



Grace period to complete biometric fingerprinting begins

Ministry of Interior (Mol) has announced that the three-month grace period to complete biometric fingerprinting for all citizens and residents in the country aged 18 and over, began on Friday, 1 March. The ministry warned that failure to complete the fingerprinting process by 1 June, will result in the suspension of various essential services from Mol to the defaulters, including their access to renewal of residencies, car registration, driving licenses, and others.

Sources at Mol say that the General Department of Criminal Evidence has received over 1.78 million individuals since the launch of the biometric fingerprint project last year. Of these, approximately 900,000 are citizens and 880,000 are residents.

Moreover, around 670,000 individuals, mainly residents, have yet to complete the biometric process.

In addition, out of the total population of over 4.8 million people in the country, With nearly 1.1 million individuals, out of the country's total population of 4.8 million people,

exempt from the requirement of biometric fingerprinting due to being under the age of 18, the completion rate among those required to undergo the process is so far only 48 percent.

The sources emphasized the importance of obtaining the biometric fingerprint within the specified timeframe to avoid any inconvenience or disruption of essential services. They urged those who have not yet completed the process to schedule an appointment through the Mol website and complete the process at one of the designated locations in all governorates.

An earlier statement on the deadline, which was released last week by Mol's General Department of Public Relations and Security Media, noted that this move was part of the ministry's ongoing endeavor to collect biometric fingerprinting from all citizens and residents in Kuwait aged 18 and over.

The statement highlighted that citizens, Gulf Cooperation Council nationals, and residents can quickly undergo biometric fingerprinting at border outlets, Kuwait International Airport, and designated centers, as well as commercial



complexes. The locations in the country currently designated as biometric fingerprinting centers include, Security Directorates at the governorates in Hawalli, Farwaniya, Ahmadi, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Jahra, and at the Ministries Complex in Kuwait City. People can also access the fingerprinting process at the Avenues Mall, 360 Mall, and Capital Mall.

In addition, two dedicated centers have been established for residents in the Ahmadi and Jahra governorates. Additionally, individuals

can also obtain their biometric fingerprint upon returning from travel through the dedicated devices installed at air, land, and sea ports.

On a related note, Youssef Kazim, the official spokesman for the unified government electronic services application 'Sahel', announced that citizens and residents can now conveniently schedule their "biometric fingerprint" appointments directly within the app.

Detailing the steps for booking appointments online, he explained: "Users will first need to enter the Sahel platform - Select the 'dates' option - click on the 'Book an appointment' button - Choose the 'Ministry of Interior' option - Select the 'General Administration of Criminal Evidence' - choose 'Biometric Fingerprint' and then select their preferred location, day, and time from the available options.

He further added that users will receive a notification confirming their appointment reservation, along with a reminder that they must present the 'My Identity' application or their civil ID when attending to complete the biometric fingerprinting procedures.

KEMS Zajil Telecom, Part of Kalaam Group, is Proud to Announce, Kalaam Gear-Up for The Second Year to Provide Connectivity for The World's Largest Motorsport Series

Kalaam Telecom Group is again gearing up, in collaboration with Riedel Networks, a renowned global network provider to cater to the needs of the largest motorsport series, starting with the race in Bahrain followed by the Middle East series. Kalaam's successful delivery of the 2023 race series in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia,



KEMS Zajil Telecom CEO, Yusuf Ahmed

Qatar and UAE proved to be a great success and set the stage for continued success in the upcoming races.

Nezar Al Saie, Chairman of Kalaam Telecom



Group said "As a Bahraini company, Kalaam takes great pride in delivering groundbreaking solutions for the biggest motorsport series in the world, with Riedel Networks choosing Bahrain as their hub for the Middle Eastern region. This collaboration has been a milestone entering the motorsport industry on a global scale, starting with the Middle East."

Veer Passi, Group CEO of Kalaam said "2023 was a success story for Kalaam and we remain committed to pushing the boundaries of connectivity & revolutionizing the way we connect the motorsports world. By collaborating with Riedel Networks on this endeavor, Kalaam continues to cater to strategic industries and mission critical projects."

Micheal Martens, CEO of RIEDEL Networks added, "Kalaam aligned perfectly with our criteria for a partner, bringing not just technological expertise but also a commitment to seamless collaboration and an unwavering focus on achieving our shared goals. This collaboration has fortified our network infrastructure and laid the foundation for

future endeavors."

Partnership with Kalaam supported Riedel Networks in establishing a Point-of-Presence (PoP) in the region, granting connectivity to Kalaam's worldwide PoPs in Europe and Asia while ensuring ultra-low latency service level guarantees. The solution leverages Kalaam's fully owned Kalaam Network Optical Transit (KNOT) cable system and the Europe-India Gateway cable (EIG). By utilizing these advanced cable systems, Riedel Networks established a robust and reliable network infrastructure, enabling seamless data transmission with minimal latency.

KEMS Zajil Telecom, part of Kalaam Group headquartered in Kuwait, is a distinguished digital solutions provider and has a proven track record of delivering cutting-edge enterprise solutions to a diverse clientele in Kuwait. "This a proud moment for KEMS Zajil Telecom, in being associated with the group, and we are sure to use this experience to further elevate deliveries of solutions within the local market," said KEMS Zajil Telecom CEO, Yusuf Ahmed.

Kuwait Cricket team granted A-List status

Kuwait Cricket's Men's National team gained entry into the coveted A-List status granted by the International Cricket Council (ICC). The new status, attained by winning three out of its four matches in the ongoing qualifiers being held in Malaysia, secures Kuwait a berth into the next round of the ICC 50 Overs Cricket World Cup Challenge League. by winning 3 out of its 4 matches in the ongoing qualifiers in Kuala Lumpur.



Speaking to media on the occasion, President of Kuwait Cricket Board, Haider Farman said: "This is an extremely satisfying, historic and path-breaking moment for Kuwait cricket and a reflection of all the hard work that's been put in for so many years by the entire KCC family. I congratulate each and every single member of the delegation to Malaysia and the entire KCC fraternity for this huge breakthrough." He added, "I strongly believe that we have the potential to achieve more, and excel even further with an eye on the ODI Status now."

KCC Director General, Sajid Ashraf added, "We have many dreams, one of them has come true today. With today's win and qualification for the ICC CWC Challenge League, Kuwait has demonstrated exceptional skill, determination, and teamwork. We are immensely proud of their achievements. Kuwait will now participate in as many as 15 List A matches spread across this 50 overs cycle over the next four years. Huge congratulations to the entire team led by skipper Aslam, head coach Qasim Ali and Team Manager Naveen Dhanajayan, and all the players, as they are the real heroes of the game."

ABCK-AmCham Kuwait host 21st golf tourney

ABCK-AmCham Kuwait held its 21st Annual Golf Tournament on 2 February at the Sahara Kuwait Golf Resort. In his opening remarks, AmCham Kuwait's Chairman, Pete Swift, expressed gratitude to members for their unwavering support and welcomed all participants, encouraging them to enjoy a day of camaraderie and competition.

Following the tournament, an Awards Ceremony and lunch were held, with Swift acknowledging the golfers, hosts, and sponsors for their contributions. He also thanked the event sponsors, Eastern United Petroleum Services (Gold Sponsor), Saudi Arabian Chevron (Silver Sponsor), and the event's Exclusive Travel Partner and newest chairman club member, IFA International Travel and Tourism, for their support.

The award winner for the 'Longest Drive' was Benjamin Duroyon, and the award for the 'Closest to the Pin' went to Jamie Urbanek. The team that earned the third place in the

tournament was that of Eoin Fitzgerald, Michaela Abey, Steven Bezuidenhout, and Darragh Meredith.

The second place was earned by the team of Philip Kotsis, Les Moskaliuk, Dan Leritz, and Aaron Dikos. The first place of the Annual Golf

Tournament was earned by the team of David Sims, Scott Dunnings, Harold Yambao, and Mark Assistin.

To wrap up the event, the AmCham Kuwait team conducted several raffle draws that saw winners receiving a host of enticing prizes.



ICJ not able to stop Gaza Genocide

Nicaragua case against Germany may have consequences to Israel supporters



By Tareq Yousef AlShumaimry

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has indeed taken significant steps to address the risk of genocide in Gaza. However, its effectiveness in enforcing its decisions remains a subject of ongoing debate. Here are some key points:

ICJ ruling on genocide prevention: The ICJ ordered "immediate and effective measures" to protect Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip from the risk of genocide.

Israel's compliance: Despite the ICJ's ruling, Israel has failed to take even the bare minimum steps to comply.

Challenges to enforcement: While the ICJ has issued orders to prevent genocide, the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms remains a challenge.

Urgent international cooperation is necessary to protect civilians and alleviate the suffering in Gaza.

The ICJ's powers are limited by the unwillingness of the losing party to abide by its rulings.

Last week the International Court of Justice saw the conclusion of the public hearings held from 19 to 26 February, 2024 on the request for an advisory opinion in respect of the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem,

During the hearings, the State of Palestine, 49 Member States of the United Nations and three international organizations presented oral statements (in the following order): Palestine, South Africa, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Russian Federation, France, The Gambia, Guyana, Hungary, China, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mauritius, Namibia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Indonesia, Qatar, United Kingdom, Slovenia, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, Tunisia, Türkiye, Zambia, League of Arab States, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, African Union, Spain, Fiji and the Maldives.

The Kuwaiti delegation comprising Ali Al-Thefeeri, Kuwait's ambassador to The Hague, permanent representative to the UN Tariq Al Bannai and Assistant Foreign minister for Legal Affairs, Tahani Al-Nasser made a fervent plea to end the occupation.

Ambassador Ali Al Thefeeri told the court that the current advisory proceedings were of extreme



importance to the Palestinian people, Kuwait, the international legal order and the international community as a whole.

Ambassador Tariq Al Bannai pointed at the discriminatory practices that the Palestinians were subjected to, while Tahani Al-Nasser told the court that Kuwait was harnessing its strength and international diplomatic relations in support of the Palestinian cause and against the massacres currently taking place in Gaza.

Furthermore, on 1 March, Nicaragua filed an application instituting proceedings against Germany before the International Court of Justice for alleged violations by Germany (Germany is a key ally of Tel Aviv, and is one of its biggest arms providers alongside the United States, according to UN experts) of its obligations deriving from the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the 'Genocide Convention'), the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their additional protocols, "intransgressible principles of international humanitarian law" and other norms of general international law in relation to the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly the Gaza Strip.

As Germany decided that it would officially intervene with Israel in the lawsuit and USA is only in solidarity with Israel, but will not officially intervene in the lawsuit, Nicaragua filed the application instituting proceedings against Germany

The applicant states that each and every Contracting Party to the Genocide Convention has a duty under the Convention "to do everything possible to prevent the commission of genocide" and that, since October 2023, there has been "a recognised risk of genocide against the Palestinian people, directed first of all against the population of the Gaza Strip".

Nicaragua argues that by providing political, financial and military support to Israel and by defunding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), "Germany is facilitating the commission of genocide and, in any case has failed in its obligation to do everything possible to prevent the commission of genocide.

This is also a clear message to countries sending weapons to Israel that they are liable to be complicit to

the crime of genocide.

Under the genocide agreement, countries agree not to commit

genocide, meaning complicity in the act is a violation. The pact also enables member states to actively prevent

and punish possible genocide.


As pressure mounts on Israel to stop the genocide and killings the ICJ seems helpless in its ability to enforce rulings due to the fractured mandate at the UN Security Council.

The world is watching helplessly as Israel is acting with full impunity in annihilating the Palestinian people and grabbing their land.

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

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Indian Tourism event held at Avenues

The Indian people are closer to the hearts of Kuwaitis: Sheikha Hala

Embassy of India organized a two-day tourism promotion event titled 'Explore, Experience, and Enjoy Incredible India' at the Avenues Mall on 29 February – 1 March.

Ambassador of India H.E. Adarsh Swaika and Kuwait's Assistant Under-Secretary of Tourism, Osama Al Mekhyal inaugurated the event, in the presence of a distinguished gathering of Kuwaiti dignitaries, including Sheikha Hala Badr Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, head of the Diplomatic Women's Committee.

In his address to the gathering, Ambassador Swaika explained that the event focused on diverse facets of Indian Tourism, such as, Summer Tourism, Luxury Trains of India, Wellness & Rejuvenation, the Golden Triangle, Adventure, Wildlife and more. He noted that the event was part of ongoing efforts by the embassy to showcase different aspects of Indian tourism to Kuwaiti friends and other expatriate communities in Kuwait.

For her part, Sheikha Hala Badr Al-Sabah stressed the strength and progress of Indian-Kuwaiti relations, noting the great similarity in cultures between the peoples of the two countries, considering that the Indian people are closest to the hearts of Kuwaitis from the Asian continent. She invited Kuwaitis to learn about the tourism opportunities that India abounds in the various seasons of the year, praising the kindness of the Indian people and their warm reception of guests.

Under the theme of 'Summer Tourism',



information about attractive summer destinations in India, such as Kashmir, Shimla, Kulu, Manali, Mussoorie and Nainital in the north; Darjeeling, Gangtok and Kalimpong in the east,

and Ooty in the south were provided.

Under the theme of luxury trains, tourism trails covered by the well-known Palace on Wheels, Maharaja Express, Golden Chariot and

Deccan Odyssey trains were showcased. Wellness tourism in Kerala attracted plenty of visitors to the stalls. The themes of wildlife tourism and adventure sports drew a lot of attention from young people. Tourism pamphlets on different tourism sectors of India were distributed.

Prominent tour and travel agencies ITL World, Caesar's Travel Group, Luxury Travels and Aurora Holidays from Kuwait collaborated with the Indian Embassy in the exhibition, with each of them showcasing one of the touristic themes.

The event also showcased various Indian art and dance forms, such as, Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Mohiniyattam, in addition to folk dances and popular contemporary Bollywood dances. Activities like henna designs, Zardosi artwork, instant quiz etc were also organized to engage the visitors.

New intersection, bridge, streamlines traffic flow

Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport (PART), in coordination with the General Directorate of Traffic, has opened sections of the road and bridge project at the cross between Fifth Ring Road and the Al-Ghazali and Mohammed bin Al Qasim Roads.

Director of PART, Engineer Khaled Dhawi, announced the inauguration of two significant components within the project on 23

February. He noted that the opening included a 1500m long service road, boasting three traffic lanes parallel to the Fifth Ring Road; and, an intersectional upper bridge with Al-Ghazali Road, spanning 120 meters in length."

He added that together, these two developments will provide seamless access to the entrances of the Avenues Mall, an area that has suffered for long from traffic congestion.

In addition, a 320m long bridge, equipped with two traffic lanes, will enhance connectivity within the network, and streamline traffic flow in the vicinity of the agricultural area, enhancing overall service levels on Al-Ghazali Road and the Fifth Ring Road upon completion of the project.



LuLu Hypermarket shines with traditional 'Ramadan Souq' launch

Embarking the holy month of Ramadan, LuLu Hypermarket launched its eagerly anticipated 'Ramadan Special' promotion on February 28, marking the occasion with the grand opening of the traditional 'Ramadan Souq' at its Al-Qurain outlet.

The ceremony, graced by esteemed officials from five distinguished charity groups in Kuwait – Namaa Charity, Qawafil Charity, Islamic Care Society, Wasm Ahl Al khair and Al Najad Charity – signaled the commencement of a month-long journey characterized by generosity and unity.

During the event, LuLu Hypermarket unveiled exclusive charity gift cards in collaboration with these humanitarian organizations, empowering patrons to effortlessly contribute to noble causes.

Festive gift cards, available in denominations of KD10, KD25, and KD50, were made accessible at all outlets, offering shoppers the ideal opportunity to spread joy and support during Ramadan.

Furthermore, the hypermarket committed to distributing over 400 free Iftar food kits daily throughout Ramadan. Additionally with a special focus on supporting indigent individuals across Kuwait through a partnership with Namaa Charity.

Enhancing the atmosphere of the 'Ramadan Souq' are a

variety of promotions and discounts on essential Ramadan items, ranging from delicious foods to household necessities and heartfelt gifts.

Shoppers can explore specially curated Ramadan kits, offered in two options: a standard kit priced at KD10 and a premium kit at KD15. They can also savor convenient Iftar meal counters and immerse themselves in the festive spirit elevated by traditional



decorations and impressive displays.

The 'Ramadan Special' promotion goes beyond ordinary shopping, providing captivating experiences like the 'Dates Festival,' 'Big TV Majlis,' and 'Ramadan Home Fest,' catering to a range of preferences and needs. Additionally, health-conscious consumers can delve into the 'Healthy Ramadan' segment, which offers organic, vegan, and allergen-free options to enrich their fasting journey.

LuLu Hypermarket, as a testament to its steadfast commitment to community engagement, invites patrons of all ages to join in the festivities of the 'Ramadan Nights' festival. It promises a blend of entertainment, gastronomic delights, and cultural enrichment for all participants.

Through initiatives such as the 'Ramadan Special' promotion, LuLu Hypermarket reaffirms its dedication to enriching the social and religious fabric of the community. Additionally, it aims to provide unparalleled shopping experiences and access to premium products at competitive prices. LuLu Hypermarket extends a warm invitation to all to join in commemorating the spirit of Ramadan, where tradition seamlessly blends with modernity, and generosity knows no limits.

Russian Embassy celebrates 'Defenders of Fatherland Day'



Russian Ambassador H.E. Vladimir Zheltov, stressed the depth, strength and durability of Russian-Kuwaiti relations. Describing bilateral relations as strong and historical, he noted that these ties go back to 1963. The ambassador was speaking on the occasion of the commemoration of the 'Defenders of the Fatherland Day'.

He pointed out that Kuwait was Russia's first friend in the Arabian Gulf region, explaining that over the past six decades, bilateral relations between the two countries have maintained their strength thanks to the wisdom of the Kuwaiti leadership, expressing his country's pride in the continuation of these relations.

In response to a question about defense cooperation between the two countries, he said that the ball is in the Kuwaitis' court, as his country is open to any proposals to enhance this cooperation.



Returning to the occasion, Ambassador Zhiltov said that 'Defenders of the Fatherland' Day is a historical day dating back to 1918, and it is a national holiday celebrated by citizens throughout Russia as one of the most respected and appreciated occasions. He explained that this day is a tribute to all the Russian army, soldiers and

officers who defend their homeland everywhere and on the Ukrainian front.

In turn, the Russian military, air and naval attaché at the Embassy of the Russian Federation to Kuwait, Colonel Shmatov Alexei, praised the military and defense relations between the armies of the two countries. Addressing a gathering of diplomats and military attachés to the country on the occasion of 'Defender of the Fatherland Day', Colonel Alexei said: "We respect and highly value the wise position of the State of Kuwait towards the crisis in Ukraine, indicating that a strong, modern army is the guarantee of the security of countries, the preservation of their sovereignty, and the preservation of the continuity of the country. It is the development and prosperity of its future."

Regarding the occasion, he said, "This day represents a national holiday that embodies the heroic history of our army and naval forces. It also reflects the strongest and indissoluble bond between all generations of defenders of the homeland and the fatherland. It also embodies our deep gratitude to the loyal sons

and daughters of the homeland, and to all those who did not spare themselves while fighting the enemy in defense of their homeland and people."

He spoke about his country's decisive contribution during World War II, in liberating humanity from the hateful dangers of fascism, and for that, our country paid a dear price: the lives of more than 27 million of its best sons and daughters. He added that the Soviet Union was at the forefront of those opposing colonialism and working to end it and cut off its roots. He also noted that Russia made an invaluable contribution to advancing political and economic development in many countries on the continents of Asia and Africa.

"As we commemorate Defender of the Fatherland Day this year, our eyes overflow with tears. Russian soldiers are fighting today not only for the future of Russia, but also for freedom, true independence, and respect for the sovereignty and security of all countries, against neo-colonialism, and against the ideas of some countries that claim their superiority over other sovereign and independent countries."

Exhibition highlights British-Kuwait defense cooperation



A photo exhibition by Kuwaiti researcher Alssa Dashti, titled 'Kuwaiti-British defense cooperation during the 1961 crisis', was inaugurated last week by Sheikha Hala Al-Badr Al-Sabah, head of the Diplomatic Women's Committee.

The exhibition, featuring 35 rare photographs documenting the close collaboration between the Kuwaiti and British militaries during the Iraq-Kuwait border crisis of 1961, emphasizes

The exhibition showcases photographs depicting joint Kuwaiti-British military operations aimed at protecting the northern border, along with images of Kuwaiti volunteers supporting the armies. Particularly noteworthy are the photographs capturing the involvement of several members of the ruling family in the defense of Kuwait, including His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, and the late Sheikh Badr Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In her remarks on the occasion, British Ambassador H.E. Belinda Lewis, praised the collection of photographs that highlighted the strong collaboration between British forces and Kuwaiti volunteers during a pivotal moment in Kuwait's history. She also honored the four British soldiers who sacrificed their lives during Operation Vantage, the British military operation aimed at securing Kuwait.

Ambassador Lewis also noted that the photographs illustrate the challenging weather conditions and high temperatures during the summer. She noted how British soldiers learned from their Kuwaiti counterparts how to cope with the extreme heat.

Researcher Dashti explained that he collected and purchased the photographs from various archives, auctions, and antique shops in Britain. He emphasized that the exhibition highlights Britain's strong and courageous stance, reflecting the deep-rooted cooperation and loyalty that transcends bilateral agreements.



the robust and enduring defense relationship between Kuwait and Britain, said Sheikha Hala. She underscored the supportive role of the British army during the 1961 crisis when Iraqi President Abdul Karim Qassim attempted to invade Kuwait. Britain demonstrated its commitment by deploying 5,000 troops to protect Kuwait, who remained on high alert at the northern border throughout the summer months.



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Farewell ceremony held for Brunei Ambassador to Kuwait



Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Kuwait, and Ambassador of Tajikistan, H.E. Dr. Zubaydullo Zubaydov, hosted a farewell ceremony for the outgoing Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam H.E. Haji Ahmed Haji Jumat. The event was attended by a representative of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Khaled Al-Farsi, and a large number of heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the country.

In his speech, Ambassador Zubaydov praised the efforts of the outgoing ambassador in developing relations between his country and Kuwait, as well as his cooperation and support for his colleagues from other missions. He also expressed his gratitude to the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its continuous cooperation and support for diplomatic missions and international organizations in Kuwait, providing all facilities and overcoming all difficulties to accomplish their tasks. He also emphasized the good relations that



Kuwait enjoys with all countries.

For his part, Ambassador Jumat expressed his mixed feelings of sadness and gratitude at leaving Kuwait, a country that he holds dear to his heart. He thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Prime Minister

Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem, Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, and all employees of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Kuwaiti people for their hospitality.

"I am grateful for the friendships I have made during the past six years that I have worked in the State of Kuwait," he said. "I also appreciate the state of peace and tranquility that the State of Kuwait enjoys despite the ongoing events that pose a major challenge to the stability of the region. This achievement is a testament to

the effective leadership of Kuwait, which has been able to maintain the country's security and prosperity."

Ambassador Jumat added that his stay in Kuwait was full of memories, emotions, and achievements. He also mentioned the honor of working with his colleagues in the diplomatic corps in Kuwait, especially the ASEAN group, where they celebrated many achievements and formed many lasting friendships, making his time in the country unforgettable.

He described his experience as Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam to the State of Kuwait as both enriching and rewarding. He expressed his gratitude for all the opportunities and experiences that contributed to shaping his tenure in Kuwait.

"I will not only miss my stay in the State of Kuwait, but I will also miss working with all of you," he concluded. "While my tenure as ambassador may be coming to an end, I am confident that we have built a strong foundation of friendship and cooperation, which will continue to promote possible cooperation and partnership between our countries in the years to come."



Medx Medical Group expands with new branch in Abu Halifa



Medx Medical Group, leading healthcare provider in Kuwait has opened their second branch in Abuhalfifa. The new center has been inaugurated by H.E. Sheikh Intizar Al Mohamed Al Sabah business manager Ms. Suhaila Ghulum Hussain Al Qattan.

The event was also attended by Mr. Mohamed Ali V.P, The President and CEO of Medx medical group, Mr. Jassim Mohamed Azmi (Medx group sponsor),

Mr. Sanjay K Muluka, Counselor of Embassy

of India to Kuwait, doctors, and management representatives of Medx medical group.

Medx Zain Medical care is located at Road No. 209, Salem Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah Street, Opp. Kuwait Magic park in Abuhalfifa. The new center presently serves 5 departments including General medicine, Gynaecology, Pediatrics, Dermatology and Dental.

The management has announced special packages and services on the inauguration of the new center.

AlBabtain Auto and Kuwait Blood Bank Unite for Successful Blood Donation Drive



AlBabtain Auto, a premier automotive aftermarket services company in Kuwait, joined forces with the Kuwait Blood Bank for a highly successful blood donation campaign held at their Marzouk location. The event garnered remarkable support from AlBabtain Auto staff, their families, and members of the community, highlighting a shared dedication to humanitarian causes.

The blood donation campaign, held at Al Babtain Auto's premier facility, witnessed an outpouring of generosity from participants, including employees, their loved ones, and even individuals passing by the location. Customers awaiting car services also eagerly contributed to the cause, showcasing a remarkable spirit of altruism and community engagement.

Through this collaborative effort, AlBabtain Auto and the Kuwait Blood Bank underscored their commitment to supporting the healthcare needs of the community. The campaign not only served as a platform for

blood donation but also as a testament to the collective strength and compassion of Kuwait's residents.

Mr. Muneer Mamnoon, GM at AlBabtain Auto, expressed his gratitude to all donors for their invaluable contributions, stating, "We



are immensely proud of the overwhelming response to our blood donation campaign. This initiative reflects our unwavering commitment to giving back to society and making a positive impact on the lives of others."

For more information about Al Babtain Auto, please visit www.albabbtainauto.com.

Elections set for 4 April, voting system, districts, remain same

A regular session of the Council of Ministers, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem, on Tuesday, 27 February, approved a draft decree, inviting voters to elect members of the National Assembly on 4 April.

Announcing the poll date, Amer Al-Ajmi, the official government spokesperson said in a statement that the decree calling for elections will be published in the Official Gazette on 3 March, pending its approval by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah.

On a related note, a previous statement by Al-Ajmi last week had stressed that the authorities had no intention to alter the voting system or redraw the constituencies for the upcoming National Assembly elections. Refuting rumors circulating on social media that plans were underway to revise electoral districts and voting

procedures, Al-Ajmi said that the government has not examined any proposals concerning district amendments, and has no intentions in this matter. He affirmed that the upcoming elections will proceed using the existing electoral districts and the one-vote system.

The rumors on changes to election process and redrawing of voting districts probably arises from an executive decree published in the official gazette, Kuwait Al-Youm, on 22 February. The decree noted that Decree No. 4 of 2024 has temporarily suspended the National Assembly's election law No. 120 of 2023 until 1 October. The decree further stated that elections will be held according to the new decree until the suspended law is re-enacted.

The decree stipulates that every Kuwaiti who has reached the age of 21 years has the right to vote — with the exception of those naturalized within



the last 20 Gregorian years in accordance with the provisions of Article (6) of the Amiri Decree No. 15 of 1959 regarding the Kuwaiti Nationality Law; and those convicted by a final court order of a fraudulent bankruptcy crime unless he/she has been rehabilitated in accordance with the law.

In addition, the decree states that a voter who has been convicted by final judgment of a felony, a crime against honor or trust, or a crime of insulting the divine entity, the prophets, or the Amir, shall be prohibited from voting unless rehabilitated. Adherence to the provisions of the Constitution, the law, and Islamic law, is also a must for a voter to exercise his/her rights of voting and nomination.

The decree further states that the right to vote shall be suspended for military and police personnel, adding that every voter must assume his electoral rights by himself/ or herself in his/ her electoral constituency where he/she actually and permanently resides and must confirm this address by his/her civil ID. A voter shall not cast his/her ballot more than once in a single election.

The decree governing the 2024 National Assembly elections, published in the official gazette, also outlines stringent penalties for electoral misconduct. Individuals found guilty of publicly deceiving voters through any form of media or publication could face imprisonment for up to five years and fines ranging from KD2,000 to KD5,000.

Similarly, the decree stipulates penalties for clandestine attempts to influence voters through letters, phone calls, or intermediaries by offering bribes or inducements. Such acts, the decree noted, could compel voters to vote in a particular manner or abstain from voting.

Although no date has been fixed for the snap elections, the updated voter registration records that are slated for publication in the official gazette shortly indicate a total of 837,000 eligible voters for the forthcoming National Assembly elections. This includes 792,000 previously registered voters, along with an additional 45,000 individuals who have reached the voting age of 21.

LuLu Hala February:
Festive spirit, dreamy deals



The joyous spirit of Kuwait's National and Liberation Days echoed across LuLu Hypermarkets during the 'Big Nation, Big Discounts' Hala February campaign that ran from 21-27 February at all outlets of the hypermarket.

The week-long festival, inaugurated at Lulu Hyper Quiraia outlet on 21 February by the Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate, Mahmoud Abdul Samad Bu Shahary and LuLu's top management in Kuwait , delivered an immersive experience that featured never-before deals in all categories across the aisles, including on groceries, fresh and frozen items, health and beauty products, and household items, as well as on mobiles, accessories, wearables, and gadgets.

products proudly made in Kuwait. The shopping festival also saw a buying spree in the garments, footwear, and ladies' handbag section where a 'Buy 2, Get 1 Free' offer was underway from 14 February to 9 March. Additionally, a special 'Buy 1, Get 1 Free' offer on garments, footwear and ladies' handbags was available only from 22-26 February.

Aside from the jaw-dropping discounts during the week-long 'Big Nation, Big Discounts' festival, LuLu Hypermarket fostered a sense of community through large cutouts and displays of Kuwaiti monuments. One display that grabbed every shoppers attention was a replica of the iconic Kuwait Towers made from over 17,000 milk and fruit juice tetra-packs, sponsored by the local firm KDD.

As part of the festivities marking National and Liberation Days, young voices rendered patriotic songs during the Kuwait Arabic Schools Patriotic Songs Competition, where students from several schools proudly showcased their musical talents in celebration of the nation. Winning teams earned top honors, while all participating schools received consolation prizes, ensuring everyone felt included and appreciated.

Aspiring young artists also had the chance to shine at the Hala February Theme Drawing Contest, held at the Qurain outlet. Divided into Sub-Junior, Junior, and Senior categories, the contest encouraged participants to express their creativity around the themes of Kuwait's National and Liberation Days. Each category saw talented winners receive amazing prizes, celebrating their artistic expression and patriotism.

A traditional Kuwaiti Sword Dance, special Kuwaiti drama and entertainment shows, and a 'Hala Kuwait' performance by a troupe of talented kids, as well as several Kuwaiti flag themed mascots, kept the entertainment quotient flowing throughout the festival period. And, if you felt hungry during the festivities, there was a special Arabic Food Festival complete with food stalls and sampling counters that ensured nourishment to ensure the enjoyment never ceased.

The annual LuLu Hala February festival has evolved from being just a shopping bonanza to an occasion to celebrate the essence of Kuwait, through displays of national pride, community zeal, and most of all by sharing the joy of the occasion with family and friends.

IDCK donates KD 85,246 to Red Crescent for Gaza children



The International Diplomatic Club Kuwait (IDCK) announced that the the proceeds from the Al Joud International Charity Bazaar it held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on Monday, February 19, amounted to KD 85,246,466 The full amount was handed to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society to benefit the medical needs of the children of

Gaza. The IDCK would like to extend its deepest gratitude to all those who supported this critical humanitarian endeavor.

The one day bazaar was a resounding success with many embassies and private companies participating in making the event a grand success.



To commemorate Kuwait's 63-year history of independence, 63 unique discounts were available throughout the week, and 600 trolley loads of purchases were offered free to lucky customers for five days from 22-25 February. While the 'Brand of the Week' initiative, and the 'Hala Digital Shopping' festival introduced customers to a diverse range of branded products at attractive prices, the 'Deal of the Day' offered a special price discount on various select items on each day of the festival.

LuLu Hala February also celebrated local products with a Kuwait Fresh Produce Market that offered fresh, high-quality local produce, and



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Indian Buffet



الخميس - الجمعة
البويفة الهندي



Palestinian Products Festival witnesses large turnout

The fourth annual Palestinian Products Festival in Kuwait was inaugurated at the Kuwait Graduates Society last week by the Ambassador of Palestine, H.E. Rami Tahboub. The event was marked by the presence of several ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps, religious leaders, prominent Kuwaiti and Arab entrepreneurs, alongside engaged members from both the Arab and Palestinian communities in Kuwait.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Tahboub expressed gratitude to the attendees for their participation in the festival and their unwavering support for Palestinian products renowned for their superior quality.

"The festival serves as vital economic support for the Palestinian economy amidst the prevailing circumstances in Palestine, encompassing the besieged Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem," said the Palestinian envoy. He added, "We take great pride in the exceptional quality of Palestinian products, and we extend our gratitude to the State of Kuwait for its ongoing support, particularly in facilitating trade and



advancing the Palestinian cause," Tahboub said.

The ambassador expressed satisfaction with the turnout at Palestinian exhibitions held in Kuwait, particularly those showcasing food and handicrafts. He emphasized that the strong attendance by Kuwaitis is a testament to their

trust in Palestinian products. Ambassador Tahboub also extended his gratitude to the Kuwait Graduates Society for hosting the fourth Palestinian Products Festival and for its unwavering support.

Ibrahim Najar, general manager of Palcircless,

highlighted the diversity of companies participating in the exhibition as one of its distinguishing features. "Despite the obstacles imposed by the occupation, eleven companies from the Gaza Strip are participating," he noted.

"The Kuwaiti market is expansive and supportive of Palestinian goods, leading to a substantial increase in our exports to Kuwait since 2014," he added.

He added that the participation and attendance of numerous ambassadors and citizens at the exhibition affirm their dedication to supporting the Palestinian cause and products, reflecting their high level of trust in them. He underscored the significance of companies persevering to uphold exceptional quality and development, particularly during challenging times.

"The State of Kuwait stands out as the sole Arab nation steadfastly supporting the Palestinian cause at large, and the people of Gaza in particular. We extend our profound gratitude to Kuwait and its people for their unwavering support," added Najar.

Kuwait Fund serves as right-arm of country's foreign policy

Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) held its annual ceremony to felicitate long-term employees at the company's headquarters last week. Addressing the event, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, who is also the Chairman of KFAED, stated that through its

numerous development activities around the world, the Fund has served as the right-arm of Kuwaiti foreign policy.

Congratulating current, as well as, recently retired long-term employees who worked in the Fund for more than 20 years, the minister thanked them for their dedication throughout

the previous years. He also highlighted the role that the Fund provides within the framework of supporting and strengthening bilateral relations between Kuwait and other sisterly countries. This was made possible through its contributions to financing projects in more than 105 countries around the world over a period of more than 60 years. He hoped that the Fund would continue its development, being the right arm of the foreign policy of the State of Kuwait.

Asserting that the organization would continue its tireless work in various development

fields with the aim of alleviating suffering of people worldwide, the minister stressed the Fund remains committed to Kuwait's motto and mission that aims to 'Help people help themselves'.

In his address to the gathering, Acting Director General of the Fund, Walid Al-Bahr, said that the annual ceremony comes as a continuation of the effective communication between the Fund's employee families, based on acknowledging the important role played by the Fund's employees, and in appreciation of their focused path towards serving the global effort for development.

NBTC Winter Carnival '24: A celebration of unity, achievement and hope



The vibrant spirit of festivity engulfed the premises of NBTC as the Winter Carnival '24 unfolded its colorful wings on 25th February 2024. Under the azure sky, amidst the cheers and laughter of employees, staff, and their families, Managing Director, K. G. Abraham kicked off the festivities by hoisting the NBTC flag and releasing Tri-colour balloons, representing the beginning of yet another joyful occasion.

The carnival this year was more than just entertainment; it was a celebration of joy, talent, and giving that embodied the spirit of NBTC's core value, "One Team, One Family".

This year's carnival transcended mere entertainment; it became a convergence of joy, talent, and generosity, embodying the essence of NBTC's core value – "one team, one family." Welcoming esteemed guests and participants, Shibey Abraham, Deputy Managing Director, extended warm greetings, setting the tone

for an enriching day ahead. Mohammed Al-Baddah, Chairman, and Mr. K. G. Abraham, Managing Director, gave an insightful address and commitment to fostering unity and progress.

Gracing the occasion were esteemed guests, Venu Rajamony IFS (Former Officer on Special Duty for External Cooperation, Government of Kerala) and Manas Raj Patel – First Secretary (Community Welfare and Labour) at the Indian Embassy in Kuwait, whose presence added to the grandeur of the event.

Rohin Alex, Operations Assistant, provided a spirited introduction to the NBTC Winter Carnival, setting the stage for the festivities that followed. Highlighting NBTC's unwavering commitment to community and compassion, the announcement of the "HOME FOR HOMELESS – PHASE IV Project" resonated deeply. With 135 houses already built, and 52 employees receiving keys to their new homes, NBTC reaffirmed its dedication



to employee welfare by providing shelter and stability to its extended family. The unveiling of PHASE V, further exemplified NBTC's pledge to support 25 more employees across regions, enabling them to realize their dream homes.

In a gesture of recognition and support, NBTC celebrated academic excellence through the K.T. Geevarughese Memorial Scholarship Program. Thirteen deserving children, whose parents are not financially strong, were awarded scholarships to pursue professional courses, continuing the legacy of empowering young minds. Over the years, this initiative has supported 182 children, fostering a culture of learning and opportunity.

Further enriching the carnival, NBTC rewarded eleven students for their outstanding performance in the recent 10th & 12th board exams. Cash prizes ranging from 500KD to 100KD were bestowed upon these bright achievers, encouraging them to reach greater heights in their academic journey. Varghese

Puthukulangara, who received the Veekshanam Primary Pravasi Shreshtha award, was honoured at the event. The cultural extravaganza unfolded with captivating performances by renowned artists. Biju Narayanan, Lakshmi Jayan, Anamika, Kaushik, and a team of musicians led by Anoop, mesmerized the audience with their enthralling melodies, creating an atmosphere of joy and harmony. With each moment, the carnival epitomized NBTC's commitment to fostering a culture of togetherness, achievement, and progress.

As the sun set on a day filled with laughter and joy, casting a warm glow over the jubilant crowd, NBTC Winter Carnival '24 concluded, leaving a lasting impression on the hearts of over 3000 attendees. Their smiles, radiating gratitude and hope, epitomized the spirit of unity and celebration that has defined the core value of NBTC throughout the years – "One Team, One Family."

Irish trade minister's visit aims to strengthen ties



Irish Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Simon Coveney made an official visit to Kuwait last week to discuss with Kuwaiti officials on ways to strengthen Kuwaiti - Irish relations in various fields.

During his visit, the minister met and held successful discussions with the Minister of Finance, Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf, and the management of Kuwait Airways. The minister said progress was also made on visas whereby diplomatic passport holders will now be able to enter Ireland without a visa. And of course, we will work on ensuring that visas for others will be delivered as quickly as possible.

He also highlighted the enormous investment potential in both directions, between Ireland and Kuwait. "We recognize that this economy is growing and expanding

and we want young Irish Innovative companies to be part of that in the tech sector. In the medical device sector, in transport and perhaps most importantly, we focus today on the aviation sector where Ireland has a very significant number of companies that can offer Innovative solutions."

Expressing happiness at his first visit to Kuwait, the Irish minister said he felt positive about the growing trade volume between the two countries, and its potential to increase further in the years ahead. He also noted that currently nearly 1,000 Kuwaiti students are pursuing their higher education in Ireland. "The visit has been a great success and I look forward to working further on Ireland and Kuwait relations so that we can grow a stronger and more substantive relationship in the coming years," said the minister.

Over two-third of Kuwait's population are foreigners

Recent statistics from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), which provides insight into Kuwait's population dynamics, reveals that as of the end of 2023, Kuwait's population stood at 4,859,595.



This total population comprised 3,313,387 non-Kuwaitis, representing 68.18 percent of the population, and 1,546,208 Kuwaitis, or 31.82 percent of the total number of people in the country.

The ratio of one Kuwaiti to every three foreigners has prevailed in the country for quite a while now, except during the COVID-19 period, when a large number of

expatriates left the country. In 2021, following the end of the pandemic and a revival of the economy, expatriate numbers increased to levels that currently surpass the pre-COVID era.

Despite the government's Kuwaitization drive and other measures intended to balance the demographic equation, a heavy influx of foreign workers, along with a falling birth-rate among citizens, has ensured that the population continues to remain tilted in favor of foreigners.

Other population data from PACI reveals that although the heterogeneous expatriate population represented nationals from over 100 countries, the vast majority were from just a handful of nations. Indians constituted the largest expatriate group, comprising 21 percent of the total population, and 30 percent of all expatriates. In second spot were Egyptians, who accounted for 13 percent of the total population and 19 percent of all expatriates.

Other major nationalities contributing to Kuwait's diverse demographic makeup included: Bangladeshis, representing 6 percent of the total population, Filipinos (4); Syrians, Sri Lankans, and Saudi Arabians (each representing 3%), and Nepalis and Pakistanis each accounting for 2 percent of total population.

Employers laud baked products of Filipino household workers culinary scholars

By Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Kuwaiti and foreign employers of Filipino household service workers enrolled in baking scholarships of Masterclass Lifestyles Workshops laud the good quality products brought home after their classes. The ten days baking scholarship program is sponsored by State of Kuwait Lady Eagles Club, Ooredoo and in cooperation with Migrant Workers Office and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

Employers and sponsors of Filipino household service workers in Kuwait praised the products hand crafted and made during their one day bread making scholarship program held at the studio of Masterclass Lifestyles Workshops at The Walk Mall in Salmiyah. "My employers had the first taste of the breads I brought home from my class and were amazed with the quality of the breads and the taste. It was very fulfilling to hear them speak good about the baked goods and asked me if I wanted to pursue the classes" added Mylene, household service workers for 6 years with her employer, Mylene added that she wanted to learn how to bake long back but

had no knowledge of where and how. "When the announcement was posted by POT TV Vlog I grabbed the opportunity to attend and learn and I was overwhelmed with the results, I never knew I could do such products with right guidance from the trainers"



added Mylene. Beth, another household worker was requested by her employer to bake same breads the following day after her class and gave them out to friend to try. "I used the dough to create local delicacies like breads and Zaatar and small breads with different toppings, orders from my employers' friends poured in and probably this is the best achievement" commented Beth.

The baking scholarship has been designed by masterclass Lifestyles Workshops to provide an opportunity for household service workers to learn new skills and acquire knowledge in culinary arts. "The program maybe too short for them but we hope to impart to them the essential techniques and proper allocation of ingredients to create good and quality products" added Mariefe Torio, Chef in Charge of Scholarship program.

Since the start of the program launch a month back, 60 participants have availed the scholarship program and some have pursued the classes and enrolled on regular workshops. The 10 days program is generously sponsored by members of State of Kuwait Lady eagles Club in cooperation with Ooredoo. Graduation and handing of certificates are scheduled after the Holy Month of Ramadan. For more details, they may call: 55650296.



Rijish Joseph- Trainer of Future Body Gym with Philson Modi

Outline your diet regimen and fitness workouts for healthier body and mind

By Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Living in a busy world where health and fitness are jeopardized and compromised as results of overwhelming work and limited time to fend oneself with proper and adequate diet paired with sedentary lifestyles. We are often confronted with obesity that often leads to various illnesses and detrimental diseases. How do we then bridge the gap between the word busy and unhealthy?

With the surge of social media hypes that endlessly post and publish incessant articles, pictures and reels with each one claiming not only the best approach to diet and workout but a dogma that would not accept other possibilities. Having lived 35 years as a personal and group trainer showcased a line up of cases on fitness conditions from mild to complex obesity treatments, food deprivation and voluntary starvation, medical and clinical body enhancements to achieve desired weights and ideal form. Sadly, each approach can only attest personal results and do not apply to other conditions.

What is common and traditional regimens in fitness workouts includes a cardio workout for fat burning and cardio vascular workouts paired with light to moderate weights and controlled food intake as against new approaches of costly personal training, tailored diet and supplements with subtle medical enhancements. These two approaches do not only differ due to financial affordability and traditional ideologies. We often ask: What kind of diet is best? There is no one special diet that experts recommend for everyone to follow. People choose what foods to eat for many different reasons, including personal preference, cultural or religious influences, and nutritional content and cost and availability also play a role. In general, based on many different studies over time, experts recommend a diet that includes lots of vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts, and whole grains and limits consumption of red and processed meats, unhealthy fats, sugar, salt and alcohol. What we often term as traditional is often more effective that includes increase intake of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, cut down on sugary drinks and alcohol and cut down on unhealthy fats and consume more healthy fats instead.

In creating an ideal fitness regimens several physical conditions have to be evaluated than simply jumping into a video clip watched on line. AQA listed seven different components of fitness; agility, balance, cardiovascular endurance (aerobic power), coordination, flexibility, muscular endurance, power/explosive strength (anaerobic power), reaction time, strength (maximal, static, dynamic and explosive) and speed. Each of these components have their limits thus, pre workout evaluations have to be made to asses the full capacity of each person. Identifying the body structures and their qualities is essential to design an effective program.

Rijish Joseph, Trainer at Future Body Gym stated that gym clients often have good and effective set of workout but often fail with their diet and nutrition. "Discipline is very important and dedicating adequate time to their workouts are essential to achieve one's fitness goal" added Joseph. Workout alone will never justify and equal excessive food intake, thus balance diet and workout have to exist side by side. "Environment often has an impact with one's workout thus when in company of people who are hard workers that produce substantial results can inspire and influence others around them" added Joseph.

Dubai enhances entry visa period to attract more Indian visitors

Dubai has introduced a five-year multiple-entry visa to further bolster travel from India. The visa, issued within two to five working days upon receiving and accepting the service request, allows its holder to stay in the country for 90 days, extendable once for a similar period, with a total stay not exceeding 180 days in one year.

Dubai welcomed 2.46 million overnight visitors from India between January and December 2023, according to the latest data from the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET).

This marks an increase from the 1.84 million tourists in 2022 and surpasses the pre-pandemic figure of 1.97 million visitors in 2019. DET said through this 'significant' initiative, tourists can now leverage multiple entries and exits, providing operational flexibility for business engagements and leisure travel.

Bader Ali Habib, regional head of proximity markets at DET said Dubai values its long-standing relationship with India, and its inbound visitation from the market in 2023 was 'outstanding', contributing to a record-breaking performance by Dubai's tourism sector.



"The five-year multiple entry visa initiative signifies a strategic step towards deepening our already existing ties with India. This historic milestone will not only open doors to a longer and more enriching experience for Indian tourists, but also provide a platform for

increased economic collaboration," he said.

With an exceptional 34 percent year on year growth, India continues to deliver the highest number of international visitors from a single market. This robust influx of Indian tourists contributed significantly to Dubai's record-

breaking tourism performance in 2023, DET said in a statement. The tourism growth aligns with the goals of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, launched just over a year ago, to further consolidate Dubai's position as one of the top three global cities for business and leisure, and the best city to visit, live and work in.

"UAE and India stand as key economic partners, with a relationship deeply rooted in centuries-old cultural exchanges, diplomatic cooperation, and significant trade ties.

The diverse Indian market allows Dubai to attract a broad range of travelers, catering to various preferences such as luxury shopping, cultural experiences, family-friendly attractions, and business conferences," DET said in a statement.

Dubai welcomed more tourists than ever before in 2023, attracting 17.15 million international overnight visitors over the course of the year, according to the latest data published by DET. Representing a 19.4 percent year on year growth over the 14.36 million tourist arrivals in 2022, last year's figure also exceeded the previous record of 16.73 million visitors registered in 2019.

Sustainable growth entails tackling structural imbalances

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

This approach is based on the premise that the country's oil-based economy is exposed to instability through external factors, such as international oil prices, which are beyond domestic control.

However, for the purpose of this discussion, we focus on persistent structurally weak factors over which Kuwait has direct control. These include a bloated and inefficient public sector, an anemic private sector, a rigid labor-market, and a political system that is not conducive to fiscal, economic and administrative reforms.

Many of these shortcomings could be attributed to misguided policies and priorities in the past, including decisions based on political exigencies and appeasements, as well as corrupt practices, that have engendered labor-market anomalies and institutional deficiencies. Addressing the structural shortcomings would require coherent policies and consistent processes, firm measures, and a resolute political will to implement them within a stipulated time-frame.

The need to tackle the country's economic inconsistencies was once again reiterated at a recent symposium organized by Kuwait Economic Society in collaboration with the Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Foundation. Addressing the forum, the former Finance Minister, and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Manaf Al-Hajri underscored some of the critical challenges facing the current economic team working with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem, to draw up an economic blueprint.

The former minister said that a major hurdle facing the team was in navigating popular and political demands while steering towards prudent fiscal reforms, achieving a qualitative shift in productivity, and moving towards a knowledge-based economy. Emphasizing that overcoming the challenges would require decisive action, he underlined the need to implement significant economic and financial

reforms, as well as enhance governance and role of regulatory authorities, address institutional deficiencies, invest in capacity building, and provide targeted support and subsidies only to deserving recipients.

Lamenting the decline in productivity within ministries and flawed practices in appointments and promotions, Al Hajri attributed these to a misguided economic discourse overly focused on construction rather than addressing fundamental challenges. Acknowledging the country's economic potential and financial prowess, the former minister urged for optimal utilization of Kuwait's fiscal strength, its substantial oil reserves, copious sovereign funds, and robust financial resilience, towards achieving the country's development goals.

“Latest figures from the Ministry of Finance indicate that the fiscal deficit for the first nine months of fiscal year 2023-24 (FY23-24) was KD1.7 billion, with revenues at KD15.4 billion, and expenditure at KD17.2 billion. The figures also revealed that KD14.3 billion of the revenues, or 92 percent of total income, were derived from oil, while non-oil revenues accounted for KD1.2 billion.”

Ensuring the success of these goals would require a government and parliament working in tandem, alongside teams of local and international experts and specialized institutions, in a time-bound, transparent and result-oriented manner. While the prevailing higher oil prices provide a respite for the government, recent economic data do not leave much room for complacency.

Latest figures from the Ministry of Finance indicate that the fiscal deficit for the first nine months of fiscal year 2023-24 (FY23-24) was KD1.7 billion, with revenues at KD15.4 billion, and expenditure at KD17.2 billion. The figures

also revealed that KD14.3 billion of the revenues, or 92 percent of total income, were derived from oil, while non-oil revenues accounted for KD1.2 billion. On the expenditure side, current expenses, mainly on salaries, grants, and subsidies represented 96 percent of total spending, while capital expenditure accounted for KD720 million.

The continued dominance of oil revenues in the country's GDP, the slide by 3 percent in non-oil revenues during the first three quarters of FY23/24 relative to the same period a year earlier, and the 55 percent increase on current expenditure, as well as the drop by 6 percent in capital expenditure year-on-year, are economic bellwethers that the government will need to take heed and address going forward.

At 1.9 percent of GDP, capex as a share of the national output was not just historically low, but also 48 percent less than the pro-rata budgetary allocation. Low spending on capex is especially worrying considering that spending on sectoral projects, especially in oil and infrastructure are a main driver of market activity and non-oil revenues.

Another cause for concern to the government is the continued demographic imbalance in the country, where non-Kuwaitis account for over two-third of the population. In particular, the prevailing dominance of expatriates in the private sector labor market

is a matter of disquiet. Realigning the private sector workforce is important in order to address youth unemployment and encourage more nationals to join the private sector.

Last week, the Ministerial Committee for Economic Affairs, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister, held a meeting to discuss the issue of financial increases and measures to improve the living standards of citizens. The meeting also tackled the issue of the labor market and the increasing employment in the burgeoning public sector that strains the budget.

The premier requested the Public Authority for Manpower to provide the committee with a set of statistics on the labor market, including the number of citizens working in the private sector. The data is expected to help the government make decisions regarding the population structure, and provide benefits that could entice more citizens to seek employment in the private sector. Despite past attempts by previous governments to balance the country's skewed demographic ratio, latest figures from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), reveal that as of the end of 2023, Kuwait's total population of 4,859,595, comprised 3,313,387 non-Kuwaitis, and 1,546,208 Kuwaitis, or 31.82 percent of the total number of people in the country.

The ratio of one Kuwaiti to every three foreigners has persisted despite the government's Kuwaitization drive and other measures intended to balance the demographic equation. The falling birth-rate among citizens and the continued reliance on an influx of foreign workers to drive economic activity, has meant that the country's population continues to remain tilted in favor of foreigners.

Amid a global economic environment that remains challenging due to adverse geopolitics, fiscal constraints, and subdued global trade growth, Kuwait could face a tightening of economic pressures in the upcoming fiscal year. A cooperative political environment could help to ameliorate structural weaknesses, enhance economic stability, and deliver results that fulfill the sustainable development goals of the country, and meet the aspirations of citizens.





Raffles Al Areen Palace Resort,

the newest resort in Bahrain

By Nourah Khan
Travel Writer
The Times Kuwait

During my recent visit to Bahrain with my family, I chose to experience luxurious accommodation in one of the villas at the Raffles Al Areen Palace Resort. It was an exceptional experience that I would like to share with you.

I like to experience and explore modern resorts, and just staying in a luxury resort, without even going out anywhere else, is equivalent to a travel trip for me.

Raffles Al Areen Palace Resort is the newest addition to the luxury brand's hotel chain in Bahrain. I was keen to experience staying at the resort, as it had opened its doors to visitors only last December.

Combining authentic Arabic hospitality and the high-level service that the Raffles Hotels brand is famous for, the new property is the first and only resort in the kingdom consisting entirely of villas. There are 78 villas, each with an attached private swimming pool that provides extreme privacy for residents, with heating during the winter and a Jacuzzi bath.

The villas range from single to three bedrooms and offer the brand's famous butler service, which focuses on identifying guests' needs in advance and providing a personalized experience for each guest.

To enhance the luxurious experience of the stay, during the first day of our arrival, we requested to try the private chef's service inside the villa. Through this service, guests can enjoy



in-villa dining with a private chef upon request, providing an unprecedented level of luxury and privacy. We booked a BBQ experience in the villa with a private chef and a number of assistants and enjoyed a wonderful seafood BBQ night.

The resort also includes a distinguished selection of luxury restaurants, including Palma Mediterranean Restaurant, which includes

Switzerland. The villa spa offers the latest wellness experiences and regenerative treatments for the first time in Bahrain. Guests enjoy personalized wellness experiences that allow them to choose from a wide range of exceptional treatments and experiences, combining warm hospitality, Arab traditions and the highest levels of Swiss care.

The Spa Villa, which is located in one of the luxury resort's villas, includes a private swimming pool that creates an atmosphere that simulates exclusive and private accommodation experiences. Individuals or couples can book to experience the three treatment rooms, which begin with a refreshing moisturizing session on the outdoor terrace, then relax in the Majlis lounge, and finally enjoy the heated swimming pool.



an outdoor terrace and receives its guests throughout the day to enjoy the most delicious international dishes with distinctive local touches, in cooperation with the most famous international chefs.

The resort also recently opened Spa Villas in cooperation with Dr. Burgener's Clinic in

Before starting the treatment experience, guests must answer some questions from the experts, after which the needs of each guest are assessed and worked to meet them. Spa Villa also provides its guests with experiences that immerse the senses and ensures that they enjoy the utmost luxury, with personalized music and a selection of five fragrances.

Villa Spa also provides customized treatments for brides, as it is one of the most luxurious wedding destinations in Bahrain. The wedding package, which lasts for four hours, was designed in a way that takes into account the special needs of each bride.



The resort displays traditional Arab architecture and Arab art, and I noticed that they have a collection of wonderful artwork created by local Bahraini artists to decorate the restaurants and common spaces. The resort in general combines a unique design that combines comfort and privacy.

Noura Khan, a travel influencer and content creator, is a Kuwaiti national, holds a degree in law from Kuwait University and has worked as a journalist prior to taking up a position in the government. In 2018 she started blogging on travel and visited more than 57 countries since. She has more than 97k followers on her blog post @nourajtraveller is well appreciated for content and travel information. Noura writes exclusively for The Times Kuwait on her travel visits.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Algorithm and Its Discontents



Mariana Mazzucato and Ilan Strauss

Mariana Mazzucato, Founding Director of the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, is Chair of the World Health Organization's Council on the Economics of Health for All.

Ilan Strauss is a research associate at the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose.



In a new lawsuit in the United States against Meta, 41 states and the District of Columbia argue that two of the company's social-media products — Instagram and Facebook — are not just addictive but detrimental to children's well-being. Meta is accused of engaging in a 'scheme to exploit young users for profit', including by showing harmful content that keeps them glued to their screens.

According to one recent poll, 17-year-olds in the US spend 5.8 hours per day on social media. How did it come to this? The answer, in a word, is 'engagement'.

Deploying algorithms to maximize user engagement is how Big Tech maximizes shareholder value, with short-term profits often overriding longer-term business objectives, not to mention societal health. As the data scientist Greg

Linden puts it, algorithms built on "bad metrics" foster "bad incentives" and enable "bad actors."

Although Facebook started as a basic service that connected friends and acquaintances online, its design gradually evolved not to meet user needs and preferences, but to keep them on the platform and away from others. In pursuit of this objective, the company regularly disregarded explicit consumer preferences regarding the kind of content users wanted to see, their privacy, and data sharing.

Putting immediate profits first means funneling users toward 'clicks', even though this approach generally favors inferior, sensational material, rather than fairly rewarding participants from

across a broader ecosystem of content creators, users, and advertisers. We call these profits "algorithmic attention rents," because they are generated by passive ownership (like a landlord) rather than from entrepreneurial production to meet consumers' needs.

Mapping rents in today's economy requires understanding how dominant platforms exploit their algorithmic control over users. When an algorithm degrades the quality of the content it promotes, it is exploiting users' trust and the dominant position that network effects reinforce. That is why Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can get away with cramming their feeds with ads and 'recommended' addictive content. As the tech writer Cory Doctorow has colorfully put it, "Platform 'enshittification' comes out of the barrel of an algorithm", (which may, in turn, rely on illegal data collection and sharing practices).

The Meta suit is ultimately about its algorithmic practices that are carefully constructed to maximize user 'engagement' — keeping users on the platform for longer and provoking more comments, likes, and reposts. Often, a good way to do this is to display harmful and borderline illegal content, and to transform time on the platform into a compulsive activity, with features like 'infinite scroll' and nonstop notifications and alerts (many of the same techniques are used, to great effect, by the gambling industry).

Now that advances in artificial intelligence already supercharge algorithmic recommendations, making them even more addictive, there is an urgent need for new governance structures oriented toward the 'common good' (rather than a narrowly conceived notion of 'shareholder value') and symbiotic partnerships between business, government, and civil society. Fortunately, it is well within policymakers' power to shape these markets for the better. First, rather than relying only on competition and antitrust law, policymakers should adopt technological tools to ensure that platforms cannot unfairly lock in users and developers. One way to prevent anti-competitive 'walled gardens' is by mandating data portability and interoperability across digital services, so that users can move more seamlessly between platforms, depending on where their needs and preferences are best met.

Second, corporate governance reform is essential, since maximization of shareholder value is what pushed platforms to exploit their users algorithmically in the first place. Given the well-known social costs associated with this business model — optimizing for clicks often means amplifying scams, misinformation, and politically polarizing material — governance reform requires algorithmic reform.

A first step toward establishing a healthier baseline is to require platforms to disclose (in the annual 10-K reports filed to the US Securities and Exchange Commission) what their algorithms optimize for, along with how their users are monetized. In a world where tech executives descend on Davos every year to talk about 'purpose', proper disclosures will pressure them to do what they say, as well as help policymakers, regulators, and investors distinguish between

earned profits and unearned rents.

Third, users should be given greater influence over the algorithmic prioritization of information shown to them. Otherwise, the harms from ignoring user preferences will continue to grow as algorithms create their own feedback loops, pushing manipulative clickbait on users and then wrongly inferring that they prefer it.

Fourth, the industry standard of 'A/B testing' should give way to more comprehensive long-term impact evaluations. Faulty data science drives algorithmic short-termism. For example, A/B testing may show that displaying more ads in a feed will have a positive short-term impact on profits without overly harming user retention; but this ignores the impact on acquiring new users, not to mention most other potentially harmful long-term effects.

Good data science shows that optimizing recommender systems for long-term, delayed rewards (such as customer satisfaction, retention, and new-user adoption) is the best way for a company to drive long-term growth and profitability — assuming it can stop focusing primarily on the next quarterly-earnings report. In 2020, a team within Meta determined that fewer intrusive notifications would be better for both app usage and user satisfaction over a longer period of time (one year). Long-term effects differed sharply from short-term effects.

Fifth, public AI should be deployed to evaluate the quality of algorithmic outputs, particularly advertising. Given the considerable harms arising from platforms lowering the standard of acceptable ads, the United Kingdom's advertising watchdog will now use AI tools to scrutinize ads and identify those making 'dodgy claims'. Other authorities should follow suit. Equally important, AI evaluators should be a feature of platforms' openness to external auditing of algorithmic outputs.

“One way to prevent anti-competitiveness is by mandating data portability and interoperability across digital services, so that users can move more seamlessly between platforms, depending on where their needs and preferences are best met.”

Creating a digital environment that rewards value creation from innovation, and punishes value extraction from rents (especially in core digital markets), is the fundamental economic challenge of our time. Safeguarding the health of Big Tech's users and the entire ecosystem means ensuring that algorithms are not beholden to shareholders' immediate profit concerns. If business leaders are serious about stakeholder value, they should accept the need to create value in a fundamentally different way — drawing on the five principles above.

Meta's forthcoming trial cannot undo past mistakes. But as we prepare for the next generation of AI products, we must establish proper algorithmic oversight. AI-powered algorithms will influence not just what we consume, but how we produce and create; not just what we choose, but what we think. We must not get this wrong.



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Design Doha announces winners of inaugural Design Doha Prize



By Hermoine Macura-Noble
Special to The Times Kuwait

Design Doha concluded an inspiring week of various exhibitions, panels, and events, which aimed to promote new and inspiring artists from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, by announcing the inaugural winners of the highly converted Design Doha Prize. The winners of the 2024 Design Doha Prize are Fabraca Studios for Product Design (Lebanon), Fadaa for Interior Design (Jordan), Sayar & Garibeh for Furniture Design (Lebanon), and Abeer Seikaly for Craft (Jordan).

Established to provide recognition and support for exceptional designers in the categories of product design, interior design, furniture design, and craft — Design Doha is a new Qatar Museums' biennial event, established under the leadership of Qatar Museums' Chairperson, Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and a showcase for excellence and innovation among the design community in Qatar and the MENA region.

"I offer my warmest congratulations to the winners of this first Design Doha Prize. Through their remarkable artistry and rising careers, the recipients exemplify the success of Design Doha in offering a new platform to practitioners



Islamic Art Museum_naheed

across the Arab world, helping them to build professional pathways and to engage with the acclaimed international design professionals who have convened at this landmark inaugural event," said Sheikha Al Mayassa.

Design Doha Prize recipients receive



approximately USD 27,500 to sustain their practices, mentorship support from international designers and industry experts, access to new platforms to show their work and generate additional market exposure, a year of logistical and insurance support, and more.

Design Doha Prize winners were selected by a jury of renowned design professionals and curators representing local, regional, and international design communities. Competitors



Arabic Calligraphy Exhibit - Naheed

for the prize were required to have an established design business in the MENA region with an active commercial history of between two and ten years. Submissions were judged on criteria, including innovation, practicality (including potential market demand), sustainability, and social responsibility.

"Celebrating the accomplished and inventive designers based here, Design Doha further elevates and supports designers and our creative industries. We congratulate this year's Design Doha Prize recipients and are excited to see how the award helps them in their creative and commercial practices," added Design Doha Deputy Director of Programming and Partnerships Fahad Al Obaidly.

Arab Design Now, the anchor event of the inaugural Design Doha biennial, opened on 24 February and remains on view through 5 August. The exhibition surveys more than 70 Arab designers featuring 38 commissioned works.

Design Doha also includes five other exhibitions, commissioned public artworks, and events and panel presentations covering architecture, urbanism, landscape and graphic Design, craft, and other subjects.

Curated by Rana Beiruti, founder of Amman Design Week, Arab Design Now examines how local and regional designers balance contemporary design with traditional methods

derived from the region's heritage, with a particular focus on environmental concerns and sustainable Design.

"Designers, from the Levant to the Gulf to North Africa, exhibit a commitment to heritage-based traditions and rituals and an eagerness to rediscover, reinterpret, and evolve them. Their design process is inspired by a culture centered on community, collaboration, and co-creation. Their material sensibilities exhibit an intimate relationship with the land and earth and respond to the unique geographies of the region," shared Beiruti.

Designers featured in Arab Design Now include Basma Hamdy (Qatar), Levi Hammett (Qatar), Ali Ismail Karimi (Bahrain), Hamed Bukhamseen (Kuwait), Nermeen and Nisreen Abudail (Jordan), David Raffoul (Lebanon), Nicolas Moussallem (Lebanon), Hala Al-Ani (UAE), Hadeyeh Badri (UAE), Riem Ibrahim (UAE), Georges Mohasseb (Lebanon), 40MUSTAQUEL (Egypt) and many others.

Hermoine Macura-Noble

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



Abeer Seikaly - Artist



Thought for the week

“ Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

Stress and Body fat

Ask Mira : Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



The rapid pace of modern life has led to an increase in stress among people everywhere. Some people appear to handle stress well, while in others it could lead to depression and other mental and physical illnesses.

Whether we are stressed because of constant and pressing demands at work, home, or when confronted by a new situation or life condition, our body reacts with a 'fight or flight' response — by addressing the issue vigorously or turning away from it.

However, the question we are tackling today is not about how we respond to stress, but rather, whether stress makes us gain weight?



There are several ways in which stress can contribute to weight gain. One has to do with cortisol, a stress hormone that is released when we stress out. Unfortunately, this hormone also contributes to weight gain in the following ways:

Cravings: Did you ever see someone stressing out and bingeing on a nice salad to relax? That is not a likely scenario, as people experiencing chronic stress tend to crave more fatty, salty and sugary foods. Typical examples include sweets, fast foods, more bread, pasta, in other words, mainly foods containing a lot of carbohydrates and fat to increase serotonin, the brain hormone associated with happiness and wellbeing. These foods will definitely

lead to an increase in body weight.

High blood sugar: Prolonged stress can alter your blood sugar levels, causing mood swings, fatigue, and hyperglycemia (high blood sugar level). Too much stress has even been linked to metabolic syndrome, an important health concern that can lead to greater health problems, like heart attacks and diabetes.

High fat storage: Excessive stress even increases our fat storage in the fat adipose tissues. Higher levels of stress are linked to greater levels of abdominal fat, which unfortunately, is not only undesirable, but also linked to serious health risks.

Metabolism: A lot of people think that stressing out leads to a higher metabolism, and that is the reason they eat more. But the truth is too much cortisol can slow your metabolism, causing more weight gain than you would normally experience.

Emotional eating and stress are no doubt connected in a way, and the big reason we are seeing more obesity in our society is that people are too stressed and busy to make healthy food choices.

Instead of stressing out, try treating your stress with physical activity.

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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

RECIPE

Sugar-free Millet Muffins



Millet is a highly varied group of cereals that have been consumed around the world for thousands of years. Finger-millet, or ragi as it is known in India, is a well-known variety of millet that is rich in protein, fiber and minerals, especially iron. Sugar-free ragi cakes or muffins made without using eggs, but which nevertheless turns out extremely soft and spongy, are a perfect, wholesome delight that serves as a mini-meal at any time of the day.

Total time: 30-40 minutes

Serving: 6

Ingredients:

- 1 cup finger millet flour (Ragi)
- 1/3 cup oats
- 1/2 cup jaggery powder
- 1/4 cup yogurt
- 1/4 cup oil
- 1/4 cup milk + 1/2 tsp vinegar (Mixed)
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp cinnamon powder
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp cashew nut chopped (can be replaced with any other nut or seed)
- 2 tbsp choco chips



Chef Chhaya Thakker

Instructions:

- Mix together oil, jaggery powder, salt, curd, cinnamon powder, vanilla extract, milk+vinegar mix in a bowl
- Sift the ragi flour along with the baking soda and baking powder into the bowl
- Mix the wet and dry ingredients together without any lumps
- Add oats, part of choco chips and chopped cashew nuts
- Grease and line a muffin tray with paper cups
- Fill the muffin cups half full with the mixture
- Garnish with remaining chocochips, almond, walnut, cashew nut
- Bake them at 200 C for about 15 minutes
- Remove, let the muffins cool, and then serve them warm or cold
- These muffins can be stored at room temperature for 5-6 days.



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

Running to drive away depression

Depression is a common mental health condition that causes symptoms of profound sadness and loneliness in afflicted people. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression affects more than 264 million people worldwide. People of any age and from any socioeconomic background may experience depression at some point in their lives.

A recent study also found that engaging in regular exercise can have a profound positive impact on mental health. Findings from the study, which focused on running therapy, suggests that structured running can help reduce depression and anxiety to the same extent as using antidepressant medications.

Researchers at Vrije University in the Netherlands, who were behind the study, said that a structured running therapy can help reduce depressive symptoms, and that the beneficial outcome of this program was comparable to that obtained from the use of antidepressants.

The study also noted that sticking with the running regimen for extended periods was a challenge for most participants in the study, and the research team recommended that running therapy should not be considered as a stand-alone treatment but rather it should be used alongside a medication program.

For their research, scientists followed 141 people with depression, anxiety, or both. Participants were free to choose whether they wanted to pursue only medication treatment, or only running therapy. Over the course of 16 weeks, 45 people were treated with medication and 96 followed a running program.

While the medication group received treatment with antidepressants, the running therapy group were provided with supervised

45-minute outdoor running sessions, with a target of two to three sessions a week, a target that aligns with the public health guidelines from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

At the end of the trial, about 44 percent in each group showed a remission in their symptoms of depression and anxiety. However, when it came to physical health, changes were more favorable among the runners, who saw a decrease in heart rate, blood pressure, and waist circumference and an increase in lung function.

On the other hand, the antidepressant only group experienced signs of physical decline, with weight, blood pressure, and triglycerides increasing, and heart rate variability decreasing (a sign of less resiliency), according to Cleveland Clinic.

The research team suggested that exercise directly addresses the sedentary lifestyle often found in patients with depressive and anxiety disorders by encouraging these people to go outside, set personal goals, improve their fitness and participate in a group activity.

Sticking with an exercise program, however, was found to be a challenge for the study participants, with only 52 percent in the running group adhering to the protocol, while 82 percent in the drug group were able to keep up with their medication regimen.

Researchers and doctors evaluating the study advised that an antidepressant should be accompanied by increased physical activity, and added that they would like to see future research look at the outcomes of the use of antidepressants and running together.

The researchers noted that a change of lifestyle pattern and beginning to run regularly can be especially difficult for depressed individuals,



whose mental health severely interferes with motivational drives. Moreover, running might not be for everyone, and depressed individuals may get similar benefits from other activities they prefer, such as bicycling, swimming, or a sport like soccer or tennis. Pursuing physical activity with other people has been found to help with motivation.

Findings from the new study could prove to be valuable to healthcare professionals seeking to guide people with depression. With more than 250 million people worldwide suffering from some form of depression, and given its propensity to affect anyone anywhere, doctors, researchers and pharmaceuticals are keen to gain a better understanding of this medical condition, so as to offer effective treatments that alleviate the symptoms and address the causes of depression.

Doctors use several methods to diagnose depression, including a physical examination and lab tests to check overall health to determine if the patient is currently dealing with other

medical conditions. A blood test will also reveal prevailing hormone levels, which could have a bearing on depression. Doctors may also recommend a psychiatric evaluation to ascertain the patient's mental health and to learn about their thoughts, feelings, and behavior patterns.

The type of treatment the doctor recommends will depend on the symptoms and how severe they are. Based on the severity, the doctor may prescribe medications, psychiatric therapy, or hospitalization.

In most cases, antidepressant medications in combination with therapy are effective for people with depression. In severe cases, doctors may also prescribe a mood stabilizer, antipsychotic, anti-anxiety medication, or stimulant medication, to help the antidepressant work better.

Among other treatments available to treat depression are cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which helps the patient to change unhelpful or unhealthy ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, using practical self-help strategies that are known to improve their quality of life.

Depending on the intensity of depression, doctors may recommend an Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), which passes electric currents through the brain to help neurotransmitters work better, or a Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), which uses a magnetic coil to send pulses through the brain to help stimulate nerve cells that regulate mood. These methods are usually recommended only if prescribed antidepressants are found to be ineffective, or if the patient cannot take them for other health reasons.

If the depression is severe enough that the person cannot take care of themselves, or are inclined to harm themselves and others, doctors may recommend psychiatric treatment in a hospital or a specialized residential facility.

Predicting heart attack from standard blood test

Using the results of a standard blood test and an online tool, people can find out if they are at increased risk of having a heart attack within the next six months. The online tool, developed by a research group at Sweden's world-renowned Uppsala University, aims to increase motivation among patients to change their lifestyle.

A heart attack occurs when an artery that sends blood and oxygen to the heart is blocked. Fatty, cholesterol-containing deposits build up over time, forming plaques in the heart's arteries. If a plaque ruptures, a blood clot can form and block arteries, causing a heart attack. During a heart attack, a lack of blood flow causes the tissue in the heart muscle to die.

Statistics from the World Health Organization (WHO) show that Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading cause of death globally,

taking an estimated 17.9 million lives each year. More than four out of five CVD deaths are due to heart attacks and strokes, and one third of these deaths occur prematurely in people under 70 years of age. Many high-risk people may not be aware of their vulnerability and accordingly do not take their preventive treatment.

Researchers behind the new online tool explained, "Risk

factors of heart attack that have previously been identified involved five to ten years of follow-up and only factors that were stable over time were considered risk factors. However, we know that the time just before a heart attack is very dynamic. For example, the risk of a heart attack doubles during the month after a divorce, and the risk of a fatal heart event is five times as high during the week after a cancer diagnosis.

Together with other European researchers, the team proceeded from the hypothesis that several important biological processes are active during the months before a heart attack and that these could be detected using a simple blood test. The researchers had access to blood samples from 169,053 individuals without prior cardiovascular disease from six European cohort studies. Within six months, 420 of these people suffered their first heart attack. Their blood was then compared with blood from 1,598 healthy members of the cohorts. The study identified around 90 molecules that were linked to a risk of a first heart attack. The researchers then developed a simple online tool, using which anyone can find out their risk of having a heart attack within the next six months. The importance of the finding is that it motivates people to seek treatment. Knowing that you happen to have an increased risk of suffering a heart attack soon, is certainly a strong motivator to take preventive measures.

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Japan as Number Four



Takatoshi Ito

A former Japanese deputy vice minister of finance, is a professor at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University and a senior professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo.

Harvard Professor Ezra Vogel's 1979 book, *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America*, became an instant bestseller in Japan. The flattering title certainly helped sales, but it was the book's central argument — that the Japanese approach to governance and business were superior to others — that really made a splash.

At the time, Japan was riding high. Its GDP had grown by about 10 percent annually for most of the 1950s and 1960s, and 4-5 percent during the second half of the 1970s — a trend that would continue throughout the 1980s. But Japanese businessmen and political leaders were not sure whether Japan had succeeded economically because of its unique system or despite it. For them, Vogel's book amounted to a kind of seal of approval and reinforced the belief that Japan could soon surpass the United States to become the world's largest economy.

In the years that followed, Japan appeared to be progressing toward this goal. In the second half of the 1980s, Japanese stock prices tripled, and real asset prices rose fourfold. In 1988, Japan's GDP amounted to 60 percent that of the US (in current dollars), and, with a population about half the size at the time, its GDP per capita was significantly higher. In 1995, following a sharp appreciation of the yen, Japan's economy was about three-quarters the size of the US economy.

That turned out to be 'peak' Japan. Soon, the economy was gripped by decades-long



stagnation and deflation. From 1995 to 2010, Japan experienced negative GDP growth (in yen terms). Meanwhile, the US economy grew by around 2 percent annually, and China racked up year after year of double-digit growth. Today, Japan's GDP amounts to just 15.4 percent that of the US, and China's GDP has been larger than Japan's since 2010. Far from rising to number one, Japan fell to number three.

The news that China had surpassed Japan as the world's second-largest economy did not prompt much of an outcry from the Japanese public, which appeared practically resigned to their economy's decline. To be sure, Japanese voters had handed the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) a victory over the long-dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) the previous year. But the honeymoon with the DPJ did not last long. The party fell far short on governance, diplomacy, and economic policy, and from 2009 to 2012, a parade of DPJ prime ministers each lasted barely a year in the position.

In the December 2012 election, Japanese voters tried a different approach, electing the LDP's Abe Shinzō as prime minister for the second time. Abe quickly introduced a bold economic-policy package, dubbed Abenomics, that aimed

finally to lift the Japanese economy out of two decades of deflation and recession with three 'arrows': massive monetary easing, expansionary fiscal policy, and a long-term growth strategy.

Abe's plan worked; to a point. Thanks to the Bank of Japan's monetary expansion, Japan finally achieved a positive inflation rate. But real growth remained elusive, owing to rapid population aging. Though labor productivity increased significantly, the gains were insufficient to offset the decline in the number of workers and working hours. Add to that yen depreciation in 2012-14, and Japan's GDP declined (in US dollar terms), before flattening out.

Now, Japan has fallen even further: last year, Germany surpassed Japan as the world's third-largest economy. And, once again, the public reaction to the news of Japan's declining global position has amounted to a shrug. The kind of constructive anger that can spur dynamic reform is nowhere to be seen.

The list of measures needed to revitalize the Japanese economy is as well-known as it is long. For example, Japan must steer personal bank deposits and institutional savings to equities and alternatives. And productivity increases are sorely needed in every sector — an imperative that should be pursued through aggressive

digitalization, given declining population size.

In the meantime, today's labor shortages should drive up nominal wages, and strong demand for goods and services, as well as the rising costs of inputs, should be reflected in higher prices. This is something of a forgotten art in Japan: over decades of deflation, as consumers turned on companies that raised prices, the price mechanism became practically non-operational. Relative and absolute prices froze, and resource allocation suffered.

The good news is that 'deflationary mindsets' are changing, not least because the BOJ has managed to keep inflation above its 2 percent target for nearly two years. But ultra-accommodative monetary policy carries high costs. The growing interest-rate differential with the US, where rates rose rapidly in 2022-23, contributed to the yen's rapid depreciation against the dollar, from ¥115 in January 2022 to ¥150 ten months later and throughout 2023.

But while the yen's depreciation vis-à-vis the US dollar might have contributed to Japan's declining GDP in US dollars, it is not the whole story. After all, a weak currency can often boost growth by making exports more competitive. But there is no sign of this in Japan, which reflects a deeper problem: both innovation and production have largely left the country. Payments to US IT-service companies are rising fast, pushing imports higher. Japan must take urgent and decisive steps to reverse this trend, such as by promoting science and technology education to generate IT-service production domestically.

If the economy's fall to number four is not enough to wake Japan up, it will soon fall to number five. The International Monetary Fund projects that India's GDP will overtake Japan's (in dollar terms) in 2026. To stave off further decline, Japan's government must devise a clear strategy for raising productivity, expanding the workforce, and allocating scarce labor to the most productive sectors.



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