

Thought “ for the week

Every man is rich or poor
according to the proportion
between his desires and his
enjoyments.

- Samuel Jonson
English writer

Clearing misconceptions between caffeine and weight loss

Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



Are you one of those who lost weight on caffeine? or maybe you think that it was the caffeine effect while you were trying to control your food quality and quantity.. I personally never think of using drinks to control my appetite or to lose some weight, I always prefer the natural way which I am sure you all know: Eating a balanced diet plus exercise.

But, what is the direct relation between caffeine and weight loss? And why are a lot of fat- burning pills made out of caffeine?

I will start by saying that caffeine may slightly encourage weight loss or maybe prevent weight gain, but there is no proof that increased caffeine consumption can lead to permanent weight loss. When I mention caffeine, it doesn't mean only the coffee people drink, but also different beverages including caffeine like tea, energy drinks and cola, products containing cocoa or chocolate.

What does coffee do?

- Caffeine stimulates thermogenesis: one of the ways your body generates heat and energy from digesting food.
- Thermogenesis is one basal metabolic rate reaction, which means the metabolism of your body at rest, when you are not exerting any effort. So it is a minimal reaction. And there is no evidence that long-term coffee consumption aids in weight loss.
- Caffeine also acts as a diuretic, which means it increases the amount of urine you excrete. So you end up losing the water more than the fat, which is why you tend to lose weight.
- Caffeine acts as a natural appetite suppressant: Caffeine lovers, those who drink more than 3 cups

of coffee a day, may end up eating less throughout the day. Caffeine gives a feeling of satiety, especially when it comes to smoking with caffeine consumption

- Coffee contains antioxidants, which fights against cancer problems, but too much caffeine might cause nervousness, insomnia, nausea and increased blood pressure. It contains 'cafestol' which increases blood cholesterol levels, so it is not recommended for people with issues with their cholesterol.

One final bit of advice is to not use any pills. It is dangerous in the long run.

Your best option is to intake two cups of coffee daily which is healthy due to their high antioxidant levels, but not more than this as caffeine will cause irritability, addiction and hypertension.

Eat like Mira
Create healthy habits, not restrictions

To subscribe to my diet programs,
don't forget to log in to:
www.eatlikemira.com.



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

RECIPE

Spinach Pesto Paneer



This delicious recipe for spinach pesto paneer involves cubes of paneer that are deep fried till crisp and then tossed in a spinach-pesto sauce. It serves as a quick and easily prepared appetizer with a beautiful dense green color.

Total time: 25 minutes

Serving: 4 persons

Ingredients:

For spinach pesto:

- 1/2 cup almonds
- 2.5 cups spinach
- 2 tbsp grated parmesan cheese
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/2 lemon juice
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- Other ingredient:
- 250g paneer (cottage cheese)
- 2 onions
- 1 red capsicum
- 1 green capsicum
- 2-3 green chili
- 1 1/2 tbsp corn flour
- 1 1/2 tbsp maida (all purpose flour)
- 1 tbsp green chili sauce
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- Oil to fry
- Salt to taste
- Water



Chef Chhaya Thakker

Instructions:

For making spinach pesto:

- Wash and spin-dry the spinach leaves
- Blend the leaves in a food processor with the almonds, garlic, parmesan cheese, lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper
- Chop paneer into cubes
- Dice onion, capsicum into cube shape
- Slit green chillies lengthwise
- Make a thick paste of corn flour, maida, salt and little water
- Heat oil in a frying pan
- Dip the paneer cubes in the above paste and fry till golden brown
- Remove from pan and drain excess oil on kitchen paper
- Heat a wok and add 2 tbsp of oil
- Add onions and stir on high for half a minute
- Add green chili, capsicum and sauté well
- Add the pesto paste, green chili sauce, pepper and salt; stir well
- Add fried paneer cubes and mix well
- Remove from flame, add lemon juice and combine
- Garnish with freshly chopped coriander leaves
- Serve hot or cold.

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

Nanoplastics infiltrate human food chain

Although environmental microplastics in foods were first reported in 2004, it is only now, after 20 years that their multiple adverse effects on human health are drawing wider attention.

Studies in the past have shown the increasing level of tiny plastic particles in our food chain, but their level could not be precisely quantified due to technological limitations. Scientists at Columbia University in the United States, using a trailblazing new technique, have now been able to examine more minutely the miniscule plastic particles present in our food chain.

The study of three well known brands of bottled drinking water sold in plastic containers revealed an average of 240,000 plastic particles per liter — 100 times more than previously estimated. Of the seven types of plastics identified in bottled water, nearly 90 percent were found to be nanoplastics and the rest were microplastics.

Microplastics are polymer fragments that can range from less than 5 millimeters down to 1 micrometer (μm). Nanoparticles are far smaller, ranging from $1\mu\text{m}$ to 1 nanometer (nm). [For the purpose of clarification: One millimeter (mm) is equal to one thousandth of a meter; one micrometer (μm) is equal to one millionth of a meter; and one nanometer (nm) is equal to one billionth of a meter. One trillionth of a meter is referred to as a

picometer (pm).]

At 1,000th the average width of a human hair, nanoplastics are so microscopically small that they can migrate through the tissues of the digestive tract or lungs into the bloodstream, distributing potentially harmful synthetic chemicals throughout the body and into cells. The new study which shows high levels of nanoplastics being ingested through our food and water suggests the problem of plastics in the human body could be far larger than previously estimated.

Previously there were no methodologies to examine and analyze nanoplastics. The latest study used an altered version of Raman Spectroscopy — a laser-based technique that analyzes the chemical composition of cells by measuring vibration of molecules in response to light. The new altered technique, referred to as hyperspectral stimulated Raman scattering (SRS) microscopy, adds a second laser to amplify the previous signal by several orders of magnitude, allowing the previously unseen nanoplastics to be detected in microseconds rather than the hours needed by the older technique.

Using the new method, the researchers could observe particles as small as 100 nanometers in the water they examined. Instead of the 300 nanoplastics per liter previously estimated to be present in

bottled water, the new study revealed the presence of between 110,000 and 370,000 nanoparticles per liter.

Following the detection of the nanoparticles, the researchers then used a new machine-based learning technology that allowed them to identify and classify which plastic types were involved. It is worth adding that the instrument was tuned to analyze only seven major types of plastics, so although other nanoparticles were detected in the water samples, these were not analyzed. The innovative new techniques presented in the study open the door for further research to better understand the potential risks of these tiny particles to human health. Although confirmed studies on the risks posed by these particles in the human body are currently not available, what is known is that since these tiny particles do not biodegrade readily they can remain for an undetermined length of time within the body, potentially posing a long-term health hazard. Experts opine and some studies suggest that these tiny plastic particles could cause physical injury by rubbing against tissues such as the intestinal lining when ingested through food and drink, or the lung linings when inhaled through air.

From the intestine and lungs the nanoparticles could infiltrate into the bloodstream and find their way to the liver, kidney and brain, as well as cross the placental boundary to end up in an unborn child. Micro and nanoplastics can also be a chemical hazard, as they contain additives which are added during their production to give them desirable properties such as strength, flexibility, and adaptability to external factors. Some of these additives include phthalates, bisphenol A (BPA), per- and polyfluorinated substances (PFAS), and heavy metals.



Many of these additives are known to alter endocrine system functions leading to adverse developmental, reproductive, neurological, and immune effects. In addition, since the tiny polymers have the ability to bind to all kinds of compounds, they may carry into the body harmful environmental pollutants, toxins, antibiotics, or microorganisms.

Once inside the body, the nanoparticles release these compounds causing various health issues such as inflammation, oxidative stress and immune responses that could contribute to the development of diseases such as cancer, metabolic disorders, and neurodevelopmental conditions, among others.

The new findings, especially the presence of large amounts of nanoparticles in bottled water are certainly a serious cause for concern to the public and to health authorities. There are several steps that we as consumers can take to lower the risk of plastic particles in the body. These include avoiding consumption of foods and beverages in plastic containers, wearing clothing made from natural fabrics, and buying consumer products made from natural materials, among others.



Mindfulness helps with healthy eating

More than two decades ago, researchers supported by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) developed a heart-healthy eating plan called Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH). The DASH diet, which gained popularity over the past 20 years, encourages eating fruits, vegetables, and whole grains while avoiding saturated fats.

Studies conducted over the years since the launch of the DASH diet have confirmed that it can help to reduce hypertension, or high blood pressure, and lead to other heart-protecting changes. Despite its undisputed health benefits, other studies have revealed that adherence to the DASH plan tends to be low, especially with the emergence of several fleetingly popular diet plans.

A new study by researchers at Brown University in the US suggests that adding mindfulness training to the DASH eating plan might help people follow the diet and reduce hypertension. Mindfulness is a focus on the present moment and being aware of what is going on inside and around you. The researchers developed a training program to teach mindfulness skills — including yoga, meditation, and self-awareness — and apply these skills toward taking steps to reduce blood pressure. Such steps include following the DASH diet, boosting physical activity, and taking blood pressure medicines.

To test the effectiveness of their program,

the researchers recruited about 200 people who had elevated blood pressure (over 120/80 mm Hg). Participants were mostly college-educated (73%), and female (59%), with an average age of about 60 years. Half received enhanced usual care, which included a blood pressure device with training in how to use it, brochures about hypertension control, and doctor referrals when needed. Those in the mindfulness group were asked to engage in mindfulness practices at home for at least 45 minutes a day, six days a week. They also attended group training sessions, including weekly 2.5-hour classes.

All participants were assessed at the start of the study and six months later. DASH diet adherence was assessed via a recognized food questionnaire. Another questionnaire was used to measure participants' interoceptive awareness — their awareness of their body's internal signals and processes, such as hunger cues and other mind-body interactions.

Results published late last year showed that those in the mindfulness program had a significant 4.5 mmHg reduction in blood pressure at six months compared to the control group. In their new study, the researchers also gleaned insights into the reasons why this reduction happened.

By the end of six months, the mindfulness group had a 0.32-point boost (in a 0-11 range) to their DASH diet score compared to the control group. This improvement is akin to shifting from two or three servings of vegetables a day to the recommended four or more servings. Improper diet is one of the biggest drivers of blood pressure. When the researchers focused only on the 97 participants who entered the study with poor adherence to DASH, the improvement was even greater. The mindfulness training led to a difference of 0.62 points between the training and controls.

FULL BODY CHECK-UP

Package Includes :

- Total Cholesterol
- Urea
- LDL
- HDL
- Creatinine
- FBS/RBS
- VLDL
- SGPT
- Triglycerides
- Uric Acid
- DENTAL CONSULTATION
- CBC (Hemoglobin, Total WBC Count, Differential WBC, Platelet Count, Total RBC Count, HCT)
- SGOT
- Urine Routine Analysis
- ECG
- GP CONSULTATION
- DIETICIAN CONSULTATION

السالمية كLINIC
SALMIYA CLINIC
Humane care is more than healthcare

FOR ENQUIRIES CALL OR WHATSAPP ON

60689323 60683777 60968777 25727004 25728004

Salmiya - Bagdad St. - P.O. Box 4363, Salmiya 22044 Kuwait

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Americans Remain Dissatisfied Despite a Strong Economy



Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg

A former World Bank Group chief economist and editor-in-chief of the American Economic Review, is Professor of Economics at Yale University.

“It’s the economy, stupid.” This famous slogan from Bill Clinton’s 1992 presidential campaign was once thought to capture the key issue on American voters’ minds in any election year. So, will that mantra be vindicated once again this year?

While it is premature to declare economic victory, inflation appears to have been tamed without triggering a recession, the labor market remains tight, and President Joe Biden’s policies have disproportionately benefited low-income Americans (though much more remains to be done). Yet in poll after poll, respondents express deep dissatisfaction with the country’s leadership.

The discontent is not just with Biden but extends to all ‘major economic leaders’, including US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, who was not even appointed by the current administration. It cannot be attributed to recent foreign-policy decisions in the Middle East, because the low approval figures predate the Hamas attack on October 7. Instead, there seems to be a sharp disconnect between the way economists view the state of the US economy and people’s perceptions of their own well-being.

What explains this? One hypothesis is inequality. On one hand, standard income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient or wage dispersion, does not obviously explain rising discontent. After increasing in the preceding decades, income inequality has remained stable



in recent years, and Biden’s policies have explicitly sought to address it.

On the other hand, inequalities in health outcomes or across regions remain glaring, and current economic policies cannot do much to reverse them in the short run. Even more importantly, perhaps, is the growing sense among people in many parts of the country that political and academic elites have forgotten them and care more about Palestine in the Middle East than East Palestine, Ohio.

A second hypothesis, particularly relevant to the younger generation, is that uncertainty about one’s professional and economic prospects has increased in a world marked by AI, geopolitical conflict, and climate change. The upward mobility that earlier generations enjoyed no longer seems likely.

The problem with this hypothesis is that it is based on an ex post evaluation of earlier generations’ achievements. In retrospect, we know that attaining a college degree or higher and entering the labor market in the early 1990s

– at the onset of hyperglobalization and rapid economic growth – was equivalent to winning the lottery for those of us who were lucky enough to do so. At the time, however, we had no idea about what was to come. Previous generations experienced the same day-to-day anxieties and uncertainties that the younger generation faces today, but these did not lead to the same widespread discontent.

A third hypothesis focuses on the overall decline of institutions and public life, which encapsulates everything from the loss of civil discourse to gerontocracy, deepening political polarization, and recurrent policy paralysis (think debt ceilings and government shutdowns). These issues may have only tenuous links to economics, but they contribute to the increasing disillusionment with the functioning of American democracy.

A less bleak view is that the current discontent is a byproduct of the progress the US has made as a society. While some forms of inequality have

increased, others have noticeably decreased. Few would question that women, Black Americans, and members of the LGBTQ+ community have many more opportunities to compete today than they did two decades ago, when they were still excluded from many fields. In relative terms, white males have lost the most. If one views the world through the prism of a continuous zero-sum power struggle, one should not be surprised to see pushback from those who are losing privileges they long took for granted.

Another ‘positive’ take is that pre-existing sources of discontent, like unequal treatment, are more salient today precisely because people are aware of new opportunities and the factors leading to success (that is, ‘how the game is played’). Instead of feeling content with what they have achieved, they focus on where they have fallen short of their aspirations.

Consider the case of elite college admissions. My home institution, Yale University, had about 18,000 applications for the class of 2007, compared to about 52,000 for the class of 2027. A generation ago, Yale might have been considered out of reach to all but a few; but now the dream is within reach, and applications have poured in. The flip side is the bitterness that an applicant’s family feels after rejection by an elite college. What they take away from the experience is not that they had a shot, but that the promise did not materialize.

The same disappointment arising from unfulfilled promises in a world of rising aspirations may explain discontent in many other contexts, from the advancement of professional careers to the fate of businesses. The positive side is that people feel empowered to eye the next rung up the ladder.

As usual with social phenomena, the source of today’s discontent is likely to be multidimensional, including elements of all of the above explanations, as well as others. Hard as it is for an economist to admit, one thing is certain: It’s not just the economy, stupid.

Al Muzaini
Exchange



المزيني
للسيرفة

TRANSFER & WIN

\$10,000

MEGA PRIZE

December 26, 2023 to February 29, 2024

\$100

DAILY PRIZE

\$1,000

WEEKLY PRIZE

\$2,500

MONTHLY PRIZE