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A new premier to lead a new government

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah issued an Amiri decree on 15 April appointing Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as the new prime minister. The decree stated that, "after assessing the constitution and holding traditional consultations, as well as reviewing the Amiri order issued on 28 Ramadan 1445 AH, corresponding to April 7, 2024 AD, accepting the resignation of the Prime Minister:

"We ordered the following: Article One: Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah shall be appointed Prime Minister, and he will be charged with nominating members of the new cabinet, and presenting their names to us to issue a decree appointing them. Article Two:

The Prime Minister must implement this order of ours, inform it to the National Assembly, and it shall come into effect from the date of its

issuance and publication in the Official Gazette." Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah brings with him a wealth of experience having served previously

in several ministerial positions, including in the Oil and Information ministries (2009-2011), in Health (2005-2007), and in Finance and Communications (1999-2001). He also held positions in the banking and finance sectors, including as Board Chairman of Burgan Bank (1987-1998). Prior to his appointment as the premier, he was Chief of the Diwan of the Crown Prince from 2021.

Born in 1952, Sheikh Ahmad did his primary studies in Kuwait and Lebanon before traveling to the United States for graduate studies. In 1976, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Finance (Banking and Investment) from the University of Illinois. He is said to be a strong advocate for the use of technology in advancing the progress of the country, supports the role of

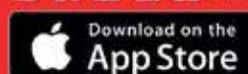
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ASEAN community in Kuwait rings in traditional New Year celebrations

The event showcased exhibitions of 'Muay Thai,' traditional boxing of Thailand and cultural dances, and traditional delicacies from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar



By **Ricky Laxa**
Staff Writer

The traditional New Year celebrations in the Kingdom of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Kingdom of Thailand, and Republic Union of Myanmar were held at the Embassy of Thailand in Bayan on 18 April. The event was attended by members of the ASEAN community in Kuwait, guests, and members of

the diplomatic corps. Khalid Al Yaseen, Deputy Assistant of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Asian Affairs, graced the occasion.

The embassies of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar, along with other ASEAN embassies and invited guests, gathered at the Embassy of Thailand to celebrate the beginning of a new solar year on their traditional calendar.

The celebration marked the start of 'Maha Songran' for Cambodia, 'Pi Mai' for Laos, 'Thing

Yan' for Myanmar, and 'Songkran' for Thailand.

The event also aimed to enhance cordial cooperation among the ASEAN community in Kuwait. In his opening remarks, Ambassador of Thailand H.E. Ekapol Poolpipat, highlighted that the four countries share a common tradition in celebrating the New Year based on their religious traditions and that the event was a collective effort among the four embassies.

The event showcased exhibitions of 'Muay

Thai', traditional boxing of Thailand, cultural dances, and traditional delicacies from the four countries. Ambassadors from Peru, China, South Korea, and Japan were also present at the celebration.

"We deeply thank everyone for joining us at the event and sharing this joyous occasion with other embassies. The event also highlights the collaboration among ASEAN partners in Kuwait," said the Thai ambassador.

British surgeons train Kuwaiti medics for Gaza deployment

On 17 April, a visiting delegation of British surgeons and anesthetists from the David Nott Foundation, a UK medical charity specializing in training doctors in conflict and natural disaster zones, completed two 'Hostile Environment Surgical Training' courses for over 30 Kuwaiti medics preparing for deployment to Gaza.

These courses, hosted at the National Bank of Kuwait's headquarters, were facilitated and funded in partnership with the British Embassy Kuwait and the Kuwait Red Crescent Society. The aim was to equip participating Kuwaiti medics with vital trauma surgery and anesthesia skills that will help them save lives during their deployment to Gaza and in any future conflict or disaster areas.

The surgeons learned how to manage multiple trauma injuries commonly seen on the frontline, ranging from penetrating head wounds to multi-organ blast injuries. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti anesthetists learned how to adapt their skills to hostile environments with limited resources.

Chargé d'affaires at the British Embassy, Sunny Ahmed said: "This week's training is a great example of the UK and Kuwait's partnership in action. One of the core values we share is our commitment to humanitarian assistance, and I sincerely hope the specialist skills participating medics have acquired can help alleviate the dreadful suffering in Gaza.

"On behalf of the British Embassy, I would like



to express my sincere gratitude to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, who have joined us to help fund and facilitate the David Nott Foundation's delivery of both courses, the National Bank of Kuwait for providing the venue, the Kuwaiti Government for their support, and, of course, the British surgeons and anesthetists who so generously volunteered their time over the past week."

For his part, President of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer, said, "On behalf of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, I extend my appreciation to the British Embassy for facilitating this week's training. I also extend our sincerest gratitude to the David Nott Foundation



for their invaluable expertise. Their guidance has empowered our esteemed consultants, whose dedication serves as a testament to the spirit of humanity that defines our National Society, with the skills needed to navigate the complexities of emergency medical care as volunteer medics in conflict zones.

"Last, but certainly not least, I extend my heartfelt thanks to the National Bank of Kuwait for their generous support. We are truly grateful for their partnership. I am immensely proud of the collaboration that has characterized our time together this week and am confident that we will carry forward the lessons learned

in our shared mission to serve humanity with compassion and expertise."

Elly Nott, Co-Founder of the David Nott Foundation, said, "Recognized by the UN as a Humanitarian Center and embodying the values of charity and humanity, Kuwait is a natural partner for the David Nott Foundation. This week, we have trained 22 surgeons and ten anesthetists in partnership with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and the British Embassy Kuwait. Sadly, there is no end to the need for their skills in the world at present, and we look forward to further collaboration with our colleagues here in Kuwait for the benefit of those who suffer in conflict."

Nepali nationals in Kuwait soar to 107,000 and counting

Post-COVID-19, Nepali worker influx in the country doubled in various sectors, particularly in domestic work, construction, security, restaurants, hotels, cleaning, among others

By Raj Malla
Special Correspondent
The Times Kuwait

Nepal and Kuwait have been in a diplomatic relationship for 52 years, starting from the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1972. Over this period, the two nations have signed agreements covering areas such as labor, trade, and economic cooperation.

In 2022, the Embassy of Nepal in Kuwait celebrated its 50th anniversary by organizing events such as blood donation and tourism promotion. Since the end of the Kuwait-Iraq war in 1992, Nepalis have been coming to Kuwait primarily for employment opportunities.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the arrival of Nepali workers, particularly in domestic work, construction, security, restaurants, hotels, cleaning, and other service sectors, has doubled. Employers have praised Nepali workers for being hardworking, sincere, and honest, contributing significantly to the country's development.

Currently, the number of Nepali nationals in Kuwait has reached 107,000 and continues to increase due to instability and limited job opportunities in Nepal, making Kuwait an important source of employment for Nepalis. The substantial remittances that Nepali workers send home help support their families and the local economy in Nepal.

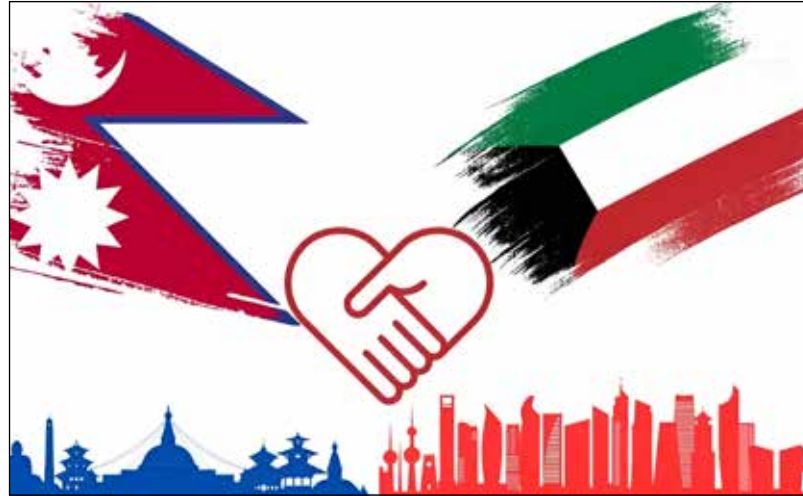
The Embassy of Nepal in Kuwait, established in 2009, has played a key role in safeguarding the interests and welfare of workers while fostering diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The embassy offers consular services to Nepalese citizens, including passport and visa processing, legal aid, and other document-related assistance. Nepali workers in Kuwait strive to safeguard the rights of their fellow citizens by collaborating with local authorities and employers.

As the Nepali community in Kuwait continues to grow, it is natural for social activities to increase within the society. Approximately 75 Nepali organizations have been established, focusing on sports, caste, religion, and faith. These organizations aim to protect the rights of Nepali workers, organize cultural and religious events, and provide various forms of assistance and services. They also collect support and contribute to the relief efforts during natural disasters in Nepal.

Nepali journalists in Kuwait are rare, but some contribute their reporting skills driven by their passion for journalism and the desire to connect with the community. Updates are often disseminated through social media platforms.

As the number of Nepali workers in Kuwait increases, there have been reports of citizens engaging in illegal activities and serious crimes like narcotics, drugs, and human



trafficking, which are prohibited by law. Such actions tarnish the reputation of the Nepali community and discredit the name of Dashain. Nepali nationals are urged to maintain honesty and a strong work ethic and avoid involvement in such activities.

While remaining vigilant to avoid legal issues and protect their rights by abiding by local laws, the Nepali embassy and local Nepali organizations will continue to offer accurate information and counseling to their nationals. This approach will help Nepali workers uphold a positive image of Nepal among the various communities in Kuwait.

Pledge to pay MEW dues in installments could restore MoI transactions

Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy (MEW) has announced that "citizens who sign pledges to pay off their accumulated dues with MEW through installments will be allowed to complete their transactions with the Ministry of Interior (MoI)." They emphasized that the ministry's objective is to ensure the collection of its accumulated debts without impeding the interests of citizens or residents.



Earlier, MEW had linked the completion of any transaction by residents with the Ministry of Interior only after payment of their electricity and water consumption bills in full. Sources at MEW revealed that ongoing coordination between the electricity ministry and the interior ministry, which establishes electronic linking between the two entities, obliged citizens and residents to settle their

outstanding dues. The linking process succeeded in collecting large amounts of debts that had remained unpaid for years. The success of the scheme led to a reduction in the ministry's debts, which in turn encouraged the ministry to take similar steps to help collect outstanding dues from citizens.

Additionally, links have now been established with the Ministry of Works, the General Authority for Agriculture and Fisheries, and the Public Authority for Industry. Currently, efforts are underway to establish links with the Ministry of Finance, State Property Administration, and the Ministry of Commerce and Manpower to deny transactions to people who owe money to MEW.

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Kuwait aims to more than triple renewable energy output

Kuwait announced its intention to update its renewable energy goals and enhance strategies aimed at energy efficiency, as well as affirmed its commitment to a zero-carbon future and to sustainability and renewable energy.

Kuwait's updated renewable energy goals were revealed by Director General of Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), Dr. Mashan Al-Otaibi, during his speech at the 14th session of International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Assembly, organized in Abu Dhabi, UAE from 16 to 18 April.

Held under the banner of 'Outcome of COP28: Infrastructure, Policies and Skills for

Tripling Renewables and Accelerating the Energy Transition', the Assembly aimed to facilitate interaction between decision-makers on pressing issues related to the energy transition in the coming decade and beyond, and inform the future work of the Agency.

During his speech, Al-Otaibi reviewed efforts made by Kuwait to double renewable energy production from 15 to 30 percent by 2030 and to 50 percent by 2050.

He added that these goals are part of the strategy of Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity Water and Renewable Energy (MEW) announced by Minister Salem Al-Hajraf in March, and is in



Director General of (KISR) Dr. Mashan Al-Otaibi

line with Kuwait's policy that aims to enhance sustainable energy economy.

He noted that Kuwait is exerting all efforts to implement policies and provide incentives to curb growing demand for energy, and to reduce energy consumption by 10 percent by 2030 compared to 2020, he stated. In this context, Kuwait announced the start of the second and third phases of Shagaya renewable energy project, which aims to add 5,000 megawatts to the national network of energy, in addition to 2,500 megawatts of energy systems, he said.

Al-Otaibi also reiterated that Kuwait is committed to achieving zero-carbon emissions by 2060, which the country pledged to achieve at the COP27 Climate Conference in 2022.



Hala Fiesta Winners realize their dreams

LuLu Hypermarket, the region's leading retailer, hosted a prize distribution ceremony on 13 April at its Al Rai outlet for winners of its 'Hala Shop and Win' promotion, which was held from 1 February to 16 March at all outlets of the hypermarket.

The lucky winners of the raffle draw, a highlight of the Hala Shop and Win promotion, were presented with incredible prizes by top LuLu management.

Top LuLu management personally handed over the keys to a gleaming Nissan Patrol SUV to one winner and two stylish Nissan X-Trail crossover SUVs to two lucky winners. In addition, 30 lucky winners also received the latest iPhone 15 Pro. Every winner walked away beaming at having won such magnificent prizes, and expressed their heartfelt thanks to LuLu for making their dreams a reality.

The exciting raffle draw was not limited to just high rollers, every KD5 worth of purchase entitled any shopper to participate in the raffle draw and win one of the 33 grand prizes. The official raffle draw was held on 31 March at the Ministry

of Commerce and Industry in front of ministry officials and top LuLu management.

The 'Shop & Win' promotion is a shining example of LuLu Hypermarket's dedication to customers, and a reminder that shopping at the hypermarket is more than just purchasing



products, it is an experience filled with exciting rewards and a chance for everyone to win. With its commitment to creating enriching experiences, LuLu Hypermarket continues to reign supreme as the shopping destination of choice for all in Kuwait.



FAIPS-DPS ignites cultural immersion with unforgettable journey to France, Belgium



FAIPS-DPS has consistently aimed to offer its students engaging and enriching educational opportunities. In pursuit of this goal, the school organized a six-day tour in March 2024 for students in classes VII to XII, IGCSE, and BC, providing them with an opportunity to immerse themselves in the dynamic cultures of France and Belgium.

A group of 25 enthusiastic students and two teachers engaged in a variety of cultural activities and gain a deeper understanding of the world around them. This experience not only broadened the perspectives of the students but also encouraged them to learn and grow beyond the classroom setting.

The captivating tour that commenced on March 23rd was an incredibly enriching experience. The team's arrival in Paris, the fashion capital of the world, set the tone for an unforgettable adventure. The first stop was the fabled Disneyland where the group enjoyed thrilling rides and witnessed the spectacular Disney carnival.

The tour then continued with visits to some of Paris's most iconic landmarks, including the Arc de Triomphe and a stroll down the Champs-Élysées, where they admired the splendid architecture and indulged in some shopping for loved ones.

The group also had the opportunity to visit the famous Basilica of Sacré Coeur de Montmartre, the historic Versailles Palace, and, of course, the iconic Eiffel Tower with its stunning panoramic views.

The lively atmosphere of Paris transitioned into a tranquil and scenic journey to Belgium, unveiling an equally captivating yet distinct ambiance. Discovering the Royal Gallery of Saint Hubert in Brussels and venturing into the charming canal town of Bruges left a lasting impact on both the senses and the spirit.

Additionally, the iconic Atomium in Brussels and the awe-inspiring Mini Europe, showcasing miniature versions of European landmarks,

were standout moments of the trip.

Each destination the students visited provided them with the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in rich history and breathtaking scenery, free from the distractions of mobile phones and social media. Additionally, the trip offered a chance for the children to indulge in a wide variety of cuisines, ranging from Indian to French, Italian to Lebanese, and even Greek. Every meal was a cherished memory and a unique experience.



As the journey concluded on March 29th, the team said goodbye with fondness to the enchanting lands of France and Belgium. They had acquired priceless experiences, from shopping to being away from family, sharing hotel rooms with friends and teachers, and forging enduring bonds that will endure a lifetime.

On behalf of the management, Mr. Ravi Ayanoli, the Head of the institution, extends gratitude to the parents of the students for their support in offering this fantastic experience to the students.

Government reviews emergency plans amid regional developments

Government agencies are actively reviewing emergency plans within the framework of precautionary measures. These efforts span across food security, oil security, health security, border security, and internal security.

As regional tension simmer, Kuwaiti government agencies are actively reviewing and updating emergency plans within the framework of precautionary measures, including in efforts to ensure security of food, health, oil, border, and internal security.

The oil sector has reportedly rolled out plans that are updated and reviewed periodically, and their activation is linked to the government's decision. The plans include securing oil sites, refineries, and insurance of Kuwaiti tankers on their routes, so that the plans are ready to be implemented at any time.

Regarding health matters, emergency events are dealt with according to complete plans prepared in advance in terms of alertness, preparedness, and response. The ministry of health is said to be closely following all precautionary measures and procedures to deal with any emergency.

Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, is personally directing efforts to ensure the readiness levels, by coordinating between the ministry's various sectors, and making sure that the strategic stocks of medicine and medical supplies are adequate.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry reassured that Kuwait has a high strategic



stock of basic commodities, with an average starting from six months for the majority of commodities and reaching periods of up to a year for others. This is in addition to the stock of food commodities at local companies, which also lasts about six months.

For his part, the Minister of Information and Culture, Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi, has been

informed that the crisis management committee in the ministry has completed its preparations to monitor current events in the region and establish the procedures to be followed by the ministry's sectors in this regard.

Dr. Bader Al-Anazi, the ministry's official spokesman, said that this took place during a committee meeting, chaired by the minister

with attendance from the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, Dr. Nasser Al-Muhaisen, and other ministry leaders.

The meeting focused on reviewing the special emergency plan for monitoring events in the region. Al-Anazi stressed that the ministry is fully prepared across all its sectors to keep pace with events, implement precautionary measures, provide comprehensive information to citizens and residents, and maintain up-to-date, accurate, professional, and transparent media coverage.

He added that this meeting and subsequent follow-ups align with the directives issued by the Council of Ministers, emphasizing the need for all relevant authorities in the country to take necessary measures to keep up with events and ensure preparedness in their respective areas of operation.

He mentioned that media coverage is currently being conducted through bulletins, news summaries, news tapes, radio stations, and the ministry's social media accounts.

Al-Anazi emphasized that the ministry has implemented all necessary measures and is committed to delivering information with complete transparency and accuracy to the Kuwaiti public. He urged everyone to obtain information from official sources.

Kuwait amends Foreign Residence Law

Foreigners can now stay in the country for two months without a residence permit but must start the process for regular or temporary residence during this time.

The amendment was made effective through a ministerial decision issued by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, last week.

The decision amended some provisions of Ministerial Decision No. 957/2019 in the Executive Regulations of the Law on the Residence of Foreigners and its amendments.

The latest update includes an amendment to Article I of the Resolution. This revision

affects Article 12 of Ministerial Decision No. 957/2019, which now specifies that foreigners entering the country under the provisions (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 14) of Article 4 can stay without a residence permit for up to two months from their entry date. However, they must begin the process of obtaining regular or temporary residence during this timeframe.

The normal residence data is confirmed by the civil card issued by the General Authority for Civil Information, while temporary residence, as provided for in Article 14 of this decision, is confirmed by its data according to the mechanism determined by the General Directorate of Residence Affairs.

Ministry approves 169 committees to test 40,000 high school students by year-end

Hessa Al-Mutawa, the Acting Undersecretary of Public Education at the Ministry of Education, has approved the committees to conduct end-of-year exams for high school students in the literary and scientific sections.

These exams will commence on May 29 across all educational regions, including schools under the Ministry of Special Education and Religious Education. The total number of committees has reached 168, which will accommodate approximately 40,000 male and female students for their exams.

Al-Ahmadi Educational District led with 37 committees, followed by the Educational Capital with 36 committees, Farwaniya with 33, Al-Jahra with 22, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational District with 15, and Religious Education with five committees, including three for girls and two for boys. Below are tables displaying the headquarters of the committees and the schools that will undergo examination by the committees.

On the other hand, Maryam Al-Anazi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Educational Development and Activities, confirmed that the organizing committee for the teacher honoring celebration is making great efforts in preparation for the ceremony. It is scheduled to take place on the 29th of this



month at the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Theater at Kuwait University. She noted that 331 male and female teachers will be honored, along with 50 distinguished schools.

Al-Anazi stated that the ministry will hold a rehearsal for the celebration in the presence of the honorees during the evening period on the 21st and 24th of this month in the same theatre. She called on all the honorees to adhere to the specified date when they will be informed.

She explained that they are working hard to acknowledge everyone in the educational field for their great efforts in serving the educational process and students, hoping for the continuation of this distinction and creativity that will positively impact the educational system.

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PAM to streamline work permit procedures from June



The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has announced significant changes to its work permit procedures, aimed at streamlining the process for employers to bring in foreign workers and reducing the overall cost of labor. The changes were made by the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Manpower, at its meeting held under the chairmanship of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef.

The new regulations, which will take effect on June 1st, 2024, are expected to have a positive impact on Kuwait's business environment and consumer prices. Employers will now have the flexibility to directly recruit workers from abroad without the requirement to first transfer existing workers from within Kuwait. This change is intended to address labor shortages and reduce

the burden on employers. The previous system, which mandated a certain proportion of workers to be sourced internally, often led to inflated labor costs. The new approach eliminates this requirement, allowing employers to optimize their workforce needs more effectively.

To ensure a more balanced and sustainable labor market, PAM has introduced new fees associated with work permits. An initial fee of 150 Kuwaiti dinars will be applied for issuing a new work permit. Additionally, a fee of 300 Kuwaiti dinars (approximately \$980 USD) will be charged for transferring a worker from one company to another within the first three years of their employment. This restriction, along with the employer's consent requirement, aims to curb visa trading practices and promote longer-term employment relationships.

More than 13,000 Kuwaitis waiting to be employed

The number of citizens awaiting nomination and appointment in the Civil Service Bureau's systems has surged to over 13,000, a significant increase from the approximately 3,000 citizens registered two years ago.

According to recent statistics from Al-Rai newspaper, the gap between the current registration numbers and the smaller numbers from two years ago is widening. The Service Bureau is actively nominating batches to fill positions in ministries and government agencies based on the job needs plan.

Informed sources at the bureau told Al-Rai that "the past policy of employing citizens led to a significant reduction in the number of registrants in the bureau's systems to about 3,000. However, the current situation sees the number of registered individuals rise to more than 13,000, contrasting with the number of recently nominated candidates who were rejected or not approved."

The sources revealed that among the registered candidates for employment are 6,168 male and female citizens holding university degrees, 111 with a master's degree, and three with doctorates. Additionally, there are 2,389 citizens with a diploma, 863



with a secondary certificate, 1,341 with an intermediate certificate, and 1,133 with a primary school certificate.

The sources emphasized the necessity of addressing the reasons behind the rise in the number of individuals registered in the bureau's systems, awaiting nomination and appointment to government agencies.

They highlighted the importance of cooperation among the relevant authorities to prevent the problem from worsening and to manage the growing number of registrants with the bureau, particularly considering the annual increase in graduates awaiting their turn for appointment.

Net profits at Kuwaiti banks soar 30 percent year on year

Government agencies are actively reviewing emergency plans within the framework of precautionary measures.

These efforts span across food security, oil security, health security, border security, and internal security.

In 2023, Kuwaiti banks saw their net profit reach an all-time high, totaling 1.57 billion dinars—a 30% increase from the previous year's 1.21 billion dinars. Additionally, these banks distributed 1.03 billion dinars in cash and grants.

Recent data from the Central Bank of Kuwait indicates significant improvements in the financial integrity indicators of local banks by the end of 2023, showcasing substantial advancements across various metrics. Kuwaiti banks' robust indicators position them well to navigate crises, a testament to their proactive measures and strategic procedures.

Financial indicators show that all local banks enjoyed safety in their conditions during the past year, both in terms of business growth, coverage of non-performing loans, and high capital adequacy rates. This is thanks to the continued growth of the sector and the expansion of its banking units.

Capital adequacy standard

The capital adequacy standard for the Kuwaiti banking sector according to the Basel 3 standard reached 19.9% by the end of 2023, up from the 19.2% level recorded at the end of the fourth quarter of 2022. Meanwhile, the ratio of the first tranche of capital to the asset base was 88.4%, marking a decrease from the 88.8% level recorded by the end of 2022.

At the end of the fourth quarter of 2023, the ratio of irregular loans to total loans remained at 1.4%, matching the historically lowest levels recorded at the end of 2022. Additionally, the ratio of net regular loans to net loans reached 0.9%. The coverage rate of irregular loans was 311.9% (more than three times), marking the highest historical levels in the local banking sector. This reflects the volume of adequate, large, and reassuring allocations made by local banks.

The coverage of irregular loans includes

both general and specific allocations, serving as a strong indicator for banks due to local conservation efforts and prudent risk management. This is achieved through broader and more comprehensive audits and the careful selection of customers. Meanwhile, the regulatory liquidity rate reached 22.7%. The ratio of net irregular loans (non-regular loans minus specific allocations) to net total loans (total loans minus specific allocations) is approximately 0.9%, which is also the lowest in the banking sector. Additionally, the ratio of shareholders' equity to total assets stands at 13.4%.

Remarkable stability

The banking sector has consistently maintained an acceptable net interest margin, which stands at 2.7%. This ratio has demonstrated remarkable stability since the second quarter of the previous year.

The net profitability margin of banks, both traditional and Islamic, which is the ratio of net profit to net interest income and non-interest income, remains at a good level of 43.4%. However, it experienced a decline from 44.4% in the second and third quarters to the end of the fourth quarter last year.

Kuwaiti banks are still focusing on their core activities, such as lending and banking operations. The ratio of core income (net interest income + net fee income) to operating income (net interest income + non-interest income) gradually increased to 81.6% by the end of 2023.

The ratio of operating expenses (interest expenses + non-interest expenses) to total revenues (interest income + non-interest income) reached its highest level in recent years, hitting 70.1%.

Meanwhile, the net interest margin stood at about 2.7%, representing the ratio of net interest income to average interest-bearing



assets (AEA). These assets include term deposits with the Central Bank, deposits with banks and other financial institutions, investments in government bonds, investments in fixed-income securities, and net loans.

The ratio of non-interest expenses to average assets at the end of 2023 was 1.4%, while the return on average assets was 1.5%, and the return on average equity was 11.1%.

Overall, the indicators of financial integrity of the banks reflect the strength and robustness of the Kuwaiti banking system, as well as the quality of its assets. These indicators demonstrate its ability to overcome any future crises or challenges. For instance, the coverage rate of irregular loans is one of the highest globally, and the capital adequacy ratio surpasses the requirements set by the Central Bank of Kuwait. These facts underscore the banking system's strength, its capability in achieving financial inclusion, and the effectiveness of financial mediation.

Kuwait's official reserve assets reached 14.62 billion dinars

Kuwait's official reserve assets reached 14.62 billion dinars by the end of the fourth quarter of 2023. Kuwait's reserve assets are distributed as follows: Gold, valued at 31.7 million dinars based on the book value at the time of

purchase, along with Kuwait's reserve with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), amounting to 228.7 million dinars.

The special drawing rights totaled 1.32 billion dinars, serving as international reserve assets created by the IMF to complement member countries' reserve assets. The fund allocates special drawing rights among its members based on their shares in the Fund.

Furthermore, the balance of foreign currency and deposits abroad reached 13 billion dinars, primarily consisting of paper and mineral money traded from foreign currencies and used for payments (excluding commemorative coins).

The deposits within reserve assets are held with foreign central banks, the Bank for International Settlements, and other banks, and these deposits are available upon request. Additionally, the balance of securities abroad reached 51.5 million dinars.

Deposits from public institutions reached their highest level in 2023, totaling 6.7 billion dinars. These deposits are categorized into financial on-demand deposits amounting to 96.8 million dinars and term deposits of 4.77 billion dinars, as well as non-financial on-call deposits valued at 528 million dinars and term deposits totaling 1.35 billion dinars.

Government deposits in the banking sector reached 4.6 billion dinars, consisting of on-call deposits worth 427.7 million dinars and term deposits worth 4.15 billion dinars.

Private sector deposits as of December 2023 totaled approximately 37.3 billion dinars. These deposits are distributed as follows: 9 billion dinars in on-call deposits, 5.8 billion dinars in savings deposits, and around 20.6 billion dinars in term deposits. Additionally, deposits in foreign currencies amounted to 1.8 billion dinars.



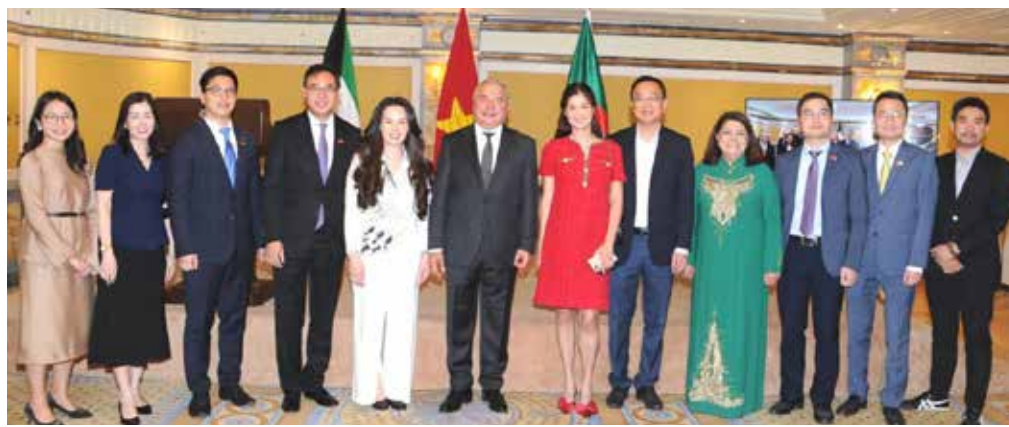
Memorable farewell reception held for Algerian, Vietnamese ambassadors

H.E. Dr. Zubaydullo Zubaydov, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan, commended the efforts of his departing colleagues in enhancing their countries' ties with Kuwait, their cooperation with fellow heads of other missions, and their support.

H.E. Dr. Zubaydullo Zubaydov, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan, hosted a farewell ceremony on 14 April for the ambassadors of Vietnam and Algeria in the country. The event was attended by Khaled Al-Farsi from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and many heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Kuwait.

Ambassador Zubaydov commended the efforts of his departing colleagues in enhancing their countries' ties with Kuwait, their cooperation with fellow heads of other missions, and their support for community members.

He expressed gratitude to the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its consistent cooperation and support for diplomatic missions and international organizations in Kuwait, providing necessary facilities and overcoming challenges to fulfill their duties. He



also highlighted Kuwait's strong relations with all countries.

Ambassador Zubaydov added: "With Ambassador Thang's departure, we bid farewell to a dear brother who was among the most active

ambassadors. His country should take pride in his achievements, especially with his supportive wife by his side. The Vietnamese ambassador has been and will remain a friend to all."

Vietnamese Ambassador H.E. Ngo Tuan Thang expressed gratitude to the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying, "We have cherished many memories here, and Kuwait and its people have been incredibly generous to me. I have learned a great deal from them." He extended thanks to the ambassadors who assisted him during his over three-year tenure in Kuwait, describing it as a wonderful country.

The ambassador also expressed his deep gratitude to the local press, noting that they

have consistently done excellent work with him and many other ambassadors. He extended an invitation to everyone to visit him in Vietnam, where he will spend the next two years before being appointed to a new country.

He also mentioned, "Diplomatic life in Kuwait is fulfilling, and I have developed strong friendships with many diplomats and ambassadors." He revealed the cooperation between Vietnam Airlines and Kuwait Airways and the plans to facilitate direct flights during the summer of this year.

In turn, Algerian Ambassador H.E. Noureddine Meriem, expressed his happiness with his time working in Kuwait. He noted that despite the short period he spent in the country, he gained rich experience and forged lasting friendships with Kuwaiti friends and the diplomatic community. He praised the depth of friendly relations between Kuwait and his country, with both sides keen on enhancing all aspects of cooperation.

In a tearful speech, H.E. Lina Marina, the Indonesian ambassador to the country, expressed her emotions during the farewell address. She thanked the audience for attending and wished success to the Vietnamese ambassador, who served three years in Kuwait. She stressed that instead of saying goodbye, we would say "until we meet again."

Indian Ambassador reviews unaccredited engineering cases

H. E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika, the Ambassador of India to Kuwait, discussed the professional accreditation developments for engineers from the Indian community with Eng. Faisal Al-Atal.



The President of the Society of Engineers welcomed Eng. Faisal Al-Atal at the association's headquarters. He was accompanied by His Excellency Dr. Adarsh Swaika, the Ambassador of India to Kuwait, along with First Labor Secretary Manas Patel and Second Secretary for Consular Affairs Anshita Kadouas, in the presence of several association members.

Al-Atal expressed his happiness at receiving Ambassador Swaika and discussing the professional accreditation developments for engineers from the Indian community. He said, "We are pleased with our cooperation in applying the practice requirements with the embassy, which has significantly reduced the number of engineers from the Indian community who were previously unable to obtain engineering accreditation."

Al-Atal mentioned that during the meeting, the association received a very limited number of such cases that they will work together to overcome. He added, "We are working on launching a special electronic platform to bring engineers of all nationalities together, ensuring that their qualifications and experience meet Kuwait's professional requirements. Subsequently, we will conduct

accreditation procedures and tests after their arrival in the country."

He explained that this platform will contribute to achieving their goal with the Indian Embassy of reaching zero unapproved engineering cases in Kuwait. Al-Atal stressed that the association adopts the lists of the Indian National Council NBA and also follows the global index Washington Accord.

Al-Atal pointed out that the association received during the meeting a very limited number of these cases that we will work together to overcome, adding: We are working on launching a special electronic platform to bring engineers of all nationalities to ensure that their qualifications and experience match the requirements of practising the profession in Kuwait and then carry out accreditation procedures and pass the tests after their arrival in the country. He explained that this platform will contribute to achieving our ambition with the Indian Embassy to reach zero unapproved cases of engineering work in Kuwait, stressing that the association adopts the lists of the Indian National Council NBA and also adopts the global index Washington Accord.

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الخميس - الجمعة
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Government unveils key strategies to boost happiness in Kuwait

• Supporting cultural, sports, and tourism in Kuwait boosts job creation, economic diversification, and equitable job opportunities through accountable spending. • Kuwait ranked ninth globally for the freedom of its people in making life decisions, surpassing major countries like Britain and France. • Kuwait was placed 32nd globally in terms of health life expectancy and was ranked 33rd globally for the generosity of its people.

Kuwait, which ranked top in the Gulf region and the wider Arab world in this year's World Happiness Report, is determined to consolidate these gains and to further boost aspects of life that add to greater happiness in the country in the coming years.

The National Observatory for Sustainable Development and Future Anticipation (NOSD) has issued a report that underlines Kuwait's commitment to enhancing happiness, and which indicates the policies and procedures that the government intends to pursue to achieve this goal.

Among the measures mentioned in the report are providing further support to cultural, recreational, sports, and tourism activities that improve the standard of living of citizens and elevate their quality of life. In a corollary, these steps will also contribute to creating new job opportunities, serve as new sources for economic diversification, and enhance Kuwait's global standing.

Effectively promoting a culture of accountability and transparency across various facilities and sectors is crucial. Rationalizing government spending, improving the harmonization of public budgets and fiscal policies in the country to reduce inequalities, and create equitable and accessible jobs for all. Ensuring the enjoyment of all public services for everyone in the country and achieving quality, comprehensive, and integrated service



coverage, are other recommendations made in the report

Other procedures to improve the satisfaction of citizens in Kuwait include developing a national strategy to finance the health and education sectors sustainably and increasing investments in them. Re-evaluating educational and technical curricula and developing new specializations aligned with the needs of

the labor market. Developing training and professional development methods to enhance workers' performance in state sectors, build national capacities, and improve competencies.

Developing relevant performance indicators to ensure the quality and efficiency of government services. Enacting laws and legislation to address dysfunction and achieve demographic balance for social, economic, and

functional security. Strengthening the rule of law, integrity, and anti-corruption measures, protecting judicial systems, and enhancing their strength and independence are also highlighted in the report.

The World Happiness Report 2024, a partnership of Gallup, the Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and the WHR's Editorial Board measures the level of happiness and well-being in various countries of the world, taking into account a number of factors, including social support, income, health, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption. It also reflects the quality of life in more than 143 countries, and the impact of the social, urban and natural environment on the satisfaction of peoples within their homelands.

The State of Kuwait has been ranked 13th on the World Happiness Index, securing the top spot in the Arab world. This ranking was influenced by several key components, including ranking ninth globally for the freedom of its people in making life decisions, surpassing major countries like Britain and France.

The country secured the 17th spot worldwide in the GDP per capita index and in terms of social support and ranked 41st globally. Kuwait was placed 32nd globally in terms of health life expectancy and was ranked 33rd globally for the generosity of its people. Regarding the absence of corruption, Kuwait ranked 46th globally.

A new premier to lead a new government

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

digital transformation in diversifying the economy, and promotes the streamlining of procedures to enhance the welfare of Kuwaiti citizens.

News of the appointment was greeted enthusiastically by many among the public, who expressed hope that the new premier would help bring an end to the constant bickering in parliament, and focus on introducing reforms and implementing policies and plans that would drive sustainable development in the country, and ensure the welfare of the people and the nation.

The announcement of a new premier was welcomed with less keenness by several legislators who cautioned that their cooperation with the new government was conditional on it presenting a realistic work program that fulfills reform requirements and tackles essential issues. They also added that their cooperation hinged on the incoming government being focused on key priorities such as enhancing the living standards of the citizens and appointing qualified ministers.

MP Saleh Ashour expressed his hope that the new government formation would include competent ministers capable of effectively managing the country in the upcoming phase, with a strong focus on addressing the needs of citizens and improving their quality of life. Other MPs called for selecting ministers who possess the capacity to handle political responsibilities, and comprehends the seriousness of unresolved and stagnant issues.

For his part, MP Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf criticized the potential inclusion of "past figures who had failed in ministerial roles" — an oblique reference to the grilling of the new premier in 2007, while he was the health minister. He also cautioned against a government that fails to steer political progress in the right direction.

Meanwhile, media reports indicate that the National Assembly is expected to hold its first session on Sunday, 21 April, in line with the constitutional deadline for a session of parliament to be held two weeks from election date.

Prior to the first parliamentary session around 41 MPs

attended an informal parliamentary coordination meeting held on 14 April, which aimed to prioritize issues for the upcoming legislative session. Speaking to the media after the event, MP Saud Al-Asfour indicated that "high on the list of priorities are addressing the high cost of living, social assistance, the Election Commission, extending judicial authority to matters of nationality, and amending election laws."

The overwhelming espousal by legislators for prioritizing issues such as the living standards and welfare of citizens, and the need to appoint capable ministers, are understandable given their importance to the public. However, it is unfortunate that none of the lawmakers had anything to say on the slow pace of project developments, or the lack of structural reforms needed to move the country forward.

Nor did any MP voice concern over the latest State Audit Bureau report on the poor quality of education, and lack of institutional reforms needed to improve teaching and learning methodologies in public schools. In its scathing report, following evaluation of Kuwait's public education strategy for the period from 2005 to 2025, the State Audit Bureau noted that the strategy, which is slated to end next year, "did not achieve its goals regarding bringing about institutional reform in the public education sector."

In its report to the Ministry of Education, the Bureau requested a study into the reasons for the lack of improvement in the quality of education despite the passage of nearly 20 years and the allocation of over KD71 million for the integrated education reform system. The Audit Bureau lamented that "Kuwait's ranking in the field of quality of education and school administration continued to decline, as shown in results of international measurements during the years of implementation of these projects.

The Bureau also pointed out that Kuwait lagged globally, and it occupied last place in the Gulf on the global competitiveness index on education quality, in the fiscal years 2016/2017-2017/2018. It also occupied the penultimate position in the Gulf in the school administration quality index in the fiscal years from 2015 to 2018, during the years of implementing these projects."

In its response to the Bureau report, the permanent committee at the Ministry of Education, responsible for responding to the Bureau's observations, emphasized that "the Educational Research and Curricula sector at the ministry has been diligently working since the launch of the strategy to achieve its objectives, especially regarding the fourth goal concerning basic standards and requirements for curricula. The sector also organized conferences on education, including those on comprehensive quality, in collaboration with international bodies.

Additionally, the Curriculum Development sector has designed new curricula and courses using modern methods that prioritize self-research and information deduction, avoiding indoctrination. While designing modern curricula and learning methodologies are important, it is equally crucial to measure and evaluate the success in implementation of these programs and policies. The 2019 global 'Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study', which evaluates fourth and eighth graders, found Kuwait trailing among the bottom five countries in terms of education level in mathematics and science.

A previous report by the World Bank after evaluating its multi-year education modernization program in Kuwait — which was held in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, and the National Center for Education Improvement — concluded that political instability and changes in top-tier education officials, as well as frequent turnover of trained staff from the national cadre, due to retirement or other reasons, led to less than desired commitment by all stakeholders to the overall program goals.

Education is the foundation of any society as it prepares people to live cohesively in a community, participate politically, and contribute economically. Quality of education, and the institutional reforms needed to achieve this, are vital to nurturing youth who are equipped to be the future drivers of the country's growth and progress, as well as to produce capable leaders of tomorrow. We hope the new government in office will pay heed to the Audit Bureau's latest observation on education in the country.



Greek Embassy organizes workshop on Greek luxury tourism

• The 'Greek Luxury Tourism' workshop showcased Greece's diverse tourism offerings, enticing Kuwaiti vacationers with its appeal as a year-round destination.

• Under the new EU regulation, Kuwaiti citizens are eligible for a five-year visa from any EU diplomatic mission, including Greece, enabling seamless travel within the Schengen Area

In celebration of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Greece and Kuwait, the Greek Embassy hosted a workshop titled 'Greek Luxury Tourism' to showcase the tourism potential of the Greek islands. The event was attended by Vice Regional Governor for Tourism, Kyriakos Kotsoglou, and representatives of leading luxury resorts from Greece, who shared their expertise with their Kuwaiti counterparts and explored potential partnerships.

Greek Ambassador H.E. Ioannis Plotas

expressed his delight that Kuwait considers Greece a prime vacation destination, emphasizing the workshop's aim is to "strengthen my country's image in the Middle East, particularly in Kuwait."

Ambassador Plotas highlighted tourism as a cornerstone of the Greek economy, which is currently experiencing significant growth. He expressed his amazement at the depth of knowledge Kuwaitis possess about Greek regions and their fond recollections of visits there. He emphasized the enduring historical ties that bind the two nations, dating back to the

Hellenistic era when Alexander the Great left his mark in the region.

The Ambassador distinguished Greece as a unique tourist destination, accessible throughout the year, not just during the summer. Visitors can explore the country's numerous archaeological sites, breathtaking island landscapes, and the captivating beauty of Crete.

Under the new EU regulation known as Cascade Visa System, Kuwaiti citizens are eligible for a five-year visa from any EU diplomatic mission, including Greece, enabling seamless

travel within the Schengen Area. "I am also proud of this development, in which Greece played a constructive role," remarked the ambassador.

Ambassador Plotas expressed his heartfelt appreciation to Mideast Travel and, in particular thanked Katerina Mousbet and Ntigrinatakis for their efforts in promoting the event.

The workshop served as a platform to strengthen bilateral ties between Greece and Kuwait, promoting cultural exchange and fostering economic cooperation, particularly in the tourism sector.

WOMEN IN DIPLOMACY

More Women Needed at the Foreign Policy Table



A global dialogue hosted by Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) emphasized the role of gender-informed strategies and gender diversity within international institutions to drive better and more equitable foreign policy and outcomes.

GU-Q's 'Gender in Foreign Policy' Hiwaraat conference engaged the diverse perspectives of distinguished women leaders with pioneering careers in politics and international diplomacy, including Dalia Grybauskaitė, the first female president of Lithuania, who held the office from 2009 to 2019.

"It is important for the world that women assume greater leadership roles in the diplomatic and political arenas because it is the natural thing and the right thing to happen," said Dr. Safwan Masri, dean of GU-Q. "And I can think of no better expression of [GU-Q's] mission and values than today's discussion on gender in foreign policy," he said, highlighting that seven in ten students in the foreign service

degree program at GU-Q are women, with the potential to bring a new gender balance to the diplomatic field.

In her remarks, Ambassador Androulla Kaminara, inaugural Distinguished-Diplomat-in-Residence at GU-Q, argued that a "business as usual" approach in foreign policy is no longer adequate. "The UN Secretary-General has stressed that, despite evidence that women's full participation makes peacebuilding much more effective, the number of women in decision-making roles is falling." At the current rate of change, she said, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will take 170 years, including SDG 5 on gender equality, which is integral to all SDGs. "Having this conference in a region where the rate of change with respect to gender empowerment is one of the fastest in the world is important," she noted.

In her message, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN in New York, Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, pointed to Qatar's global

leadership in championing women's rights while acknowledging the work still ahead. "Historically, women were largely absent from the decision-making tables of international diplomacy. However, over the decades, the persistent efforts of countless women and advocates for gender equality have dramatically shifted this landscape." She highlighted Qatar's ongoing efforts, especially through the Group of Friends on Gender Parity, to create more opportunities for women at senior levels within the UN.

The conference helped connect perspectives from the Global North and Global South, and highlighted positive examples of countries actively striving to achieve a gender balance in diplomatic postings, including Lithuania, South Africa, and the European Union. Seasoned women diplomats reflected on the challenges they have faced in their careers in the foreign service, the importance of diversity in decision-making processes, and the role of women in

advocating for better policy outcomes. They pointed to the potential role of quota systems, education, and mentoring in creating more access for women at the decision-making level.

A separate session highlighted the opportunities that artificial intelligence presents for diplomacy, its value in facilitating decision-making, but also the dangers of inherent biases and its weaponization. The concluding session focused on the devastating, disproportionate impact of conflict on the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Gaza, and the urgency of amplifying the voices of women in peace-building and conflict-resolution processes.

The conference, which was moderated by GU-Q student Moza Al Hajri, created unique learning opportunities for GU-Q students. An exclusive engagement with Ms. Grybauskaitė on the sidelines of the conference offered students firsthand insights into international diplomacy and leadership.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Quality Journalism Is More Important than Ever



Anya Schiffrin, Dylan W. Groves, and Joseph E. Stiglitz

Anya Schiffrin is Director of the Technology, Media, and Communications Specialization at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. Dylan W. Groves is Assistant Professor of political science at Lafayette College. Joseph E. Stiglitz, a former chief economist of the World Bank and former chair of the US President's Council of Economic Advisers, is University Professor at Columbia University and a Nobel laureate in economics.

Although news consumption soared during the COVID-19 pandemic, subscriptions have since fallen, and news outlets around the world have been laying off reporters or even shutting down altogether. That is bad news for all of us.

Our new UNESCO brief highlights recent research that demonstrates just how important high-quality information is to a well-functioning economy, society, and democracy. New studies in economics and political science use rigorous methods to confirm what journalists already knew: that their work has a positive influence on democratic norms, civic engagement, and governmental and corporate accountability. By building social trust and promoting human rights, serious, credible reporting also supports economic performance and sustainable development.

The 2021 UNESCO Windhoek+30 Declaration — which reaffirmed the importance of information as a public good (one from which everyone benefits, and none are excluded) — was based on numerous studies from Africa, India, Latin America, and the United States. This literature shows that high-quality news and journalism promotes accountability and responsiveness even amid rising tides of misinformation and disinformation. Fact-checking can indeed counter the lies and distortions now flooding societies around the world.

Moreover, high-quality journalism remains more effective than social media in disseminating accurate, trustworthy news. While technology can enhance the spread of good information, it is currently doing the opposite. Large digital platforms regularly downrank news, claiming that users are more interested in other categories of content. But Pew Research Center data suggest that news consumption across platforms has remained stable (at least in



the US) since 2020. And with more people voting in elections this year than ever before, there has never been a greater need for quality reporting.

Everyone, even those who do not invest in journalism themselves, benefits from the investigation, curation, and dissemination of trustworthy and useful information. But this public good is unlikely to be adequately provided in a free market, even with the help of public-spirited philanthropists, aid organizations, media companies, and governments. In many markets, their support is not enough.

often do so only after long delays, and with extensive redactions.

Legacy media outlets are a key part of the media ecosystem and require continued support; but so do smaller outlets and those targeting underserved areas. Some promising ideas for supporting journalism include providing special funds or tax breaks (such as payroll tax credits or targeted value-added-tax (VAT) reductions) and issuing news-subscription vouchers. During the pandemic, governments around the world launched variations of these

content provided by journalists. However, they have long used content produced by journalists without providing much (if any) compensation, thus depriving media outlets of a major revenue source: advertising. This cycle is destroying the information ecosystem on which they, and our society, depend.

Many countries have helped sustain high-quality journalism through investments in independent public broadcasting. Healthy public broadcasting institutions build social trust and generate an important spillover benefit: competition that forces private media companies to hold themselves to a higher standard. The institutional structures that facilitate the development of public broadcasting are well-known; what is required is the political will to establish the necessary frameworks.

A general principle in economics is that without public support, there will be an undersupply of public goods. Unfortunately, quality journalism is fast becoming Exhibit A for this principle, despite rigorous scholarship demonstrating its importance. Journalism's business model is threatened by the rise of AI and the power of tech monopolies that distribute news without paying a fair price for it, and this is happening just as misinformation, disinformation, and political polarization are magnifying the dangers of journalism's decline.

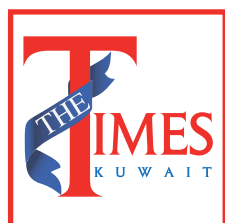
Around the world, there is a growing sense that democracy is in decline. An important step toward reversing this is to enhance support for quality journalism, starting immediately. The costs of inaction may be enormous.

“ High-quality journalism remains more effective than social media in disseminating accurate, trustworthy news. While technology can enhance the spread of good information, it is currently doing the opposite. ”

Governments, especially, have a responsibility to ensure the provision of public goods. Enabling high-quality journalism requires legal regimes that protect free expression and the 'right to tell'. But that is not enough. For journalists to do their jobs, there also must be laws and enforcement mechanisms in place to ensure the right to access information: the 'right to know'. While many countries have passed such laws, they are rarely enforced. When public authorities even bother to respond to information requests, they

policies, thus producing a wide range of models that can now be emulated.

Another crucial step is to ensure that journalists are appropriately compensated for their work. Big Tech (the proprietors of search engines, social media, and most artificial-intelligence platforms) relies on news media to engage users and improve its products. Since tech firms do not produce news themselves, they have no way to fulfill users' demand for high-quality news and search results without the



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Governments Must Shape AI's Future



Mariana Mazzucato and Fausto Gernone

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

Fausto Gernone, a PhD student at the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, is on a research visit at the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley.

Last December, the European Union set a global precedent by finalizing the Artificial Intelligence Act, one of the world's most comprehensive sets of AI rules. Europe's landmark legislation could signal a broader trend toward more responsive AI policies. But while regulation is necessary, it is insufficient. Beyond imposing restrictions on private AI companies, governments must assume an active role in AI development by designing systems and shaping markets for the common good.

To be sure, AI models are evolving rapidly. When EU regulators released the first draft of the AI Act in April 2021, they hailed it as 'future-proof', only to be left scrambling to update the text in response to the release of ChatGPT a year and a half later. But regulatory efforts are not in vain. For example, the law's ban on AI in biometric policing will likely remain pertinent, regardless of advances in the technology. Moreover, the risk frameworks contained in the AI Act will help policymakers guard against some of the technology's most dangerous uses. While AI will develop faster than policy, the law's fundamental principles will not need to change — though more flexible regulatory tools will be needed to tweak and update rules.

But thinking of the state as only a regulator misses the larger point. Innovation is not just some serendipitous market phenomenon. It has a direction that depends on the conditions in which it emerges, and public policymakers can influence these conditions. The rise of a dominant technological design or business model is the result of a power struggle between various actors — corporations, governmental bodies, academic institutions — with conflicting interests and divergent priorities. Reflecting this struggle, the resulting technology may be more or less centralized, more or less proprietary, and so forth.

The markets that form around new technologies follow the same pattern, with important distributive implications. As the software pioneer Mitch Kapor puts it, "Architecture is politics." More than regulation, a technology's design and surrounding infrastructure dictate who can do what with it, and who benefits. For governments, ensuring that transformational innovations produce inclusive and sustainable growth is less about fixing markets, and more about shaping and co-creating them. When governments contribute to innovation through bold, strategic, mission-oriented investments, they can create new markets and crowd-in the private sector.

In the case of AI, the task of directing innovation is currently dominated by large private corporations, leading to an infrastructure that serves insiders' interests and exacerbates economic inequality. This reflects a longstanding problem. Some of the technology firms that have benefited the most from public support, such as Apple and Google, have also been among those accused of using their international operations to avoid paying taxes. These unbalanced, parasitic

relationships between big firms and the state now risk being further entrenched by AI, which promises to reward capital while reducing the returns to labor.

Today's AI systems could take a similar route: value extraction, insidious monetization, and deteriorating information quality. Governing generative AI models for the common good will require mutually beneficial partnerships, oriented around shared goals and the creation of public, rather than only private, value. This will not be possible with redistributive and regulatory states that act only after the fact; we need entrepreneurial states capable of establishing pre-distributive structures that will share risks and rewards ex ante. Policymakers should focus on understanding how platforms, algorithms, and generative AI create and extract value, so that they can create the conditions, such as equitable design rules, for a digital economy that rewards value creation.

The internet is a good example of a technology that has been designed around principles of openness and neutrality. Consider the principle of 'end-to-end', which ensures that the internet operates like a neutral network responsible for data delivery. While the content being delivered from computer to computer may be private, the code is managed publicly. And while the physical

benefits that could have emerged.

For example, in 1955, AT&T persuaded the Federal Communications Commission to ban a device designed to reduce noise on telephone receivers, claiming exclusive rights to network enhancements. The same kind of monopolistic control could have relegated the internet to being merely a niche instrument for a select group of researchers, rather than the universally accessible and transformative technology it has become.

Likewise, the transformation of GPS from a military tool to a universally beneficial technology highlights the need to govern innovation for the common good. Initially designed by the US Department of Defense to coordinate military assets, public access to GPS signals was deliberately degraded on national-security grounds. But as civilian use surpassed that of the military, the US government, under President Bill Clinton, made GPS more responsive to civil and commercial users worldwide. That move not only democratized access to precise geolocation technology; it also spurred a wave of innovation across many sectors, including navigation, logistics, and location-based services. A policy shift toward maximizing public benefit had a far-reaching, transformational impact on technological innovation. But this example also shows that governing for the common good is a conscious choice that requires continuous investment, high coordination, and a capacity to deliver.

To apply this choice to AI innovation, we will need inclusive, mission-oriented governance structures with the means to co-invest with partners that recognize the potential of government-led innovation. To coordinate inter-sectoral responses to ambitious objectives, policymakers should attach conditions to public funding so that risks and rewards are shared more equitably. That means clear goals to which businesses are held accountable; high labor, social, and environmental standards; and profit sharing with the public. Conditionalities can, and should, require Big Tech to be more open and transparent. We must insist on nothing less if we are serious about the idea of stakeholder capitalism.

Ultimately, addressing the perils of AI demands that governments extend their role beyond regulation. Yes, different governments have different capacities, and some are highly dependent on the broader global political economy of AI. The best strategy for the United States may not be the best one for the United Kingdom, the EU, or any other country. But everyone should avoid the fallacy of presuming that governing AI for the common good is in conflict with creating a robust and competitive AI industry. On the contrary, innovation flourishes when access to opportunities is open and the rewards are broadly shared.

“ The internet is a good example of a technology that has been designed around principles of openness and neutrality. While the content being delivered from computer to computer may be private, the code is managed publicly. ”

relationships between big firms and the state now risk being further entrenched by AI, which promises to reward capital while reducing the returns to labor.

The companies developing generative AI are already at the center of debates about extractive behaviors, owing to their unfettered use of copyrighted text, audio, and images to train their models. By centralizing value within their own services, they will reduce value flows to the artists whom they rely on. As with social media, the incentives are aligned for rent extraction, whereby dominant intermediaries amass profits at others' expense.

Today's dominant platforms, such as Amazon and Google, exploited their position as gatekeepers by using their algorithms to extract ever larger fees ('algorithmic attention rents') for access to users. Once Google and Amazon became one big 'payola' scheme, information quality deteriorated, and value was extracted from the ecosystem of websites, producers, and app developers the platforms relied on.

infrastructure needed to access the internet is private, the original design ensured that, once online, the resources for innovation on the network are freely available.

This design choice, coordinated through the early work of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (among other organizations), became a guiding principle for the development of the internet, allowing for flexibility and extraordinary innovation in the public and private sector. By envisioning and shaping new domains, the state can establish markets and direct growth, rather than just incentivizing or stabilizing it.

It is hard to imagine that private enterprises developing the internet in the absence of government involvement would have adhered to equally inclusive principles. Consider the history of telephone technology. The government's role was predominantly regulatory, leaving innovation largely in the hands of private monopolies. Centralization not only hampered the pace of innovation but also limited the broader societal

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



Overcoming the Development Project Implementation Gap



Jorge Moreira da Silva
Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services, is a former minister of environment and energy for Portugal and former director of the OECD Development Cooperation Directorate.

This week's World Bank spring meetings will kick-start the replenishment of the International Development Association – the largest source of development finance for the world's poorest people. The event cannot come soon enough. With extreme poverty, climate change, and a worsening debt crisis jeopardizing progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), IDA is more important than ever.

For many recipient countries, IDA often represents the only reliable, sustainable source of development finance. For donors, it offers good value for money: for every dollar mobilized through IDA, recipient countries receive around \$4 to support their development. But as governments seek an ambitious replenishment of IDA's resources this year, we must maximize the impact of IDA dollars already in circulation.

With up to two-thirds of those living in extreme poverty expected to reside in fragile and conflict-affected countries by 2030, successful implementation of IDA-supported development projects in challenging contexts is vital. But, as new research by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) shows, disbursing IDA funds to projects that positively affect people's lives must overcome major barriers.

During one recent IDA cycle, around 50 percent of its financing commitments in conflict-affected least-developed countries were not disbursed. The IRC's research highlights limited institutional capacity, especially in conflict-affected countries.

Such gaps can be explained largely by the World Bank's low risk threshold and an operating model that works primarily with and through national governments. This model can lead to project delays and suspensions, especially in conflict-affected countries, not least because of limited institutional capacity and a lack of relevant expertise and experience.

This highlights a crucial point. Too often, discussions about development goals like the SDGs focus on two gaps – in financing and policy

settings, and we are a major channel for implementing IDA-financed projects, among other humanitarian, development, and peace-and-security initiatives. We also help recipient governments make the most of the IDA funds they receive, working alongside other UN agencies to accelerate project delivery, overcome delays, and ensure the intended results.

Our experience, particularly in conflict zones, demonstrates the overwhelming positive impact IDA funds can have when we get implementation right. In South Sudan, for example, IDA and UN agencies worked together to implement a project focused on increasing poor and vulnerable households' access to temporary income opportunities. Since then, the security situation has improved sufficiently

through the government, the World Bank, with IDA financing, has worked with UN partners on the ground to deliver access to basic services. One project, implemented by UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and UNOPS, provided health and nutrition services to more than eight million Yemenis at more than 2,000 locations and by relying on mobile outreach teams. Such engagement helps to preserve pre-crisis human-capital gains and a degree of institutional stability, both of which are essential to the eventual post-conflict recovery.

This capacity to implement projects even in crisis-affected areas, including conflict zones like Yemen, is essential to deliver on the SDGs. But so are efforts to prevent crises. These are particularly cost-effective interventions: for every dollar invested in prevention, around \$16 are saved in the long term. With any intervention, timing is key. As the World Bank has pointed out, it is imperative to invest IDA funding early, especially in fragile contexts.

The World Bank's newly expanded Crisis Preparedness and Response Toolkit promises to help countries respond to emergencies, from conflict to climate-related disasters, and prepare for future shocks. For example, it includes measures that would allow governments to reallocate up to 10 percent of undisbursed World Bank financing toward emergency response. This, together with other tools and welcome changes under the Bank's evolution and reform agenda, offers much-needed flexibility to countries in crisis.

This week's World Bank spring meetings offer a valuable opportunity to reflect on the IDA's critical role as a source of hope for those most in need – and commit to enhancing its impact even further. That means not only replenishing its resources, but also recognizing and addressing implementation gaps.

“ The majority of UNOPS work takes place in fragile and conflict-affected settings, and we are a major channel for implementing IDA-financed projects, among other humanitarian, development, and peace-and-security initiatives. ”

– while failing to recognize the implementation gap. But finance and policy alone cannot overcome implementation bottlenecks; technical assistance and other support is also vital. This is a key focus of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which I have led for exactly one year.

UNOPS runs operations in over 80 countries on behalf of the UN system and global partners, such as the World Bank. The majority of our work takes place in fragile and conflict-affected

to begin handing full ownership of projects — which has reached over 420,000 people across ten counties — back to the South Sudanese government and local communities.

In Mozambique, UNOPS is working alongside the World Bank and the national government to restore basic services for 680,000 people who have been internally displaced as a result of the conflict in the country's north or who are hosting displaced communities and returnees.

In Yemen, where the Bank cannot work



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Ozone Layer's Recovery Shows How to Protect the Planet



Robert Redford and Xiye Bastida

Robert Redford, Co-Founder of the Redford Center, is an actor, director, and producer.

Xiye Bastida, a climate-justice activist from the Otomi-Toltec indigenous community in Central Mexico, is an organizer with Fridays For Future and Co-Founder of the Re-Earth Initiative.



There was a time, not so long ago, when the depletion of Earth's ozone layer seemed like an insurmountable challenge. Decades of using harmful chemicals, such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), had threatened to cause irreparable damage to our planet. Without swift action, we faced the risk of climate destabilization, ecosystem collapse, and the breakdown of our food system. Consequences that were once almost unthinkable became painfully real.

But then, the most remarkable thing happened: humanity united to protect the ozone layer. Heeding the warnings of Nobel laureate scientists Paul Crutzen, Mario Molina, and Sherwood Rowland, whose research underscored the severity of the threat, we did not ignore or dismiss the scientific evidence, nor did we bury our heads in the sand and claim that the challenge was too daunting. Instead, the global community recognized the urgent need for collective action.

By harnessing scientific knowledge, entire industries have been transformed, and equitable policies have been put in place to shield countries

The planetary boundaries model, introduced by Rockström and others in 2009, provides a useful framework for assessing the planet's health. It identifies nine interconnected factors — including climate, freshwater availability, biodiversity, and land use — that are crucial for the planet's stability and habitability. In their recent study, Rockström and his co-authors found that six of these nine boundaries have already been breached, putting Earth on a dangerous course that undermines the planet's resilience and jeopardizes human well-being. Notably, the ozone layer is the only area showing signs of improvement.

Given that Earth functions as an interconnected system, we cannot solve one problem without addressing the others. Despite being aware of the critical role of planetary boundaries in preserving our Earth's habitability, we have not acted decisively enough to halt our slide toward catastrophe. For example, we know that more than a million species are on the brink of extinction, potentially triggering the collapse of entire ecosystems. We also know that nitrogen and phosphorus runoff leads to the proliferation of toxic algae blooms in oceans and freshwater systems, thereby breaching the biogeochemical flow boundary. Similarly, tolerating dangerous levels of chemical pollution and allowing our children to ingest microplastics compromise the life-support systems necessary for humanity's survival.

To restore Earth's stability, governments must recognize the need to respect the nine planetary boundaries. This requires a steadfast commitment to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions and protecting biodiversity and water resources. Moreover, our chances of success increase exponentially when we cooperate: if the international community can unite as it did when it agreed to repair the ozone layer, there is hope.

But first, we must heed the advice of indigenous peoples and local communities and listen to what nature is telling us. Despite making up less than 5 percent of the global population, indigenous communities act as the planet's wise custodians, protecting at least one-quarter of the world's land and seas and 80 percent of its biodiversity.

To advance this approach, we have joined forces with Planetary Guardians, an independent collective of global leaders, scientists, and environmental advocates championing the planetary boundaries model. Our goal is to promote its adoption as a framework for assessing and guiding collective climate action.

By bringing together leaders from various countries, industries, age groups, genders, and cultures, Planetary Guardians aims to leverage our diverse backgrounds and experiences to find solutions to protect the planet. While our planet's

resources are finite, there is no limit to human ingenuity and our capacity for solving complex problems. The real question is what Earth we wish to leave to future generations.

To be sure, there are no simple answers or

quick fixes. Our future hinges on the steps each of us is willing to take. But in saving the ozone layer, we have already shown that taking swift, informed, collective action can facilitate the changes needed to sustain human life on Earth.

“ Governments must recognize the need to respect the nine planetary boundaries. This requires a steadfast commitment to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions and protecting biodiversity and water resources. ”

that did not contribute to the problem. Thanks to the Montreal Protocol, ratified by 197 countries, nearly 99 percent of ozone-depleting substances have been phased out. This includes the reduction and replacement of CFCs, which has slowed climate change by at least a decade.

The successful global effort to protect the ozone layer should serve as a beacon of hope for all of us. It is one of humanity's greatest environmental achievements, showing what we can achieve when we act together with commitment, respect, and determination. But it can also serve as a warning. A 2023 study by Johan Rockström and 28 other leading climate scientists revealed a startling new reality, underscoring the need to adopt a collaborative approach to protecting the planet before it is too late.

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Thought “ for the week

Never think that war,
no matter how necessary, nor
how justified, is not a crime.

- Ernest Hemingway, 1946

Proper diet when breastfeeding



Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy

Hello Ladies!

Studies have proven that babies who were breastfed have a higher IQ when they grew older, show a better performance at school and are more sociable.

Breastfeeding benefits both the mom and the baby, and increases the bond between both of them. Breast milk is very rich in nutrients and antibodies that protect the baby. It is more easily digested by the baby than milk formula, and has just the right amount of fat, sugar, water, and protein to help your baby continue to grow.

Many new moms wonder if diet can affect breastfeeding or can make them produce less milk. You do not have to make major changes to what you eat or drink if you follow a normal healthy diet. Nevertheless, there are a few considerations to follow.

Keep in mind: If your diet is too low in calories or relies on only one food group, then this will affect the quality and quantity of your milk.

Calories: The exact amount depends on your weight, your workout level, your metabolism and how frequently you are breastfeeding. Remember, breastfeeding increases your calorie needs, usually moms who are breastfeeding need 2,000 calories per day.

- Increase your water consumption by half a liter a day. Nursing women tend to get thirsty especially during feeding sessions because part of their water consumption goes directly to milk production.

- Eat five meals a day, with two snacks in between and focus on healthy cooking, high fiber food choices, and plenty of vegetables and fruits.
- Keep in mind that everything you eat will go directly to your milk.
- So avoid any food that can cause bloating problems for your baby such as cauliflower, raw carrots, couscous, broccoli, capsicums, cabbage, beans, lentils and spices (you need to see the effects of these food on your baby).
- Avoid nicotine, caffeine, alcoholic beverages and artificial sweeteners, including diet sodas. Those will decrease breast milk production.

Don't Forget: Good Nutrition for you means good nutrition for your baby!



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



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

RECIPE

Roasted Almond Cookies



Almond cookies are always a huge hit around the holiday season. If you love almonds then these cookies are just the right ones for you. They are buttery and soft while not being overly sweet, and they are an easy delicacy to prepare at short notice for a party, or as a gift to family and friends.

Total time: 30 to 40 minutes
Yield: 30 cookies

Ingredients:

- 1,1/2 cup All-purpose flour(maida)
- 1/2 cup clarified butter (ghee)
- 1/2 cup sugar powder (add few extra spoonfuls for a sweeter version)
- 1/4 tsp baking powder
- 3 tbsp roasted almond (roughly chopped)
- 1/4 tsp almond essence (optional)
- 1tbsp milk
- (All ingredients should be brought to room temperature)



Chef Chhaya Thakker

Preparation:

- In a mixing bowl add ghee and powdered sugar, and whisk until fluffy (creamy)
- Add the baking powder, roasted chopped almonds and flour along with essence Sprinkle the mixture with milk and form a dough.
- Pinch out a little dough and roll into balls, then press gently to form desired shape
- Top the shaped dough with a sprinkle of chopped almonds
- Place the shaped dough on a baking tray lined with parchment paper
- Refrigerate for about 15 minutes
- Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- Place the baking tray in the oven and bake for 8 to 10 minutes or until the centers are set. Do not over bake so that they remain soft on emerging from oven
- Allow the cookies to cool on the baking pan, before shifting them to a baking rack Store in an airtight container and relish it for over a month.



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

Regular sound sleep critical to good health

We all need it, but rarely get enough of it; in today's world, daily sound sleep has increasingly become a rare and precious commodity. Our busy lifestyles and work schedules, as well as the related increase in anxiety and other mental and physical health risks, all get in the way of regular good quality sleep at night.

Healthcare professionals underline that sufficient sound sleep daily is one of the three vital and interconnected pillars of good health, along with appropriate nutrition and regular physical exercise. Reducing or impairing one pillar can have profound impacts on the other two aspects of good health.

Over time, inadequate sleep raises your risk for chronic health problems, affects the heart and circulatory system, the body's metabolism, respiratory system, and immune system, as well as impairs how well you think, react, work, learn, and get along with others. Lack of sufficient sleep has also been associated with a greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes and insulin resistance.

A meta-analysis of 36 studies covering over one million participants found that very short sleep of fewer than five hours and short sleep of fewer than six hours increased the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 48 percent and 18 percent respectively. Sleep deprivation was also found to be associated with a higher risk of developing obesity, heart disease, and metabolic syndrome, all of which increase the risk of diabetes.

Mental health concerns, such as depression, are also strongly linked to poor sleep quality and sleeping disorders. One study among 2,672 participants found that those with anxiety and depression were more likely to report poorer sleep scores than those without anxiety and depression. In other studies, people with sleeping disorders like insomnia or obstructive sleep apnea also report higher rates of depression than those without.



Studies have shown that daily sleep cycles through two stages — Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep stage and non-REM sleep (NREM) — that are repeated every 80 to 100 minutes during the entire sleep process. Usually there are four to six cycles of NREM and REM per night, sometimes interrupted by brief waking up between the cycles. Researchers involved in sleep studies use sensors to record eye movements and brain activity to classify sleep phases and stages.

When you first fall asleep you enter the NREM sleep phase, with your blood pressure and heart rate both slowing down. During non-REM

sleep, your parasympathetic system controls your body, and your heart does not work as hard as it does when you are awake. During the REM phase of sleep and when waking, your sympathetic system is activated, increasing your heart rate and blood pressure to the usual levels when you are awake and relaxed.

Non-REM sleep has three stages. The first stage is the transition between wakefulness and sleep. In the second stage, you are already asleep but not yet in deep sleep.

Nearly half of our daily sleep time is spent in stage two NREM. In the third stage, called deep sleep or slow-wave sleep (because of the gentle

wave pattern that appears in measurements of brain activity during this period) the body repairs injuries and reinforces the immune system. You need stage 3 NREM sleep to wake up feeling rested. Without enough stage 3 sleep, you feel tired and drained even if you slept for a long time.

There are two phases of REM sleep: phasic and tonic. Phasic REM sleep contains bursts of rapid eye movements, while tonic REM sleep does not. Phasic REM occurs about 90 minutes after you fall asleep, and is the primary 'dreaming' stage of sleep. It lasts roughly 10 minutes the first time, increasing with each REM cycle. The final cycle of stage R may last roughly between 30 to 60 minutes. During the phasic stage your eyes can be seen to twitch behind your eyelids and your brain activity is similar to your waking hours.

The patterns and types of sleep change as people mature. For example, newborns spend more time in REM sleep. The amount of slow-wave sleep peaks in early childhood and then drops sharply in the teenage years. Slow-wave sleep continues to decrease through adulthood, and older people may not have any slow-wave sleep at all.

Regularly sleeping less than seven hours at night for adults can put your health and safety at risk, which is why it is essential that you prioritize and protect your sleep on a daily basis. If all efforts to improve sleep on your own have failed, consultation with a sleep medicine expert to seek solutions is the next logical step. Most sleep disorders are treatable, with satisfactory outcomes.

New semiconductor from graphene

Graphene, a material extracted from graphite and made up of pure carbon, stands out for its high thermal and electrical conductivity, elasticity, toughness, lightness, and resistance. It has been shown to be 200 times more resistant than steel and five times lighter than aluminum. The multiplicity of favorable properties make graphene a versatile material that is increasingly finding new applications in a wide variety of industries and sectors, including in energy, electronics, and construction.

The applications of graphene in the health and medicine sectors are particularly fascinating. Thanks to the properties of graphene, stronger, more flexible, and lighter hearing aids could be developed, and their potential in fabricating human bones and muscles is also being explored. Graphene oxide is another innovative byproduct that is being examined for its possible application in diagnosing diseases and in their subsequent treatment.

In particular, the scientific and technology community is exploring innovative ways to use graphene, especially in the field of computing and in renewable energy. The use of graphene in renewable energy could lead to batteries that charge faster, last longer, and generate much more energy output than what is available today. The favorable characteristics of graphene, including its thermal and electrical conductivity, which is proven

to be 1,000 times better than that of copper, are predicted to bring about transformative changes to the electronics sector.

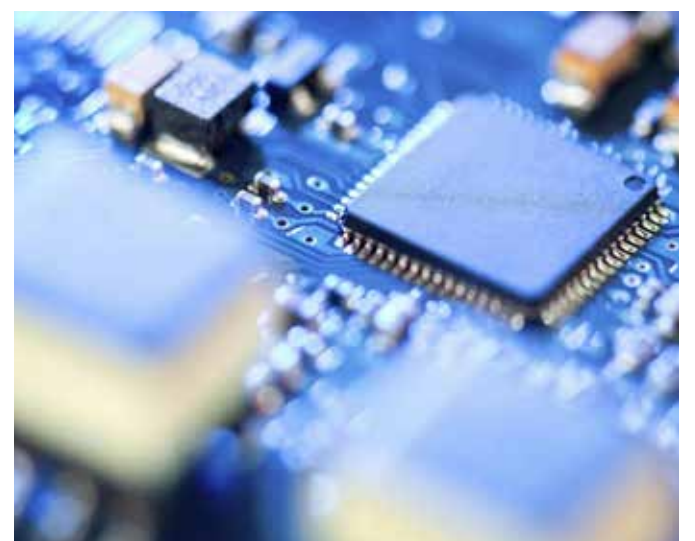
Now researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology in the United States claim to have created the world's first functional semiconductor made entirely from graphene. Semiconductors are materials that conduct electricity under specific conditions and they form the foundational component of electronic devices. The breakthrough new finding by the researchers throws open the door to new ways of doing electronics.

Their discovery comes at a time when silicon, the material from which nearly all modern electronics are made, is reaching its limit in the face of increasingly faster computing and smaller electronic devices. The innovative graphene semiconductor is compatible with conventional microelectronics processing methods — a key necessity for any viable alternative to silicon.

The breakthrough discovery came about after the team overcame the major hurdle known as the 'band gap', which had prevented graphene from realizing its full potential in the electronics industry. In its natural form, graphene is neither a semiconductor nor a metal, but a semimetal. A band gap is a material that can be turned on and off when an electric field is applied to it, which is how all transistors and silicon electronics work. Graphene did not have a band gap, that is, until now.

The team was motivated in their research by the hope of introducing three special properties of graphene into electronics — the robustness of graphene, its thermal resistance, and its electricity conductivity that enabled it to handle very large currents, without heating up and falling apart. Moreover, to make a functional transistor, a semiconducting material must be greatly manipulated, which can damage its properties.

To prove that their platform could function as a viable semiconductor, the team figured out how to grow graphene on silicon carbide wafers using special furnaces. This enabled them to produce 'epitaxial graphene', which is a single layer that grows



on a crystal face of the silicon carbide. The team found that when it was made properly, the epitaxial graphene chemically bonded to the silicon carbide and started to show semiconducting properties.

Over the past decade, the team has persisted in perfecting the material. Their latest measurements prove that the new graphene semiconductor has 10 times greater mobility than silicon. In other words, the electrons move with very low resistance, which, in electronics, translates to faster computing.

Epitaxial graphene could cause a paradigm shift in the field of electronics and allow for completely new technologies that take advantage of its unique properties. The material also allows the quantum mechanical wave properties of electrons to be utilized — a requirement for quantum computing, which is predicted to revolutionize computing over the coming decade.

