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# Enhancing FDI in Kuwait promotes economic growth

**THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT**

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is a key element in boosting capital, increasing employment opportunities, enhancing quality of human resources, fostering innovation and technology transfers and stimulating productivity gains, all of which are instrumental in driving economic growth and development. The importance of augmenting FDI inflows gains even more salience during periods of economic slowdowns such as the one the world currently faces.

According to the World Bank the global economy is poised for its third consecutive year of economic deceleration. In its latest report on global economic prospects in 2024, the World Bank said that amid ongoing conflicts, trade fragmentation, financial stresses, climate-



related disasters, and anemic international trade and investment, the global economy is

expected to slow down to 2.4 percent this year, marking the weakest half-decade performance

in over 30 years. The Bank warned that unless major course-corrections are urgently undertaken one out of every four developing economies could be poorer by the end of 2024 than they were before the onset of COVID-19 pandemic. On a more optimistic note, the report indicated that by implementing proper macroeconomic and structural policies, and having well-functioning institutions, nations could attract investments and improve their long-term economic prospects.

The World Bank's assessment of global economic prospects for 2024 was underpinned by a report published in June 2023 by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The study, titled 'World Investment Report 2023' (WIR-2023), showed that overlapping international crises, higher food and energy prices,

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**Al Muzaini** **المزيني**  
Exchange **للمصرفة**

**TRANSFER & WIN**

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**MEGA PRIZE**

December 26, 2023 to February 29, 2024

**\$100**

**DAILY PRIZE**

**\$1,000**

**WEEKLY PRIZE**

**\$2,500**

**MONTHLY PRIZE**





## Indian community participates in Republic Day celebrations

Indian nationals turned out in thousands at the Indian Embassy premise on Friday morning to celebrate India's 75th Republic Day. Ambassador of India H.E. Dr Adarsh Swaika unfurled the National Flag at 9:00

am, followed by the singing of the National Anthem and the reading out of the Indian President's Address. The event commenced by garlanding the Mahatma Gandhi statue by Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika.

The Ambassador in his speech, highlighted the strong bilateral relationship between India and Kuwait and assured that the Embassy is always ready to render help to its nationals. He also noted the various contributions by the

Indian Associations in Kuwait. Cloudy skies and a slight drizzle did not deter Indians from participating in the Republic Day celebrations and joining their community in celebrating the auspicious occasion.



## Indian Embassy marks 75th Republic Day

The Indian embassy held celebrations on 26 January to mark the country's 75th Republic Day, which commemorates the adoption of the Indian Constitution on 26 January 1950.

Attending the event as the chief guest was the Deputy Foreign Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. In his speech on the occasion, the Indian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika highlighted the long and rich history of India-Kuwait relations and emphasized his appreciation of Kuwait's leadership, the government, and the people for their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. He added that both New Delhi and Kuwait share the belief that the world is one family and that diplomatic discussions are the only means to overcome international issues and conflicts.

On bilateral relations with Kuwait, the Indian ambassador pointed out that they were indeed historical and time-tested. "Trade and people to people linkages have been the edifice of our close ties. Most importantly, the leadership of both countries highly value the importance of this multifaceted relationship. The bilateral relations cover cooperation in a wide spectrum of areas and India remains among the top-three bilateral trade partners of Kuwait."



He added that increasingly there has been a diversification of the bilateral trade basket, and that bilateral investment cooperation was growing with greater Kuwaiti investments in India, as well as increasing presence of Indian companies in Kuwait.

Ambassador noted that many Indian companies have executed, are executing, and look forward to executing large-scale infrastructure projects in Kuwait. Collaboration in education is well known with 26 Indian schools running in Kuwait with an enrollment of over 60,000 students. The strong and vibrant Indian community in Kuwait of around one million

serve as a living bridge between the two countries. We look forward to further strengthening our special partnership with Kuwait under the guidance of the new leadership of Kuwait.

In his address to the large gathering of diplomats, Indian and Kuwaiti community members and the media, Ambassador Swaika said the day marked the diamond jubilee of India's Republic Day celebrations, a historic milestone in India's journey since it was on this very day in 1950 that the Constitution of India came into effect.

He pointed out that the Indian Constitution embodied the principles of equitable development, democracy, pluralism, secularism, and principles of natural justice that the country stands for. The Indian Constitution is a living document that has responded to the needs of time, and is an article of faith for all Indians at home and abroad, while unity in diversity is part of the traditional ethos of Indian society.

Elaborating on the Indian developmental story in recent years, the ambassador said it continued to attract the attention of the international community. He took the liberty to highlight some important facets of today's India.

- The world's largest democracy with a stable democratic regime
- World's most populous country with 65 percent of population under 35 years of age
- Fifth largest global economy and poised to become the third largest by 2027-28;
- A GDP of USD 3.75 trillion with exports of USD 776 billion last year
- Preferred foreign investment destination with USD 615 billion in investments in the last nine years, including USD 71 billion just last year
- Marked a 79 spot jump in ranking on the World Bank's 'Ease of Doing Business' index over the past five years
- World's largest working population and first in lowest manufacturing costs globally
- World's third largest Startup Ecosystem (111 unicorns with total valuation of USD 350 bn)
- Global Pharmacy of the world

- Fourth largest installed capacity of renewable power
- Poised to become a USD 1 trillion digital economy by 2025 (46% share in real time digital payments globally).

The ambassador also took the opportunity to express his appreciation to the large Indian community for their stellar contribution in being the bedrock of India-Kuwait partnership, and expressed confidence that the community would continue to contribute to strengthening bilateral ties in future. "You are the true 'Rashtradoshs' (ambassadors) of India who continue to serve not only India but your home away from home in Kuwait."







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3

# Sri Lanka set to regain its lustre as Pearl of the Indian Ocean

Ambassador of Sri Lanka H.E. Kandeepan Bala

By Reaven D'Souza  
Executive Managing Editor

Sri Lanka and Kuwait established formal diplomatic relations in 1971, and since then the two friendly nations have been enjoying a mutually rewarding diplomatic journey. However, even before inking formal ties, in 1963 Sri Lanka had extended support to Kuwait in its bid to gain UN membership following independence, said H.E. Kandeepan Bala the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, during a recent wide-ranging interview with The Times Kuwait.

"Over the years, Sri Lanka has stood in solidarity with Kuwait throughout its trying times. During the invasion and occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi forces in 1990-91, Sri Lanka voted in favor of all UN Security Council Resolutions demanding the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Sri Lanka was also one of the first countries to reopen its Embassy in Kuwait after the Gulf war," said Ambassador Bala while providing a back-drop to relations between the two countries.

He added, "In 2021, Sri Lanka and Kuwait celebrated the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations by holding a series of commemorative events in both capitals. Throughout the past few decades, mutual visits by leaders of both countries has served as an impetus to strengthen ties between the two states.

On the multilateral front Sri Lanka and Kuwait share many platforms such as non-alignment movement, Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Secretariat and in many specialized United Nations agencies, including the UN Human Rights Council, and we continue to exchange support in these multilateral international fora."

"Today, the multifaceted relations between the two nations continue to grow in various fields, including in trade, employment, tourism and overseas development assistance. Underlining the importance of bilateral economic ties, Ambassador Bala noted that these relations witnessed an upsurge, especially following the initial signing of bilateral trade agreements in the early 1990s. The volume and range of products traded have expanded propelled by regular holding of joint Trade Ministerial Committee Meetings between the two countries, and bilateral trade has



continued to grow over the years. With the aim of enhancing mutual relations among business entities, an MoU was signed to hold regular meetings between the Chambers of Commerce and Industry alternatively in both capitals.

I would also like to acknowledge with gratitude that the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) has been a main source of funding support for many

nearly USD7 billion annually."

Turning to the tourism sector in his country, the ambassador said, "The tourism sector has recovered substantially in the post COVID-19 period. Despite the economic downturn and catastrophe that the country encountered following the pandemic, Sri Lanka received almost 1.5 million tourists in 2023. Tourist arrivals from Kuwait have also remained steady

holidaymakers, from beautiful beaches to lush green vegetation to well-presented ruins of an ancient civilization, and a hospitable people, all of which make Sri Lanka a wonderful tourist destination for Kuwaitis.

"Moreover, having recognised the importance of cultural exchanges that, in these modern times, have become an influential source of soft power, the Sri Lanka embassy in Kuwait, in collaboration with the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, has organised several cultural events in Kuwait. On Sri Lanka's National Day each year, celebrations are spiced up by exclusive performances by talented cultural troupes flown in to portray different forms of arts, music and dances of Sri Lankan society that reflect the secular nature of the country. Over the past five decades, World renowned Sri Lankan cultural troupes have visited every year to showcase cultural strengths of Sri Lanka and thereby strengthen people to people contacts."

Emphasizing the role of the Sri Lankan community in building and strengthening people-to-people ties between the two countries, Ambassador Bala stated: "Kuwait is home to around 130,000 Sri Lankan migrant workers who contribute to strengthening relations between the two nations in terms of sourcing the much needed remittances to Sri Lanka and building a positive image of the country among people in Kuwait. In recent years, Sri Lanka has been successful in diversifying deployment of migrant workers to Kuwait, from the traditional domestic sector to various skilled, semi-skilled and professional workers in the fields of construction, infrastructure, education and health services including caregiving. Such diversification helps build the positive image of Sri Lanka in this part of the world, while contributing to the socio economic progress of Kuwait."

Asked about the potential for Kuwaiti entrepreneurs to invest in Sri Lanka, the ambassador noted: "Sri Lanka, a lower middle-income country with a population of approximately 22 million is on a recovery path following the worst economic crisis it faced in 2022, and there are opportunities for investors to take part in its growth story. The Government of Sri Lanka has embarked on a slew of reforms to tide over the crisis in the last few months.

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infrastructure, irrigation and rehabilitation projects that have helped the socio-economic development of Sri Lanka. Most recently, the KFAED provided funding for several projects to equip and upgrade key universities of Sri Lanka. Kuwait also serves as one of the chief sources for foreign exchange earnings in Sri Lanka, with remittances by our diaspora contributing

with some 8000 plus tourists arriving from Kuwait each year.

"Sri Lanka is determined to regain its position as one of the most visited countries in South Asia that consistently ranked among the world's favourite destinations for travellers seeking the experience of a lifetime. Sri Lanka is endowed with everything that caters to a wide variety of

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# Vietnamese coffee gaining popularity in Kuwait

## Interview with Hung Vu – Vietnamese barista on a trip to Kuwait

### THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

**H**ung Vu works in Coffilia, the renowned Vietnamese coffee brand that opened its first shop in Kuwait just a few months ago. Since last year, he has conducted several business trips to Kuwait, and in this interview he shares his thoughts on Kuwait, coffee, and in particular, Coffilia coffee in Kuwait.



**The Coffilia coffee shop opened in Kuwait in October 2023. What are your thoughts on the business of the coffee shop so far?**

I think they are doing a good job in handling the business. The staff and Mr. Luai Al-Qattan, the owner of Coffilia Kuwait, have caught on with the workarounds of the coffee shop and they have conducted many activities to attract the Kuwaiti people, which resulted in more and more people getting to know about the brand and the uniqueness of Vietnamese coffee.

**After your many trips to Kuwait, what are your thoughts on the coffee culture in the region?**

The coffee culture here is quite diverse. Aside from traditional types of coffee beans such as Arabica and Robusta which are known worldwide, Kuwait also is the meeting point of other specialty coffee beans from countries such as Italy, Kenya,... The people here are also very knowledgeable when it comes to brewing, roasting and enjoying coffee.

**And besides coffee, what is the other one thing that impressed you the most in Kuwait?**

I got to say it's the food. I have been to many countries and tried the local cuisine from around the world, and in my opinion Kuwait is among the most unique ones. I wish to come back here more often and try out more

of the Arabic cuisine, in which I like most of the dishes.

**In your opinion, can Vietnamese coffee be one of the Kuwaiti people's favorite?**

Viet Nam is the second biggest coffee exporter in the world with high-quality coffee beans and products, but to attract Kuwaiti people, I think we need to do more, especially since there are some differences in the strength and flavor between our coffee products and those of the local favorites.

**And what will Coffilia do in the future to reach that goal?**

Of course we set out many strategies for Coffilia to achieve our goals from the first



place. One of the things we plan to do in the future is to open more small shops in different areas for delivering our coffee to more customers, and we plan to hopefully implement the expansion this year.

We are also working on the Coffilia-branded green beans, which will come soon to Kuwait, as we notice that is a growing trend in the consumption market of this country.

## Indian Heritage opens new outlet in Egaila



**I**ndian Heritage, the renowned exclusive Indian textile house, recently marked a significant milestone with the grand opening of its new store at Al Sama Mall, Egaila. The inauguration ceremony, held on Thursday, January 25th at 7:30 pm, was a momentous occasion for the brand.

Having embraced the philosophy of preserving the Indian heritage and blending it with rich traditions of Kuwait's culture,



Indian Heritage began its journey as an exclusive Indian textile house back in 2000. Over the years, it has become one of Kuwait's largest and most reputable stores, offering a diverse range of exclusive designer and heritage products from India. Renowned for its exceptional quality, the brand ensures that all its products are crafted with the finest materials, providing customers with a luxurious and long-lasting product. The brand hopes to array into more lifestyle



products in the future. The opening ceremony captured the essence of vibrant Indian craftsmanship and artistry, captivating attendees who were present to witness the celebration. Esteemed guests graced the event, adding to its charm and significance.

The new store, located in Al Sama Mall, Egaila, promises an unparalleled shopping experience with a meticulously curated collection of items to ensure you have access to the latest trends and timeless classics, all under one roof at reasonable prices. Indian Heritage already established its presence in Kuwait with two stores: one in Souk Safat, Kuwait City, and another Abu Halifa magic mall. With the addition of the Al Sama Mall branch, the brand wants to further celebrate the appreciation for cultural diversity within the region.

The brand has 2 premium stores opening very soon in Al-Khiran and Avenues malls to give Kuwait's residents and visitors an immersive experience in the rich tapestry of Indian fashion that harmoniously blends with rich traditions of Kuwait.

The opening of Indian Heritage in Kuwait is not just a store inauguration; it's an invitation to celebrate modern fashion that has deep roots in tradition and culture of Kuwait and India.





# Thousands apply as new rules for family visas takes effect

On the first day of implementation of the new ministerial decision to allow residents fulfilling certain criteria to apply for family visas, the Residency Affairs Department at the Ministry of Interior in all six governorates received in total over 2,000 applicants.

However, sources at the ministry indicate that despite the overwhelming number of applicants, less than 500 submissions were accepted on the first day, with the remaining

being rejected for various reasons.

Some of the applications were found to have mistakes in them, while some submissions were for bringing in their parents, a group that is currently not included in the family visa category. However, the vast majority of rejected applications were because they did not meet the stipulations needed to apply for a family visa.

Reports indicate that the majority of applicants were Arabs, and that the lion's share



of applications were submitted to the Farwaniya and Hawally Residency Affairs Departments.

Ministry sources also revealed that plans are under study to receive family visa applications through the Ministry of Interior website, or via the government's online Sahel app so as to reduce congestion at residency affairs departments, regulate the work mechanism, and ensure that work permits or salary certificates are not tampered with or falsified.

## Kuwait improves its ranking in Corruption Perception Index

The year 2024 has definitely gotten off to a great start with the swearing-in of a new cabinet and a new prime minister. In an added feather to Kuwait's cap, the country notched a 13-point drop in the global 'Corruption Perception Index' prepared annually by the international non-profit, non-governmental organization, Transparency International.

The 2023 CPI ranking published on 30 December, as the world prepared to ring in another New Year, showed that Kuwait had pulled its way up the annual index to reach the 63rd spot for the first time ahead of New Year 2024 as the world rang in a new year on 31 December, shows Kuwait pulled its way up from the 77th spot it occupied in 2022 to rank 63rd among the 180 countries featured in the 2023 index.

The annual Corruption Perceptions Index, measures the perceived levels of public sector corruption in countries around the world. The index scores countries on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) based on various factors including the presence of bribery, embezzlement, and abuse of power in a country. In its response to the new ranking, Kuwait's anti-corruption authority, 'Nazaha' said that Kuwait's improved ranking is a positive

sign, signaling progress in the country's efforts to combat corruption. The latest ranking places Kuwait at 63rd globally and fourth in the Arab world, a significant jump from its previous positions of 77th globally and seventh in the Arab world in the 2022 index.

Nazaha has been actively working to reinforce

transparency, integrity, and good governance in Kuwait. Its efforts, along with other relevant institutions, have contributed to the improved perception of corruption in the country. This progress reflects the commitment of Kuwait's government to combating corruption and promoting accountability.



## Gold Festival Campaign by BEC 6301 Winners in 100 Days

Bahrain Exchange Company (BEC), specialists in worldwide money transfers and currency exchange, have launched their latest promotional campaign 'Gold Festival' \_a chance to win gold coin daily and grand prize of 50grams gold.

Running from the January 22nd to April 30th, 2024, the campaign will be open to all customers that make any currency exchange or money transfer transaction from one of its 62 branches, plus customers who send money online through BEC's secure online money transfer service BEC Online through website or App will also be eligible to take part. The Customers will be entered into the daily draws for the transactions made between each draw dates throughout the campaign period. The draws will be held every day throughout the campaign and the grand prize 50-gram draw will be on 2nd May 2024.

Mr. Mathews Varughese, BEC CEO commented on the campaign, "This campaign is different from our earlier ones. Gold festival will have 1 winner from each branch every day for 100 days. I wish all our customers a good fortune."

BEC currently has 62 branches across Kuwait including 3 branches at Kuwait International Airport in T1, T4 and T5 terminals respectively. BEC specialises in sending money around the globe safely and quickly to over 46,000 locations in 30 countries. Its global reach has extended to over 200 countries and territories through its partnership with international remittance companies such as MoneyGram, EzRemit and TransFast.

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# Kuwait projects market witnesses surge in 2023

A new report out last week shows that Kuwait experienced a remarkable surge in project awards during 2023, reaching a total of USD8.2 billion, the highest level of spending on projects over the past five years,

The report by Kamco Invest, an investment subsidiary of the multinational investment holding company, Kuwait Projects Company

and Gulf region, Kuwait's high revenues have allowed for robust investment in projects, ensuring a steady project market in the upcoming years. In the energy sector alone, the total value of projects awarded in 2023 witnessed a twelve-fold increase, reaching \$3 billion, compared to \$246 million in 2022.

Similarly, the transportation sector saw a significant boost, with project awards totaling \$2.7 billion compared to \$754 million in the previous year. These two sectors combined accounted for 68.8% of the total value of projects awarded in Kuwait throughout the year.

The report also highlighted the increase in project awards across the GCC countries, which nearly doubled in 2023, amounting to \$209.8 billion compared to \$109.7 billion in 2022. This progress in GCC project activity showcases the commendable efforts made by governments in the region to promote economic development and diversification. Looking ahead, Kamco Invest expects the project market in the Gulf countries to remain strong in 2024, with projects already in the bidding stage or scheduled to be awarded expected to exceed \$270 billion across the Middle East and North Africa region.

Saudi Arabia is foreseen to lead the growth prospects with \$107.2 billion, followed by the UAE with \$51.5 billion and Kuwait with \$19.8 billion. These promising projections reflect the determination of regional governments to reduce dependence on oil revenues and implement reforms for long-term economic sustainability.

In December 2023, Kuwait contributed \$450 million to the total project awards in the Middle East and North Africa region, ranking fourth among Gulf countries and sixth regionally. Some significant contracts awarded during the

month included a \$442 million contract by the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy for the rehabilitation of the Al-Zour South Power and Water Distillation Station, as well as an \$8 million contract awarded by Al-Ansari Real Estate Company for establishing infrastructure for the light industries complex.

The project market in Saudi Arabia retains

the top spot with projects worth \$1.805 trillion, followed by the UAE and Oman with values of \$705 billion and \$231 billion, respectively. Qatar, however, was absent from the list. As the project market continues to flourish in Kuwait and the wider GCC region, these endeavors are expected to pave the way for sustained economic growth and a diversified future.



(KIPCO), revealed that Kuwait's project awards in 2023 represent a staggering 300 percent growth from the \$2.1 billion awarded in 2022. Notably, this rate of annual growth in the total value of contracts awarded in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is the highest across the region.

The surge in project awards in Kuwait can be attributed primarily to infrastructure investments, particularly in the transportation and energy sectors. As one of the most creditworthy economies in the Middle East

## Consumer spending grows as economy looks up

Latest economic figures from the Central Bank of Kuwait show that consumer spending by both citizens and residents in 2023 increased by KD3.6 billion from a year earlier. The growth in spending by 8.6 percent took total consumer spending within the country and abroad to KD45.79 billion, up from the KD 43.02 billion registered in 2022.

Notably, the final quarter of 2023 demonstrated the highest level of consumption spending throughout the year, with disbursements reaching around KD11.6 billion. The last-quarter spending spree by consumers last year marked a new milestone in quarterly spending. The increase in consumer spending points towards a boost in economic activity within the country, highlighting growing confidence and increased purchasing power among citizens and residents.

The data from the Central Bank unveils a positive trend that reflects the overall economic health of Kuwait, as individuals are willing to allocate a larger portion of their incomes towards discretionary spending on goods and



services. This surge in spending is not only indicative of an improving economy, but it also has a positive impact on various sectors of the economy, including retail, hospitality and tourism.

Increase in domestic demand for services and goods from these sectors could not only boost their revenues but also yield additional benefits to other sectors and provide a further impetus to economic growth and development in Kuwait.

## Indian Embassy organizes blood donation drive

Embassy of India, Kuwait organized a blood donation camp on 31st January in association with the Indian Doctors Forum (IDF) at the Al Adan Hospital. The event was graced by the Indian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika, Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmad Al Awadhi, Dr. Hussein Jasser, Director of the Al Adan Hospital; Dr. Reem Al Radwan, Director of Kuwait Central Blood Bank; Dr. Hanan Al Awadhi, Medical Director of Kuwait Central Blood Bank, and Dr. Diwakara Chaluvaiha, president of IDF.

A large number of Indian community members from all walks of life turned up at the blood donation drive to donate their blood for this noble humanitarian cause. In a statement on the occasion, the Indian embassy noted that every year several thousand Indian citizens working in Kuwait selflessly donate blood to the Kuwait Central Blood Bank. The latest blood-donation camp reiterated the readiness of the Indian community to continue contributing with their blood to support Kuwait's requirements for blood donations.

The Indian Embassy, along with Indian Doctors Forum and various other Indian community associations in Kuwait organize blood-donation and free medical camps in Kuwait throughout the year. In 2023, in addition

to three blood donation camps organized by the Indian Embassy in coordination with the IDF, more than 50 other blood donation drives and free medical check-up camps were organized by various Indian associations in Kuwait.



The event also highlighted the contribution of the Indian community to the medical services field in Kuwait. Currently, there are thousands of Indian medical personnel, including doctors, paramedics, nurses and medical technicians employed in the various public and private hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare institutions in Kuwait. Indian medical personnel continue to be the cadre of first preference because of their expertise, hard work and compassion.



## LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Hala Shop & Win' Promotion

LuLu Hypermarket, the regional retail leader, celebrated Kuwait's festival month of 'Hala February', with the launch of an exciting 'Hala Shop & Win' promotion that runs from 1 February to 16 March at all LuLu Hypermarket outlets in the country.

The six-week long promotion that extends throughout the month of February and well into mid-March provides shoppers with a one-off opportunity to shop unhurriedly at their own pace for a range of products that are being offered at special discounts, while enjoying the many celebratory events featured during the promotion period.

A special promotional offer during the 'Hala Shop & Win' festival is the chance to win several enticing prizes, with every purchase of KD5. Among the exciting prizes are a Nissan Patrol SUV for one lucky winner, two Nissan X-Trail for two winners, and 30 iPhones of the latest

iPhone 15 Pro version for 30 lucky winners.

Hala Shop & Win promotion not only provides shoppers with the chance to shop for products at amazing discounts, but also gives lucky winners the incredible opportunity to drive away in a legendary Nissan vehicle or own the latest iPhone.

LuLu Hypermarket went all out with their Hala Shop & Win festival to make the month of Hala February memorable for shoppers with a host of celebratory events, promotional offers, discounts and much more, which ensured that customers not only enjoyed their shopping experience but also had the opportunity to win big. With the Hala Shop & Win promotion, LuLu Hypermarket once again proved its commitment to customer satisfaction, and to provide them with an unforgettable shopping experience during each visit to the hypermarket.



# Kuwait-UK celebrate 125 years of friendship

A living, breathing – and flourishing relationship



UK embassy in Kuwait launched on Monday 29 January a whole year of celebrations marking 125 years of official diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and the State of Kuwait.

Attending the celebrations Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah was UK Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State in the Cabinet Office Oliver Dowden.



Addressing the exclusive gathering Sheikh Mohammed Al-Sabah said that Kuwait took great pride in its exemplary relations and cooperation with the United Kingdom.

"The exemplary historical relations keep growing under the sovereign care of the political leadership of Kuwait, at the core of which is His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah," he said in a speech to a celebration marking the 125th anniversary of the relations.

The function, held by the British Embassy saw heads of diplomatic missions as well as a galaxy of Kuwaiti dignitaries and local residents

participate in the celebrations.

Sheikh Mohammad said the two countries decided to declare 2024 a year of the Kuwait-UK partnership as per a memorandum of understanding signed in last August 29 during the visit to the United Kingdom by His Highness the Amir – the then crown prince.

"The relationship keeps growing and deepening thanks to the historic stances and solidarity in all areas, particularly when it comes to the protection of Kuwait's security and stability, and the promotion of the prosperity of both countries," the minister noted.

"The state-to-state and people-to-people exchanges also add momentum to the friendly relations," he noted. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah noted that economic cooperation between both countries has seen milestones since the establishment of the Kuwait Investment Office (KIO) in London more than seven decades ago.

KIO turned to be one of the world's biggest sovereign funds with volume of investments amounting to nearly USD 300 billion in Europe and the two Americas, including USD 40 billion inside the UK, he said, noting that the Kuwaiti investments helped create up to 150,000 jobs in the UK so far.

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah recalled UK's supportive stances of Kuwait right to protect its security and independence since 1920, including during the incidents of 1961 and the honorable stance against the Iraqi brutal invasion of 1990.

On his part, the UK Deputy Prime Minister expressed pleasure for designating 2024 a

year of Kuwait-UK partnership, saying that the partnership is one of the most important sources of strength and resilience of both sides in the face of challenges.

The diplomatic relationship doesn't tell the whole story as the two countries a friendship spanning over 125 years since the signing of the UK-Kuwait agreement, Dowden added.

Adding that the phrase "diplomatic relations" didn't really tell the full story he said what they were celebrating here was friendship. One that stretches back long before the Anglo-Kuwaiti Agreement was signed.

Dowden pointed that it was during the 1700s when their two nations first enjoyed fruitful trading ties. In fact, the first accurate survey of Kuwait Bay was made by the captain of a British ship, the Eagle, when it docked here in 1777.

In the centuries since, the world has

weathered choppy waters and stormy seas - but our friendship has held steady, he added

Meanwhile, British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis said the relations between both nations made headway in various fields, in economy, politics, culture and society.

Recalling the milestones of 1961 and 1991 in the defense and security cooperation, she said the decades-long partnership has other wonderful aspects. Ambassador Belinda added that Kuwait offered great contributions to the UK.

Bilateral trade was booming – worth over £5 billion in 2023, which is an increase of more than 66% on the year before. And investment flows are larger and more diverse than ever. Ambassador Lewis pointed that it was important to remember that the two countries bond exist because of the bonds between our people.

## New digital service of MoH positively impacts healthcare system

A study conducted by a specialized in-house committee of the Ministry of Health (MoH), on the new digital process for submitting and approving sick leaves and medical reports, found that there were several benefits and positive outcomes from implementing the new system.

A report submitted by the committee said that the system, which was approved by Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, has shown significant improvements, including a reduction in assault crimes against physicians and a decrease in the total number of visitors compared to previous years.

According to the committee's report the electronic leave approval system has played a crucial role in enhancing the quality of work and reducing waiting times at healthcare centers. This has resulted in a lighter workload for both medical service providers and patients, as well as contributed to minimizing overcrowding at healthcare facilities, particularly by non-patients, and ultimately leading to an increase in patient satisfaction.

Additionally, the report noted that the new system has helped in reducing

unnecessary waiting times, combating the spread of diseases, particularly respiratory illnesses, and optimizing the prescription of medications. It has also played a vital role in preventing attacks on medical staff, simplifying the process of obtaining sick



leave without physically visiting the center, and creating a more organized patient flow. The system has also proven effective in distinguishing patients in need of immediate care and deterring individuals from seeking medical services for non-genuine reasons, and in contributing to enhanced efficiency in health management.

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# Expat motorists violating serious traffic laws face deportation

In a statement last week, the Ministry of Interior called on all motorists to abide by traffic laws and warned that any serious violations, including driving without a valid driving license, could have severe



consequences. The ministry added that expat drivers charged with serious traffic offenses could face summary administrative deportation.

The statement called on drivers to verify the validity of their driving licenses online through

the 'MyID' or 'Sahel' application. Underlining the importance of online verification, the ministry clarified that some expat may not be aware that the driving license they hold has been withdrawn by the traffic department for various reasons of which the driver may not even be aware. The ministry stressed that lack of awareness on the validity of their license did not exempt the driver from penalties, including deportation, for driving with an invalid license.

More than 145 expatriates have reportedly been deported for driving without a valid driving license, including those who were not aware that their licenses had been withdrawn by the ministry.

Driving licenses of expatriates, especially those issued after 2013, can be withdrawn for a number of reasons, including not meeting the conditions needed to apply for a driving license, such as not having the specified qualifications, or due to changes in their profession. Driving Licenses that have been rescinded by the ministry will be clearly indicated in the MyID app as being 'withdrawn'.



## Grocery chain Oncost opens new store in Fintas

Kuwait's frontline family grocery chain Oncost opened its new store in Fintas. The new store is located in Block 1, Street 1.

The store was jointly inaugurated by Oncost Chief Operating Officer Dr Remesh Anandadas and Commercial Director Jihad Saif. Oncost management and several community members attended the inaugural ceremony.

"We have moved one step closer to our goal of becoming the largest retail grocery chain in the country by solidifying our presence in all parts of Kuwait", said COO Remesh Anandadas after the inaugural ceremony.

He expressed his optimism that the new Oncost store in Fintas will become the favorite destination for customers, adding that Oncost will open five more branches in Kuwait in 2024.

As the first membership-based groceries store, Oncost offers 4 percent cashback on purchases and many other incentives to its permanent customers. The Oncost management has expressed its gratitude to its committed customers for their years of continued support.

"It is our objective to give priority to essential

day-today items and provide them to customers in an express delivery format," he said. "Since we are directly importing from countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan and many Arab countries, we have been able to make our products available to our customers at very discounted prices," he pointed out.

As part of the inauguration, attractive offers have been announced for customers at the Fintas store. The outlets will be open for service from 8 AM to 11 PM.

A huge collection of fresh products and staples such as fruits, vegetables, seafood, meat, dairy products, egg, flour, bakery items, etc is available at all Oncost and Gulfmart stores across the country. In addition, shelf space is earmarked for canned and packaged goods, non-food items, kitchen wares, household items, cosmetic products, etc for the convenience of the customers.

"It is our endeavor to make available top quality food products and household essentials at attractive prices to our valued customers. At all our outlets, we ensure a very enjoyable shopping experience," Anandadas added.

## Masterclass Lifestyles

### Workshops commence scholarship programs for household workers



By Ricky Laxa  
Staff Writer

Masterclass Lifestyles Workshops kicked off its one day culinary scholarship program for domestic workers in Kuwait Friday morning with seven participants. The 10 days program, which aimed at providing essential baking education to household service workers was organized in collaboration with Philippine Embassy's Office of Migrant Workers, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and Ooredoo.

"When the program was announced in the social media, I immediately contacted the organizer to ensure that I can secure a place in the program and it was worth the time, effort and an experience of a lifetime" commented Luisa, participant. The three hours baking program showcased basic information and hands on experience on making dough that can create various types of breads saleable and popular among bakeries. Ingredients, facilities and equipment have been provided to ensure that participants can learn and bring home their products. "I never knew that half kilo and handful of ingredients accessible at home can actually create such savory items, kids at home loved them and my employer is impressed with my products" added Michelle, participant.

Ooredoo Mobile Network Xpress SIM Card Head Jennifer Contreras Canillas came to distribute complimentary sim cards to the participants. "Such project are worth supporting especially intended for the personal development and enrichment of household service workers" added Canillas. The program will also provide certificate of participation to all attendees attesting their accomplishment. A graduation ceremony will also showcase their most loved products available for attendees to sample and taste.

Masterclass Lifestyles Workshops started its workshops in 2018 and offer variety of short workshops, include: Breads and Pastries, Art of Cake Decorating, International Cuisines, Southeast Asian Cooking, Art of Chocolate Making, Barista Course, Filipino Delicacy Gourmet, Masterclass Advanced Cake Decorating, Japanese Cooking course and Healthy Option Cooking. Each course is spearheaded by a Masterchef and supported by trainer. Each course is comprised of four sessions with three hours each class. The program has 800 graduates from different courses and has produced 15 Masterchefs in the past four years.

For more details, you may call: 55650296 (Whatsapp)



## Sri Lanka set to regain its lustre as Pearl of the Indian Ocean

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

"Given Sri Lanka's conducive business climate the Sri Lankan Board of Investment has identified sectors such as information technology services, agriculture, tourism and hospitality industry, real estate, electronics and light manufacturing facilities, as feasible and rewarding opportunities for Kuwaiti businesses to invest in Sri Lanka.

'Sri Lanka's strategic location off the southern coast of India along the main east-west Indian Ocean shipping lanes gives it a regional logistical advantage, especially as Sri Lanka has comparatively advantageous deep-water ports that enable maritime trade in important commodities. This geographic advantage remains relatively untapped. Prospective Kuwaiti investors may wish to explore other possible investments in Sri Lanka in their desired areas of interest."

In conclusion, Ambassador Bala said that he considered his diplomatic assignment in Kuwait as very enriching in terms of understanding the regional politics and dynamics, as Arab nations increasingly become very relevant and active in the sphere of international relations. They have emerged as an integral part of the multilateral system in recent years taking up responsibilities that contribute to the peace and security of the region. Their contribution

to the third-world by way of ODAs, grants and loans are on the increase which in turn helps the socio economic developments of countries such as Sri Lanka. Also, the presence of a large number of diplomatic missions in Kuwait offer opportunities for close and intense interaction with nations from across the globe, thus strengthening relations between nations with mutual benefits.

"Moreover, my previous assignment in Kuwait, not very long ago, allowed me to establish contacts which I still am able to make use of and I continue to further expand the network and solidify working relations with leaders and key institutions. The wealth of experience I gathered makes my job much easier. My network of friends both in the public and private sectors has expanded over the years which serves as a useful conduit of the much needed information which is critical for the Embassy to initiate timely measures to arrest without delay adverse situations.

"I find Kuwaiti society to be very moderate, friendly, accommodative and hospitable and as a result I have been successful so far in delivering on our national interests and priorities consistently. I am thankful to His Highness the Amir, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Interior, and a number of other Government institutions for their support and cooperation."



# South African ambassador addresses Palestinian issues at Reconnaissance Research

Ambassador of South Africa H.E. Dr Manelisi Genge in an address to a select gathering at Reconnaissance Research, a leading independent think-tank in Kuwait, shared his insightful views on South Africa's stance at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and its ongoing commitment to international diplomacy and human rights.

The ambassador emphasized South Africa's historical journey, highlighting the country's struggle for independence and the significant role played by various formations in South Africa, as well as abroad. The speech also touched upon South Africa's long-standing relationship with Palestine, dating back before 1994, and acknowledged his country's internationalist approach and the belief in not isolating itself from global issues.

Considering this, South Africa has been actively involved in advocating for the lifting of sanctions on countries like Cuba and is part of the international community that is engaged in diplomatic efforts to find solutions to global challenges.

The ambassador specifically addressed the

recent developments concerning Israel and Palestine. South Africa, he noted, condemned the actions of Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023, but also views the reaction of Israel as disproportionate, particularly concerning the indiscriminate bombing of civilians, including women and children and properties. This stance aligns with his country's commitment to international norms of conflict, which emphasize the focus on combatants over civilians. South Africa's diplomatic

approach is deeply influenced by the philosophy of Ubuntu, which means that I am, because you are, signifying interconnectedness, and coexistence among people. This philosophy underpins the country's diverse society, which strengthens and guides its moral and diplomatic decisions, especially regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The ambassador detailed South Africa's actions in the international arena, including its push for a ceasefire at the United Nations and its decision to refer the Israel-Palestine case to the International Criminal Court. Despite not being a member of the UN Security Council,



South Africa actively uses its presence in the UN General Assembly to advocate justice and peace for the current unfortunate situation in Palestine.

In December 2023, South Africa suspended its diplomatic relations with Israel until a sustainable solution was found to the current developments between Palestine and Israel. Additionally, the country took the significant step

of filing its case against Israel at the International Court of Justice. This appeal included requests for provisional measures, primarily focusing on a ceasefire, and the advancement of the case to the merit argument phase.

The ambassador concluded by reiterating South Africa's commitment to seeking an immediate ceasefire and restoring the humanity and dignity of the Palestinians. The speech was a powerful affirmation of South Africa's unwavering dedication to internationalism, human rights, and the pursuit of a just and equitable world.

In a statement, the ambassador welcomed the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Israel. He remarked that the ICJ's ruling, which suggests the possibility of Israel's actions in Gaza being genocidal, is a significant development for upholding international law and advancing justice for the Palestinian people.

The ambassador highlighted the responsibility of all nations to prevent genocide and to stop supporting Israel's military actions, which the Court identified as potentially genocidal. He also emphasized the binding nature of the ICJ's provisional

## Kuwait, Philippines seek consensus on domestic worker issues

The increasing shortage of domestic workers in the market has prompted Kuwait and the Philippines to re-engage in talks to work out remaining differences in their stances on recruiting and employing Filipino workers.



The matter takes on added urgency with the approaching month of Ramadan when the need for domestic workers in the market traditionally soars. Moreover, in recent weeks other countries sending domestic workers to Kuwait, including Sri Lanka, have set new prices for recruiting its workers.

Owners and officials of domestic worker

recruitment offices in Kuwait say it is crucial for both countries to iron-out their differences in a speedy manner in order to alleviate the growing shortfall in domestic workers in the market. Media reports indicate that government entities in Kuwait, including the ministries of Foreign Affairs, and Interior, along with the Public Authority of Manpower are currently reviewing the request from the Philippines to resume recruitment.

Negotiations between the two sides over the past many months are said to have resolved many of the contentious issues in the domestic worker file, however, a few more disagreements remain to be ironed out, including the issue of domestic worker shelters established by the Philippines Embassy, which the Kuwaiti side considers is in contravention of its laws.

Bassam Al-Shammari, an expert in domestic labor affairs, warned of a severe labor shortage crisis in the Kuwaiti market over the next two months if the government does not act quickly to remove obstacles hindering local recruitment offices from bringing in new workers who can meet the demands and needs of citizens.

Measures on both Israel and South Africa, underlining South Africa's dedication to defending Palestinian rights and striving for their liberation.



## Kuwait economy ends 2023 on a positive note

Latest update on the economy by the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) shows that the Kuwaiti economy ended 2023 on a high note, with several economic indicators during the last quarter of the year gone by pointing to a positive shift in the country's growth trajectory.

In addition to an upswing in bank credit, real estate activity, and stock market performance, the report also highlighted a decline in inflation in December on the back of relatively stable prices throughout much of 2023.

On the political front, the bank noted that the ascension of His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Sabah as Amir of Kuwait in mid-December, and his appointment of His Highness Dr. Sheikh Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as the Prime Minister, indicated a shift towards a new outlook in leadership that boosted political morale. The fourth quarter of 2023 also witnessed an accelerated pace in government legislations that resulted in the passing of several significant laws, including measures aimed at enhancing the supply of residential properties by combating the monopolization of vacant lands by some individuals, and a law enabling foreign companies to participate directly in public tenders, by removing the need for representation through a local agent.

Positive fiscal fallouts are also expected from the government's proposals for an excise tax on tobacco and sweetened beverages, as well as a 15 percent corporate tax on multinational companies (MNCs). The proposed introduction of a corporate tax comes in line with Kuwait becoming a signatory in November to the international comprehensive global minimum tax framework, initiated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and aimed at curbing tax evasion and profit transfer by large MNCs.



## UK to launch e-travel permit for Kuwaitis

British Ambassador, H.E. Belinda Lewis expressed pride in the United Kingdom's continued popularity as one of the most favored travel destinations among Kuwaiti nationals. She hoped that with the launch of the electronic travel permit on 22 February, more Kuwaiti visitors would take advantage of the opportunity to visit the United Kingdom.

The electronic travel permit or Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) will be available for Kuwaiti citizens, citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and Jordanian nationals. Elaborating on the ETA, the British ambassador said that the ETA, which costs 10 pounds sterling (around KD4), offers unlimited short trips to the UK, including stays of up to six months for the purpose of tourism, visiting family and friends, conducting business, studying, or transiting to another destination.

The permit remains valid for two years or until the passport used to apply for it expires. Unlike its predecessor, the Electronic Visa Waiver (EVW), the ETA can be used multiple times within the two-year validity period and is not linked to a specific trip, allowing for more flexibility. The British Ambassador emphasized that the ETA would make short trips to the UK more spontaneous and convenient. She further encouraged Kuwaiti visitors to take advantage of the opportunity to experience the cultural, historical, and scenic attractions that the United Kingdom has to offer.

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البويفة الهندي



# Gold worth over a billion dollars sold in Kuwait in 2023

Latest data from the World Gold Council (WGC) show that in 2023, citizens and residents in Kuwait together bought about 19.6 tons of gold worth over KD376 million (around USD1.23 billion) at an average price of KD19,200 per kilogram.

The total purchases in 2023, which included gold bullion, gold jewelry, and gold coins, marked an increase of nearly 700 kilograms (rise of 3.7%) from the 18.9 tons sold a year earlier.

The WBJ report also revealed that while there was a



noticeable increase in the sale of gold bullion, purchases of gold jewelry by citizens and residents decreased by around 2 percent. Bullion is considered the primary hedge against inflation and during adverse global conditions.

The drop in purchase of nearly 300 kilograms of gold jewelry in 2023 was offset by the increase in buying of bullion by about 1,000 kilograms last year. Nevertheless, in terms of volume, the amount of gold jewelry sold far outstripped bullion, with 14.4 tons of ornamental gold sold in 2023 against just 5.2 tons in bullion sales.



## LuLu Hypermarket celebrates Indian Republic Day with 'India Utsav'

LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, celebrated the 75th Indian Republic Day with a special 'India Utsav' promotion that was held from 24th to 30th January. The event was inaugurated by the Ambassador of India H.E. Adarsh Swaika in the presence of Sanjay K. Muluka, Counsellor- Commerce Indian embassy & LuLu Kuwait's top management on 27 January at the hypermarket's AlRai outlet.



During the week-long promotion, customers were treated to amazing discounts and offers on a wide range of Indian branded products. The discounts and promotional offers extended to groceries, meat, fruits and vegetables, non-food items, health and beauty products, fresh and frozen items, fashion and garments, footwear, and more. In addition, there was a special promotion where customers could receive half pay-back on Indian sarees and churidars. The event was made even more memorable with the performance by a band of Indian school students playing traditional Indian welcome music. The students also showcased their talents by performing

patriotic Indian songs during the event.

One of the highlights of the promotion was the 'Indian Fancy Dress Competition' exclusively for students of Indian schools in Kuwait. Over 400 students participated in the competition, with first, second, and third prize winners receiving valuable gift vouchers, certificates, and trophies, as well as consolation prizes for participants.

Another competition conducted specifically for students of Indian schools was the 'Great Indian Quiz', which witnessed participation by students for over 20 Indian schools in the preliminary round. The final competition took place on the day of the India Utsav inauguration at AlRai, with four top teams competing. The winning teams of the quiz received gift vouchers, special certificates, medals, and trophies.

The India Utsav promotion also featured various other attractions and highlights, including cutouts of traditional Indian monuments, vivid decorations and a creative display of India's own 'Vandhe Bharat' train. Food stalls offering popular Indian dishes and special food sampling counters that provided shoppers with a tantalizing taste of Indian foods. Additionally, the week-long event served as a springboard for the launch of several new Indian products, including a wide range of Indian organic products and several varieties of Indian millets.

LuLu Hypermarket's 'India Utsav' promotion was a grand celebration of India's 75th Republic Day that presented to shopper's incredible offers, engaging competitions, and a vibrant Indian cultural experience.



## Creative Point Event launches initial project "Culinary Festival 2024"

By Ricky Laxa  
Staff Writer

Creative Point Company, newest event management company recently launched its initial project "Culinary Festival 2024". Slated on the 8th of March 2024 at Al Salam Mall in Salmiyah will feature international cuisines from different

restaurants and home based food products in Kuwait. Initially organized by Masterclass Lifestyles Workshops series of projects have been organized in the past included participation of embassies and entrepreneurs among which were bazaars and exhibitions featured embassies services such as trade, consular and tourism sectors. The Culinary Festival 2024 will highlight selected restaurants that will feature international and popular cuisines and dishes.

The event will also provide home based products platform to promote and market their items, some which have been selling on line successfully. "We will be inviting popular local chef celebrities and diplomats to attend the occasion and comprise the board of judges to sample and choose winners on food entries prepared by Masterchefs and Amateur Chefs. Raffle draws and cultural entertainment numbers will also add sparkle to the event.

Invitations have been sent to 63 embassies in Kuwait to participate and recommend restaurants that serve their cuisines. This will somehow help in providing information on locations of restaurants and their cuisines. Interested vendors and exhibitors may contact 55650296 (Whatsapp) for more details.

## Enhancing FDI in Kuwait promotes economic growth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and surging public debt in 2022, precipitated a sharp drop in global investment flows, with FDI falling by 12 percent from USD1.48 trillion in 2021 to \$1.29 trillion a year later.

The fall in FDI worldwide was also reflected regionally, with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states together recording an 18 percent drop in their FDI inflows year on year (y/y) in 2022. Foreign investments to the six-nation bloc fell from \$45 billion in 2021 to \$37 billion in 2022; however, this FDI slump was not witnessed evenly across all six economies of the GCC.

In the United Arab Emirates, the second largest economy in the Arab world, FDI in fact, increased by 10 percent from a year earlier to total a record \$23 billion in 2022 — representing nearly 60 percent of total FDI to the GCC region. Meanwhile, in neighboring Saudi Arabia, the region's largest economy and the world's top crude oil exporter, FDI dropped by almost 60 percent in 2022 — falling to \$7.9 billion from the \$19.3 billion a year earlier.

Other GCC countries also saw uneven FDI inflows that ranged from a y/y drop of 8 percent in Oman to total \$3.72 billion in 2022, and a 107 percent dive for Qatar to a regional low of \$76 million. On the other hand, Bahrain witnessed a 10 percent increase in its FDI inflows to record \$1.95 billion in 2022, while Kuwait saw its FDI surge by 34 percent y/y to total \$758 million in 2022. However, Kuwait's seemingly remarkable FDI growth needs to be seen against the backdrop of the low base a year earlier, when disinvestments of over \$273 million led to a negative FDI.

Kuwait has historically struggled to attract foreign investors, despite having many economic, geographic, and demographic advantages that should have made the country an ideal destination for global FDI inflows. Among the several strong economic indicators in Kuwait are abundant oil resources, a stable and strong currency, external assets of over \$800 billion, low public debt, per capita GDP in 2022 of nearly \$52,000, and a young, educated and talented population.

Additionally, the country has a robust banking and financial sector, an engaging private sector, and a strategic geographic proximity to major markets that enable easy access to trade in goods and services. Regrettably, the economic primacies that Kuwait enjoys have not translated to the country attracting significant FDIs. Since achieving a peak FDI of \$3.26 billion in 2011, Kuwait's foreign investments have followed a downward trajectory.

The country's weakness in attracting sizeable FDI inflows over the past decade or more, can be attributed to a wide range of factors, including the economy's overreliance on oil sector revenues; a non-oil sector that ironically is inextricably linked to oil sector fortunes and government contracts; an investment environment that many potential investors consider uninviting; and an overly bureaucratic and bloated public sector that gnaws into budget expenditures.

With over three-quarter of budget expenditure directed towards public sector wages, bonuses and subsidies, not enough resources remain to spend on vital infrastructure projects, especially during prolonged periods of low oil prices. The result is poor quality infrastructure that hampers and dissuades FDI. In addition, the country's contentious political landscape that exudes instability and impedes necessary financial and structural reforms, have deterred FDI inflows.

The WIR-2023 study by UNCTAD noted that foreign direct investments are crucial to Emerging Markets and Developing Countries (EMDC), in particular during global economic downturns. The report indicated that foreign investments to EMDCs improve allocation of resources across sectors and producers; promote job creation; foster training and skill-set gains; trigger technology overflows; encourage research and innovation; support a more competitive business environment, and enhance overall economic productivity.

International institutions such as the World Bank, and International Monetary Fund as well as global and local consultancies, have stressed on the need for Kuwait to pursue economic diversification to wean the economy away from its overreliance on oil revenues. Analytical studies have also underscored that in order to foster sustainable and inclusive growth going forward, Kuwait will need to promote a favorable business and investment environment.

Everyone in Kuwait, from the government, to legislators and citizens are in agreement that Kuwait needs to diversify the economy, encourage private sector involvement, and create a climate more conducive to business and investment. But this is as far as the unanimity goes; when it comes to implementing these agreements there is marked divergence in how to go about it, and red lines frequently pop-up, which its proponents insist cannot be crossed.

In all fairness, governments in the past have attempted to introduce policies to reduce administrative hassles and remove bureaucratic barriers to trade and investments, as well as provide incentives and cut tariffs to attract FDI. In fact, a key plank of Kuwait's ambitious 'Vision 2035' Development Plan is to encourage economic diversification by attracting FDI towards strategic industries like information and communications technology, renewable energy, electricity, water, tourism, health care, and education.

The government also established the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) in 2013, with the mandate to attract value-added direct investments, and promote Kuwait as a lucrative investment destination. The Authority licenses and grants incentives and exemptions for investments, and streamlines the business environment to enhance Kuwait's global competitiveness. However, since it began operations in 2015 to the end of March 2023, cumulative approved direct investments by the Authority amounted to only around KD1.5 billion.

It is apparent that in order to enhance FDI inflows to the country, Kuwait has to urgently diversify its economy; introduce policies and reforms to enhance business and investment climate, encourage private sector participation, and minimize government intervention in economic activities, as well as rejig the bloated public-sector.

Additionally, the country will need to develop and enhance a 'real' non-oil sector that helps spawn ancillary businesses, generates significant and stable employment opportunities, and enhances labor-market productivity. Among non-oil activities that could be boosted are tourism and hospitality, agriculture, environment, and medical services, as well as learning, training, and research facilities. However, achieving these initiatives will require significant transformation to the current political landscape; an unlikely scenario no doubt, but on which many in the country continue to pin their hopes.



# Cape Town

## A Journey to the Jewel of South Africa



**By Hermoine Macura-Noble**  
Special to The Times Kuwait

Enveloped by the majestic Table Mountain and the azure waters of the Atlantic Ocean, Cape Town stands as a beacon of adventure, culture, and natural beauty. This vibrant South African city effortlessly combines history with modernity, offering travelers an immersive experience unlike any other.

The best place to start discovering this magical city is via cable car to the top of the iconic Table Mountain. The journey begins with a panoramic ascent to the summit of the flat-topped marvel that presides over the city. The Table Mountain aerial cableway provides a thrilling ride to the top, offering sweeping views of the city, the Atlantic Ocean, and surrounding landscapes. Once at the summit, visitors are greeted by breathtaking vistas, hiking trails, and the opportunity to witness the iconic 'tablecloth' of clouds cascading over the mountain.

Ocean drive



"Every corner of this city tells a story of resilience, diversity, and natural beauty. The warmth of the people and the fusion of cultures create an atmosphere that is so welcoming. There's a unique rhythm to life here that captivates the soul here," shares tourist, Dawn McPherson.

Venturing south along the stunning Cape Peninsula, the scenic drive along Chapman's Peak offers dramatic cliffs and seascapes,



leading to the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Point. Here, where the currents collide, you'll discover the iconic lighthouse, historic shipwrecks, and the opportunity to spot indigenous wildlife, including playful baboons and Cape fur seals.

For those looking to learn more about Cape Town's history and culture, visiting the Bo-Kaap is a must. The colorful neighborhood traces its roots back to the 17th century. It is distinctively unique with its cobblestone streets lined with pastel-hued houses — each telling a fantastic story of the Malay community. Take a guided walking tour to learn about the rich cultural heritage, sample traditional Cape Malay cuisine, and capture the essence of this lively district.

When it comes to accommodation, Cape Town has a plethora of choices. From boutique hotels with panoramic views to opulent waterfront escapes — there is a decent range of high-end accommodations that redefine the concept of indulgence.

Boulders Beach



A favorite of celebrities such as Rihanna and Lawrence Fishbourne, the Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa is ideal for those looking for a private nature retreat. Situated on Cape Town's most scenic route, Table Mountain flanks the hotel with the majestic Twelve Apostles mountain range on the other. Well established as the city's leading boutique hotel, The Twelve Apostles Hotel prides itself on offering guests that 'personal touch.'

With the hotel's convenient complimentary shuttle service, guests are five minutes from the beautiful beaches at Camps Bay, 20 minutes from the city center and the V&A Waterfront, and within easy reach of many wineries. Helicopter transfers are also available, offering an exhilarating experience of flying over the spectacular peninsula.

Another great place to stay is the stunning Tintswalo at Boulders, which offers seaside accommodation in nine beautifully appointed super private suites. With rich concoctions of azure, blue and greens, and dark wood fittings, the luxury suites are maritime tributes to some of history's most famous ships that sailed the very oceans that Tintswalo at Boulders overlooks. It's the perfect choice for those looking to get up close and personal with the African penguins that call Boulders Beach home.

Summer is prime time to visit Boulders



Beach, when you will see the most penguin action. Between September and October the birds spend most of their time feeding out at sea, so there are fewer penguins on the beach. However a visit in January will allow you to see the juvenile birds moulting on the beach.

Cape Town also transforms into a theater of aquatic splendor from June to November as the Southern Right Whales, Humpbacks, and Bryde's Whales migrate from Antarctica to the warmer waters of the Western Cape for breeding and calving. This annual spectacle allows travelers to witness these gentle giants as they breach, slap their tails, and playfully interact with each other.

Several vantage points along the Cape coastline offer ideal spots for whale watching. Hermanus, a charming town a short drive from Cape Town, is renowned as one of the best land-based whale-watching locations globally. The elevated cliffs provide a perfect perch to witness the whales frolicking in the waves below. For those seeking a more up close and personal experience, the best boat tours and charters are available around Simon's town which take you into the heart of the action.

For fine dining and shopping — the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront (V&A) Waterfront is where culture and commerce converge. The V&A Waterfront is a bustling hub that seamlessly blends history with contemporary charm. Enjoy a stroll along the harbor, explore the diverse range of shops, art galleries, and restaurants, or embark on a boat trip to catch a glimpse of seals and dolphins.

Cape Town's allure lies in its ability to enchant visitors with a harmonious blend of natural wonders, historical landmarks, and cultural richness.

"From exclusive accommodations to haute cuisine, Cape Town whispers to the discerning traveler, inviting them to savor the pinnacle of luxury in a setting where sophistication meets the sublime," explains Explorer, John Burgess.

From Table Mountain's majestic heights to the Winelands' exquisite beauty, Cape Town is a destination that captivates the heart and soul of all who venture to explore its diverse landscapes. Whether you seek adventure, relaxation, or a taste of South African culture, Cape Town invites you to embark on an unforgettable journey at the crossroads of history and natural beauty.

**Hermoine Macura-Noble**

The first Australian English speaking News Anchor in the Middle East. She is also the Author of *Faces of the Middle East* and Founder of US-based 501c3 charity – The House of Rest which helps to ease the suffering of victims of war. For more from our Contributing Editor, you can follow her on Instagram, @hello\_hermoine



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



# Enforce Climate Agreements with Trade Measures



**Scott Barrett, Noah Kaufman, and Joseph E. Stiglitz**

Scott Barrett is the Lenfest-Earth Institute Professor of Natural Resource Economics at Columbia University's Climate School. Noah Kaufman, a senior research scholar at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs, is a former senior economist for the Council of Economic Advisers and a former deputy associate director of energy and climate change at the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Joseph E. Stiglitz, a former chief economist of the World Bank and former chair of the US President's Council of Economic Advisers, is University Professor at Columbia University and a Nobel laureate in economics.

Casual observers of the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai (COP28) can be forgiven for attributing high stakes to the event. "We are on the brink of a climate disaster, and this conference must mark a turning point," UN Chief António Guterres warned during the proceedings. Then, when a final agreement was reached, Canadian Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault hailed its "breakthrough commitments on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and the transition away from fossil fuels."

But the truth is that neither the contents of the Dubai agreement, nor what was left out of it, will have much impact on climate change. We have seen this movie many times before, starting with the 1992 treaty that created the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Back then, all countries committed to preventing 'dangerous' climate change, which would have required dramatic cuts in annual global greenhouse-gas

(GHG) emissions. But emissions have continued to rise, albeit at a lower rate than they might have otherwise. Voluntary commitments have proven mostly hollow.

To be clear, we are not suggesting that fevered warnings about climate risks and the need for action are misguided. As economists who have spent decades studying climate change, we recognize that some of the economics literature has too often been used by those opposing a meaningful response. As we note in a recent report for the Institute of Global Politics, economic models that purport to identify 'optimal' climate policies often systematically underestimate the benefits of emission reductions and overestimate their costs.

Moreover, economists have let their admiration for a single policy solution, carbon taxes, get the better of them. This has given rise to misleading claims that relying on carbon prices

transformational progress in narrow, but crucial, economic sectors.

We already know that this more targeted approach works. Consider the Montreal Protocol, which protects the stratospheric ozone layer, or the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). Unlike the voluntary commitments made at each climate-change COP, these two treaties established binding obligations that can be enforced through international trade markets. The Montreal Protocol bars participating countries from trading in chlorofluorocarbons (ozone-depleting chemicals) with non-participating countries; and under MARPOL, access to ports is restricted to ships that meet certain technical standards.

These two treaties have worked because they create positive feedback effects: the more countries that agree to participate, the higher the pressure on others to join. As a result, the

Even in polarized America, it received strong bipartisan support in the US Senate last year.

We should now do the same for other major emissions sources. Aluminum production, for example, is responsible for about two percent of global GHG emissions each year. Yet by replacing carbon anodes with inert anodes, the industry could dramatically reduce its emissions. An aluminum treaty might require that parties both switch to inert anodes and import aluminum only from other participating parties.

In contrast to unilateral threats of trade measures, this approach to international climate agreements is fundamentally cooperative and multilateral. It differs from unilaterally imposing domestic regulations on foreign production, as the European Union is doing, or from imposing carbon-based tariffs on certain imports without any corresponding domestic regulations, as some in the US have proposed. These methods may only invite retaliation.

To succeed, international climate agreements must be compatible with countries' economic strategies, not least those of lower-income countries like India, where most future emissions will occur. That is why the Montreal Protocol and Kigali Amendment include provisions whereby richer countries agree to help poorer countries pay the costs of compliance.

The international community took the wrong lesson from the Kyoto Protocol. It should be obvious by now that relying on voluntary commitments and aspirational targets does not work. The problem with Kyoto was that it did not get the incentives right.

By focusing climate agreements on individual sectors, linking obligations to trade access, and addressing the 'common but differentiated' roles of rich and poor countries in international negotiations, the world will have a better chance to achieve the goals outlined in the Dubai agreement: a rapid and equitable transition to net-zero emissions.

Then, future climate-change COPs can focus on other consequential issues, rather than on crafting the right mix of hollow words that everyone can agree on.

“Unilaterally imposing domestic regulations on foreign production, as the EU is doing, or imposing carbon-based tariffs on certain imports without similar domestic regulations, as some in the US propose, may only invite retaliation.”

alone is the most cost-effective way to reduce emissions. In fact, the many market failures that stand in the way of a rapid, equitable transition to net-zero emissions underscore the need for a broad portfolio of policies, which includes carbon prices.

In a world of urgent challenges, policymakers and the public have limited attention for climate change. Rather than focusing so much on international conferences that require unanimous support, entail no accountability, and ultimately have little effect on emissions, we should be directing our energies toward negotiating agreements that can achieve

ozone layer will return to its pre-1980 level in a few decades, and over 99 percent of oil is now shipped according to MARPOL specifications, virtually eliminating a major source of marine pollution.

The same approach has already worked for climate agreements. The Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol phases down hydrofluorocarbons, a powerful greenhouse gas. Like the examples above, the amendment incorporates a trade measure designed to create a positive feedback effect once a critical threshold of participation has been met. Owing to this structure, ratification is in every country's interest.





EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Making 2024 the Year of Responsible AI



**Yolanda Botti-Lodovico and Vilas Dhar**

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The start of 2024 has been marked by a wave of predictions regarding the trajectory of artificial intelligence (AI), ranging from optimistic to cautious. Nevertheless, a clear consensus has emerged: AI is already reshaping human experience. To keep up, humanity must evolve.

For anyone who has lived through the rise of the internet and social media, the AI revolution may evoke a sense of déjà vu — and raise two fundamental questions: Is it possible to maintain the current momentum without repeating the mistakes of the past? And can we create a world in which everyone, including the 2.6 billion people who remain offline, is able to thrive?

Harnessing AI to bring about an equitable and human-centered future requires new, inclusive forms of innovation. But three promising trends offer hope for the year ahead.

First, AI regulation remains a top global priority. From the European Union's AI Act to US President Joe Biden's October 2023 executive order, proponents of responsible AI have responded to voluntary commitments from Big Tech firms with policy suggestions rooted in equity, justice, and democratic principles. The international community, led by the newly established United Nations High-

“AI revolution raises two basic questions: Can we maintain the current momentum without repeating mistakes of the past? Can we create a world in which everyone, including the 2.6 billion people who remain offline, is able to thrive?”

Level Advisory Body on AI (one of us, Dhar, is a member) is poised to advance many of these initiatives over the coming year, starting with its interim report on Governing AI for Humanity.

Moreover, this could be the year to dismantle elite echo chambers and cultivate a global cadre of ethical AI professionals. By expanding the reach of initiatives like the National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource Task Force — established by the United States' 2020 AI Initiative Act — and localizing implementation strategies through tools such as the UNESCO Readiness Assessment methodology, globally inclusive governance frameworks could shape AI in 2024.



At the national level, the focus is expected to be on regulating AI-generated content and empowering policymakers and citizens to confront AI-powered threats to civic participation. As a multitude of countries, representing more than 40 percent of the world's population, prepare to hold crucial elections this year, combating the imminent surge of mis- and disinformation will require proactive measures. This includes initiatives to raise public awareness, promote broad-based media literacy across various age groups, and address polarization by emphasizing the importance of empathy and mutual learning.

As governments debate AI's role in the public sphere, regulatory shifts will likely trigger renewed discussions about using emerging technologies to achieve important policy goals. India's use of AI to enhance the efficiency of its railways and Brazil's AI-powered digital-payment system are prime examples.

In 2024, entities like the UN Development Programme are expected to explore the integration of AI technologies into digital public infrastructure (DPI). Standard-setting initiatives, such as the upcoming UN Global Digital Compact, could serve as multi-stakeholder frameworks for designing inclusive DPI. These efforts should focus on building trust, prioritizing community needs and ownership over profits, and adhering to shared principles for an open, free, and secure digital future for all.

Civil-society groups are already building on this momentum and harnessing the power of AI for good. For example, the non-profit Population Services International and the London-based start-up Babylon Health are rolling out an AI-powered symptom checker and health-provider locator, showcasing AI's ability to help users manage their health. Similarly, organizations like Polaris and Girl Effect are working to overcome the barriers to digital transformation within the nonprofit sector, tackling issues like data privacy and user safety. By developing centralized financing mechanisms, establishing international expert networks, and embracing allyship, philanthropic foundations and public institutions could help scale such initiatives.

As nonprofits shift from integrating AI into their work to building new AI products, our understanding of leadership and representation in tech must also evolve. By challenging outdated perceptions of key players in today's AI ecosystem, we have an opportunity to celebrate the true, diverse face of innovation and highlight trailblazers from a variety of genders, races, cultures, and geographies, while acknowledging the



deliberate marginalization of minority voices in the AI sector.

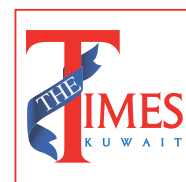
Organizations like the Hidden Genius Project, Indigenous in AI, and Technovation are already building the 'who's who' of the future, with a particular focus on women and

people of color. By collectively supporting their work, we can ensure that they take a leading role in shaping, deploying, and overseeing AI technologies in 2024 and beyond.

Debates over what it means to be 'human-centered' and which values should guide our societies will shape our engagement with AI. Multi-stakeholder frameworks like UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence could provide much-needed guidance. By focusing on shared values such as diversity, inclusiveness, and peace, policymakers and technologists could outline principles for designing, developing, and deploying inclusive AI tools. Likewise, integrating these values into our strategies requires engagement with communities and a steadfast commitment to equity and human rights.

Given that AI is well on its way to becoming as ubiquitous as the internet, we must learn from the successes and failures of the digital revolution. Staying on our current path risks perpetuating, or even exacerbating, the global wealth gap and further alienating vulnerable communities worldwide.

But by reaffirming our commitment to fairness, justice, and dignity, we could establish a new global framework that enables every individual to reap the rewards of technological innovation. We must use this year to cultivate multi-stakeholder partnerships and promote a future in which AI generates prosperity for all.



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## Thought “ for the week

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

- Samuel Jonson  
English writer

## Leftover foods that turn poisonous when reheated

.....  
Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy  
.....



**M**any people tend to store their leftover food and reheat them before eating them later. While this is safe for most foods, there are some specific food items that you need to avoid reheating before consuming as they could turn poisonous on heating again.

Foods have different nutritional values that vary on heating, but no matter how great their nutritional value is, there are some foods that we must avoid reheating. Below is a list of some of the foods that we must stop reheating and using.

**Egg:** This is a high-risk food that should not be eaten once reheated, as it can become quite toxic when heated at high temperatures, and cause problems to your digestive tract. However, if you have a dish that you are reheating which contains eggs as one of its many ingredients, it is absolutely fine to eat. What you need to refrain from eating are reheated boiled eggs or scrambled eggs.

**Celery:** This is a vegetable item that contains several nutritional values and is mostly used for soups or side dishes. However, when you are reheating the soup, make sure you do not heat it more than once, since the nitrate content of the celery can be a problem for your health if heated for the second time. Keep in mind that any good nutritional vegetable item that comes from the family of celery or carrots can turn into toxic substances if put into the microwave on a continuous basis.

**Mushrooms:** Mushrooms are one of the most well-known foods that are not advised to be reheated and should be eaten and finished right after preparation. Even if you want to eat them later, make sure you eat them cold, they can still be as delicious as they were right after preparation. The composition of proteins in mushrooms change when reheated and become a high health risk for digestive and heart problems.

**Spinach:** Spinach contains nitrates that can convert into nitrites when reheated. Nitrites can then transform into nitrosamines, which are potential carcinogens linked to various cancers. So to minimize this risk, it is advisable not to reheat spinach and other nitrate-rich vegetables.

**Chicken:** If you reheat chicken after a day or two and eat it, it can become very toxic for your health. This is because the composition of proteins in chicken changes when reheated after being kept in the fridge for a certain time. The new protein composition can cause digestive problems and acidity issues that make you feel uncomfortable. For this reason, it is better to eat your chicken cold or perhaps heat it carefully under low temperatures along with some additional healthy ingredients such as parsley, sweet potatoes, or peppers.

**Beetroot:** This is another beneficial vegetable item rich in nitrates that, as explained above, can form toxic substances when reheated.

No doubt, most of the foods in the above list are incredibly delicious and beneficial to your health, and should be included in your diet menu on a regular basis. However, make sure they are not reheated again and again, since they can easily turn into toxic substances that could cause several health problems.

So my advice to you is to adjust the amount of food you are cooking to a serving portion that is appropriate for you and your family to eat during one meal. This eliminates the problem of leftover food, and the need to reheat them in one go.

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

### RECIPE

## Carrot Bowls



**A**s a refreshing dessert or a light snack, these carrot bowls with ever-so tender and unbelievably sweet carrots can be easily conjured up.

**Total time:** 30 to 40 minutes.  
**Serving size :** 10 pcs.

#### Ingredients:

- 4 large carrots
- 300g sugar
- 1.5 cinnamon sticks
- 1.5 cups water
- 200g grated khoya
- 2 tbsp ghee (clarified butter)
- 50g freshly grated coconut
- 1 tsp cardamom powder
- 1 tsp chopped mixed nuts (cashews, almonds, pistachios)
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 tsp coconut powder
- 1 tsp chopped pistachios



*Chef Chhaya Thakker*

#### Instructions:

- Cut the carrots into 1.5-2 inch slices and use a scoop or spoon to carve out bowl shapes, leaving the bottoms intact
- In a pan, combine 1.5 cups water and the sugar. Bring to a boil and simmer until the syrup thickens.
- Add the carrot bowls to the simmering syrup and cook until softened and translucent.
- Remove with a slotted spoon and drain well.
- In a pan, heat up the ghee and saute the chopped nuts for 2-3 minutes. Add the grated khoya, cardamom powder, and remaining 1/2 cup sugar. Mix well and remove from heat.
- Fill the cooked carrot bowls with the khoya mixture. Garnish with chopped pistachios and coconut powder
- Chill in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes before serving.



Indian Chef Chhaya Thakker, who has a huge following online on WhatsApp and YouTube will be sharing her favorite recipes and cooking tips with readers of The Times Kuwait. For feedback, you can write to [editortimeskuwait@gmail.com](mailto:editortimeskuwait@gmail.com)



# AI helps discover new antibiotic drugs

In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as one of the top 10 threats to global health. AMR is the result of a pathogen-drug combination, where a bacterium, virus or other pathogenic microorganism that causes a disease gains resistance to drugs commonly used to treat the condition.

One pathogen-drug combination of particular concern to health authorities is methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). This pathogen-drug combination was found to be the most deadliest globally in 2019, with more than 121,000 deaths attributed to MRSA in that year. Currently there are no vaccines available for MRSA, and nothing in the near pipeline either.

It is against this background that the recent study by researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States gains salience. Using a type of artificial intelligence (AI) known as deep learning (DL), the researchers were able to discover a class of compounds that can kill MRSA. The compounds could not only destroy the pathogen, they could do so with low toxicity to neighboring cells, making them a potential candidate for drug development.

The MIT study showed that these compounds could kill MRSA grown in a lab dish and in two mouse models infected with MRSA. A major novelty of the study was that the researchers were also able to understand the types

of information that the AI model used to select compounds with antibiotic potency. This knowledge could help researchers to design additional drugs that might work even better than the one identified by the MIT team, or even come up with other drugs to fight AMR.

"Our study provides a framework that is time-efficient, resource-efficient, and mechanistically insightful, from a chemical-structure standpoint, in ways that were not available before," said the MIT researchers leading the Antibiotics-AI Project at MIT. The team is now aiming to discover new classes of antibiotics against seven types of deadly bacteria over the next seven years using AI assistance.

Over the past several years, the researchers have been using the deep learning technique — a method that evolved from the basic type of machine-learning (ML) in artificial intelligence (AI). The method, which draws inspiration from the way the human brain works, can process data to recognize complex patterns in pictures, text, sounds, and other forms of data to provide accurate insights and predictions.

Deep learning (DL) models can be trained to examine chemical compounds and identify chemical structures that are associated with antimicrobial activity. These models can then sift through millions of other compounds, generating predictions of which some may have strong antimicrobial activity. Work by the MIT



team has so far yielded potential drugs against several drug-resistant bacteria, including *Acinetobacter baumannii*, a common bacterium found in hospital environments.

The one limitation to this approach of DL is that the models are 'black boxes', meaning that there was no way for researchers to understand what features the model based its predictions on. The researchers at MIT also used their study to try to open this 'black box'. To do this, the team first trained a deep learning model to test around 39,000 compounds for antibiotic activity against MRSA, and then fed this data, plus information on the chemical structures of the compounds, back into the model.

"You can represent basically any molecule as a chemical structure, and also you tell the model if that chemical

structure is antibacterial or not," Wong says. "The model is trained on many examples like this. If you then give it any new molecule, a new arrangement of atoms and bonds, it can tell you a probability that that compound is predicted to be antibacterial."

To figure out how the model was making its predictions, the researchers then adapted an algorithm known as Monte Carlo tree search, which has been used to help make other deep learning models. This search algorithm allowed the model to generate not only an estimate of each molecule's antimicrobial activity, but also a prediction for which substructures of the molecule likely accounted for that activity. To further narrow down the pool of candidate drugs, the researchers trained three additional deep learning models to predict

whether the compounds were toxic to three different types of human cells. By combining this information with the predictions of antimicrobial activity, the researchers discovered compounds that could kill microbes while having minimal adverse effects on the human body.

Using this collection of models, the researchers screened about 12 million compounds, all of which are commercially available. From this collection, the models identified compounds from five different classes, based on chemical substructures within the molecules, that were predicted to be active against MRSA.

The researchers then tested the identified compounds against MRSA grown in a lab dish, which allowed them to identify two, from the same class of compounds, that appeared to be very promising antibiotic candidates. In tests in two mouse models, one of MRSA skin infection and one of MRSA systemic infection, each of those compounds reduced the MRSA population by a factor of 10.

A non-profit spin-off started by members of the MIT team now plans to do more detailed analysis of the chemical properties and potential clinical use of these compounds. By leveraging similar AI processes based on chemical substructures, the researchers hope to design compounds from scratch, and to adopt this approach out of the box to discover new classes of antibiotics against different pathogens.

## Study explores why exercise boosts brain activities

A study exploring the mechanisms behind why cognitive performance improves in response to exercise, found that the hormone and neurotransmitter, dopamine, plays a key role.

Dopamine which is produced in the body acts on areas of the brain to give you feelings of pleasure, satisfaction and motivation. Dopamine also has a role to play in controlling memory, mood, sleep, learning, concentration, movement and other body functions. Dopamine is known to increase when you work out. Findings from the new study suggest that dopamine is also linked to faster reaction time during exercise.

Researchers at the University of Portsmouth, who were behind the new discovery say their findings could lead to development of new treatment pathways and regimens for cognitive health conditions, based on the significant role that dopamine plays in several mental health conditions such as Parkinson's disease, schizophrenia, ADHD, addiction, and depression.

To measure the amount of dopamine released in the brain during exercise, the researchers used a sophisticated scanning device known as a 'positron emission tomography (PET)', which is capable of tracking metabolic and biochemical activity of cells in the body. The results revealed that when a participant cycled lying down in the machine, their brain increased the amount of dopamine release, and that this process was linked with improved reaction time.

Previous studies had shown that cardiovascular exercise improves cognitive performance, but the exact mechanisms behind this process in humans were not explored in detail before. Findings from the new study adds to the growing body of evidence that exercise prescription is a viable therapy for a host of health conditions across the lifespan.

As part of the study, three experiments were carried out with 52 male participants. In the first experiment, individuals were asked to carry out cognitive tasks at rest and while cycling in the PET scanner, so the team could monitor the movement of dopamine in their brain. The second test used electrical muscle stimulation to test whether forced muscle movement to stimulate exercise would also improve cognitive performance. The final experiment combined both voluntary and involuntary exercise.

In the experiments where voluntary exercise was carried out, cognitive performance improved significantly, while this did not occur when only forced electrical stimulation were used. It was also found to be limited when the voluntary and involuntary exercises were combined. The study results indicate that the dopamine release in the brain is initiated when the signal to exercise is from the brain and not just the muscle itself.

The team's previous study examined the relationship between oxygen levels, cognitive performance and exercise, to test the theory that the more oxygen we breathe during a workout, the more awake our brain is. They found no change to an individual's reaction time when cycling both inside and outside of an environment with low levels of oxygen (hypoxia).

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