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# Resetting Relations Key to Parliamentary Consensus

## THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

The snap general elections held on 4 April returned results that were largely expected, with all but 11 of the parliamentarians from the previous legislative term returning to the National Assembly. Political analysts predict that the lineup of elected lawmakers could point to a potential continuation of frayed relations between the executive and legislative wings in parliament.

Despite this political reading, there is fervent hope among many people that this time around it would be different, and that the 18th legislative term of the National Assembly could witness a reset in relations, and herald the beginning of a new chapter distinguished by cooperation, coordination and constructive engagement



between the two entities in parliament. A collaborative parliamentary environment is vital to tackle the various economic and social challenges confronting Kuwait, and to find solutions to many of the intractable issues that have evaded resolution over the years. A harmonious relationship is also essential to adopt the several fiscal and economic reforms that have remained stalled in the National Assembly for far too long.

In particular, parliamentary consensus is needed for diversifying the economy away from its overwhelming reliance on oil income. Transitioning the economy from its current rentier model and shifting towards a more stable, sustainable and productive framework is critical for the country's sustainable development and to sustain the welfare of citizens.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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# Expats can return to Kuwait without biometric fingerprinting

**Ministry of Interior has clarified that expatriates who are yet to complete their biometric fingerprinting will be allowed to reenter Kuwait after the expiry of the June 1 deadline set by the ministry.**

Contradicting stories being spread on social media that expatriates without biometric fingerprinting will be denied entry after the expiry of the deadline, the interior ministry made clear that these reports were

unfounded. The ministry added that anyone with a valid visa to enter the country can do so without the additional need to have their biometric fingerprint being recorded.

The ministry explained that the 'deadline' set for June 1 to complete biometric fingerprinting by citizens and residents in Kuwait is adequate, given the large number of outlets set up around the country to complete the process. The ministry warned that failure to complete the fingerprinting within the stipulated time frame will lead to denial of access to the numerous



transactions and services offered by the ministry, but it will not prevent the defaulter from entering the country.

The source stated that expatriates who have not undergone fingerprinting will be required to immediately do so upon their return from abroad, either at the airport itself or at any of the fingerprinting centers located in the six governorates of Kuwait and in several shopping centers. The ministry noted that the biometric fingerprint is only taken once and is transformed into digital evidence, enabling security services to verify the identity of any person and permanently prevent deported or banned individuals from reentering the country.

## Decline in number of Gulf students at US universities

**The latest annual statistics on international students in the United States and elsewhere by the US-based Institute of International Education (IIE) notes that there has been a significant drop in enrollment of students from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states in educational institutes in the United States.**



The annual IIE report titled 'Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange' points out that this fall in student strength from GCC countries was most noticeable from Saudi Arabia, but the decline was also reflected in student enrollment from other states in the region, with the possible exception of Oman.

The report also noted that this decline in enrollment of students from the Middle East was not universal across universities in the Western world, with educational institutions in countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia, in fact, witnessing an increase in students from the region. The decline in US enrollment is also unexpected, as it comes at a time when there is growing interest among students in the Middle East to pursue higher education abroad, especially in East and Southeast Asian countries.

Data from the 'Open Doors' report indicates a significant decline in the number of Saudi students in the United States, dropping from 61,287 to 15,989 during the 2022-2023 academic year, a decrease of almost 75 percent. Similarly, the number of Qatari students decreased by 71 percent from 1,443 to 404, while the number of Bahraini and Kuwaiti students also decreased significantly. Personal safety, including the risk of gun crime, as well as higher tuition fees, has been cited as factors keeping students away from US universities.

Vinay Loungani, sales director for the Middle East and North Africa at Crimson Education, a leading college admissions counseling company, stated "Many families in the Middle East are increasingly less inclined to send their children to the United States, citing reasons such as safety, financial obligations, and overall distance. They feel more comfortable sending their children to the United Kingdom or other European countries when their children insist on studying abroad."

However, analysts point out that higher tuition fees at US universities cannot be a valid reason for students ditching US educational institutions, as the United Kingdom, a popular destination for Middle Eastern students, has not seen the same decline in numbers as the US, despite universities in the UK hiking tuition fees for foreign students in recent years.

In fact, figures issued by the Higher Education Statistics Agency in the United Kingdom indicate that there were 12,925 first-year students from the Middle East in the United Kingdom in the academic year 2011/2012, while the number rose to 16,905 by 2021/22. The increase in enrollment came despite universities in the UK significantly increasing fees for foreign students, in the wake of the British government initiating caps on tuition fees for British students at UK universities.

Analysts say that security concerns and higher costs of US universities are only one aspect of why students shy away from US higher education institutions. They point to other factors at play behind the increasing number of Middle Eastern students deciding not to travel to the US and other places to receive higher education. A major factor behind this shift in trend are changes in foreign scholarship systems by their governments, such as the ones recently incorporated in Saudi Arabia.

Governments in the GCC and across the region are encouraging their students to pursue higher education at any of the wide range of high-quality educational institutions in their own countries. The opening of New York University Abu Dhabi more than a decade ago is a prime example of this, said Soraya Beheshti, the regional director of Crimson Education. Similarly, she pointed to institutions in Qatar linked to three American universities — Georgetown, Cornell, and Carnegie Mellon — as helping to encourage students to stay in their home country.



## Nepalese media delegation visits The Times Kuwait

By Ricky Laxa  
Staff Writer

Members of the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) and Nirem Productions, a leading Nepalese media outlet, visited The Times Kuwait News last week and met with the Executive Managing Editor Reaven D'Souza and Director of Marketing Wilson Dcunha.

Members of the Nepalese delegation included Chairman of Federation of Nepali Journalists, Raj Malla, Chairman of Nirem Productions Kuwait, Prem Jimee Yakkha, and Jay Narayan Tharu of Nirem Update.

During the meeting, Mr. D'Souza discussed with the Nepalese side the possibility of publishing social events, articles, and news in Nepalese and English languages, to cater to its more than 120,000 Nepalese nationals working in Kuwait.

For his part, Mr. Malla noted that the Nepalese community in Kuwait is one of the

most active communities in the country with regular activities in diverse fields including in sports, culture and social domains. He added that streamlining reports of these activities through media outlets, including through social media posts and podcasts, would be of utmost importance in disseminating news of these events, as well as local news of interest, to the Nepalese community in Kuwait.

Pointing out that The Times Kuwait has provided platforms to several news reporters and embassies to have their articles published in their own languages such as Philippines and Indonesia, Mr. D'Souza said: "We can definitely explore all these possibilities for the Nepalese community and provide them the opportunity to provide news updates to their own nationals and other expatriates in the country."

News articles in Nepalese will be available online, on The Times Kuwait website at <https://timeskuwait.com> in the coming weeks.

## Customs union condemns director's decision to change work system

Ahmed Aqla Al-Anazi described the decision of the Acting Director-General of Customs as absurd, random, and ill-considered, stating that it affects the progress of work and the security of Kuwait.

The Union of Workers in the General Administration of Customs conducted field visits to border customs centers to inquire about the decision of the Acting Director General of Customs regarding changes to the work system.

During the union's visit to the Nuwaiseeb Customs Administration, the head of the customs union, Ahmed Aqla Al-Anazi, confirmed that the union does not object to the continued implementation of the fingerprint system.

He added, "But at the same time, it rejects the decision of the Acting Director-General



to change the work system, describing the decision as absurd, random, and ill-considered."

Al-Anazi pointed out that the decision cannot be implemented in practice and affects the progress of work and the security of the country.



# Kuwait to integrate AI in educational curriculum

*A new decision by the Minister of Education and Higher Education, Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, to establish a committee tasked with integrating programs on Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology into computer curriculum, has been praised by many academics.*

The committee is led by Dr. Abdullah Al-Mutawa from Kuwait University's College of Engineering and Petroleum, and includes the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education, the Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Research and Curriculum Sector, and the general supervisor of computer education at the ministry.

Academics and analysts have welcomed the ministerial decision, noting that it is aligned with technological advancements taking place around the world, and aims to establish Kuwait at the forefront of digital education in the region. The decision is also said to be part of the government's broader initiatives to digitalize the overall economy and enhance the quality of education in the country.

In his comments on the decision, President of the Kuwait Society for Postgraduate Studies, Dr. Muhammad Al-Otaibi, emphasized the significance of AI and underscored the importance of integrating it into the educational curriculum. He noted that AI is a sophisticated system that empowers the educational system with substantial capabilities to evolve and to achieve objectives, besides catering to the needs of all individuals seeking knowledge, by providing them with necessary information and knowledge.



Dr. Muhammad Al-Otaibi

Elaborating further, Al-Otaibi said that AI serves as a bridge between knowledge, stored information, and individuals seeking knowledge. It offers them suitable methods to access and analyze information anytime, anywhere. He also highlighted AI's robust and impactful role in providing assistance, solving problems and challenges, boosting strengths and addressing weaknesses, as well as offering real-time translation of linguistic texts in a simpler and more accurate manner.



Khaled Al-Enezi

He added that the ability to employ and access AI remotely further enhances the quality, accessibility and inclusivity of education provided by the state, as well as fosters a culture of learning in diverse and effective ways that align better with the modern era. Additionally, AI can contribute to minimizing cheating and manipulation by students and others concerned with education, while also offering personalized educational opportunities tailored to each student's needs, thereby eliminating barriers and challenges, while providing solutions for students with different skill sets.



Dr. Saud Nasser Al-Tami

For his part, Professor Walid Khaled Al-Enezi, a curriculum and teaching methodologies expert at Kuwait University's College of Education, remarked that Dr. Al-Adwani's decision to integrate AI into the computer curriculum is a right step in the right direction and is pivotal in furthering Kuwait's vision to become an artificial intelligence hub in the region, and aligns with global digital transformations in education.



Dr. Siham Al-Qabandi

Emphasizing that AI represents the pinnacle of global scientific achievement, technological revolution, and industrial progress, Al-Enezi added, "Adequately preparing for this technology is crucial to keeping abreast of scientific advancements, creating a conducive educational environment, training educators, and ensuring our students are ready for a seamless transition in knowledge acquisition, which is pivotal for their academic development."

Adding his thoughts on the minister's educational enhancement move, Dr. Saud Nasser Al-Tami, a professor of law and a lawyer before the Court of Cassation and the Constitutional Court, noted that this decision keeps pace with global trends of using technology extensively in education. However, he added that adopting AI necessitates preparing an educational environment capable of effectively integrating educational technology and crafting suitable educational content for different academic stages.

Pointing out that AI is driving a transformation across various educational aspects, such as teaching, assessment, guidance, and curriculum development, Al-Tami said, "As AI evolves, it will play a crucial role in designing and developing curricula, revolutionizing traditional teaching methodologies, and incorporating applications such as chatbots and virtual instructors for a more efficient and effective educational system."

Al-Tami emphasized that the successful integration of AI into distance education would enhance education quality and foster a culture of learning in innovative ways that align with the modern era. He elaborated further by noting, "AI can facilitate the creation of question banks, mitigate cheating, and offer customized educational opportunities for each student. It can help tailor solutions based on the individual skills of students, identifying their strengths



and weaknesses in courses, and actively working to enhance them.

In her comments on the ministerial decision, Professor of

Social Planning at Kuwait University, Dr. Siham Al-Qabandi, pointed out that AI is an unavoidable technology and scientific development

that permeates all aspects of contemporary life, offering immense benefits. Therefore, its incorporation into educational curricula is crucial, reflecting the government's commitment to nurturing youth who are in tune with the latest technological advancements in our modern world.

She added that integrating artificial intelligence into education will motivate students through various means, as it will help analyze student performance, design educational challenges, programs, and games, create tailored training programs, identify and address linguistic and learning difficulties, and design educational interventions to assist them.

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# Tajikistan President slated to visit Kuwait this year

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan to Kuwait highlighted the significance of this year, anticipating developments and consultations across political, economic, and commercial sectors between the two countries.

- Ambassador H.E. Dr. Zubaydullo Zubaydov mentioned that twenty Tajik students are currently studying Arabic in Kuwait.

- Tajikistan has significant animal wealth, as well as vegetables, fruits, and nuts that could be supplied to Kuwait.

- The direct flight route between Kuwait and Dushanbe, operating three times a week, aims to boost tourism between the two nations.

Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan H.E. Dr. Zubaydullo Zubaydov announced that the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon was slated to visit Kuwait this year at the invitation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Ambassador Zubaydov disclosed news of the visit during a reception he held last week at the embassy for members of the Tajik community who had come to greet him on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr. In his address to compatriots, the ambassador stated: "This year is very important for the two countries because it will witness several important developments in various fields, including a visit to Kuwait by the President of Tajikistan in the last quarter of the year, and the holding of the Joint Economic Committee of the two countries, as well as consultations covering political, economic, and commercial topics between officials from both nations."

He went on to add, "We aim to enhance our relations with Kuwait across various domains, and this year will also witness the organizing of a Tajik Cultural Week in Kuwait." Ambassador Zubaydov also revealed that currently more than twenty Tajik students are enrolled in Arabic language courses at Kuwait University's Faculty of Arts, and that the goal is to expand this number in the future.

Elaborating on the planned visit of his country's president, the ambassador said that during the visit discussion will be held on various topics, including on providing food security to Kuwait. He highlighted that Tajikistan has significant animal wealth, as well as vegetables, fruits, and nuts that could be supplied to Kuwait.

Regarding tourism, Ambassador Zubaidov confirmed that the launch of direct flights between Kuwait and Dushanbe was aimed at boosting tourism in his country. Revealing that last year only around 500 Kuwaitis visited



Tajikistan, compared to over one million tourists from around the world, the envoy expressed regret that many Kuwaitis still remain unaware of the many attractions of Tajikistan, despite the fact that Tajikistan's history is intertwined with Arab and Gulf history for over a thousand years.

Turning to investment opportunities in Tajikistan, the ambassador noted that there are

many opportunities for Kuwaiti businessmen to invest in his country, along with many facilities such as tax exemptions. He pointed out that the most important projects in his country currently are hydroelectric projects, given that about 60 percent of Central Asia's waters are located in Tajikistan. He explained, "The Kuwaiti Fund is involved in some of our infrastructure projects."

Expanding on the role of Kuwaiti diwanis in strengthening people to people relations between Kuwait and other countries, Ambassador Zubaydov said, "During Ramadan, I visited about 70 diwanis, where I spoke with everyone and invited them to visit Tajikistan. We have luxurious hotels, and Kuwaitis do not need an entry visa. The distance between our countries is less than three hours flying time from Kuwait, and our country is very affordable. The food is excellent, security is plentiful, and people are very hospitable and ispeak English, Arabic, and Persian."

## Djibouti's Mahmoud Ali Youssouf to energize Pan-African leadership

Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf's candidacy for the leadership of pan-African organization signals Djibouti's intent to introduce a fresh dynamic, backed by two decades of outstanding experience.

Mahmoud Ali Youssouf has held positions such as Director of Multilateral Affairs, Ambassador to Egypt and the Arab League, State Minister of International Cooperation, and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

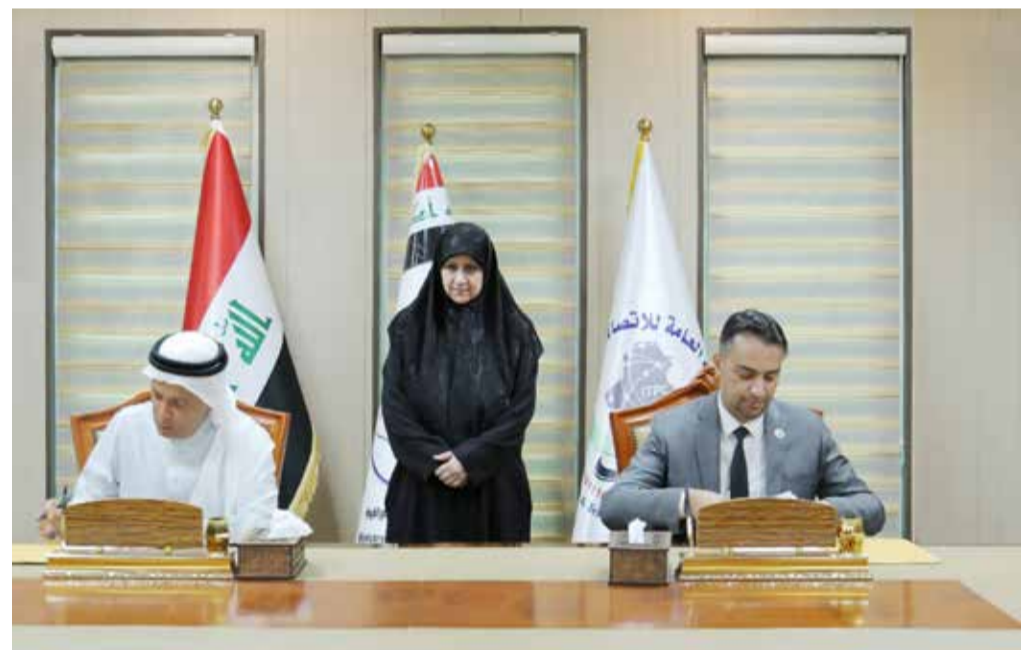
The regional and international influence



of Djiboutian diplomacy is intrinsically linked to his role and loyalty alongside President Ismail Omar Guelleh. Djibouti offers the most qualified minister to Africa and the African Union. After completing brilliant studies at prestigious universities in Egypt, England, and France, minister Mahmoud returned home to serve his beloved Djibouti.

With exceptional integrity, he swiftly climbed the ladder at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).

Zajil Telecom, a Kalaam Telecom Group company, signed a strategic partnership with Iraqi Informatics & Telecommunication Public Company to create an alternate route for operators to connect the GCC into Europe via Iraq



Zajil Telecom (Zajil Telecom, a wholly owned subsidiary in Kuwait of Kalaam Telecom Group), signed a long-term strategic agreement with the Iraqi Informatics & Telecommunication Public Company (ITPC) under the patronage of Her Excellency the Minister of Communications, Dr. Hiyam Al Yasiri. This agreement establishes "Kalaam Iraq Transit," the first official 100% terrestrial alternative route for large enterprises, hyperscalers, and global carriers to route their data traffic from the GCC to Europe transiting Iraq across Turkey.

Her Excellency the Minister, Dr. Hiyam Al Yasiri, commented that this project and other similar projects that are currently underway will make Iraq a safe land corridor and a competitor to the only international maritime corridor in the region that passes through the Suez Canal.

Kalaam offers a comprehensive suite of solutions, leveraging its owned assets like the 100% terrestrial KNOT cable system and its participation in the EIG consortium's submarine network. The recently added "Kalaam Iraq Transit" stands out with its unique route, delivering the lowest latency, enhanced resiliency, security, reliability, and overall performance. This innovative new route addresses geopolitical risks and capacity constraints, providing a more efficient and reliable path for customers with expanded

connectivity options. This along with Zajil's landing license in Kuwait, in collaboration with CITRA, bypasses common chokepoints and avoids maintenance issues challenging other Red Sea cables, to ensure consistent performance and prevent data loss for businesses connecting the GCC to Europe.

Nezar Mohammad Al Saie, Chairman of Kalaam said, "This strategic investment marks a significant leap in our regional & global market expansion. We're building Kalaam



into a powerhouse, the go-to partner for data and digital solutions. We stay ahead of the curve, making strategic investments, embracing advancements, and navigating geopolitical changes with agility. Our diverse route options empower businesses, operators and hyperscalers to choose the perfect path for seamless connectivity & optimized performance."

Kalaam provides other comprehensive solutions by leveraging its owned assets, including the 100% terrestrial KNOT cable system, and the EIG consortium submarine cable system.

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# Kuwait's business boom: 2,620 specialized companies established in just four months

*The number of micro companies in the country increased from 153 in December 2023 to 208 in January 2024, representing a growth of 55 companies and a growth rate of 36%.*

In January of this year, the number of specialized companies established surged by 45% compared to the previous month (December 2023).

The Single Window Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry

reported that 694 specialized companies were established in January, up from 479 in December 2023, marking a significant increase of 215 companies in just one month.

Companies of a private nature are those that conduct activities managed solely by

their owners, without the need for employees, commercial premises, or approval from another regulatory body. This framework aims to facilitate and support projects, providing an exception to the requirements outlined in the executive regulations of the Commercial Shop Licensing Law.

According to official data issued by the Ministry of Commerce and obtained by Al-Anbaa newspaper, the total number of specialized companies established in Kuwait since the former Minister of Commerce's decision in May 2023 has reached approximately 2,620 companies. Specifically, 839 companies were established in October, 608 in November, 479 in December, and 694 in January 2024. In the same context, the number of micro companies increased from 153 in December 2023 to 208 in January 2024, representing a growth of 55 companies and a growth rate of 36%.

Similarly, the number of private companies experienced significant growth in January 2024, reaching 993 companies compared to 851 in December 2023, marking a growth rate of 17%.

The data also indicated that mobile vehicle licenses have not seen any new establishments since they were temporarily suspended in March 2021. This suspension will continue until the sector is organized and new sites are



identified for these vehicles, in cooperation with Kuwait Municipality.

The Ministry of Commerce has already identified 400 sites for vehicle owners. The mobile phone sector, in accordance with regulations from Kuwait Municipality, the General Traffic Administration, and other relevant authorities, includes various locations such as parking lots for public parks under the Public Authority for Agriculture and Livestock, waterfront areas managed by the Tourism Projects Company, parking lots for clubs affiliated with the Public Sports Authority, and external parking lots in some public benefit associations.

## CSC issues vital circular on government agency job requirements

**The head of the bureau clarified that the Civil Service Council has the authority to approve job requirements for each government agency, while the role of the bureau is primarily technical.**

The head of the Civil Service Bureau issued a circular concerning the approval of job requirements for all government agencies under the central employment system. He clarified that the Civil Service Council has the authority to approve job requirements for each government agency, while the role of the bureau is primarily technical.

The circular, numbered 4 of 2024, was issued to inform government agencies about the details of the decision made by the Civil Service Council at its first meeting of 2024, held on February 28. These details include:

- The bureau receives the job needs of its affiliated entity through a letter approved by the competent minister, ensuring that these needs are distributed among approved job titles based on classified job groups. The number of vacancies must not exceed the financial grades allocated in the entity's budget. Job needs must be requested twice a fiscal year: first from April 1 to April 30, and second from October 1 to October 31. These required job needs are automatically entered into

Council deems appropriate, considering the technical opinion of the Civil Service Bureau. Subsequently, upon issuance of the Service Council's decision in this regard, the bureau shall automatically enter the approved needs into the integrated civil service systems, linking the entry to the number approved by the Civil Service Council for the government agency at the approved job titles level, as per the classified job groups and the number of vacancies in the financial grades allocated in the budget for each government agency.

- Amending the numbers of these job requirements for each government agency in light of the number of vacancies in the financial grades allocated in the budget is not permissible, except through approvals issued by the Civil Service Board. Such approvals should be in accordance with coordination between the Ministry of Finance and the Civil Service Bureau in this regard.
- Regarding job categories that are not restricted by registration periods or roles in the central employment system, the Civil Service Commission is authorized to complete their nomination procedures directly, while adhering to the number of vacancies in the financial grades allocated in the budget for each government agency.
- The candidate for employment must review the entity for which he is nominated and complete all procedures and justifications for the appointment within 30 working days from the date of his announcement of the nomination. Otherwise, his right to nominate for the entity will be forfeited, unless the administration of the entity for which he is nominated provides a valid reason for the delay beyond this date.
- A candidate who rejects nomination to two different government agencies loses his right to the role he reached in the central employment system and is returned to the system as a first-time employment registrant.

The bureau has called on the government agencies covered by the central employment system to consider implementing the decision of the Civil Service Board mentioned in the previous detail. This request is made without prejudice to Cabinet Resolution No. 1248, passed last November 6, which states, "No letters should be sent to the Civil Service Bureau from a government agency that includes a need for only one person of a specific specialty for the purpose of individually nominating a specific person for employment. If such a letter is sent, no action will be taken, it will have no effect, and it will be considered as if it did not exist."



integrated civil service systems, and a need may only be entered once for the purpose of nominating a specific person.

- The bureau reviews the job needs received from the ministers in a manner consistent with the nature of the government entity's work, the scientific specializations in the central employment system, and the number of employees in each job group within the entity. This review ensures that job needs align with the number of vacancies in the financial grades allocated in each government entity's budget. It also ensures compatibility between scientific specializations and the entity's work, as well as between job needs and the number of employees with approved job titles in each job group classified within the entity.
- After completing the review in accordance with the previous clause, the bureau shall present it to the Civil Service Council for approval of the functional requirements of each government agency based on what the Civil Service

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# Kuwait's financial prospects in 2024: positive outlook

*Reforms and investment are key to unlocking Kuwait's economic potential. However, political deadlock threatens Kuwait's economic progress.*

A recent report by Oxford Business Group (OBG) has highlighted Kuwait's strong economic position as it enters 2024. The report attributes this to the country's improved fiscal balances and overseas investments. It further explains that since late 2023, policymakers have had opportunities to enhance long-term sustainable growth. However, these opportunities will only materialize after addressing prevailing challenges in local markets.

The report outlines the dual nature of Kuwait's economic landscape in 2024, noting both potential obstacles and gains. While the impact of declining oil demand and political issues could pose challenges, Kuwait's financial outlook remains positive due to its improved fiscal and external balances.

OBG identifies several areas of opportunity for the Kuwaiti economy, particularly in financial and structural reforms, diversification, and strategic investments. Initiatives such as the launch of a development fund and the government's four-year action program represent significant steps towards stimulating the economy and attracting investment. However, fully unlocking the potential of these opportunities hinges on resolving political differences and introducing key reforms, including new taxes, in Kuwait.

The report acknowledges the internal economic challenges faced by Kuwait, noting that delays in implementing necessary fiscal and



structural reforms could lead to an unbalanced fiscal policy and undermine investor confidence. Such delays could also hinder Kuwait's progress towards economic diversification. Conversely, political deadlock in Kuwait could impede the acceleration of essential fiscal and structural reforms, which are crucial for bolstering investor confidence and stimulating the private sector.

#### Oil revenues and fiscal discipline

Despite the challenges it faces, Kuwait maintains a positive financial outlook. Public financial balances have improved, and external

financial reserves have increased. The non-oil fiscal balance has also strengthened. This improvement is attributed to rising non-oil revenues and spending controls in the general budget, which have boosted the non-oil fiscal balance by around 2% of non-oil GDP in fiscal year 2022/2023.

Similar to other Gulf economies, Kuwait has ample fiscal leeway. However, further fiscal discipline in Kuwait's general budget is necessary to support growth and enhance fiscal sustainability. The expansionary fiscal policy planned by Kuwait in the 2023/2024 budget

draft is appropriate. From the next fiscal year onwards, Kuwait's fiscal consolidation process should aim to boost non-oil revenues and enhance investment spending to underpin economic growth.

Potential revenue-enhancing measures for Kuwait's general budget in the next fiscal year could include introducing excise taxes and value-added taxes (VAT), expanding the scope of income tax to cover domestic companies, and focusing on reducing the government wage bill and phasing out energy subsidies while improving income support.

While VAT implementation may not be on the immediate agenda in Kuwait, despite recommendations from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and a GCC agreement to adopt similar tax measures, introducing VAT in Kuwait may not be feasible unless the political climate improves sufficiently to gain parliamentary approval. Conversely, the corporate tax framework may be more achievable, with the government aiming to implement it in 2024.

Further structural policies aimed at diversifying Kuwait's economy would be welcome. In addition to Kuwait's reform and governance efforts to promote growth, effective investment in infrastructure, digital initiatives, carbon emissions reduction initiatives, and service sectors such as tourism could accelerate economic diversification and support Kuwait's energy transition efforts.

## Resetting Relations Key to Parliamentary Consensus

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

However, many legislators and the public they represent are opposed to any initiative that could curtail the prodigious largesse and benefits currently provided by the state. With prudent measures such as rationalizing salaries, reducing subsidies, trimming the bloated public sector, and limiting welfare handouts, being non-starters in parliament, the upcoming new cabinet will be hard-pressed to find coherent solutions to address the many challenges that lie ahead.

And, there is no dearth in the number of issues that need speedy resolution. With parliament set to open on 14 May, the ministers will have to evaluate the various obstacles hindering progress in their respective domains, find appropriate solutions, and outline priorities in tackling them. Among the multitude of challenges awaiting ministerial resolution are reviving the New Kuwait 2035 Vision, and implementing the long-pending social, financial and economic reforms.

The ministers will also have to approve critical infrastructure and utility projects, encourage greater private sector participation in the economy, and promote foreign investments. Concomitantly, they will also have to introduce measures to enhance public services, combat corruption, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and rectify administrative inefficiencies.

Generating gainful employment opportunities for the tens of thousands of young nationals entering the labor market each year, will be a priority for the upcoming government. But this poses yet another challenge, as a bloated public sector that gnaws the largest chunk of public expenditure in the annual state budget, is no longer capable of absorbing all

the young citizens who apply each year.

Attempts by the authorities to reduce the pressure on the public sector by encouraging nationals to seek employment in the private sector, and goading private companies to absorb citizens, have both failed to achieve desired outcomes. Analysts point out that most youth prefer government jobs because of the higher remuneration, better working conditions, and generous perks that accompany jobs in the public sector.

Bridging the discrepancy in emoluments and benefits between public and private sectors would be key to attracting youth to work in private enterprises. But this would then push government's expenditures even higher and result in the annual budget moving into deep deficit territory. Given this dilemma, the executive and legislative wings will have to reach broad consensus on exploring and implementing innovative strategies to create job opportunities for nationals.

Continued confrontations, conflicts, and ensuing political instability, which have in recent decades become the hallmark of parliamentary life in Kuwait, have increasingly become a cause of concern to many citizens. The public disquiet was reflected in a recent informal media survey, where many citizens voiced frustration at the persistent strained parliamentary relations.

Urging legislators and the government to work together in the nation's interest, many citizens called for a new beginning — one based on shared visions and specific goals to be achieved within a defined time frame. They also stressed on the need to intensify efforts and harness resources to reinvigorate the New Kuwait 2035 vision, and to ensure sustainable development by diversifying the economy, rationalizing government spending, and

boosting non-oil revenues.

The two parliamentary entities were also exhorted to resolve structural imbalances in the national economy, create an investment climate that would attract foreign capital, boost business competition, and privatize non-productive government entities. Encouraging public-private partnerships and developing specialized economic zones that could serve as commercial, financial and cultural hubs, were also priorities for many citizens.

Emphasizing that people were the pillar to build a productive and sustainable economy, survey respondents called for measures to encourage young nationals to pursue innovative and creative enterprises in newer transformative technologies. Additionally, they urged for empowering Kuwaiti women in decision-making roles, eradicating all forms of discrimination, securing rights of the differently abled, and updating legislation to safeguard these rights,

Many of the views expressed by citizens in the informal survey were a reiteration of findings by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) following its Article IV Consultation program in Kuwait last year. The Fund noted that frequent government changes, and the political impasse between the government and parliament have in recent years impeded important fiscal and structural reforms in the country.

The IMF pointed out that reform bills — such as the new debt law needed for orderly fiscal operations, and the value added tax bill — have been awaiting parliamentary approval for quite a while. Meanwhile, political developments have delayed implementation of the structural reform agenda proposed by the previous government under its program of action.

The Fund noted that although oil revenues

form the main income source for the country, the government has only limited sway over the two essential aspects of oil — its price and its production. Oil prices are dictated by volatility in the global energy market, while oil production is increasingly regulated by the need to conform to quotas set by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its non-OPEC allies.

The Fund warned that this lack of oversight on its main income resource posed a two-sided risk to Kuwait's economy — it curbed the country's potential growth, and negatively impacted its fiscal and current account balances. The IMF added that external potential threats to the economy are further exacerbated by domestic risks such as delays in needed fiscal and structural reforms, which then undermine investor confidence, and hinder progress in economic diversification.

On the plus side the Fund noted that high oil prices have improved the fiscal and external balances, and allowed replenishment of the state treasury, the General Reserve Fund (GRF), as well as increased assets of the Future Generations Fund (FGF), and reserves of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). The combined corpus of these entities, which amounted to around 450 percent of GDP as of end-2022, enables Kuwait to tide over adverse economic and fiscal situations, and to address long-standing structural imbalances from a position of strength.

However, the fiscal and structural reforms, as well as economic restructurings needed to drive the economy forward, will pivot on the government and legislators finding the means to resolve the prevailing political gridlock. A new parliament is an opportunity to reset relations — an option that the two parliamentary entities could do well to seize.



# London: A Home Away From Home



By Hermoine Macura-Noble  
Special to The Times Kuwait

*The most visited city by Gulf residents – London exudes a warmth and charm like no other, which is why one of the most cherished experiences when planning your trip is finding accommodation that feels like a second home.*

Whether you're jetting off for business or pleasure, the comfort and familiarity of a hotel that exudes warmth and hospitality in the British capital can elevate your entire journey. From cozy bed-and-breakfasts to luxurious boutique hotels, London is peppered with establishments that pride themselves on offering a home away from home.

Tucked away near Oxford Street lies a haven of luxury and contemporary style at the Edition Hotel London, which is definitely one to consider. Nestled amidst the city's historic charm, this boutique hotel stands as a beacon



Zapote Owners,  
Chef Yahir Gonzalez and Tony Geary

of modern hospitality, offering guests a truly unique and unforgettable experience. From its meticulously curated design to its world-class amenities, the Edition Hotel London redefines the art of luxury living in the British capital.

Occupying a landmark building that once housed the Berners Hotel, a beloved institution in London's hospitality scene – renowned



architect John Pawson, led the transformation of this historic space into a masterpiece of contemporary design. Every aspect of the Edition Hotel London is meticulously designed to evoke a sense of understated luxury and refined elegance. When guests enter the lobby, they are greeted by a striking mix of textures, colors, and architectural elements. The interiors feature a palette of muted tones, accented by rich wood finishes, polished metals, and plush furnishings, creating a serene and inviting ambiance throughout the hotel.

The Edition Hotel London offers a range of luxurious accommodations, including guest rooms, suites, and penthouses, each exquisitely appointed with modern amenities and thoughtful touches. The rooms boast spacious layouts, sumptuous bedding, and floor-to-ceiling windows that flood the space with natural light and offer breathtaking views of the city skyline. Guests can indulge in the ultimate comfort and relaxation with amenities such as marble bathrooms, rainfall showers, and state-of-the-art technology at their fingertips.

What truly sets the Edition Hotel London apart is its commitment to providing impeccable service and personalized hospitality to every guest. From arrival to departure, the hotel's dedicated staff team goes above and beyond to ensure that every need is met and every expectation is exceeded. Whether arranging bespoke experiences, organizing private events, or offering insider tips on exploring the city, the staff at the Edition Hotel London are always on hand to provide warm and attentive service with a personal touch.

Another home away from home to consider when visiting the British capital is The Other

House in Kensington. Embracing a bold new approach to hospitality, this innovative hotel redefines the traditional concept of a luxury stay with a revolutionary hospitality concept combining apartment-style living with hotel services and a private club available to residents and local members. According to the management, the journey began around eight years ago when they saw a gap in the market for a fresh approach to hospitality, blending apartment-style living with a 'check-in, check out' model, along with an exclusive private members club. This concept evolved into a 'Residents' Club,' offering guests a second home or their 'other house' experience with comfort, flexibility, and control.

Consisting of 237 Club Flats and designed by a team of acclaimed architects and interior designers – the hotel boasts a striking contemporary aesthetic that seamlessly blends luxury with functionality. At The Other House, every detail has been carefully considered to ensure guests a memorable and immersive experience. Thoughtful touches such as locally sourced artwork, bespoke furnishings, and

premium amenities add to the sense of luxury and refinement, making guests feel right at home when they arrive. The property also offers a range of luxurious accommodations, including comfy connecting rooms for large families.

In addition to its luxurious accommodations and world-class amenities, The Other House is a vibrant hub for creativity, innovation, and collaboration. The hotel's communal spaces, including inviting lounges, co-working areas, and event spaces, foster connection and inspire conversation.

Regarding fine dining, it Feels like June in Canary Wharf is a great place to consider with its cozy Malibu-inspired theme, summer feels, and a unique menu featuring small plates, salads, a variety of grilled meats, and a Taco Bar. The starters have a Mediterranean feel, while the grills are American. The dishes are super fresh here and earthy, with the Tuna Croquettes on a thin layer of citrus mayo being a favorite, followed by seafood and meat feast mains made up of Ancho Chicken Thighs, Beef Striploin, and Buttermilk Chicken Wings with Sriracha mayo and Chimichurri for dipping.

Another warm and homely restaurant worth visiting is Zapote, which is in London's busy Shoreditch dining district. Launched by a former Dubai-based gastronomic aficionado, this ideal date night restaurant boasts some of the best Mexican food in the city. Served in a relaxed, comfortable environment, food lovers can look forward to a scrumptious tapas-style menu made up of Mexican classics with super unique ingredients, scallops, bone marrow, and succulent octopus. The yellowfin tuna and spicy crap tostada offer a burst of flavor and are worth the journey in itself. The warm and kind staff truly make you feel at home with their detailed explanations of each dish, which at times can be difficult to pronounce, but impossible to resist.

"We source as much locally and change our menu every 6 weeks or so. We work with a small but reliable team of local suppliers with whom we have worked for many years. Still, we also cultivate new relationships, for example, with a farm in North Yorkshire that grows our tomatillos. We source our corn, dry produce, and chilis from a select number of producers Chef Yahir has personally met during recent trips to Mexico. To ensure sustainability, we have them shipped over every quarter," explains Tony Geary, Zapote's co-founder and manager.



**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





# The Boring Truth About AI



**By Amar Bhidé**

Professor of Health Policy at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, is author of the forthcoming *Uncertainty and Enterprise: Venturing Beyond the Known* (Oxford University Press).

Experts who warn that artificial intelligence poses catastrophic risks on par with nuclear annihilation ignore the gradual, diffused nature of technological development. As I argued in my 2008 book, *The Venturesome Economy*, transformative technologies – from steam engines, airplanes, computers, mobile telephony, and the internet to antibiotics and mRNA vaccines – evolve through a protracted, massively multiplayer game that defies top-down command and control.

Joseph Schumpeter's "gales of creative destruction" and more recent theories trumpeting disruptive breakthroughs are misleading. As economic historian Nathan Rosenberg and many others have shown, transformative technologies do not suddenly appear out of the blue. Instead, meaningful advances require discovering and gradually overcoming many unanticipated problems.

New technologies introduce new risks. Invariably, military applications develop alongside commercial and civilian uses. Airplanes and motorized ground vehicles have been deployed in conflicts since World War I, and personal computers and mobile communication are indispensable for modern warfare. Yet life goes on. Technologically advanced societies have developed legal, political, and law-enforcement mechanisms to contain the conflicts and criminality that technological advances enable. Case-by-case court judgments are crucial in the



United States and other common-law countries. These mechanisms – like the technologies themselves – are evolutionary and adaptive. They produce pragmatic solutions, not visionary constructs.

The Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb and helped end World War II, was an exception. It had a high-priority military mandate. With the Nazis seeking to develop a bomb of their own, speed and effective leadership were essential. And as all-out thermonuclear war became a real threat, statecraft and strategic deterrence helped avert doomsday.

But nuclear weapons are a misleading analogy for AI, which has followed the typically diffused, halting pattern of most other technological transformations. AI spans disparate techniques – such as machine learning, pattern recognition, and natural language processing – and has wide-ranging applications. Their common feature is mainly aspirational – to go beyond mere calculation to more speculative yet useful inferences and interpretations.

Unlike the Manhattan Project, which proceeded at breakneck speed, AI developers have been

at work for more than seven decades, quietly inserting AI into everything from digital cameras and scanners to smartphones, automatic-braking and fuel-injection systems in cars, special effects in movies, Google searches, digital communications, and social-media platforms. And, as with other technological advances, AI has long been put to military and criminal uses.

Yet AI advances have been gradual and uncertain. IBM's Deep Blue famously beat world chess champion Garry Kasparov in 1997 – 40 years after an IBM researcher first wrote a chess-playing program. And though Deep Blue's successor, Watson, won \$1 million by beating the reigning Jeopardy! champions in 2011, it was a commercial failure. In 2022, IBM sold off Watson Health for a fraction of the billions it had invested. Microsoft's intelligent assistant, Clippy, became an object of ridicule. And after years of development, autocorrected texts continue to produce embarrassing results.

Machine learning – essentially a souped-up statistical procedure that many AI programs depend on – requires reliable feedback. But good feedback demands unambiguous outcomes

produced by a stable process. Ambiguous human intentions, impulsiveness, and creativity undermine statistical learning and thus limit the useful scope of AI. While AI software flawlessly recognizes my face at airports, it cannot accurately comprehend the nuances of my carefully and slowly spoken words. The inaccuracy of 16 generations of professional dictation software (I bought the first in 1997) has repeatedly frustrated me.

Large language models (LLMs), which have become the public face of AI, are not technological discontinuities that magically transcend the limitations of machine learning. Claims that AI is advancing at warp speed confuse a mania with useful progress. I became an enthusiastic user of AI-enabled search back in the 1990s. I thus had high hopes when I signed up for ChatGPT's public beta in December 2022. But my hopes that it, or some other LLM, would help with a book I was writing were dashed. While the LLMs responded in comprehensible sentences to questions posed in natural language, their convincing-sounding answers were often make-believe.

Thus, whereas I found my 1990s Google searches to be invaluable timesavers, checking the accuracy of LLM responses made them productivity killers. Relying on them to help edit and illustrate my manuscript was also a waste of time. These experiences make me shudder to think about the buggy LLM-generated software being unleashed on the world.

That said, LLM fantasies may be valuable adjuncts for storytelling and other entertainment products. Perhaps LLM chatbots can increase profits by providing cheap, if maddening, customer service. Someday, a breakthrough may dramatically increase the technology's useful scope. For now, though, these oft-mendacious talking horses warrant neither euphoria nor panic about "existential risks to humanity." Best keep calm and let the traditional decentralized evolution of technology, laws, and regulations carry on.

## Supporting Free Speech at Cambridge



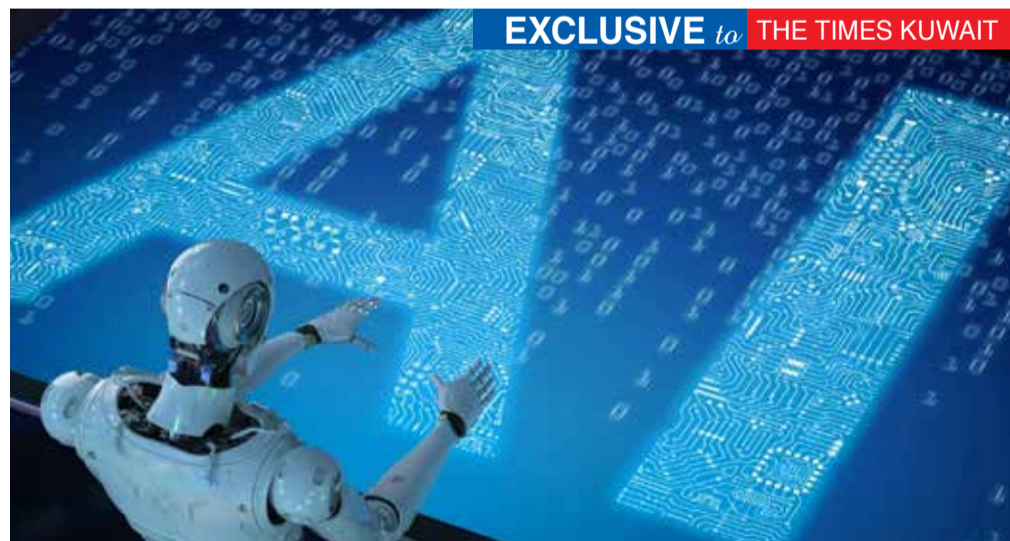
**By Peter Singer**

Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, is Founder of the organization *The Life You Can Save* and a founding co-editor of the *Journal of Controversial Ideas*. He is the author of *Practical Ethics*, *The Life You Can Save*, and *Animal Liberation Now*, and a co-author (with Shih Chao-Hwei) of *The Buddhist and the Ethicist* (Shambhala Publications, 2023).

Nathan Cofnas is a research fellow in the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Cambridge. His research is supported by a grant from the Leverhulme Trust. He is also a college research associate at Emmanuel College. Working at the intersection of science and philosophy, he has published several papers in leading peer-reviewed journals. He also writes popular articles and posts on Substack.

In January, Cofnas published a post called "Why We Need to Talk about the Right's Stupidity Problem." No one at Cambridge seems to have been bothered by his argument that people on the political right have, on average, lower intelligence than those on the left.

Some people at Cambridge were, however, very much bothered by Cofnas's February post, "A Guide for the Hereditarian Revolution." To follow Cofnas's "guide," one must accept "race realism": the view that heredity plays a role in the existing social and economic differences between different demographic groups. Only by challenging the taboo against race realism, Cofnas believes, can conservatives overcome "wokism," which he sees as a barrier to understanding the causes of inequality and to allowing people to succeed on the basis



of merit. If Harvard University admitted students "under a colorblind system that judged applicants only by academic qualifications," Cofnas asserted, Black people "would make up 0.7% of Harvard students." He also wrote that in a meritocracy, the number of black professors at Harvard "would approach 0%."

That post gave rise to a petition from Cambridge students demanding that the university dismiss Cofnas. The petition currently has about 1,200 signatures.

On February 16, the Master of Emmanuel College, Doug Chalmers, responded to the protests by saying that the college is committed to "providing an environment that is free from all discrimination." The relevance of this comment is unclear; although there are many statements in Cofnas's post that one can reasonably object to, it does not advocate racial discrimination. Importantly, though – or so it seemed at the time – Chalmers added that the college is also committed to "freedom of thought and expression," and he acknowledged Cofnas's

"academic right, as enshrined by law, to write about his views."

On the same day, Professor Bhaskar Vira, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education at Cambridge, issued a brief statement that began: "Freedom of speech within the law is a right that sits at the heart of the University of Cambridge. We encourage our community to challenge ideas they disagree with and engage in rigorous debate." He then made the obvious point that "the voice of one academic does not reflect the views of the whole university community," adding that many staff and students "challenge the academic validity of the arguments presented." His statement concluded by seeking to reassure students who were "understandably hurt and upset" by Cofnas's views that "everyone at Cambridge has earned their place on merit and no one at this University should be made to feel like this."

There was no suggestion, in the statements made by Chalmers or Vira, that either Emmanuel College or the University of Cambridge was

considering dismissing Cofnas. Yet, in the face of continuing protests, both the college and the university bowed to the pressure and began their own inquiries, as did the Leverhulme Trust. The university's inquiry and that of the Trust are, at the time of writing, ongoing, but on April 5 Cofnas received a letter notifying him that Emmanuel College had decided to terminate its association with him. In justifying that decision, the letter informed Cofnas of the views of a committee that had been asked to consider his blog:

"The Committee first considered the meaning of the blog and concluded that it amounted to, or could reasonably be construed as amounting to, a rejection of Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI and EDI) policies ... The Committee concluded that the core mission of the College was to achieve educational excellence and that diversity and inclusion were inseparable from that. The ideas promoted by the blog therefore represented a challenge to the College's core values and mission."

These sentences imply that at Emmanuel College, freedom of expression does not include the freedom to challenge its DEI policies, and that challenging them may be grounds for dismissal. That is an extraordinary statement for a tertiary institution to make. It is even more surprising given that the adoption of DEI policies is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Emmanuel College's decision does not prevent Cofnas from continuing to hold his research fellowship in the Faculty of Philosophy. But that would cease to be the case if the university inquiry were to reach the same conclusion as the college.

The academic world will be watching what happens. Were the University of Cambridge to dismiss Cofnas, it would sound a warning to students and academics everywhere: when it comes to controversial topics, even the world's most renowned universities can no longer be relied upon to stand by their commitment to defend freedom of thought and discussion.





EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# A Weak, Uneven Global Recovery



**By Eswar Prasad and Caroline Smiltneks**

*Eswar Prasad, Professor of Economics at the Dyson School at Cornell University, is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and the author of *The Future of Money: How the Digital Revolution Is Transforming Currencies and Finance*.*

*Caroline Smiltneks is an undergraduate student in economics at Cornell University.*

A world burdened by geopolitical conflicts, protectionist policies, and persistent inflation is weighing heavily on economic growth. But while the latest update of the Brookings-Financial Times Tracking Indexes for the Global Economic Recovery (TIGER) shows that global growth has plateaued, some countries' economic rebounds offer glimmers of hope for the year ahead.

The pace of economic growth varies significantly between countries, particularly the world's major economies. While the United States and India have maintained strong performance, China's economy is slowing. Such divergences are also evident within the eurozone, with Germany teetering on the brink of recession while the Italian and Spanish economies perform better than expected.

The second divergence is between actual economic outcomes and financial markets, as stock markets rally even in countries with lackluster growth and tight monetary policies. Moreover, household and business confidence is rising around the world despite the

heightened uncertainty caused by geopolitical shifts and volatile domestic politics.

Stock-market gains and rising confidence could signal a slight uptick in global growth in 2024, especially if inflation continues to fall, enabling central banks to cut interest rates. But this optimistic outlook is jeopardized by escalating geopolitical tensions, domestic political turmoil in a number of countries, and persistent inflationary pressures. Moreover, China and Germany's reliance on external demand instead of stimulative domestic policies could undermine their trading relationships and global economic growth.

The US economy has proven remarkably resilient, with a red-hot labor market and rising equity prices boosting business and consumer confidence and stimulating domestic demand. Although the Federal Reserve has maintained high interest rates, productivity

market booming and confidence rebounding, the country appears set for another year of moderate growth. By contrast, the United Kingdom is on the verge of a prolonged, albeit mild, recession, owing to persistent inflation, limited fiscal flexibility, and domestic political instability.

While China's economy remains beset by challenges, the government has delivered additional macroeconomic stimulus and taken measures to prop up the struggling property and stock markets. But the effectiveness of these measures is undermined by the absence of comprehensive reforms needed to rebuild private-sector confidence. A more robust policy package, including further fiscal support, could counter weak household demand and deflationary pressures, thereby boosting confidence among domestic and international investors.

Indian policymakers must implement governance and education reforms, along with infrastructure investments.

There are other bright spots in Asia. Indonesia, which, like India, is about to reap a demographic dividend thanks to its young population, is also expected to grow rapidly in 2024. Although the Russian economy has demonstrated unexpected resilience over the past two years, the economic impact of Western sanctions should not be overlooked. The boost from the Ukraine war effort, while significant, is artificial and may not be sustainable or translate into productivity growth.

Argentina and Mexico are projected to grow by 2-3 percent in 2024, while Brazil's growth is expected to be slightly lower. But political divisions in these countries could curb domestic demand and discourage foreign investors. Meanwhile, the possibility of interest-rate reductions in the US and other developed economies has alleviated some of the pressure on low-income countries grappling with debt distress, resulting in improved but still weak growth outlooks.

Crucially, a slight uptick in global growth may mask significant problems, such as geopolitical rifts, political unrest, trade protectionism, climate-related disruptions, and inadequate protections for vulnerable populations and countries. The adverse effects of economic nationalism and trade protectionism are likely to hit smaller developing countries the hardest.

The challenge facing policymakers, particularly in major economies, is to develop policy frameworks that reduce uncertainty and boost business and consumer confidence. At the same time, central banks must remain focused on restoring price stability, and governments on sound fiscal policies and supply-side reforms.

“ A slight uptick in global growth may mask significant problems, such as geopolitical rifts, political unrest, trade protectionism, climate-related disruptions, and inadequate protections for vulnerable populations and countries. ”

gains and immigration have enabled the American economy to sustain growth without exacerbating inflation. While the Fed has the flexibility to delay monetary easing, inflation dynamics continue to make it difficult to determine the optimal timing for a policy shift.

Meanwhile, Japan has finally begun to normalize its monetary policy. With its stock

India, for its part, is poised for another year of strong growth, buoyed by a surging stock market that reflects optimism among households and businesses. But despite lower inflation and the government's fiscal discipline, the outlook is not entirely rosy, as reflected in lackluster employment and foreign direct investment. To maintain its growth momentum,



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Two years to save the world



**Simon Stiell**

Executive Secretary, UN Climate Change

Last week, in his address at Chatham House, the London-based British think-tank, Simon Stiell, the executive secretary of UN Climate Change, underlined the immediacy of the global community implementing strategies to curb and mitigate global warming, as well as deploying plans that adapt to climate change.

In his talk on 11 April titled, 'Two years to Save the World', Mr. Stiell warned that the world was running out of time when it came to climate change, and that without effective steps the planet could soon face threats to its sustainable development.

"Some of you may think the title of today's event is overly dramatic. Melodramatic, even. So let me start by explaining briefly why the next two years are so essential in saving our planet. First, we know the stakes. You have heard me talk before about record shattering heat and massive damage to economies, and how there is no room for half measures. Let us take all that as a given.

"Second, we are at the start of a race which will determine the biggest winners in a new clean energy economy. And with the global index of living standards in constant flux, each country's climate responses will be key to whether they rise up the ladder or fall. Whether they thrive or barely survive. "Third, for many countries, they will only be able to implement strong new climate plans if we see a quantum leap in climate finance this year.

"Fourth, it is about how the Paris Agreement works. As of today, national climate plans — called Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs — in aggregate will barely cut emissions at all by 2030. We still have a chance to make greenhouse gas emissions tumble, with a new generation of national climate plans. But we need these stronger plans, now.

"And while every country must submit a new plan, the reality is G20 emissions are around 80 percent of global emissions. So G20 leadership must be at the core of the solution, as it was during the great financial crisis. It was then that the G20 came of age and showed that major developed and developing economies can work together to avert global economic catastrophes.

"Fifth and finally, every citizen of every country has an opportunity to be part of this transition. Every voice makes a difference. This year and next, we will need every voice more than ever.

"Let us consider for a moment what is up for grabs if we do make the next two years really count. Bold new national climate plans will be a jobs jackpot and economic springboard to boost countries up that global ladder of living standards. In the face of crop-destroying droughts, much bolder climate action to curb emissions and help farmers adapt will increase food security, and lessen hunger.

"Cutting fossil fuel pollution will mean better health and huge savings for governments and households alike. The transformative potential of bold climate action, in tandem with steps to advance gender equality, is one of the fastest ways to move away from business as usual.

"For those who say that climate change is only one of many priorities, such as ending poverty, ending hunger, ending pandemics, or improving education, I simply say this: none of these crucial tasks, indeed none of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), will be possible unless we get the climate crisis under control.

"In fact, business-as-usual will further entrench the gross inequalities between the



world's richest and poorest countries and communities that unchecked climate impacts are making much worse. These inequalities are kryptonite for cooperative global climate action, and every economy, every country and its people pays the price of that.

"To start curing this global cancer of inequality, we need to enable bold new national climate plans by all nations that protect people, boost jobs and drive inclusive economic growth. And we need them by early next year. The next generation of national climate plans must be investment plans for sustainable and strong economies.

"Which brings us back to the crucial importance of climate finance. Because it is hard for any government to invest in renewables or climate resilience when the treasury coffers are bare. Debt servicing costs in many countries have overtaken health spending, making new borrowing impossible, even as wolves of poverty gnaw at the door.

"A quantum leap this year in climate finance is both essential and entirely achievable. Every day, finance ministers, CEOs, investors, and development bankers direct trillions of dollars. It is time to shift those dollars from the energy and infrastructure of the past, towards that of a cleaner, more resilient future. And to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable countries benefit.

“

"I offer UN Climate Change's partnership wherever it can help to support stronger and faster climate-related outcomes. To the World Bank, IMF at the upcoming Spring Meetings. To the G7, G20, and their finance ministers. Together we can make this deal real.

”

"This year, at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, we need to agree on a new target for climate finance that meets developing country needs. But it is not enough to agree on a target. We need a new deal on climate finance, between developed and developing countries. That deal should have four key components.

- First, more concessional finance. Especially for the poorest and most vulnerable countries.
- Second, we need new sources of international climate finance, as the G20, International Maritime Organization, and others are working on.
- Third - as Mia Mottley and William Ruto have made clear — we must reform

development banks to make them work better for developing countries, embed climate in their decision-making, and build a financial system fit for the twenty-first century.

- Fourth, debt relief for the countries that need it most to give them the fiscal space for climate investment. Developing countries spent more than four hundred billion dollars servicing debts last year.

"Experts have shown that if we do all of this together, we can meet developing country needs, mobilizing hundreds of billions of dollars. Ever-closer cooperation between international institutions is more important than ever.

"I offer UN Climate Change's partnership wherever it can help to support stronger and faster climate-related outcomes. To the World Bank, IMF at the upcoming Spring Meetings. To the G7, G20, and their finance ministers. Together we can make this deal real.

"Together we must step up the pace. The Springs Meetings are not a dress rehearsal. Averting a climate-driven economic catastrophe is core business. It cannot be allowed to slip between the cracks of different mandates. We cannot afford a talkfest without clear steps forward, when there is an opportunity to make real progress on every part of the new climate finance deal all nations need.

At the Spring Meetings we need an ambitious

Debt Clauses - which allow countries facing supercharged storms to focus on recovery - are another welcome step in the right direction. Eligibility should now be expanded beyond small and island states to more countries and more climate impacts.

"The G7 has an absolutely crucial role too, this year chaired by Italy. G7 governments are the key shareholders in the World Bank and IMF. In truth, they provide both capital and direction. With their say-so, these institutions can do much more to use all the tools at their disposal to deliver large-scale impacts on the ground. It is entirely in the interests of every G7 country to take much bolder climate action at home and abroad, including on climate finance.

"Firstly, because serious progress on climate finance is a prerequisite for bold new national climate plans from developing countries, without which all economies, the G7's included, will soon be in serious and permanent strife.

"Secondly, because resilience building is equally urgent, to protect the supply chains that all economies depend on. We have just seen what supply chain disruptions flowing from COVID-19 did to inflation, and to households and businesses. Well, you can bet your bottom dollar these disruptions and inflationary impacts will only get dramatically worse, without bolder climate action.

"So too, the world needs the G20 to rise to this moment. We are all aware of geopolitical challenges. I do not downplay them. But they cannot be an excuse for timidity, amidst this worsening crisis. I will be candid: blame-shifting is not a strategy. Sidelining climate is not a solution to a crisis that will decimate every G20 economy and has already started to hurt.

"So the financial firepower the G20 marshaled during the global financial crisis should be marshaled again and pointed squarely at curbing runaway emissions and building resilience now. Brazil, who also hosts COP30, has a vital role to play to kickstart the ambitious action we need.

"I am encouraged that the G20, under Brazilian leadership, is exploring ways to find new finance for climate and development. Brazil itself is also trialing new ways to reduce unreasonable borrowing costs for clean energy which could work for other developing countries.

"Ultimately, it is not enough to invest in clean energy and resilient infrastructure without measures that also speed up the decline of fossil fuels. Stronger domestic progress on carbon pricing is essential to reflect the real economics of fossil fuels, including the massive health and economic costs of greenhouse gas pollution, which should not be shunted on to government, households, and other industries to pay.

"When I say we have two years to save the world, it begs the question — who exactly has two years to save the world? The answer is every person on this planet. More and more people want climate action right across societies and political spectrums, in large part because they are feeling the impacts of the climate crisis in their everyday lives and their household budgets.

"Rising costs for fossil-fuel-powered transport, for heating and cooling, energy, rising food prices as climate disasters hit production and supply chains, to name just a few. A recent survey by Gallup of 130,000 people in 125 countries found that 89 percent want stronger climate action by governments. Yet too often we are seeing signs of climate action slipping down cabinet agendas.

"There is clearly a disconnect — because in living rooms around the world, climate impacts and costs are rising quickly up the list of household worries. The only surefire way to get climate at the top of the cabinet agenda is if enough people raise their voices.

"So my final message today is for ordinary people everywhere. Every voice matters. Yours have never been more important. If you want bolder climate action, now is the time to make your voice count.

round of replenishment for the World Bank's International Development Association. Doing so could lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, and increase clean energy access, especially across Africa. Progress in Washington DC on revising the World Bank's capital requirements could free up billions more for concessional lending without asking donors for more money.

"Next, to help give countries the fiscal space they need for climate action, the IMF can help more countries deal with debts made worse by climate change and the pandemic. For example, by making more use of the Catastrophe Containment Relief Trust.

"The World Bank's work on Climate Resilient





# A luxurious and unforgettable experience in Bangkok

By Nourah Khan  
Travel Writer  
The Times Kuwait

Bangkok, a city known for its vibrant culture, bustling streets and exquisite cuisine, offers an unparalleled, diverse, experience that attracts travelers from all over the world.

During my recent tour of Bangkok, I stayed at one of the city's newest international luxury hotels. Located in the heart of Bangkok, the Capella Hotel Bangkok offers luxury hospitality in the heart of the Thai capital.

When you enter the hotel's luxurious lobby, you are greeted by a symphony of sophistication. The grandeur of the lobby, decorated with distinctive Thai décor and polished marble floors, sets the tone for an extraordinary stay. You are greeted by courteous staff offering a warm Thai smile and a refreshing drink, instantly making you feel surrounded by the city's unparalleled hospitality.

Each room and suite at these luxury hotels is a haven of elegance and comfort. Equipped with luxurious furnishings and state-of-the-art amenities, every detail has been meticulously curated to ensure an unforgettable stay.

Floor-to-ceiling windows offer panoramic views of the city skyline or the tranquil Chao Phraya River, providing a stunning backdrop to your luxurious retreat.

Each room has a spacious terrace with amazing views and an outdoor Jacuzzi bath.

In addition, you cannot miss the experience of enjoying the hotel's luxurious spa facilities.



The hotel's latest world-class spa, Auriga Wellness, offers guests a new level of wellness led by health professionals. The spa is a natural haven of calm, blending contemporary wellness techniques with ancient Asian techniques.

The spa includes seven treatment rooms (including two spa suites), a thermal bath area, and a naturally lit tea lounge, as well as an outdoor spa garden and a well-equipped fitness center. The spa treatment is based entirely on ancient remedies, medicinal herbs and spices,



many of which grow organically in the local area. There are also many distinguished restaurants in the hotel, and you can pamper your taste in the delicious cuisine offered by the hotel's world-class restaurants.

From innovative Thai cuisine prepared by award-winning chefs to international cuisine prepared using the finest ingredients, the dining experiences here are nothing short of exceptional.

One of these restaurants is Phra Nakhon that offers authentic Thai recipes and local products. The restaurant invites guests to taste the intricacies of fine Thai cuisine, prepared by Chef Kanika Jitsang Worn with a conscious mind towards authenticity and sustainability. The restaurant serves specialty Thai cuisine based on heirloom recipes from indigenous communities across the Kingdom. By sourcing

ingredients locally

Capella Bangkok's other exquisite amenities range from personalized concierge services to exclusive privileges, with every aspect of your stay designed to perfection. Whether you are arranging a private tour of the city's famous landmarks, or visiting Bangkok for a unique shopping experience, the hotel staff will do their best to fulfill your every desire. With unparalleled attention to detail and an unwavering commitment to excellence

The luxurious Capella Bangkok hotel redefines the meaning of hospitality.



It offers more than just accommodation, but rather provides an immersive experience that exceeds expectations. From the moment you arrive until the time you depart, every aspect of your stay has been meticulously designed to ensure a journey of pleasure, relaxation and unparalleled luxury.

*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

# Readying for AI's creative destruction



## Daron Acemoglu

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

The ancient Chinese concept of yin and yang attests to humans' tendency to see patterns of interlocked opposites in the world around us, a predilection that has lent itself to various theories of natural cycles in social and economic phenomena. Just as the great medieval Arab philosopher Ibn Khaldun saw the path of an empire's eventual collapse imprinted in its ascent, the twentieth-century economist Nikolai Kondratiev postulated that the modern global economy moves in 'long wave' super-cycles.

But no theory has been as popular as the one, which goes back to Karl Marx, that links the destruction of one set of productive relations to the creation of another. Writing in 1913, the German economist Werner Sombart observed that, "from destruction a new spirit of creation arises." It was the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter who popularized and broadened the scope of the argument that new innovations perennially replace previously dominant technologies and topple older industrial behemoths. Many social scientists built on Schumpeter's idea of 'creative destruction' to explain the innovation process and its broader implications. These analyses also identified tensions inherent in the concept. For example, does destruction bring creation, or is it an inevitable by-product of creation? More to the point, is all destruction inevitable?

In economics, Schumpeter's ideas formed the bedrock of the theory of economic growth, the product cycle, and international trade. But two related developments have catapulted the concept of creative destruction to an even higher pedestal over the past several decades.

The first was the runaway success of Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen's 1997 book, *The Innovator's Dilemma*, which advanced the idea of 'disruptive innovation'. Disruptive innovations come from new firms pursuing business models that incumbents have deemed unattractive, often because they appeal only to the lower-end of the market. Since incumbents tend to remain committed to their own business models, they miss 'the next great wave' of technology.

The second development was the rise of Silicon Valley, where tech entrepreneurs made 'disruption' an explicit strategy from the start. Google set out to disrupt the business of internet search, and Amazon set out to disrupt the business of book selling, followed by most other areas of retail. Then came Facebook with its mantra of 'move fast and break things'. Social media transformed our social relations and how

creation of new industries and new jobs, as people and capital are continuously freed to do more important, valuable things than in the past."

Now that hopes for artificial intelligence exceed even those of Facebook in its early days, we would do well to re-evaluate these ideas. Clearly, innovation is sometimes disruptive by nature, and the process of creation can be as destructive as Schumpeter envisaged it. History shows that unrelenting resistance to creative destruction leads to economic stagnation. But it does not follow that destruction ought to be celebrated. Instead, we should view it as a cost that can sometimes be reduced, not least by building better institutions to help those who lose out, and sometimes by managing the process of technological change.

Consider globalization. While it creates important economic benefits, it also destroys

especially when it comes to AI.

First, as with globalization, helping those who are adversely affected is of the utmost importance and must not be an afterthought. Second, we should not assume that disruption is inevitable. As I have argued previously, AI need not lead to mass job destruction. If those designing and deploying it do so only with automation in mind (as many Silicon Valley titans wish), the technology will create only more misery for working people. But it could take more attractive alternative paths. After all, AI has immense potential to make workers more productive, such as by providing them with better information and equipping them to perform more complex tasks.

The worship of creative destruction must not blind us to these more promising scenarios, or to the distorted path we are currently on. If the market does not channel innovative energy in a socially beneficial direction, public policy and democratic processes can do much to redirect it. Just as many countries have already introduced subsidies to encourage more innovation in renewable energy, more can be done to mitigate the harms from AI and other digital technologies.

Third, we must remember that existing social and economic relations are exceedingly complex. When they are disrupted, all kinds of unforeseen consequences can follow. Facebook and other social-media platforms did not set out to poison our public discourse with extremism, misinformation, and addiction. But in their rush to disrupt how we communicate, they followed their own principle of moving fast and then seeking forgiveness.

We urgently need to pay greater attention to how the next wave of disruptive innovation could affect our social, democratic, and civic institutions. Getting the most out of creative destruction requires a proper balance between pro-innovation public policies and democratic input. If we leave it to tech entrepreneurs to safeguard our institutions, we risk more destruction than we bargained for.

“ Facebook with its mantra of ‘move fast and break things’ transformed our social relations and how we communicate in one fell swoop, epitomizing both creative destruction and disruption at the same time. ”

we communicate in one fell swoop, epitomizing both creative destruction and disruption at the same time.

The intellectual allure of these theories lies in transforming destruction and disruption from apparent costs into obvious benefits. But while Schumpeter recognized that the destruction process is painful and potentially dangerous, today's disruptive innovators see only win-wins. Hence, the venture capitalist and technologist Marc Andreessen writes: "Productivity growth, powered by technology, is the main driver of economic growth, wage growth, and the

firms, jobs, and livelihoods. If our instinct is to celebrate those costs, it may not occur to us to try to mitigate them. And yet, there is much more that we could do to help adversely affected firms (which can invest to branch out into new areas), assist workers who lose their jobs (through retraining and a safety net), and support devastated communities.

Failure to recognize these nuances opened the door for the excessive creative destruction and disruption that Silicon Valley has pushed on us these past few decades. Looking ahead, three principles should guide our approach,





EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Nonsense and Bad Rules Persist in Banking



**Anat R. Admati**

*Professor of Finance and Economics at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, is co-author (with Martin Hellwig) of The Bankers' New Clothes: What's Wrong with Banking and What to Do about It.*

In December, the CEOs of the eight largest banks in the United States participated in a three-hour posturing session before the Senate Banking Committee. It was a disheartening display that showcased the toxic blend of politics and asinine rhetoric that often characterizes discussions about banking.

Much of the hearing focused on proposed banking regulations known as the 'Basel 3 Endgame'. Claiming to 'translate' the potential implications of this complex topic 'for the average American', Republican Senator Tim Scott stated that the proposed rules would lead to "fewer dollars to lend to Americans." Bankers and several senators, including Scott, argued that by keeping a portion of the banks' money "on the sidelines," these regulations would prevent poor people from achieving the American Dream.

But these threats often originate from falsehoods, such as Scott's suggestion that capital is something banks cannot use. In reality, as Democratic Senator Sherrod Brown noted, "Absolutely nothing in these rules would stop banks from making loans." Instead, they would simply require banks to rely more on their own equity and less on borrowing to finance loans and investments. As the late US Federal Reserve Chair Paul Volcker famously observed, there is a lot of "bullshit" in the debate about capital requirements.

“

Both the US and the EU must focus their efforts on achieving new breakthroughs in vital sectors, including AI, biotech, advanced networks, clean energy, and the manufacturing technologies of tomorrow.

”

Prudent banks insist on borrowers having "skin in the game" when they lend, yet vehemently oppose regulations aimed at reducing their dangerous reliance on borrowing. Banks' aversion to equity funding and addiction to borrowing enables them to shift costs and risks to others, ultimately benefiting at public expense. They often get away with it by keeping politicians and the public confused.

Shortly after the 2007-09 financial crisis, I realized that crucial policy decisions were being influenced by nonsensical analysis, impenetrable jargon, fallacious and misleading arguments, and inappropriate uses of mathematical models. As a result, opportunities to improve the banking system were constantly overlooked. By sowing confusion and leveraging their influence over politicians, regulators, lawyers, and economists,



bankers have corrupted the mechanisms by which rules are formulated and enforced.

The 133,000-word 'Basel 3 Endgame' adjusts a complex system of 'risk weights' by trying to calibrate the rules. Banks have weaponized the complexity of the proposed rules, threatening to reject certain loans. In fact, with the debt subsidies we all provide them, they will take risks, chase outside returns, and endanger us.

Over the past 14 years, I have consistently challenged the fallacies, irrelevant facts, and myths propagated by numerous bankers, policymakers, and economists. In November 2010, I helped organize a letter by 20 banking and finance scholars warning that the proposed Basel 3 reforms were grossly inadequate. I also debunked JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon's misleading claims about the Basel 3 rules in an open letter to the JPMorgan Chase board of directors and criticized Dimon for implying that what benefits large banks automatically benefits America.

Recognizing the importance of countering bankers' obfuscation, the German economist Martin Hellwig and I published the book *The Bankers' New Clothes: What's Wrong with Banking and What to Do about It* in 2013. Our goal was to expose how and why banks are so needlessly dangerous and to propose ways to change the system that merely required political will. But the symbiotic relationship between banks, governments, and parts of the media and academia ultimately prevailed. As Democratic Senator Richard Durbin said in 2009, banks "own" Capitol Hill.

More than a decade later, JPMorgan Chase has grown much larger, its deposits having more than doubled from \$1.1 trillion in December 2011 to nearly \$2.5 trillion in December 2023, far outstripping its reported loans, which increased from \$700 billion in 2011 to \$1.3 trillion in 2023. The bank's reported assets of about \$3.4 trillion, stacked as dollar bills, would extend over 230,000 miles into space – almost as far as the moon.

While the runs on Silicon Valley Bank and First Republic Bank in the spring of 2023 reflected legitimate concerns regarding their asset values and solvency, flawed accounting rules and Fed support continue to obscure the fragility of other banks. The persistence of bailouts is costly for society and encourages a culture of recklessness, both in the US and abroad.

The March 2023 collapse of Credit Suisse is a prime example of the disruption caused by the failure of financial institutions that operate across multiple jurisdictions. It is doubtful that maintaining such large institutions is justifiable, given the costs and risks they pose to our societies. Moreover, the preferential treatment of banks has fostered widespread disregard for rules, encouraging criminal behavior that often goes unpunished.

Political forces and misinformation continue to distort policy decisions. In a new and expanded edition of our book, Hellwig and I explore the severe governance issues that plague the banking

sector and undermine our democracies. One notable example is the \$13 billion settlement JPMorgan Chase agreed to in late 2013 to avoid a trial that would have revealed damning details of fraud committed by the bank's employees under Dimon's leadership.

While Dimon correctly asserts that banking rules are excessively complex, he also vehemently opposes simpler regulations. But by designing and implementing such rules effectively,

policymakers could reduce the need for costlier regulations and yield significant social benefits at virtually no cost. If banks are unattractive to equity investors, it may be due to their perceived opacity, or because banking has become too dependent on debt subsidies, which would be lost if financial institutions used equity funding. Blanket subsidies to profit-maximizing banks, however, make little sense. Instead, public funds should be directed toward deserving causes and those most in need of support.

The inability of our democracies to resist the influence of powerful corporations and their leaders is alarming, given that this ongoing failure fuels legitimate discontent with our economic, political, and legal systems. Deception (possibly self-deception) is prevalent not only in banking but across numerous other industries as well.

Based on misleading and disingenuous threats, banks have lobbied furiously and mobilized citizens and politicians to object to the proposed rules. On January 16, 2024, the deadline for public comments, I submitted my reaction to the Basel 3 Endgame proposal, as well as another related and misguided one. I attached a document debunking 44 flawed claims, which my co-author and I continue to revise as we identify more such claims. In the politics of banking, I fear that willful blindness to truth is likely to prevent better rules.



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# Thought “ for the week

Do I not destroy  
my enemies when  
I make them my friends?

- Abraham Lincoln

# Detox food List

Ask Mira : Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



**O**ur body is affected a lot by what we eat, how clean the air we breathe is, and how healthy we are.

Detox or detoxification, is the removal of toxic substances from the body. In other words, it is a method of removing all environmental and dietary toxins from the body, cleansing the colon and enhancing blood circulation. As a result, you feel more fresh, more focused, and you sleep deeper.

This is a sample list of allowed foods on a detox diet.

**Vegetables:** All vegetables are very rich in water so they help in flushing out toxicity. Whether raw or in salads or taken as juices, vegetables are the number one detox food. More specifically, this include more: broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, beetroots, onions, garlic, artichokes, beetroots, cucumbers and celery.

**Fruits:** Like veggies, fruits are also rich in water, so they help a lot in cleaning your body. Fresh fruits, frozen or fresh fruit juices offer the same benefits. The best fruits include: Papayas, strawberries, pineapples, kiwis and green apples.

**Nuts and seeds:** These are rich in omega-3 and are good sources of fiber. Of course you need to take the unsalted ones. You can eat it between your meals as snacks or toss it over your salads. Salted peanuts are not allowed though.

**Olive oil and avocados:** Extra virgin olive oil is the preferred oil during a detox period. Avocado is also recommended with your salads.

**Beans, lentils and quinoa:** These are considered plant proteins. These types of foods are natural and rich in iron. This list also includes red kidney, haricot, red lentil, green lentil and brown lentil.

**Grilled fresh seafood:** Eat any fresh fish, including salmon, lobster, crab, prawns, lemon sole, grilled fish and tuna.

- Herbs and spices include ginger, black pepper and fresh herbs
- Herbal and natural hot drinks such as chamomile and ginger
- Taking in at least two liters of water daily is also highly recommended.

#### The foods not recommended during a detox plan include:

- Red meat, chicken, turkey, and meat products such as sausages.
- Milk, cheese, eggs and cream.
- Butter, margarine and mayonnaise.
- Any food that contains wheat including bread, croissants, cereals, cakes, pies and quiche.
- Salted and non-raw nuts.
- Chocolate, candy, jam, puddings, ice-cream and custard.
- Alcohol and carbonated beverages, even the diet ones.
- Coffee and tea.
- Salt.

So a seven- day detox diet will be great to follow from time to time. It cleans your liver, your digestive system and gives you maximum energy. And, it beats bloating, headache, and cellulite, while increasing your immunity. Live natural!

*Eat like Mira*  
Create healthy habits, not restrictions

To subscribe to my diet programs,  
don't forget to log in to:  
[www.eatlikemira.com](http://www.eatlikemira.com).



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

## RECIPE

# Deconstructed Ring Samosa



**S**amosas are popular Indian street foods and a perfect evening snack as well. Usually samosas are shaped as triangles, however the same samosa dough can also be rolled as logs. Logs are easier to shape than triangular samosas and below is a take on this novel form of samosa rolled into logs and cut into ring shapes.

Welcome to the rolled log samosas.

Total time: 50 minutes.  
Serving: 4 person

#### Ingredients:

- For the Dough (wrap)
- 2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp carom seeds
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 4 tbsp ghee (clarified butter)
- 1/8 tsp turmeric
- 2 tbsp spinach puree
- 2 tbsp beetroot puree
- 1tbsp maida
- Water as per need.

#### For the Chaat:

- Green coriander chutney
- Dates and tamarind sweet chutney)
- Red chili-garlic chutney
- Sev
- Onion
- Coriander
- Pomegranate
- Chaat masala

#### For the Stuffing:

- 4 potatoes (boiled and mashed)
- 1/2 cup green peas (blanched or frozen)
- 2-3tbsp fresh coriander leaf (chopped)
- 1 tsp chili-ginger paste
- 1 tsp coriander-cumin powder
- 1/2 tsp amchoor powder
- 1/2 tsp red chili powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- Salt as per taste
- Oil for frying.

#### Directions:

##### Making the Dough:

- To half cup of flour add carom seeds, salt, 1 tbsp ghee and knead into a soft dough using a little water
- Repeat this dough making process three more times adding beetroot, spinach and turmeric paste respectively to obtain four different colors of dough.
- Shape each of the dough into a long roll and cut them into equal size smaller portions and then roll them to a flat ball. Set aside

##### Making the Stuffing:

- Heat 1 tbsp oil and the ginger-chili paste along with coriander-cumin powder
- Add the mashed potatoes, green peas, Amchoor powder, salt, red chili powder, garam masala, coriander leaves
- Mix well and transfer into a bowl. Set aside to cool
- Take one ball from the colored dough and roll it into a round shape like roti that is neither too thick or too thin.
- Cut the rolled roti into a square shape
- Put a generous portion of stuffing on top, fold the top and cut vertical lines below the folded part
- Now roll them into rings carefully making sure the stuffing does not come out at the edges
- Use 1 tsp flour and water to form a paste and use it to stick the edges of the rolled rings. Bring both the edges of the log together and seal tightly
- Continue the process until all the stuffing and dough is used up
- Heat enough oil for deep-frying and gently drop the samosa rings into the oil and fry on medium low flame until they turn crispy on both sides.
- Drain each samosa and transfer to a serving plate and sprinkle onion, chopped coriander leaves, pomegranate seeds, sev, and chaat masala on top and serve along with all the chutneys.



Chef Chhaya Thakker

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



# Prolonged sitting impacts health, affects posture

*Most of us spend a significant part of our lives sitting, whether at home, office, or in school. Prolonged sitting or sedentary behavior is defined as engaging in activities that involve low energy expenditure while sitting or reclining. This can include tasks such as desk- or computer-related work, lengthy online meetings, phone conversations, watching TV, or driving a car. Studies show that in many places people spend on average between 7 to 9 hours a day remaining seated, mainly at work or at home.*

All that sitting has a profound impact on our overall health, with research linking prolonged daily sitting to increased risk of negative health outcomes, including overweight, obesity, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Excessive sitting has also been shown to slow down metabolism, affecting ability to regulate blood sugar, blood pressure, and metabolize fat, as well as to weaken muscles and bones that lead to less support for the body and poor posture.

Signs that you are sitting for prolonged periods include tension or pain in your lower back, neck, or chest; leg heaviness and/or swelling; weak gluteal muscles (muscles in the buttocks region); decreased mobility in the hip and shoulder joints, and sometimes facial swelling. Without remedial measures these conditions can exacerbate

In a recent meta-analysis of 13 previous studies of sitting time and activity levels, researchers found that those who sat for more than eight hours a day with no physical activity had a risk of dying similar to that posed by obesity and smoking. However, unlike some other studies, this data analysis of more than 1 million people found that 60 to 75 minutes of moderately intense physical activity a day countered the effects of too much sitting.

Researchers at the Active Life Lab at South-Eastern Finland University have now suggested a simple remedy to too much sitting — stand up. They explained how this simple change, along with other methods, can make a big difference in your well-being. A previous project by the researchers on everyday activity and sitting habits revealed that people's muscles remain inactive for approximately 70 percent of the day, and this increases to a staggering 90 percent during office hours.

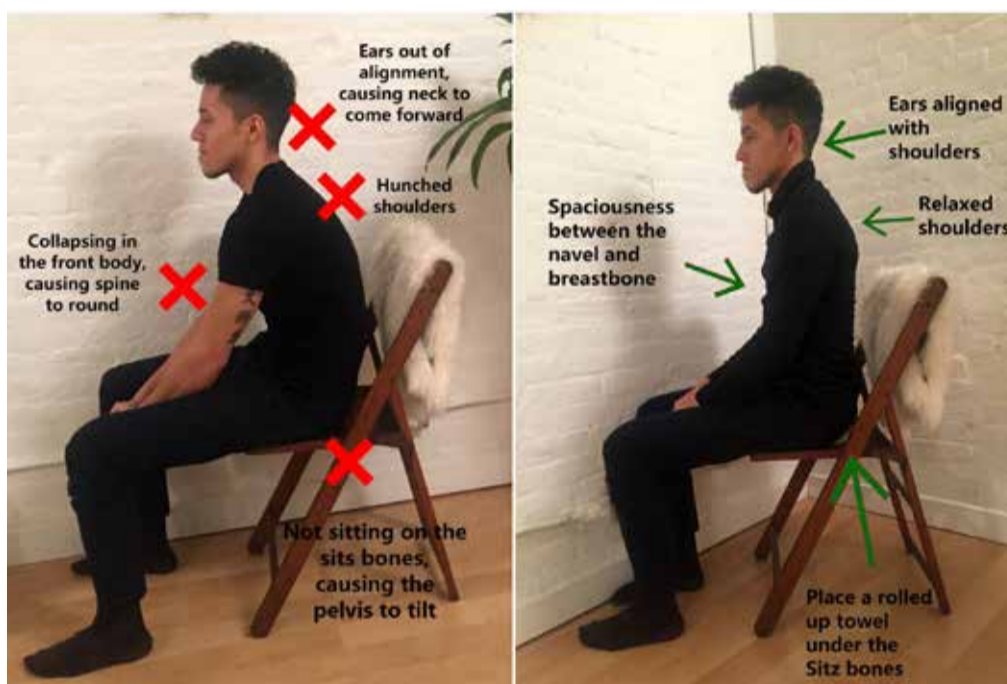
Studies show that all sitting positions impact the lumbar spine, pelvis, hip joints, and gluteal muscles. While sitting up straight is often recommended as a proper sitting practice, it is even more important to engage in regular movements of the spine so as to keep it healthy. Spine movement increases nutrient supply to the intervertebral disc, changes pressure on the lumbar discs, and reduces back pain.

Wrong sitting posture could be the result of years of habit. Some of these positions include sitting with:

**One knee crossed over the other:** This posture increases tilting of the pelvis and the angle between the pelvis and the spine. However, this position weakens and adds more compression on the glutes and muscles in the buttocks as well as increases rotation of the pelvis and the lumbar spine, which might influence the health of the hip joint and lower back. This position also causes one side of the back to have more tension in the trunk muscles, and this imbalance negatively affects our spine.

**Crossed ankles:** While this position is better than the one knee crossed over the other position, it still increases muscle tightness which may lead to musculoskeletal issues. Some of these issues, if not addressed, may develop into problems that could even cause back pain.

**Hunched sitting:** This posture weakens neck



muscles and creates tension in the back muscles because they do not work in this position. Moreover, the cervical vertebrae (bones in the neck) are displaced from their natural position, causing the back muscles to stretch unnaturally. As a consequence, more pressure is exerted on the front edges of the discs located between the vertebrae, potentially leading to discomfort and increased risk of spinal issues.

**Slouched sitting:** This position increases

tension in your lower back and neck. As in a hunched position, the cervical spine is away from the neutral alignment, which increases the load on intervertebral discs and tension in your neck muscles. Moreover, this position increases tension on the connective tissue in the lower back because of the excessive loading on the lumbar spine.

The Finnish researchers suggested that in addition to traditional recommendations such as spending 150 minutes in moderate-to-

vigorous physical activity per week, significant improvements in health could potentially be achieved through small lifestyle changes that people can easily incorporate in their lives. These include:

**Walking:** Taking regular and frequent short breaks to walk around. Walking is a natural and continuous movement promoting blood and lymph circulation, joint mobility, and overall well-being. Walking also involves movement of the spine improving spinal flexibility and preventing stiffness.

**Exercises:** Regular exercises help restore equilibrium to the muscles that may become affected due to prolonged sitting.

**Sitting with lumbar spine support:** Sitting with lumbar support creates less pressure on intervertebral discs and alleviates discomfort.

**Frequent breaks:** Frequency of breaks is also important, as this ensures you consistently give your body and mind the opportunity to rest and recuperate.

The longer you are sitting, the more recovery time is needed. It is better to sit for shorter periods with more frequent breaks, than to take a break after sitting for two or more hours. After extended periods of sitting, back pain may arise due to muscle fatigue and increased tension, making it difficult for the musculoskeletal system to recover during short breaks.

## Desk exercises for office workers

The following exercises often recommended by physiotherapists, help people engaged in desk jobs by argetting tension and pain in your neck, chest, or lower back, and numbness in the fingers. The important part to achieving positive effects is to perform the following routines on a daily basis.

**Neck stretch:** Sit up straight with legs at shoulder width and firmly on the floor. Slowly bend your head to the right side while extending your left arm to the side about 45 degrees from the body and spread your fingers. Now take your head with the right arm and gently stretch your neck for 30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.

**Chin tuck:** This is a key exercise recommended for keeping the head aligned above the spine. Sit upright and look straight ahead with the ears directly over the shoulders. Place a finger on the chin. Without moving the finger, pull the chin and head straight back until a good stretch is felt at the base of the head and top of the neck. Hold the position for a few seconds. Repeat 10 times.

**Spine twist:** Sit upright and extend your arms in front with fingers spread. Move one arm while rotating your spine to one side keeping the other arm in front of you. While rotating your spine, follow the hand with your head



and eyes. Change the rotation each time. Repeat it 10 times on each side.

**Arm stretch:** Sit upright and extend the arm to one side about 90 degrees and bend your fingers in the direction of the floor. At the same time, bend your head to the opposite side of the extended arm. Do not hold this position, instead move your fingers and head for about 30 seconds, then change the arm.

**Glute stretch:** Sit upright and cross one leg over the other with the crossed leg's knee directed to the side. Place your hands on the crossed leg. Lean forward with your back straight. Feel the stretch in your gluteus. Hold

it for 30 seconds. Repeat with the other leg.

**Back stretch:** Stand up in front of the back of your chair. Place your elbows on the chair backrest and cross your fingers. Step back with your feet and bend forward while keeping the elbows on the backrest. Let your chest descend. Keep this position for 30 seconds.

Remember sitting for shorter periods and taking more frequent active micro-breaks by standing up from the chair can offer significant health benefits. This practice may also enhance concentration, cognition, glucose regulation, and the health of the musculoskeletal system.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Taxing Polluters Is the Key to Climate Justice



**Laurence Tubiana**

A former French ambassador to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is CEO of the European Climate Foundation and a professor at Sciences Po, Paris.



After years of avoiding any explicit mention of the primary cause of climate change, negotiators at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai last year finally reached an agreement calling for a “transition away from fossil fuels.” But another uncomfortable question still looms large: How will that transition be financed? As Simon Stiell, the UN’s climate chief, recently observed, “it’s blazingly obvious that finance is the make-or-break factor in the world’s climate fight.”

Climate finance will be the single most important issue both at COP29 in Azerbaijan this year and at COP30 in Brazil in 2025. Notwithstanding recent pledges of money for a new ‘loss and damage’ fund to help developing countries deal with climate change, current financing falls far short of what is required. The European Union estimates that it must invest €1.5 trillion (\$1.63 trillion) per year from 2031 to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, and developing countries (excluding China) are expected to need \$2.4 trillion per year by 2030. Brazil alone will have to find an additional \$200 billion to reach its 2030 emissions-reduction goals.

There are no simple solutions. The sluggish growth and tight monetary conditions following the pandemic mean that even rich countries are operating with limited fiscal headroom. While more private capital is needed everywhere, its role will be smaller in low- and middle-income countries, owing to the significant premiums they face when borrowing for green projects.

Bold new policies are needed to mobilize public funding, and there is a strong case to be made for progressive taxes on carbon-intensive activities and extreme wealth. Both would generate revenues while also extending the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility” to industries and individuals.

Taxation is the standard instrument for states to raise funds reliably and at scale, and thus to commit to long-term spending and investment plans. For developing countries, in particular, the predictability of taxes makes them more useful than concessional finance. Moreover, new taxes can unlock additional resources for countries to dedicate to climate-related investments, sparing them from having to reallocate scarce funding within existing budgets. Globally, a 0.1 percent financial-transactions tax could raise up to \$418 billion per year, while a relatively modest levy of \$5 per ton of carbon dioxide emissions could bring in \$210 billion per year.

The International Monetary Fund has long advocated taxes on CO2 emissions and fossil-fuel extraction, both as a source of climate finance and to shape incentives by ensuring that polluters pay. The extra revenue from such taxes would help high-income countries (the leading historical source of emissions) fulfill their moral obligations toward poorer, more vulnerable countries. As matters stand, rich countries’ financial assistance for developing countries needs to be an order

of magnitude greater than the current pledge of \$100 billion per year.

Pollution taxes would also help to redress inequalities within countries. Even in those economies with lower historical and per capita emissions, there is a significant gap between most of the population’s emissions and the highest emitters. The economist Lucas Chancel finds that ‘carbon inequality’ is greater within countries than between them, and that it tracks inequalities in income and wealth. This should come as no surprise. Globally, the wealthiest 1 percent emit the same as the poorest 66 percent combined.

This injustice is not lost on ordinary citizens. In fact, it increasingly threatens our ability to build and sustain a political consensus for effective climate policies. Taxes to ensure that those with the greatest means and the highest emissions pay their fair share would go a long way toward convincing the public that a ‘just transition’ is not just an empty slogan.

But while the theoretical case for such taxes is strong, adoption and implementation has proven difficult. Capital, people (particularly the wealthy), and emissions all move easily across borders, undermining the efficacy of national or regional tax regimes. Though cross-border cooperation on taxation is never easy, an international agreement would give countries more leverage over their own resources, allowing them to protect those most in need. Multilateralism would be in every country’s

interest. There are encouraging signs that the political taboo against taxation is weakening. The text agreed by all parties at COP28 explicitly called “for accelerating the ongoing establishment of new and innovative sources of finance, including taxation.” And last November, UN member states passed a resolution to establish a Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation, paving the way for a fairer approach to setting global rules.

Now, the G20, led by Brazil, is considering a global minimum tax on the world’s 3,000 billionaires, who currently pay a much lower effective tax rate than the rest of the population. The EU Tax Observatory estimates that a 2 percent annual levy on their wealth, if properly coordinated, could raise \$250 billion per year.

Capitalizing on this momentum, a diverse group of countries has launched a new international tax taskforce. Chaired jointly by the leaders of Kenya, Barbados, and France, its mandate is to explore tax policies that could raise the equivalent of at least 0.1 percent of global GDP to finance sustainable development and climate action. The point is not to prescribe a single solution for all countries, but rather to assess the political and technical obstacles to many plausible options, drawing on a diverse range of experts and perspectives.

Many options are on the table, including taxes on aviation and shipping, in addition to fossil-fuel extraction and financial transactions. The taskforce will seek to advance our understanding of how such taxes could be applied equitably, perhaps paving the way for an agreement on particular policies.

Fair taxation could be a powerful lever for accelerating a just transition. By contributing fresh empirical findings and fostering trust and cooperation between countries, the new taskforce can help everyone to address the injustices at the heart of the climate crisis and unlock the resources they need to address it. Reducing the burden on poorer people and countries is not just a moral obligation. It is also necessary to win their support for a transition that cannot happen without them.



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