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# Positive impact of migration on society

*Migrants are not a problem to be solved, they are a reality to be managed*



## THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Since the start of human evolution, migration has been an integral component to the progress of humanity. The search for safety and shelter from predators and inclement weather; the quest for a decent livelihood; for better food for their families and fodder for cattle, have driven people from their origins to distant places, often against overwhelming odds and seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Over the ages, people have continued to migrate all over the world, and the drivers of these exoduses have remained much the same — safety, shelter and a better life and livelihood. Today, humanity is still on the move;



in search of work or economic opportunity that promises a better life, to seek safety from conflicts, orchestrated persecutions, or human rights violations. Others move to avoid the deleterious effects of climate change, natural disasters or environmental calamities.

The United Nations defines an international migrant as 'any person who has changed his or her country of residence. This includes all migrants, regardless of their legal status, or the nature, or motive of their movement'. Currently, more people than ever live in a country other than the one in which they were born. The world needs to realize that rather than being a challenge to be addressed, global migration is a reality that needs to be managed.

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# Dr. Ashwin Fernandes – a man with a curious mind

*Dr Fernandes expressed his belief in the immense potential of today's youth, highlighting how higher education serves as a platform for growth, enabling individuals to take off, fly, and soar*

By Sangeeta Jamwal  
Special to The Times Kuwait

“Encouragement of higher education for our youth is critical to the success of our collective future” these thought-provoking words were echoed by Dr. Ashwin Fernandes, the executive director for Africa, Middle East and South Asia at Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), and an ambassador of the quality movement in education. He works closely with institutions and governments across the regions to support the drive for excellence in education and capacity building. Dr. Ashwin Fernandes is also the author of an insightful book “India's Knowledge Supremacy – The New Dawn.”

Dr. Fernandes is a man on a mission, his words came across as honest and inspiring, above all, listening to him instilled a unique sense of hope for the future of Indian youth. When we began talking, he was candid, “Originally, I am a village person, while in school in Goa we led carefree lives with no idea of the bigger world, or of higher education or how the pursuit of it could change our life. Life has come a full circle and I have made it my mission to work with students and colleges to educate them on the prospects of higher education.

Where I work, Quacquarelli Symonds or the QS World University Rankings is the most comprehensive ranking of its kind, it shines a light on the best institutions from across the world, supporting the mission of enabling motivated people anywhere in the world to fulfil their potential through educational achievement, international mobility, and career development.

Established almost thirty years ago, QS originated from a



- *Dr. Ashwin Fernandes – a visionary leader with a clear mission – inspires with his honest and impactful words, instilling hope for the bright future of Indian youth*
- *Dr. Fernandes works closely with institutions across the regions to support the drive for excellence in education and capacity building*

student of The Wharton School. The ranking module came up twenty years ago to bridge the accountability and transparency gap in universities. There was no standard or benchmarking, so it was an initiative by our founder Nunzio Quacquarelli in 2004 to add a ranking standard. At the beginning it was about Harvard University, University of Oxford, MIT, a concentration of western universities, but over the years we worked with universities and business schools all over the world to identify, shape and deliver higher education strategies that help each institution accomplish its goals and aspirations.

Universities change lives every day, I have been with QS for twelve years, and each year brings us more opportunities to connect with learners and leaders who are changing the face of higher education around the world.

World Bank data has recorded an interesting insight, with the top twenty countries by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), showing that about out of the 1,500 universities ranked in QS World University Rankings, 900 of them are from the top 20 countries – establishing a direct correlation between thriving economies and great universities. Countries like India and the Middle East are looking to build good economies, but for that you need to build knowledge power houses, which one can achieve by building universities of repute, the tracking of which can be through rankings.

The way QS World University Rankings work, about 45% methodology comes from academic and employer reputation telling us about the best universities, 20% through cutting-edge research work accomplished by universities, 10% through faculty

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**

## Seminar explores India's higher education landscape



An educational seminar titled ‘India's Higher Education Landscape’ was hosted by the Indian embassy at its premises on 14 February. The event highlighted advancements and future opportunities within the Indian higher education sector, and sought to foster potential collaboration between India and Kuwait in this field.

Among the dignitaries attending the event were the CEO of Al Rayan Holding Company, Lena Othman Al-Ayyar as the chief guest and Chairperson of the Union of Private Schools in Kuwait, Nourah Al Ghanim, as the guest of honor. The distinguished panel of speakers at the event included Indian Ambassador Dr. Adarsh Swaika, Executive Director of QS World University Rankings, Dr. Ashwin Fernandes, and Vice-Chancellor of Symbiosis International University, India's renowned institute of higher learning.

The seminar drew attention of the attendees to the crucial aspects of Indian higher education, including that:

The ‘New Education Policy 2020’ of India has been a game-changer, reshaping the landscape of the country's educational sector. India is poised to emerge as a leading global education hub, with the education sector projected to grow substantially. Currently valued at USD117 billion, it is forecasted to

reach \$313 billion by 2030.

India boasts one of the world's most extensive networks of higher education systems, comprising 45,000-degree colleges, over 1000 universities, and around 1500 top institutes.

India is emerging as the Ed Tech capital of the world, with seven out of 36 Ed-Tech unicorn companies being Indian. As of June 2022, these companies are collectively valued at \$34.05 billion. Foreign direct investment (FDI) in the education sector in India is permitted through the automatic route. Notably, the sector has attracted substantial

FDI, amounting to \$9.3 billion between April 2000 and September 2023. India has the highest number of universities (148) among all Asian nations listed in the QS Asia rankings, and boasts 45 universities featured in the QR World rankings. The government of India has set an ambitious target to achieve a Gross Enrollment Ratio of 50 percent by 2035.

India is home to a staggering 25 percent of the global school population. Indian universities are making remarkable strides by setting up campuses abroad, with prestigious institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (in Abu Dhabi and Tanzania),

Birla Institute of Technology and Science in Dubai, and Amity University in Dubai, as well as Sharda and Sambroom Universities in Uzbekistan, to name a few.

India is at the forefront among nations in terms of patent filings and the publication of research papers in international journals.

Foreign universities like the Australia-based Deakin University are establishing International Branch Campuses (IBC) in India.

The seminar proved invaluable in showcasing opportunities for enhanced collaboration between India and Kuwait in the educational sector. This includes establishing campuses of Indian universities in Kuwait, facilitating the enrollment of Kuwaiti students in Indian universities, enabling Indian students to enroll in Kuwaiti universities, fostering recruitment of faculty members, and promoting exchange programs between universities in both countries.

Approximately 350 people attended the event, including representatives from Kuwait University, Kuwait College of Science and Technology, American University of the Middle East (AUM), and faculty members from various universities in Kuwait, as well as principals from Indian and international schools, distinguished members of the Indian community, educators, students, and media representatives.





# Serbia and Kuwait share same values

*Filip Katic, Charge d'affaires at the Embassy of Serbia*

## The Times Kuwait Report

Diplomatic relations between Serbia — when it was part of the former state of Yugoslavia — and Kuwait were established on 7 May, 1963. The fact that relations between the two nations have flourished for over 60 years is a testimony to the strength and warmth of our relationship, said Filip Katic, the chargé d'affaires at the Serbian embassy.

In an exclusive interview with The Times Kuwait last week, the Serbian diplomat opened up about the excellent relations between Serbia and Kuwait in various domains, including on the diplomatic, economic and cultural fronts.

He pointed out how ties between the two countries have grown stronger over the years. "Kuwait reaffirmed its humanitarian ideals and friendly relations with Serbia in May 2014, when my country was ravaged by torrential floods. The emergency financial aid of USD1 million provided by Kuwait on

multilateral level will continue to grow in the coming period."

Elaborating on bilateral relations, the Serbian envoy said, "Multifaceted relations between the two countries continue to develop in various areas, including trade, tourism, culture, and education. In this regard, the harmonization of three bilateral agreements in the field of scientific and technical cooperation is in progress, and these will add more impetus to our relations in these fields.

"Currently, we are focusing on organizing the second Intergovernmental Committee for Economic and Technical Issues between Serbia and Kuwait. The visit of the chairman of that Committee and Minister of RDM of Serbia, Edin Djerlek, is planned for the second half of May this year. This engagement is crucial for fostering connections in the field of economy, and investments."

Turning to cultural relations between the two countries and the potential for improving tourism ties with Kuwait, Mr. Katic said, "In the coming period, we also plan to improve cultural cooperation with Kuwait by organizing exhibitions and presenting traditional Serbian folklore ensembles in Kuwait. And, we remain fully committed to signing a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation with Kuwait in the field of culture.

"We also plan to showcase Serbia's tourism potential in Kuwait. Our country boasts beautiful nature, mountains, spas, historical monuments, and a pleasant climate. I believe that in the future, Serbia could become an interesting tourist destination for the citizens of Kuwait."

Emphasizing the great experiences he has had in Kuwait so far, the Serbian envoy noted, "The way of life in Kuwait differs from that in Serbia, but I quickly adapted due to the kindness and hospitality of Kuwaitis. I particularly enjoy my visits to diwaniya, where I have the opportunity to meet wonderful people, from whom I always learn something new about Kuwait's history, tradition, and culture. I also appreciate Kuwaiti food, especially machboos, kanafa, and, of course, coffee.

"The Serbian community in Kuwait is small, numbering only about 550 people, who are mostly employed as doctors, engineers, and fitness trainers. They are satisfied with their life and working conditions in your country. I take this occasion to thank the leadership, the government and people of Kuwait for all their support and generosity," said the diplomat at the end of the interview.



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the occasion helped to reconstruct more than 25 houses that were damaged by the floods. Over the past few decades, mutual visits by the leaders of both countries have served as an incentive for further strengthening ties between the two nations.

"On the multilateral level, Serbia and Kuwait share the same values and provide mutual support in numerous specialized bodies and agencies of the UN, including in the UN Security Council, and UNESCO. Last year, Serbia supported Kuwait's election as a member of the UN Human Rights Council for the 2024-2026 term. It is expected that mutual support on the



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# Kuwait, Bahrain explore new horizons in bilateral relations



By Tareq Yousef AlShumaimry

The upcoming visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al- Jaber Al-Sabah to the Kingdom of Bahrain, once again brings to the fore the deep-rooted ties between the two countries, at the leadership and government level, as well as between people of Kuwait and Bahrain.

The strong bonds that bind Kuwaiti-Bahraini relations have withstood the tests of time and were fortified throughout the history of the two nations. More recently, in 1990-91 during the vicious invasion and brutal occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi forces, Bahrain was among the first to express solidarity with Kuwait and its sovereignty. The kingdom also played a pivotal role in providing logistical and military support to the coalition forces during the liberation of Kuwait.

On the diplomatic front, Bahrain helped draft several United Nations Resolutions condemning Iraq's invasion and calling for the regime's total withdrawal from Kuwaiti territory. Bahrain also voiced its full support to Kuwait at various international gatherings that called for the return of legitimacy to Kuwait.

In addition, the kingdom also welcomed and provided shelter to more than 12,000 Kuwaitis who were uprooted during the invasion, and the Bahraini government formed a special committee to handle the affairs of displaced Kuwaitis. The brotherly state was also in the forefront post-liberation, when it provided medical support and assistance in infrastructure reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The fraternal relations were further boosted during those traumatic times by the visit to Kuwait by the late King of Bahrain Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah — in June 1991, shortly after the liberation of Kuwait — to congratulate the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on the return of Kuwaiti legitimacy and the defeat of the Iraqi occupation.

In an emotional speech on the occasion, the Bahraini monarch said, "It is a most joyful hour for me to meet my brother the Amir [Sheikh Jaber] in Kuwait after the scourge has been lifted off Kuwait and its return to its people." Reciprocating his gratitude and in recognition of Bahrain's great efforts, the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al- Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah went to Bahrain to express his gratitude and Kuwait's appreciation for all the support extended by Bahrain during Kuwait's darkest hours.

Moreover, in 2003, during the Iraq war, Bahraini troops arrived in Kuwait to participate in protecting the borders during the entry of US forces into Iraq to oust the former Iraqi regime. For its part, Kuwait has also taken honorable stances in its relations with Bahrain. During the unfortunate events that unfolded

Over the past decades, relations between Kuwait and Bahrain have witnessed significant development at all levels, especially since the establishment in 2001 of joint higher committee for cooperation, which has led to the signing of eight agreements in the field of diplomatic, consular, tourism, air, cultural,

over \$1.5 billion. Latest available figures show that trade between the two countries in 2023 increased by 10 percent from a year earlier. The two countries continue to seek developing their bilateral relations on all fronts for the mutual benefit of the two states and their people.

Speaking ahead of the imminent visit to Bahrain by the Amir of Kuwait, the Foreign Minister of Bahrain Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani affirmed the kingdom's pride in the visit of the Amir of Kuwait, as it embodies the depth of the distinguished deep-rooted exemplary relations between the two countries' leaderships and peoples, stressing that the visit would help strengthen the bilateral relations that are a role model for solid political and security alliance, as well as robust economic integration.

He also highlighted the two countries' keenness to ensure the unity of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), as well as champion just Arab and Islamic causes, the foremost of which is the support for the Palestinian people's freedom and security, in addition to their right to establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In addition, he stressed the two countries' pioneering regional and global contributions to safeguarding security and peace, ending wars, settling conflicts peacefully, combating extremism and terrorism, promoting tolerance and dialogue, serving humanity and achieving sustainable development goals.

In his statement ahead of the visit to Bahrain by His Highness the Amir, Shaikh Thamer Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, the Kuwaiti ambassador to Bahrain, said that the upcoming visit of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait to Bahrain would further strengthen the historical ties between the two countries. He affirmed that Bahraini-Kuwaiti relations are deep-rooted and harmonious as they go back generations and exceed all political and diplomatic rhetoric.

Adding that the upcoming visit was within the framework of enhancing cooperation and coordination between the two countries in various domains, Sheikh Thamer stated that the meeting between His Highness the Amir and His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa would build on bilateral achievements and further cement the strong fraternal relations between the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Bahrain and its people.

**Tareq Yousef AlShumaimry**, served as Chairman of the Finance Committee and Chairman of the General Budget Committee of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague (PCA) and an observer in the Administrative Council of the Court and the Consular at International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in the Netherlands during this period from 2013 to 2020. Email: tareq@alshumaimry.com



“

Over the past decades, relations between Kuwait and Bahrain have witnessed significant development at all levels, especially since the establishment in 2001 of joint higher committee for cooperation, which has led to the signing of eight agreements in the field of diplomatic, consular, tourism, air, cultural, educational and media cooperation, as well as memorandum of understanding and executive programs for cooperation in various fields.

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in Bahrain in February 2011, Kuwait voiced its strong support for the Bahraini leadership and the Government as well as dispatched its naval forces to participate under the Peninsula Shield Forces in Bahrain to maintain security in the Kingdom. Also in 2018, Kuwait partnered with Saudi Arabia and the UAE to support the efforts of the fiscal program in Bahrain through a US\$10 billion aid package..

educational and media cooperation, as well as memorandum of understanding and executive programs for cooperation in various fields.

On the economic front, trade between the two countries by the end of 2022 totalled over \$482 million, while Kuwaiti direct investments in Bahrain exceeded \$2.3 billion. In addition, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has signed 19 agreements with Bahrain, worth



## French envoy launches fifth francophone center in Kuwait



The fifth francophone center in Kuwait opened at the diwaniya of the French Ambassador H.E. Claire Le Flecher last week. Inaugurating the diwaniya, Ambassador Le Flecher expressed her joy at the opening and said it would serve as a dedicated space for French speakers to engage in open dialogue and share ideas.

Addressing the large gathering of French-speaking citizens, residents, and heads of missions of Francophonie member states,

the French envoy said that the selection of the diwaniya at her residence comes from the distinct position that diwanis have in Kuwaiti heritage. Previous four francophone centers were opened at other francophone country's embassies and in offices.

She added that the French language is considered the second language in Kuwait after English, and she believes that about a third of the Kuwaiti people understand the basics of the French language, with many of them speaking

it fluently. She expressed her happiness at the growing number of French speakers in Kuwait and the increased demand for French culture.

For his part, Benoit Catala, the advisor for cooperation and cultural work and director of the French Institute in Kuwait, explained that the reason for launching the French Diwanis was the presence of about 500,000 French-speaking people in Kuwait, including 200,000 Kuwaitis. They need a place to meet from time to time to exchange conversations in French

to maintain the dialogue of civilizations.

He added, "We have about 40 Francophone embassies in Kuwait and about 1,400 French teachers." He revealed that the next Diwanis will be held at the Lebanese embassy. He went on to note that the best place to learn French is at the French Institute, which offers courses for all levels throughout the year with specialized language teachers, and its certificates are accredited for teaching in France.

## CSB data reveals widening salary gap across labor market

Latest statistics from the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) reveal the increasing gap in salaries across the labor market segments. The figures for the first nine months of 2023 show that the gap in salaries between citizens working in the public sector and those in the private sector was approximately KD257, with the average monthly wage for citizens in government sector being KD1,600, while their counterparts in the private sector earned on average KD1,343.

The data also showed a marked gender discrepancy when it came to salaries between male and female citizens, with men earning on average KD1,925 per month, while female citizens received only KD1,364. There was also a similar difference in salaries of men and women citizens in the private sector, with men receiving on average KD1,618 per month, and women being paid only KD1,047.

However, the salary discrepancy was most glaring between citizens and non-citizens, with the average monthly salary of non-Kuwaiti workers in the labor market being only

KD342. There was also a wide gap within the non-Kuwaiti sector, with those employed in the public sector earning on average KD751, while expats in the private sector received on average only KD 323 per month. The statistical figures revealed that the salaries of non-Kuwaiti females are higher than those of males, as their average monthly wage amounted to about KD482, compared to KD323 for males.

The statistics also revealed that of the total 457,900 employees in the public sector, 366,900 (80% of workers) were citizens, while around 91,000 were non-Kuwaitis. On the other hand, the number of citizens in the private sector amounted to only 4.7 percent of the total workers in the sector, and numbered around 71,800, while non-Kuwaitis in this sector totaled 1.4 million.

## Deputy PM calls for applying law equally to all

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah ordered military and security officials to implement His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah directives about applying law equally to all.

Addressing a gathering of senior commanders and officials of the ministries of defense and interior at the Ministry of Defense last week, the deputy premier also called for executing His Highness the Amir's directives about intensifying efforts, increasing cooperation and coordination among the military sectors to defend the homeland and maintain its security and stability. He pointed out that the military institution has great responsibilities and enormous tasks that require adherence to instructions, seriousness, and firmness in applying the law to everyone without exception or discrimination.

He noted that His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah are closely following up the efforts exerted to boost capabilities of the military sectors.

Sheikh Fahad also vowed to work according to the directives and instructions of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Premier, and follow up on the efforts and the decisions made in this regard. He promised to employ all potential and remove any obstacle facing the materialization of their vision and goals.

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# Labor market statistics show increase in employment

Employment statistics presented by the Central Statistical Bureau for the first nine months of 2023 show that the total number of workers in the Kuwait labor market increased by 3.8 percent — from 2.79 million at the end of December 2022 to 2.89 million at the end of September 2023.

The data also reveals the trajectory of worker composition in the labor market during the first nine months of 2023, with the number of expatriate workers increasing by 4.2 percent, from 2.34 million at the end of 2022 to 2.44 million in September 2023. During the same period, the number of Kuwaiti workers increased by 1.4 percent, rising from 442,600 to 448,800 workers.

Based on a breakup of the labor pool by communities, the data shows that workers from the Indian community topped the list with about 879,500 Indian workers at the

end of last September, an increase of around 5 percent from the 834,670 at the end of December 2022.

Egyptian workers ranked second, with 479,880 workers, a decrease by 4,372 from the 484,259 workers at the end of 2022. Kuwaitis came in as the third largest labor force in the local market, as their numbers reached about 448,800; marking an increase of 6,181 from the 442,647 at the end of 2022.

Filipino workers ranked as the fourth largest community in the labor market, despite their numbers declining from 266,900 at the end of December 2022 to 260,380 by the end of September 2023. Bangladeshi workers came in fifth place with an increase of about 6.4 percent, from 241,300 at the end of 2022 to reach 256,670 by the end of September 2023.

The data also revealed the composition of domestic workers in the total labor market,

with figures showing the entry of 36,470 new domestic workers during the first nine months of 2023, to take the total of this segment of workers to 789,770 from 753,290 at the end of December 2022.

Workers from the Indian community once again topped the list of domestic workers with their number increasing from 337,590 at the end of 2022 to 352,780 by the end of September 2023. During the same period, the number of Sri Lankan domestic workers increased from nearly 90,000 to 106,680, while the number of Nepalese domestic workers increased from 20,730 at the end of December 2022 to 28,950 workers by end of September 2023.

Meanwhile, the number of domestic workers from Benin rose by 927 — from 4,120 to reach 5,047 workers, and the number of Indonesians increased by about 1,916 at the end of September 2023 to reach 3,983



compared to 2,067 at the end of December 2022. On the other hand, the number of domestic workers from the Philippines decreased by about 26,300 to take the tally of workers from that country to 173,700 at the end of September 2023 from around 200,000 at the end of 2022. The number of domestic workers from Ethiopia also dropped during the same period, from 8,210 to 7,516.



## Indian Heritage opens new store in Kuwait's Heart of the South

With the recent grand opening of Indian Heritage, nestled in the heart of South of Kuwait in Al-Khairan Mall, their store aims to redefine the shopping experience for individuals who seek elegance, quality, and unparalleled craftsmanship.

The Khairan store was inaugurated on 12 February by Indian Ambassador H.E. Adarsh Swaika in the presence of Indian Heritage's executives, as well as a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

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.

From sumptuous silks to opulent cashmeres, every piece in their store reflects meticulous attention to detail and a commitment to excellence and exceptional quality. The brand ensures that all its products are crafted with the finest materials, providing customers with a luxurious and high-quality product. The brand is slated to open another store at the prestigious Avenues Mall by the end of

the month and has plans to introduce more lifestyle products in the future.

The new Khairan store promises an unparalleled shopping experience with a meticulously curated collection of items to ensure that customers have access to the latest trends and timeless classics, all under one roof and at competitive prices.

Indian Heritage is now present in Kuwait and Bahrain with 4 stores in operations: one in Souk Safat, Kuwait City, another at the Magic Mall in Abu Halifa, a third at Al Sama Mall in Egaila, and a fourth in Bahrain. With the opening of its fifth branch in Kuwait's heart of the south, the brand looks forward to celebrating the appreciation for design and quality in Kuwait, and to provide customers with an immersive experience in the exquisite tapestry of Indian fashion that harmoniously blends with rich traditions of Kuwait.



## MoI details documents needed for visit visa application



The recent decision to open up family visas for expatriates who meet the specified criteria has led to thousands of applications being submitted to the Ministry of Interior's (MoI) Department of Residence Affairs in the six governorates. Following the discovery that many of

the applications are rejected because applicants do not submit the required documents, the department has taken the proactive measure of issuing a comprehensive brochure on the documents that need to be attached with the application.

According to the circular, approval for family visas require a signed request from the sponsor (applicant), including phone number, a copy of the sponsor's civil ID, a pledge by the applicant to comply with the regulations governing the visa, a copy of the travel ticket issued by Kuwait Airways or Jazeera Airways, a copy of the arriving person's passport, provided that the passport of the visitor has a validity of more than six months, verification of the address, and a certificate of kinship between the applicant and the visitor. The kinship certificate must be authenticated by the Kuwaiti embassy and the foreign ministry in the visitor's country, as well as endorsed by the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry.

The MoI also quelled all rumors that that window for family visit visas would close within a month or two, and stressed that the visa issuance for all types of visit visas is continuing smoothly.



## Credit card use on the rise

In its latest data on credit card usage in Kuwait, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) noted that total credit card spending jumped by 16.6 percent from KD3.48 billion in 2022 to reach KD4 billion in 2023.

The increase in credit card usage came despite the 4.25 percent increase in interest rates worldwide over the past year, which meant

users had to incur higher interest rates, particularly when withdrawing cash using their credit cards. Some of the other key takeaways from the CBK data on credit card usage were:

Domestic credit card usage amounted to KD2.54 billion (62.5% of total spending) while international usage totaled KD1.52 billion (37.5%)

Direct purchases and payments for services via credit cards at local points of sale increased by 21 percent in 2023 from a year earlier to reach KD2.2 billion.

Online spending on websites using credit cards increased by 14.7 percent to total KD1.3 billion.

Cash withdrawals accounted for 13 percent of total overdrafts, reaching KD540 million dinars in 2023, with domestic cash withdrawals increasing by 5.3 percent while international withdrawals rose by 6.8 percent.

The credit card usage trends underscore the increasing reliance on plastic cards for transactions, both within Kuwait and abroad, and highlights the evolving money transaction preferences of consumers in the digital age.



# Fuel prices in Kuwait among cheapest in the world



Images are of City Hypermarket Qatar.

## City Centre unveils its new identity – is now known as City Hypermarket



**K**uwait – In a grand ceremony held last week, City Centre proudly unveiled its new name and a refreshed identity, that will now be known as “City Hypermarket.”

The announcement was made at the company’s headquarters in Manara Mall nestled in the bustling Industrial estate of Shuwaikh, and was attended by the Management, it’s valued partners and Media.

The rebranding marks a significant milestone amidst a series of recent developments and expansion witnessed by the company. Notably, City Hypermarket celebrated its regional expansion with the inauguration of its first branch in the State of Qatar in December 2023.

Additionally, the company has undertaken extensive renovations across all 12 stores distributed among all Kuwait, with a focus on enhancing the shopper experience, especially at its Salmiya branch, which is among the largest hypermarket store formats in the country, spanning an impressive area of 25,000 square meters. It also boasts an extensive inventory of over 120,000 products

across a variety of departments.

Mr. Nasser Alghanim, Deputy CEO, expressed immense pride in this crucial step, that would help elevate the shopping experience and ushering in a new era of continual innovation at City Hypermarket. He stressed the company’s commitment to ongoing expansion efforts, both within Kuwait and within the region, throughout the current year beginning with the opening of the the newest branch of City Hypermarket in Al Muhallab Mall, Hawally.



Founded in 1999, City Centre has emerged as a pioneer in the retail landscape and over a period of time, has earned a reputation for offering an unparalleled variety of products ranging from food to fashion to toys and electronics, supporting

locally made products while offering exclusive items and brands from around the world namely – Waitrose and Partners, Organic Larder and more at unbeatable prices.

City Hypermarket’s mission remains steadfast - Value at Heart, which is to empower shoppers to embrace a superior lifestyle at exceptional value.



Images are of City Hypermarket Qatar.

**F**uel prices in Kuwait remain the cheapest among the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and ranks fifth in the world, with the price of a liter of gasoline being \$0.340 according to a new report by finance website, ‘Insider Monkey’ that listed the top ten countries with the cheapest fuel prices in the world.

The report attributed this low price to government subsidy on fuels. According to the figures, the annual cost of fuel in Kuwait, including gasoline and diesel products amounts to about KD976 million (USD3.15 billion), while the value of the sale of these products is about KD651 million dinars (\$2.1 billion), which means that the difference exceeds KD300 million (\$1.05 billion).

Kuwait is considered a major producer in the global oil markets, and is a member of OPEC. The oil sector contributes nearly half of the country’s gross domestic product, and about 95% of total export revenues, as well as the country’s general revenues.

Iran topped the list of countries with the cheapest fuel prices, ranking first in the world. For Iranians, cheap gasoline is considered an acquired right, as their country has the fourth largest reserve of crude oil in the world, and a liter of fuel is sold at \$0.029. This should not exceed a monthly quota of about 60 liters gallons, with the price nearly doubling for any



consumption exceeding this limit.

The large government support kept fuel prices low, but due to the widening gap between the supply, which is restricted by local refining capacity, and the high demand, the government was forced to take advantage of its strategic reserves and import gasoline for the first time in a decade.

Below is a list of the 10 cheapest countries in the world in terms of fuel prices:

- Iran: The price of a liter is \$ 0.029
- Libya: The price of a liter is \$0.031
- Venezuela: The price of a liter is \$0.132
- Algeria: The price of a liter is \$0.348
- Kuwait: The price of a liter is \$0.340
- Angola: The price of a liter is \$0.363
- Egypt: The price of a liter is \$0.372
- Turkmenistan: The price of a liter is \$0.429
- Malaysia: The price of a liter is \$0.434
- Kazakhstan: The price of a liter is \$0.455



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## MoI issues additional criteria for expats to avail family visas

Ministry of Interior (MoI) has issued a new additional condition on expatriates seeking visas for their families to join them in Kuwait. The new regulation states that applicants for family visas will also need to provide copies of air tickets issued to family members by the national carrier Kuwait

Airways or Jazeera Airways.

A statement from the ministry noted that the decision aims to support the national carrier and ensure the smooth entry of visitors. The Ministry of Interior has reportedly instructed the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to implement the

decision immediately.

The Ministry of Interior is also said to have informed all airlines operating in Kuwait about the new regulations. Visitors who have already booked tickets on other airlines will be allowed to enter the country, but they will be required to purchase a return ticket on

either Kuwait Airways or Jazeera Airways.

The new regulations are expected to have a significant impact on the travel industry in Kuwait. It is unclear how long the regulations will remain in place, or what would happen if the EU and other countries insisted on the same terms and conditions.

## US Embassy campaign aims to attract youth to US universities

United States Embassy in Kuwait launched a campaign last week ahead of Kuwait's National and Liberation Days on 25-26 February, to highlight the potential of Kuwaiti

A statement from the embassy noted that it is committed to promoting and increasing cross-cultural understanding and educational exchanges to empower Kuwaiti youth and equip them with necessary skills for career success and leadership opportunities. In this regard, the embassy noted that it provides consular and college-application guidance to facilitate enrollment in educational and exchange programs, including via in-person outreach to schools and universities and virtual broadcasting on the embassy's social media platforms.

The campaign comprises educational fairs, alumni networking receptions, TV and radio interviews with experts on studying in the United States and student visas, as well as private school visits. The embassy statement added that through these initiatives, the embassy hopes to encourage more Kuwaitis to pursue their education at U.S. universities and participate in our exchange programs.



youth. The two-week-long campaign, under the banner of 'Entum mustaqbal' (You are the Future) will highlight success stories and achievements of Kuwaiti graduates of US universities and exchange programs.

## LuLu Hypermarket marks National, Liberation Days with creative display



LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, has become a household name when it comes to buying quality products at competitive prices. The brand is also known for its amazing promotions throughout the year that offer customers astounding discounts and attractive prizes. The hypermarket has also been in the forefront when it comes to holding celebrations to mark community festivals and commemorate national events.

The brand's celebration of Kuwait's National Day and Liberation Day on 25th and 26th February each year is an event the shoppers look forward to, not only for the incredible offers that await them on these national holidays but also for the innovative manner and unique style with which these events are celebrated at the hypermarket annually.

This year, as part of celebrations to mark Kuwait's 63rd anniversary of National Day and the 33rd anniversary of Liberation Day, LuLu Hypermarket is displaying an astonishing demonstration of artistic creativity and dexterity at its Al-Qurain outlet. Creative craftspeople at LuLu Hypermarket have created a replica of the

iconic Kuwait Towers using only tetra packs of milk and fruit juices.

The towering display, made from more than 17,000 individual milk and fruit juice packets, sourced from local firm Kuwait Danish Dairy (KDD), are stacked and balanced one above the other to reach a height of over six meters.

The decision to use Kuwait Towers as the model for the breathtaking display was not an accidental choice. The hypermarket wanted to recreate a Kuwaiti landmark that best represented the country's independence and the free-spirit of its people. And when it came to these two attributes there was no better choice than the three structures that together constitute the Kuwait Towers.

Tens of thousands of shoppers and visitors are reportedly heading to the Al-Qurain branch of the hypermarket daily to witness this stunning display of creative ingenuity and to pose for 'selfies' in front of the artistic creation. LuLu Hypermarket, which has long prided itself on offering customers an exciting shopping experience has certainly outdone itself this time with this dramatic display.

## IWG marks National and Liberation Days



International Women's Group (IWG) celebrated Kuwait's upcoming National and Liberation Days by holding a special event on 11 February at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. On Sunday, February 11th, at the luxurious Crowne Plaza.

The event began with the President of IWG, Antonia Dimitrova welcoming the attendees. She then extended heartfelt congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the people of Kuwait on the auspicious occasion of National and Liberation Day, and conveyed the best wishes of the IWG Executive Board and its members, and expressed hopes for the enduring peace, prosperity and progress of Kuwait.

IWG Public Relations Coordinator, Layla Boulos then assumed the role of master of ceremonies, skillfully guiding the audience through an enchanting and culturally rich program. She commenced the proceedings by introducing Maysa Al-Mutawa, who delved into the captivating history of Kuwaiti women's clothing.

Noting that the dresses on display during the event showcased the timeless tradition and narrative of Kuwait through the ages, Ms. Al-Mutawa added that "despite globalization, Kuwaiti women proudly wear these garments on various occasions, occasionally adapting them to contemporary styles while cherishing the enduring charm of our mothers and grandmothers."

The event also featured a re-enactment of a traditional Kuwaiti wedding, featuring the bride adorned in traditional jewelry and wearing a traditional Kuwaiti 'thobe' resplendently embroidered in intricate gold thread.

Primary class students from the British School of Kuwait, along with their teacher Hebaallah Goma, entertained the guests throughout the event by performing several traditional Kuwaiti dances, including the Kuwait National Day celebrations. The beautiful choreography was meticulously arranged by Anwar Alhasan, with costumes designed by Dalal Alshatty.

The event also witnessed two very interesting

presentations; the first by Dana Al-Jouder, who spoke about the physical aspects of the old city of Kuwait. She showcased rare images of the city, including the old gate and city wall, while discussing the various changes that have occurred over the years due to modernization.



Former Municipal Council Member and Founder of Safira CSR Company, Eng. Maha Al-Bafli in her presentation emphasized the importance of corporate responsibility, women's empowerment, and promoting entrepreneurship among Kuwaiti women and youth.

As the event drew to a close, shields of appreciation were presented to the esteemed speakers, while certificates of gratitude were tendered to the participants and performers. Attendees then relished an exceptional Kuwaiti buffet meticulously crafted by chefs of Crowne Plaza.







## Iranian ambassador lauds historic relations with Kuwait

Ambassador of Iran H.E. Mohammad Totonji commended the historic Iranian-Kuwaiti relations and its development over the years. He also underlined Iran's pragmatic approach to regional geopolitics, and its efforts to foster balanced relations with neighboring countries while prioritizing reconciliation and shared religious and cultural ties over differences.

Speaking during a reception hosted by the Iranian embassy to commemorate the National Day and the 45th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution's victory, Ambassador Totonji stressed that Iran-Kuwait relations go beyond formal government level, and include deep-rooted ties based on familial bonds, intermarriages, and longstanding commercial interactions. The event was attended by

Kuwait's Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Asian Affairs, Ambassador Samih Hayat, along with a distinguished gathering of members of the diplomatic corps and other special invitees.

The Iranian ambassador emphasized that the issuance of 100,000 visas to Kuwaiti citizens for tourism and medical purposes in Iran underscores the strong and genuine relations between the two nations. He noted that after 62 years of bilateral diplomatic ties between Iran and Kuwait, there exists a balance in their relations, and efforts are underway to build upon past experiences for further improvement.

The ambassador expressed happiness that this matter is of interest to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. He wished success and prosperity to the government of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Al-

Sabah, expressing hope that this stage would witness practical initiatives from both sides to strengthen bilateral relations.

With a pertinent remark, Totonji stated that the Islamic Revolution marks a pivotal moment in Iranian history, as it introduced the principles of popular sovereignty, support for the oppressed, and defiance against arrogance, winning acceptance from all segments of Iranian society.

He added that the Iranian Islamic Revolution, by instilling the principle of self-reliance in the minds of the youth and embracing the slogan 'We are capable,' achieved remarkable advancements in various fields of science and technology. It has excelled in atomic, nano, aerospace, and medical sciences, thanks to the talents and dedication of its youth.

He went on to state that the Islamic Revolution redefined the role of women, recognizing them as essential contributors to family and society. It provided women with equal opportunities in education and employment, enabling them to excel in various fields such as science, culture, academia, sports, and more.

The ambassador concluded by adding, "I take this opportunity to invite the esteemed ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps, who may have been influenced by propaganda preventing them from seeing the reality of Iran, to visit our country. Iran is only an hour away from Kuwait, and by visiting, they can explore its unique historical, cultural, and natural sites. As the saying goes, 'Seeing is believing,' and experiencing Iran firsthand is invaluable," added the envoy.

## PROVACUNO sizzles up Kuwait's food scene with Spanish beef debut

• Last year, Kuwait bolstered its position as a premier destination for high-quality beef imports from Spain by importing over 100 tons

The Joint Professional Agri-Food Organization of the Spanish Beef Industry, known as "PROVACUNO," representing all stakeholders across the production chain, orchestrated an exclusive event to unveil Spanish beef in Kuwait. This initiative comes at a pivotal moment as Kuwait recently reopened its borders to Spanish beef products, marking a significant opportunity for both parties.

This event took place at the headquarters of the Miguel Moro, Spanish ambassador to Kuwait. José Ramon Godoy, PROVACUNO's Director of Internationalization, highlighted the distinctive features of this esteemed product, emphasizing its uniqueness characterized by freshness, juiciness, delicate flavor, and exceptional safety standards. Quality is paramount.

Moro said that Spanish beef is sourced from young animals and fed with top-quality grains and oilseeds, adhering strictly to the rigorous standards of the European production model,



relations with the Kuwaiti counterparts.

He pointed out that the trade exchange between the two countries amounts to 500 million euros directly, and extensive efforts are being made to reach the desired level.

He said, "Spanish meat is renowned for its high quality, and we have a presence in all countries. It is 100% halal with certification to prove it, as we have over two million Muslims living in Spain from various Arab countries, including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and others. Additionally, our products adhere to European standards."

He elaborated that his country is prepared to collaborate with Kuwait in the realm of food security, and we are currently coordinating with them as part of ongoing discussions. He highlighted the visit of nine Spanish companies specializing in the agricultural industry and related fields to Kuwait, emphasizing our collaboration with the Scientific Progress Foundation. Regarding whether there will be a meeting between the foreign ministers of the two countries on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, in which Kuwait is participating, he said, "I do not have any information about an expected meeting, but I am sure that there is a possibility of communication between the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister and the Spanish Foreign Minister."

He pointed out that the situation in the region is extremely difficult and requires the efforts of everyone to find solutions, explaining that Kuwait and Spain share identical visions on many political issues and current events in the region.

He stressed that Kuwait is a good and close friend of Spain, stating, "We have good relations at the highest levels, and we will witness much communication between officials of the two

countries in the future."

He expressed enthusiasm about collaborating with Kuwait in this new era and during the

current stage of development that Kuwait is undergoing, aiming to strengthen and enhance our bilateral relationship.



recognized as the most stringent globally.

He underscored its suitability for the most discerning global markets, ensuring maximum food safety without the use of antibiotics, growth-promoting hormones, or unauthorized shelf-life extenders. Regarding the Spanish beef sector, he noted that Spain annually produces around 800 thousand tons of beef, with approximately 350 thousand tons being exported.

Last year, Kuwait imported over 100 tons of our beef, solidifying its position as a top choice for our high-quality, controlled, and safe beef. Moro elaborated that while trade relations are favorable, they fall short of the aspirations of both nations. He stressed his ongoing efforts to collaboratively enhance and strengthen these

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# Kuwait to intensify efforts on renewable energy

Global efforts to combat climate change, exemplified by agreements at COP 28, underscore the urgency of transitioning to clean energy sources. Kuwait, once a regional energy leader, is now at the forefront of this shift. In the late 1970s, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research initiated solar energy programs, while exploring nuclear energy possibilities — a testament to its commitment to help diversify energy production patterns in Kuwait.

The KISR renewable energy blueprint aligned with the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's vision of sourcing 15 percent of energy from renewable sources by 2030. However, plans for nuclear energy were scaled back post-2011, influenced by the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan.

The renewable energy initiative by KISR culminated in 2016 with the unveiling of the Al-Shagaya Renewable Energy Park located around 100 km to the south-west of Kuwait City. The commissioning in 2018 of the first phase of the project set the basis for future renewable energy developments in Kuwait, and involved the installation of a



50 megawatt (MW) Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) plant, a 10 MW Wind Farm that was commissioned in May 2017, and a 10 MW Photovoltaic (PV) plant.

The official grand opening of the Shagaya Renewable Energy Park was held in February 2019. Completion of all phases of the ambitious master plan for the Al-Shagaya Renewable Energy Park is projected to generate

approximately 3.2GW of electricity using renewable sources by 2030.

Despite the presence of year-long solar radiation that makes solar power a viable form of renewable energy, Kuwait faces other challenges, including frequent dust storms and the need to secure vast land for renewable projects. Estimates suggest that to achieve 50 percent renewable energy production by 2050, the country will need to set aside over 500 square kilometers of land for this purpose. Given Kuwait's total area is less than 18,000 sq km, finding sufficient land to pursue large scale renewable energy projects could be a challenge.

On a related note, Kuwait is also venturing into hydrogen power, aiming to establish both partial and complete hydrogen stations to further reduce emissions. These initiatives, alongside investments in waste energy and green hydrogen production, reinforce Kuwait's commitment to carbon neutrality and sustainable energy sources. As Kuwait continues to innovate, it paves the way for a cleaner, more resilient energy future.

## Positive impact of migration on society

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Although many people today migrate voluntarily, millions of others are forced to migrate out of necessity, becoming refugees in other parts of their own country, or across the border in other nations. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimated that, by the end of 2022, the world hosted an estimated 35.3 million refugees, including 5.9 million Palestine refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), as well as 5.4 million asylum-seekers.

Established in 1951, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) is the leading UN entity concerned with global migration. IOM works to ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to help find practical solutions to challenges of migration, and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including to refugees and internally displaced people.

In 2018, at an intergovernmental conference on migration held in Marrakesh, Morocco, UN member states adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), an international agreement that covers all aspects of migration in a comprehensive manner. The GCM is also a non-binding document that respects the sovereign right of states to determine who enters and stays in their territory.

Despite being a signatory to the GCM since 2018, Kuwait does not countenance economic or humanitarian migrants. The nearly 2.5 million migrant workers in Kuwait are considered as 'Temporary Contract Workers' (TCWs), and the legal framework governing their employment and stay in Kuwait is based on the 1959 Aliens Residence Law that links all TCWs to a sponsor through the 'kafala' system.

The kafala system has been criticized for its proneness to exploitative practices, and although TCWs, with the exception of domestic workers, are covered by the state's labor laws, the existence of the kafala system restricts labor mobility. With labor being a key factor in production, the lack of labor mobility affects productivity as well as hampers the country's economic growth and development.

However, in all fairness, it needs to be added that Kuwait has adopted a number of laws to protect the rights of TCWs. For instance, in 2010, the government introduced new provisions to the existing private sector labor law that increased the minimum wage for TCWs, set overtime pay rates, and increased holiday credits in annual leave computations.

In 2013, the country also adopted Law No. 91/2013 on Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants that seeks to eradicate these practices in Kuwait. In 2015, the Ministry of Interior also established an anti-human trafficking department to act as the national coordinating body on human trafficking issues. And, in a proactive move, the Ministry of

Justice developed in 2016 a Counter-trafficking strategy.

And, in 2015, Kuwaiti legislators adopted Law No. 69/2015 that gave domestic workers enforceable labor rights, including 30 days of annual paid leave, end of service benefits, a 12-hour working day with rest periods, and a weekly day off, among others. In addition, the government set up shelters for domestic workers and victims of trafficking that provides them with accommodation and food, as well as medical and legal assistance.

Migration is important to global growth; empirical studies by international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) have all reiterated the multifaceted, positive impacts of migrants and migration on host communities and on source nations. Contrary to popular opinion in many host nations, migrants are not a drain on national resources.

A study on the fiscal impact of migration in all the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries in Europe, as well as in Australia, Canada, Japan and the United States, show that in most countries migrants contribute more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in individual benefits. Even low-educated immigrants were found to have a better fiscal position — the difference between their contributions and the benefits they receive — than their native-born peers.

Migrants have also been found to form a fundamental pillar of global development and prosperity. A study by McKinsey Global Institute estimates that migrants contributed roughly USD6.7 trillion, or 9.4 percent, to global GDP in 2015 — around \$3 trillion more than they would have produced in their origin countries. North America captured up to \$2.5 trillion of this output, while up to \$2.3 trillion went to Western Europe.

Some of the areas where migrants contribute to the economy of a host nation include in filling labor shortages in key sectors like healthcare, agriculture, and construction, as well as in providing public services that many nationals are reluctant to take up. Migrants also contribute to economic growth through their consumption of goods and services that stimulate local businesses and industries.

Additionally, migrants bring with them a range of skills, experience, and knowledge, as well as entrepreneurial acumen that contributes to boosting productivity and competitiveness in host economies. Migrants and migration is also an important factor in balancing population decline and maintaining the workforce needed to ensure the viability of social security systems.

According to data from the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), as of the second-half of 2020 there were an estimated 281 million international migrants around the world, comprising 3.5 percent of the global population. The ratio of international

migrants has been on the rise over the decades, going from 2.3 percent of the world population in 1980 to 2.8 percent by 2000.

Other statistics from the UNDESA reveal that over 48 percent of international migrants were women and girls; around three-quarters of migrants were aged between 20 and 64 years; and that 41 million international migrants were under the age of 20. The figures also show that most international migrants reside in Asia and Europe (31% each), followed by Northern America (21%), Africa (9%), Latin America and

the Caribbean (5%) and Oceania (3%).

In early January of this year, the IOM launched its first-ever Global Annual Appeal for 2024, urging for a funding of \$7.9 billion to pave the way for a system that harnesses migration's potential as a positive force across the globe. The funding seeks to fortify the ability of IOM to save lives, protect people on the move, address displacement, and facilitate safe pathways for regular migration. A cause worth funding for its humanitarian aspects, as well as its positive impacts on society.



## 312 Café opens innovative new branch at Jazeera Terminal 5

The inauguration of the new 312 Café branch at Jazeera Terminal 5 (T5) marks a significant milestone as the first-of-its-kind establishment in the region.

Dedicated to providing youth with special needs an avenue to showcase their skills and abilities, the café proudly employs over 16 differently abled individuals, reaffirming its commitment to fostering a more inclusive society. Founded by partners Tareq Abdeen and Georges Khoury, the café is named "312" in honor of December 3, the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The concept features both a permanent café location and short-term pop-ups at corporates, universities, or events. Offering a variety of delicious hot and cold beverages along with light refreshments, the café caters to passengers and visitors alike.

Speaking at the launch event, Abdeen expressed his excitement about partnering with Jazeera Terminal 5 for their new branch location. He emphasized the importance of providing special youth with the opportunity to develop their personalities and interact with people from diverse backgrounds. "At 312 Café we function as a family, giving them a safe and comfortable environment to learn and develop. We feel strongly about giving them an opportunity to

grow and become a part of society. Supporting these special youth is both a humanitarian and social responsibility, especially because they are creativity and skills must be utilized," Abdeen said.

In T5 at Kuwait International Airport, 312 Café now shares space with several well-known local, regional, and international brands, both in F&B and retail. The new branch location, T5, is owned and operated by Jazeera Airways, which flies to 64 destinations and serves over 4 million departing, arriving, and transiting passengers. The airport location allows 312 Café to operate around the clock and gives the youth an opportunity to serve a wider range of customers.

Rohit Ramachandran, Chief Executive Officer of Jazeera Airways, emphasized the significance of their partnership with 312 Café, stating, "This marks our second collaboration with 312 Café, following our initial venture at our head office and now extending to Jazeera Terminal 5. It is an absolute pleasure to be working with such an innovative and socially beneficial concept to offer these special individuals an opportunity to function as normally as possible. They are all talented and skilled, so empowering them to utilize their full potential is a privilege for us at Jazeera Airways, where diversity and inclusion are strong parts of our organizational culture."



# Amiri decree dissolves parliament

On Thursday, 15 February, an Amiri decree was issued dissolving the National Assembly, citing the parliament's violation of the Constitution. The decree, which cited article 107 of the Constitution, said the National Assembly had violated the Constitution within the context of using improper terms in addressing His Highness the Amir.

It added that the Prime Minister, Ministers and other concerned parties must implement this decree, effective as of the time of its issuance. It is to be published in the official Gazette. Article 107 of the constitution states the Amir may dissolve the National Assembly by a decree in which the reasons for dissolution shall be indicated.

Earlier on Thursday, the cabinet held an extraordinary session at the Seif Palace, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah to discuss proceedings of the National Assembly session held on 7 February during which constitutional principles had been breached. The cabinet noted that such behavior contradicts the values and principles instilled by the forefathers and does not represent the true nature of the loyal Kuwaiti people. Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet



Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji stated that the cabinet had reviewed the letter addressed by His Highness the Prime Minister to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, seeking his guidance on the aforementioned incidents that sparked widespread public and official disapproval.

The government noted that it has made

sincere efforts to deepen the principles of action in the program it tabled to the National Assembly in its maiden meeting with MPs after taking oath of office. In its program, the government had shown its strong belief in the importance of attaining sustainable development in all areas to ensure a prosperous future and translate into action the sovereign

instructions of His Highness the Amir.

The government added that it has been keen on effective cooperation between the Executive and Legislative authorities to review legislations in the face of mounting challenges, in a way that could serve the interests of the homeland and realize the aspirations of citizens in line with the Constitution and the law.

The letter emphasized that the Amir's high authority is inviolable, as stipulated in Article 54 of the Constitution, which states that "The Amir is the Head of the State. His person is immune and inviolable." It also highlighted that Amir's earlier address to the nation was an extension of the constitutional principles and provisions.

The Cabinet expressed its dismay at the insistence of lawmakers to record the disrespectful remarks made during the parliamentary session on 7 February in the Parliament's minutes, and considered it unacceptable and a clear violation of the Amir's authority.

Based on Article 107 of the Constitution and the presentation made by His Highness the Prime Minister, the Cabinet agreed on a decree to dissolve the National Assembly and tendered it to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

## IOM Kuwait wraps up police training on trafficking, smuggling investigations



The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Kuwait wrapped up a five-day training session in Kuwait City, focusing on criminal and electronic investigations in cases of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. The training, held from February 11 to 15, was conducted in collaboration with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior (MoI).

The training aimed to enhance the ability of frontline police officers to respond to human trafficking. It was organized by the MoI Training Department and included 30

participants from various departments.

Mazen AboulHosn, IOM Kuwait Chief of Mission, emphasized the importance of preventing trafficking, protecting and assisting victims, and prosecuting perpetrators during his closing remarks. He also expressed pride in IOM's longstanding partnership with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior, highlighting collaborative workshops conducted over the years.

The training covered various topics such as indicators for identifying human trafficking cases, national legislation and international conventions related to human trafficking, the use of information technology in investigating trafficking cases, trauma-related symptoms for trafficking victims, and strategies for interviewing both victims and suspects.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals call for immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery, and combat human trafficking.

This workshop complements Kuwait's efforts across ministries and institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, General Authority for Manpower, and the National Standing Committee on implementing the national strategy to combat trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

The state of Kuwait has been proactive in addressing the issue of trafficking in persons. Efforts include the enactment of Law No. 91 of 2013 on Combating Trafficking in Persons and smuggling of migrants, establishment of shelters for migrant workers and the formation of the Permanent National Committee tasked with implementing the National Strategy to prevent Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants.



## Dr. Ashwin Fernandes – a man with a curious mind

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

student ratio, 5% through the partners they have collaborated with during research, international students, international faculty, sustainability; as well as alumni outcomes, are their alumni placed in the Forbes 500, Forbes 200 or Asia's Top Business listed companies

The positive news is that ten years ago India had only 11 universities that were among QS-ranked but now, under the present government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has 44 out of 1,500 that are QS-ranked. In the Asia-only ranking, for the first time this year India has overtaken China with 148 universities out of the 800 ranked."

Dr. Ashwin Fernandes firmly believes India is rising. A decade ago, when he was asked to lead the India strategy from QS, no one was interested in international rankings, even the IITs and IIMs showed no interest. The new Indian leadership gauged that to compete and reach a 44 trillion-dollar economy by 2047, knowledge will have to be at the center of it and India will have to export higher education, for which new universities will be needed that attract students just like Canada, the US and Australia do.

Kuwait, a comparatively young country has three universities amongst the ranked ones. India, given its very glorious legacy should have a lot more. Dr. Fernandes's rich experience and will to document his thoughts resulted in his book 'India's Knowledge Supremacy – The New Dawn' a project he put his heart and soul into. Dr. Fernandes recalled the time around 2018 when he moved to India, amidst the backdrop of ISRO's ambitious space programs he saw a cartoon in the New York Times, depicting an Indian farmer with a cow knocking on the door marked 'Elite Space Club' where two men sat reading a newspaper. He felt offended, especially given India's history where the best universities of the world lay in ancient India. The legacy was subsequently destroyed by a series of invasions and the colonisation. He wanted to showcase the India of today, the

legacy we had and then lost. The loot and plundering of invasions and colonisation culminated in the abhorring English Education Act of 1835 which made things worse, it created a system to produce clerks with no creativity or skill, instead, all of India was just dependent on rote learning. In stark contrast he feels the National Education Policy of 2020 is a game changer and will add the much-needed impetus to higher education.

His book is a reference for anybody trying to understand India's higher education, a concise report on the past predicament of the downfall of Indian universities, the present-day policies changing the face of Indian education, and what the future holds. India's higher education in private colleges is promising, liberal arts colleges offer unique programs like AI, genomics and biotechnology, revolutionizing education. However, for universities to flourish, they need full academic rigor, and funds must be invested back into research to compete with the top tier universities of the world. Graduation programs are all dependent on research as universities need to inspire students to open their minds to new avenues.

The main challenge to higher education is access, therefore good quality education should be made available. In India the current gross enrolment ratio is 27%, which means that not all the students who should be studying higher education are enrolled. The National Education Policy aims for 50% enrolment by 2035.

Foreign students may not be thronging to come to India; however, the country stands a better chance to attract students from the global south, countries in Africa, south Asia, Latin America. There is no substitute to higher education, it will always be required as learning needs a solid foundation. Dr. Ashwin Fernandes concluded with his thoughts, "I feel the youth of today have a lot of potential and higher education gives you the platform to take off, to fly and to soar. Help is at hand if you want to study, scholarships are available, online micro credentials are available, if you have a curious mind, the rest will follow."



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



# What Corporations Need to Know About Public Health



**Tom Achoki**

*A former Sloan fellow at MIT, is an adjunct faculty member at Baylor University and Co-Founder of the Africa Institute for Health Policy, a research and advisory agency based in Nairobi, Kenya.*

Corporations are increasingly moving into the public-health domain. Companies like Amazon, Google, and Microsoft are being 'pulled' by market opportunities for non-traditional actors to 'disrupt' health care. Others are being 'pushed' by the imperative — highlighted by events like the COVID-19 pandemic — to act as responsible community stakeholders, such as by helping to address health inequities.

When such pull and push forces intersect, there are often important opportunities to align economic and social objectives. But if strategic corporate philanthropy is to improve public health, those charged with making decisions and allocating resources must have a deep understanding of the health system, including the institutions, organizations, and resources that comprise it, and the complex interactions among them.

According to a framework established by the World Health Organization, health systems have six pillars: service delivery; development and deployment of a health workforce; collection, analysis, and use of critical health information; provision of essential medical products, vaccines, and other health technologies; financing; and effective leadership and governance. To meet a population's health needs, all six must work

in harmony, in an elaborate process involving inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact.

Consider COVID-19 vaccination programs, which depend on inputs — including financial resources, workers, equipment, and the vaccines themselves — that are partly outputs from activities like medical-product development and service delivery, with all the logistics, infrastructure, personnel training, and supervision this entails. Together, all these factors lead to an outcome — getting a large enough share of the population vaccinated — with the impact being a reduction in mortality and morbidity from COVID-19.

As the WHO also explains, an effective health system is fair and equitable, both in the distribution of health goods and services and in the way it is financed. It emphasizes efficiency and cost-effectiveness as well, and responds

that any direct investment in the health system must serve to strengthen one or more of the framework's six pillars. To this end, a clear, data-based strategy for measuring health-system performance is crucial.

Only a comprehensive monitoring and evaluating plan — identifying not only what data needs to be measured, but also how, when, and by whom — can ensure that decision-makers have the information they need to plan, organize, and implement effective public-health programs. For example, it can help to ascertain high- and low-priority areas, as well as areas where services are being duplicated, thereby improving the allocation of scarce resources. It can also show which public-health interventions are making the biggest difference, and be used to track progress in health outcomes, potentially revealing gaps between segments of the

unintended consequences).

Health actors need to engage effectively with other stakeholders, because public-health programs often involve diverse groups with different priorities and objectives that must be harmonized to meet overarching health goals. For such engagement to work, however, trust and credibility are key. An effective impact-measurement strategy can help here, too, by supporting transparency and accountability.

For example, while basic principles of privacy and confidentiality must be respected, organizations should share the results, positive or negative, of any public-health investment or intervention, including relevant datasets, where feasible, with other stakeholders. Beyond fostering confidence, letting others know what works and what does not would accelerate progress on improving health outcomes. Independent evaluations of programs would also help here. All of this requires a set of key performance indicators (KPI) to be established at different levels of the framework used to measure short-, medium-, and long-term changes resulting from any given program. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. On the contrary, KPIs should be aligned with global standards, as established in existing policy documents, so that stakeholders are all using the same language.

The final critical insight for companies entering the health-care domain is that not only are health systems highly complex, but they also operate within an environment in which they must continually interact with various political, socioeconomic, and sociocultural forces. All of these forces, not just interactions within the health system, shape public-health outcomes. The better newcomers understand these interactions, the more likely they will be to have a positive impact on public health.

“

A comprehensive plan that identifies not only what data needs to be measured, but also how, when, and by whom, can ensure that decision-makers have the information to plan and implement effective public-health programs.

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to the legitimate non-health expectations of those seeking health care, such as respect and compassion. Ultimately, an effective system ensures that anyone in need of a specific health good or service can access it and derive the relevant benefits.

This framework should guide corporations, and all stakeholders, as they engage in the public-health domain. So should the principle

population. Organizations seeking to engage in public health can use such data, together with a broader understanding of the health-system framework, to identify where they are best suited to make a difference, based on their competitive or comparative advantages. The better they know the terrain they are entering, the easier it will be to pinpoint unmet needs and anticipate their actions' likely impact (including possible





EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Reducing Plastic Pollution Requires Local Remedies



**Mirei Endara de Heras**

*A former environment minister of Panama, is Co-Founder and Chairwoman of the Board of Marea Verde, a Panama-based nonprofit addressing global plastic pollution through local action.*



As the United Nations enters the final stretch of negotiations for a new treaty to end plastic pollution, governments must work to ensure that the agreement not only reduces plastic production, but also strengthens local initiatives to remove and recycle existing plastic waste.

Consider the Juan Díaz River, which runs through my hometown of Panama City. Tons of plastic, bottles and other detritus bob in the river's currents, owing to poor waste management. Faced with this problem, Marea Verde ('Green Tide'), a non-profit organization that I co-founded, has installed a trash-trapping water wheel, dubbed the 'Wanda' device, that now collects much of this waste before it reaches the ocean.

Local initiatives like ours are necessary to achieve global climate goals. This is especially true for eliminating plastic pollution, which is largely driven by local consumption decisions. The new UN treaty, in my view, should thus balance top-down efforts to reduce plastic production and ban the use of toxic chemicals in these products with support for on-the-ground efforts to recycle, reuse, or transform in a sustainable way the billions of tons of plastic already clogging the world's waterways and harming the environment. Otherwise, the ocean will contain more plastics than fish by 2050, and new diseases caused by microplastics, which have already been detected in human blood, could become commonplace.

“

The plastic crisis is a result of human activities, and solving it calls for behavioral change, which can be accomplished through initiatives that engage local communities and create awareness in their ability to improve their surroundings.

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So far, stakeholders are split on how best to proceed. During the latest round of treaty negotiations, held in Nairobi last November, the plastics industry and some oil- and petrochemical-exporting countries called for more emphasis on recycling and reuse, while environmental campaigners and other governments advocated curbs on production. To reach a consensus by late 2024, the two sides must be brought into alignment and agree on an integrated approach that links global goals

to local action. Working in government and nonprofits, I have experienced first-hand how a disconnect between international plans and on-the-ground realities can thwart progress and breed cynicism. That is why we at Marea Verde adapt ideas that have been successfully implemented elsewhere — from the United States to Nigeria and Australia — to our context and culture.

For example, our Wanda device is based on Clearwater Mills' trash wheels, a clean-energy technology that debuted in the US but is customized for a tropical ecosystem. Over the past year, Wanda has collected more than 130 tons of trash from the Juan Díaz River — a more effective intervention than fishing plastics from the sea or beach cleanups. Replicating this model worldwide could dramatically reduce land-sourced debris, which accounts for 80 percent of ocean plastic pollution.

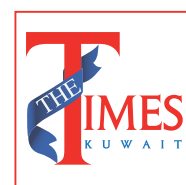
Fortunately, many other organizations are focusing on river cleanup to prevent new plastic waste from entering the ocean. Eight of these groups, including Marea Verde, are participating in the Clean Currents Coalition, a network of projects that are piloting innovative waste-removal technologies in river communities around the world. Coalition members can share knowledge and work collaboratively while also encouraging and facilitating effective on-the-ground action. The plastic crisis is a result of human activities, and solving it calls for behavioral change, which can be accomplished only through initiatives that engage local communities. For example, Marea Verde organizes and empowers residents in areas without recycling facilities by going door to door to collect plastic waste. As a result, many people have become aware of their ability to improve their surroundings, leading them to participate in neighborhood cleanups, reclaim green spaces, and lobby for better waste management.

Moreover, the lack of local data in many developing countries, including Panama, can make it difficult to design climate policies that are fit for purpose. That is why Marea Verde is also building databases on the volume and types of plastic trash in Panama's rivers, which will improve reporting, help urban planning, and demonstrate the scale of the crisis.

Efforts to counter plastic pollution must be equal to the size of the problem. To that end, the new UN treaty should include severe curbs on plastic production to choke off output and give clean-up efforts a fighting chance. But it must also

support the local groups at the forefront of tackling the plastic problem. These groups' innovative strategies, tools, and data-gathering practices can serve as a model for the global community. This

is not an either/or decision: both international regulations and local action are needed. The latter is already underway and is making a difference, one community and one river at a time.



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# Thought for the week

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

Tim Jackson  
British Ecological Economist

## How to handle menstrual cramps

Ask Mira : Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

women with menstrual cramps.

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

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

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

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

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To subscribe to my diet programs,  
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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

## Crispy Sesame Bar



**C**rispy sesame bars are made during winter months in India, as it is both nutritious and warming to the body. Sesame seeds and the jaggery used to provide the sugar content in the bars also have iron and other minerals that are beneficial to health. Depending on availability, you can replace the sesame seeds with peanuts, gram dal and other nuts for a different take on the same nutritious bar.

Total time: 15 minutes.  
Serving: 15 to 20 pieces.

#### Ingredients:

1 cup sesame seeds  
1 cup grated jaggery  
1 tsp ghee for greasing

#### Directions:

- Place sesame seeds in a non-stick pan and dry roast on a medium flame for 5 to 6 minutes and set aside
- Melt jaggery in a pan over low flame and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring constantly until the mixture turns a golden brown syrupy form. Turn off the flame.
- Check whether the syrup is the right consistency by adding a small drop of it in a bowl of cold water. If it turns into a solid drop that is crisp and easy to break, then the syrup has the correct consistency required. Otherwise, cook for a few more minutes and again check the consistency using the same method
- When syrup is of right consistency add the roasted sesame seeds and mix thoroughly until all the sesame seeds are well coated with the syrup
- Stir together the mixture quickly as the syrup will harden very rapidly
- Transfer the sesame-syrup mixture to a greased worktop or plate
- Spread evenly using a greased rolling pin
- Mark the spread into square bars with a sharp knife and set aside to cool
- Store the cut pieces in an airtight container so it stays good for 3-4 weeks.



Chef Chhaya Thakker

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



# Diabetes treatment wrapped in chocolate

**L**atest figures from the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) show that in 2021 there were more than 537 million adults living with diabetes. This number is projected to increase to 783 million by 2045. Around three in four of those with diabetes live in low-and middle-income countries, where affordability and access to diabetes medications and treatment are often difficult to come by. Limited access to treatment options in these countries has contributed significantly to the 6.7 million lives that were claimed by diabetes in 2021.

Numbers from the IDF are indeed daunting and dismaying, nevertheless hope is now on the horizon for a more affordable and accessible treatment for diabetes. The treatment, now in its early research phase, could potentially be not only more effective than the current best treatment option of insulin injections or an insulin pump, but also come wrapped in a chocolate.

Scientists at the University of Tromsø (UiT) or the Arctic University in Norway, say they have found a new way to supply the body with insulin. Rather than injecting insulin, the smart insulin developed at UiT is ingested either by taking a capsule, or even better, wrapped within a piece of chocolate. The new discovery could prove to be a blessing for the hundreds of millions affected by diabetes, especially for the estimated 97 million people who inject themselves daily with insulin.

The new treatment comes in the form of a capsule inside which are tiny nano-carriers on which the insulin is encapsulated. The nano-

carriers, each the size of less than 1/10,000th the width of a human hair, ferry their insulin payload to its target location in the liver.

The innovative manner in which insulin is carried into the body makes the treatment more effective and efficacious than insulin injections. When insulin is taken into the body through a syringe, it spreads throughout the body where it can cause unwanted side effects. On the other hand, the new method delivers the insulin precisely and rapidly to the specific areas in the body that need it most.

Although many medications are now taken by mouth, the challenge to taking insulin in a capsule is that acids and enzymes in the stomach breakdown the capsule, prematurely releasing insulin in the intestinal tract or stomach, with only a small portion eventually reaching the intended target in the liver.

Scientists behind the new study solved this problem by creating a coating that protected the insulin from being broken down by stomach acid and digestive enzymes on its way through the digestive system, keeping it safe until it reaches its destination in the liver.

Enzymes in the liver that are active only when the blood sugar levels are high, then break down the coating and the nano-carriers release the insulin, which then acts in the liver, muscle, and fat to remove sugar from the blood. The new method mimics the natural insulin delivery process in healthy people — the pancreas produces insulin that then passes through the liver where a large portion is absorbed to help maintain stable blood sugar levels. The new method ensures that when blood sugar is high, there is a rapid release of insulin, and even more importantly, when blood sugar is low (hypoglycemia), no insulin is released. This is a more practical and patient-friendly method of managing diabetes because it allows for the controlled release of insulin depending on the patient's need, and greatly reduces the risk of hypoglycemia, which can potentially be dangerous for people with diabetes.



The researchers explained that when you inject insulin under the skin with a syringe, far more of it goes to the muscles and to adipose tissues, than would normally happen if it was released from the pancreas. This can lead to the accumulation of fats and also lead to hypoglycemia. Additionally, the new method does not require the refrigeration of insulin. The oral insulin has so far been tested on mice and rats, as well as most recently, on baboons in Australia. In order to make the oral insulin palatable the team incorporated the insulin into sugar-free chocolate, which was readily ingested by the baboons.

The 20 baboons used in the test were normal, healthy baboons, but the oral insulin was also tested on mice and rats that actually had diabetes. The mice and rats fed with oral insulin did not have hypoglycemia, gain weight or cause fat accumulation in the liver, overcoming existing challenges with injectable and other oral insulins.

What remains now is to test the new method on humans. Trials on humans are projected to start in 2025, with clinical trials slated to take place in several phases.

Provided the phase I trial reveals that it is safe for humans, the scientists hope to progress to phase 2 trials to investigate how it can replace injections for diabetic patients. The researchers hope that the new medicine can be ready for use by everyone in 2-3 years.



## Spiral lenses could help advance ophthalmology

**R**esearchers have developed a new spiral-shaped lens that has distinct advantages over lenses currently in production and could revolutionize ophthalmology and other lens technologies going forward.

The new lens not only maintains clear focus at different distances, but also does so in varying light conditions, thereby overcoming many of the challenges associated with lenses currently used in prescription glasses, contact lenses, and in intraocular implants for cataracts, as well as in many miniature imaging systems.

The joint research team, from the Institut d'Optique Graduate School, the University of Bordeaux, and the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in France, that developed the new glasses say that unlike existing multifocal lenses, the new lens works much like progressive lenses used for vision correction, but without the distortions typically seen with those lenses, especially around the wearer's peripheral vision.

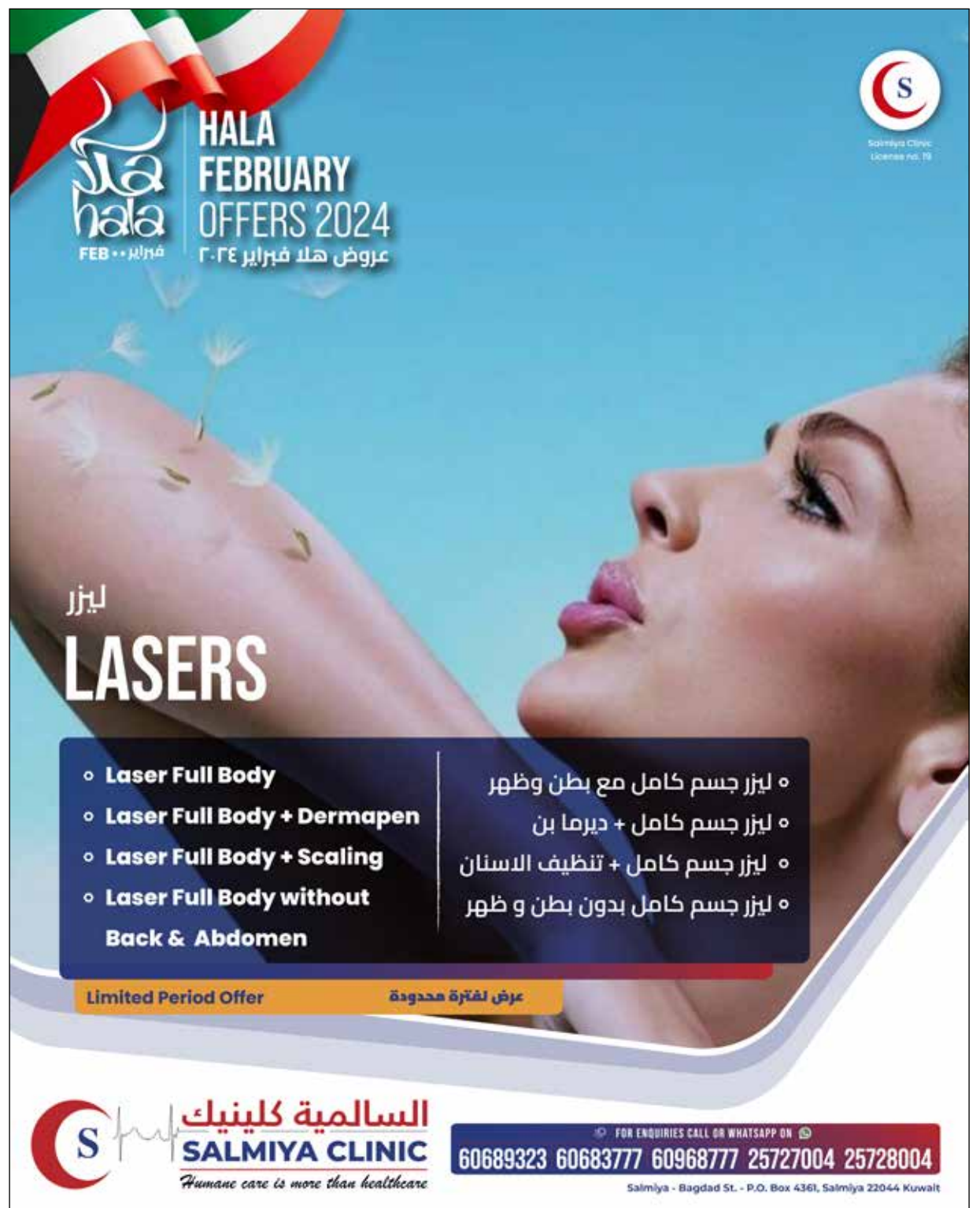
The ability to provide consistently clear vision could potentially make the lens a boon for people with age-related farsightedness or for those with implanted lenses. Explaining the advantages of their new lens, which they called a spiral diopter, the research team said that the spiraling features of the lens are arranged in a way that creates many separate points of focus — much like having multiple lenses in one.

This makes it possible to see clearly at various distances.

In addition to ophthalmology applications, the simple design of this lens could streamline the design and function of compact imaging systems, and offer a way to accomplish imaging at various depths without additional optical elements. These capabilities, coupled with the lens's multifocal properties, offer a powerful tool for depth perception in advanced imaging applications.

The unique spiral design of the lens causes light to spin, like water going down a drain. This phenomenon, known as an optical vortex, creates multiple clear focus points, which allow the lens to provide clear focus at different distances. Creating an optical vortex usually requires multiple optical components, however the researchers were able to incorporate the elements necessary to make an optical vortex directly into its surface.

The scientists also discovered that the optical vortices could be modified by adjusting the topological charge, which is essentially the number of windings around the optical axis. Volunteers using the lenses also reported noticeable improvements in visual acuity at a variety of distances and lighting conditions. The technique, which uses advanced digital machining to mold the unique spiral design with high precision, has the potential to make significant advancement in the field of optics. Bringing the new lens to fruition required combining the intuitively crafted design with advanced fabrication techniques through a cross-disciplinary collaboration among optical scientists. The research team is now reportedly working to better understand the unique optical vortices produced by their lens. They also plan to perform systematic trials of the ability of their lens to correct vision in people, so as to comprehensively establish its performance and advantages in real-world conditions. In addition, they are exploring the possibility of applying the concept to prescription eyeglasses, which could potentially offer users clear vision across multiple distances.



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Improving Cupid's Aim



**Todd G. Buchholz**

A former White House director of economic policy under President George H.W. Bush, managing director of the Tiger hedge fund, is a recipient of the Harvard Department of Economics' Allyn Young Teaching Prize. He is the author of *New Ideas from Dead Economists* and *The Price of Prosperity*.



Cupid may be hitting the mark in the shopping aisle, but he is not having much luck coaxing couples down the wedding aisle. Although Valentine's Day spending on significant others will reach a record high in the United States this year, fewer Americans are marrying and having sex, leading to fewer babies being born. But there is evidence to suggest that Cupid's aim will improve in coming years. If we want to survive as a species, we should be rooting for the pudgy cherub's success.

It is easy to point to all sorts of dreadful news about the prospects for young people globally. A survey by Japan's National Institute of Population and Social Security found that 17.3 percent of men and 14.6 percent of women aged between 18 and 34 have no intention of ever tying the knot, while many young women are swearing off sex altogether. In the US, Generation Z tells pollsters that they will never earn enough money to buy a home, while 59 percent of young people around the world say they are very or extremely worried about the planet overheating.

And yet a careful inventory of modern-day American dating and marriage trends gives hope that candlelight dinners for two are not a thing of the past. Let us organize our inventory with the acrostic ROMANCE:

Rings are pricey, with the average engagement ring costing about \$5,500. But this average is biased upward by Kardashian wannabes, who stroll around with diamonds that could rival I.M. Pei's pyramid at the Louvre. One fascinating study revealed that couples who spend more on an engagement ring are more likely to get divorced. Thankfully, the median cost of an engagement ring has been going down, perhaps because lab-grown diamonds offer the same sparkle as their mined counterparts at a fraction of the cost. Moreover, many couples eschew new rings, preferring family heirlooms like great-grandma's Art Deco bling from the Flapper era.

Online dating is fraught with sharks and frauds. And yet it opens the door to a world of opportunities for the more than half of Gen Zers and Millennials who use these apps daily. In the 'old days' in the 'old country', wherever that was, villagers relied on matchmakers and arranged marriages (some still do). Even in the 1950s, the chance to marry someone from outside your county often depended on a college sojourn or an overseas vacation — options available only to

the privileged. Today, finding a mate online costs relatively little, and a careful 'shopper' can curate by looks, education, and hobbies, rather than relying on introductions from Aunt Sylvia's bridge partner.

Marriages are less common than in prior eras, and the age of a first-time married couple is climbing fast. While Steve Carell's titular character in the 2005 comedy *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* was an outlier to be laughed at, his plight seems more plausible today. In 2021, around 25 percent of 40-year-olds had never been married, compared to just 7 percent in 1960. But delaying marriage could make sense with rising life expectancy. In 1960, the average 40-year-old American male could expect to live to 73, whereas a 40-year-old today will likely reach 85. That still leaves many years of matrimonial bliss or bickering for those who postpone it.

Accommodations are pricey, with Zillow reporting that it takes nearly 12 years for a typical first-time US homebuyer to save for a down payment. So where can a youngish couple live? The COVID-19 work-from-home craze spurred

city-dwellers to buy up suburban abodes and landlords to raise rents. Soaring inflation pushed up mortgage rates. But there are grounds for hope this year: ribbon-cutting ceremonies for multifamily buildings representing more than 700,000 new apartments are scheduled. Moreover, several states have recently passed laws permitting homeowners to construct backyard cottages.

Nullifications and divorces are down, which suggests that couples who do marry like each other more. In fact, the divorce rate has been plunging since 1980, and recently reached a 50-year low. Of course, that is no guarantee of happiness. The great comedian Jack Benny said that in 50 years of marriage, he and his wife, Mary, never considered divorce. "Murder, yes, but divorce, never."

Ceremonies can be more inventive. American newlyweds spend about \$30,000 on feeding and entertaining their wedding guests. No wonder 73 percent of young couples think it is too expensive to marry! (Their parents might agree.) While few will choose an old-fashioned party in the church gymnasium under banners proclaiming, 'Go Hoosiers', many are seeking more frugal celebrations on family patios and in back gardens.

Eros is the Greek name for Cupid, and he is puzzled by the discipline of young people. Compared to their parent's generation, they drink less alcohol, go to bed earlier, and more frequently go to bed alone. The share of 18 to 35-year-olds who did not have sex in the past year has doubled since 1990. Does this trend come from a rise in religion, a fear of rashes, or just a desire to stay at home playing video games? Regardless, when these unsexed singles finally meet the right mate, more than fireworks could explode.

Nearly a hundred years ago, Cole Porter wrote the song 'Let's Do It (Let's Fall in Love)', observing that, "Birds do it, bees do it, even educated fleas do it." Young people may be slow learners, but they are likely to catch on.

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