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Human Trafficking a Stain on Our Collective Conscience

Kuwaiti anti-trafficking legislation has been shaped in a way that promotes the principles of human rights in a broader sense that includes the fight against human trafficking. However, more than legislations and enforcements, or the need to comply with international conventions and protocols, Kuwait's anti-human trafficking initiatives stem from the country's deeply ingrained humanitarian and religious ethos.

By Reaven D'Souza
Executive Managing Editor

World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, observed each year on 30 July, aims to raise awareness of human trafficking, and the plight of victims, as well as the need to combat this pernicious phenomena, and strengthen safeguards against it.

The theme for this year's World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (WDATIP), 'Leave No Child Behind in the Fight Against Human Trafficking', reflects the fact that globally one in three victims of human trafficking is a child.

The United Nations 'Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons,



especially Women and Children', is the main legal arsenal to combat trafficking worldwide. The protocol is part of the larger United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is the nodal agency for UNTOC and its protocols.

Kuwait ratified the UNTOC and its protocols in 2006 and has exerted all efforts to prevent and combat human trafficking and other violations of human rights. In addition to introducing legislations and implementing enforcements, the government has also launched several public awareness campaigns to raise awareness and highlight the need to prevent human trafficking and protect victims.

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ASEAN: Embracing Unity, Diversity, and International Partnerships



Chan Aye
Ambassador, Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Chair of the ASEAN Committee in Kuwait (March – August 2024)

This year, we, the member states of ASEAN (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.) joyfully celebrate on 8th August the founding of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Since its inception in 1967, the historic document known as 'The ASEAN Declaration' reflects our shared history and collective vision for a peaceful, prosperous, and integrated Southeast Asia.

Despite the challenges encountered along ASEAN's journey, the organization has emerged as one of the most successful inter-governmental bodies in the region and beyond. Today, ASEAN's enduring relevance is underscored by its fundamental principles upheld at both regional and international levels. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) has been ratified by 54 countries, and ASEAN actively engages with eleven dialogue partners, with four elevated to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership status in recent years.

For all of us, ASEAN represents a cornerstone of our diplomacy, demonstrating the strength found in diversity. I acknowledge the invaluable positive contributions of each ASEAN member state in shaping our collective journey towards regional peace, stability, and prosperity. Together, we have navigated common challenges, forged partnerships, and promoted mutual understanding among us. ASEAN's commitment to dialogue and cooperation continues to inspire resilience amidst global uncertainties, reinforcing our collective resolve to build a resilient and sustainable future.

In 2024, under the theme 'ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience', the Lao People's Democratic Republic's Chairmanship underscores the critical need for collective action to address challenges while promoting regional integration and stability. Lao PDR's priorities include economic integration, digital transformation, cultural promotion, climate change resilience, empowerment of women and children, and health sector resilience. Upholding ASEAN's centrality, unity, and solidarity based on the ASEAN Charter's principles and norms is essential for achieving these goals.

On this auspicious ASEAN Day, we not only celebrate achievements and unity within our region but also deepen partnerships that transcend borders. Our relations with the State

of Kuwait continue to thrive, reflecting mutual respect and a shared vision for enhancing bilateral cooperation. The recent signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation by the State of Kuwait further solidifies our commitment to fostering political and economic cooperation.

The ASEAN-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 20 October, 2023, underscored our commitment to peace, prosperity, and understanding between these two regional blocs. Economic ties, especially in energy resources, are crucial, with GCC countries exporting oil and gas to meet ASEAN's energy needs, while ASEAN exports goods and services to the GCC. Discussions on a free trade agreement (FTA) aim to deepen economic ties, alongside cooperation in infrastructure, technology, innovation, and people-to-people exchanges, enhancing mutual benefits and regional development.

Looking ahead, the GCC-ASEAN Economic and Investment Conference in Riyadh on 28 May, 2024, pledged to strengthen economic cooperation in sectors such as food security, energy, water security, green technologies, and tourism infrastructure. The ASEAN-GCC trade valued at USD 137 billion highlights substantial economic potential, despite recent challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we commemorate the 57th ASEAN Day, let us renew our commitment to mutual respect, inclusivity, and solidarity. Let us leverage our cultural and economic diversity to foster innovation, enhance regional integration, and improve the quality of life for all ASEAN citizens. On behalf of the ASEAN Committee in Kuwait, I extend warm wishes to all ASEAN citizens and reaffirm our dedication to advancing ASEAN's shared goals of peace, progress, and prosperity.

Happy 57th ASEAN Day!



Pyramid Infratech Expands Into Luxury Real Estate with High-End Residential Projects

Pyramid Infratech, a name synonymous with quality and affordability in Gurgaon's real estate market, is making a strategic pivot towards the luxury segment. Since its establishment in 2008, the company has built a strong reputation for delivering cost-effective and high-quality residential and commercial projects. Now, Pyramid

Infratech is set to redefine its portfolio by venturing into the realm of luxury real estate.

Under the visionary leadership of Mr. Brahm Dutt and Mr. Dinesh Kumar, Pyramid Infratech has successfully completed more than 25 projects, offering a blend of contemporary architecture and thoughtful amenities. The company has been a key player in initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), providing affordable housing options to many. However, the new focus on high-end residential properties marks a significant evolution in their business strategy.

The move into luxury real estate will see Pyramid Infratech developing high-end residential projects that cater to the discerning tastes of affluent homebuyers. These new projects will feature opulent designs, premium amenities, and prime locations, setting a new standard for luxury living in the region.

With a proven track record and a commitment to excellence, Pyramid Infratech aims to create exclusive, upscale living environments that seamlessly integrate luxury, comfort, and convenience. This strategic shift positions the company to not only meet but exceed the expectations of a growing market segment seeking luxurious living spaces.



IOM marks World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

On the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, marked each year on 30 July, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Kuwait, issued a statement that shone the spotlight on children who represent a significant proportion of trafficking victims worldwide, with girls affected most of all.

An average of one in three victims of human trafficking globally is a child — although in some regions the proportion is much higher — and children are twice as likely as adults to face violence while being trafficked. Our research shows that no age group, gender or nationality is immune. In more than 50 percent of cases, family members or friends are involved and ever-evolving online platforms are making it easier for traffickers to exploit children while avoiding detection.

Urgent, comprehensive action is needed to tackle this dire situation. With decades of experience in counter-trafficking, at IOM we work closely with partners to prevent children from falling victim to this crime and protect and assist those who have. But we all need to do more, together, to reach our goal of ensuring no child is left behind in the fight against trafficking.

In his comments on the occasion, Chief of Mission of the International Organization for

Migration (IOM) in Kuwait, Mazen AboulHosn said, "Combating Trafficking in Persons and providing protection and assistance to victims is one of the priorities of the International Organization for Migration. The Kuwait Mission has worked for nearly 14 years in cooperation with the Government of the State of Kuwait to strengthen mechanisms and initiatives to combat this crime, and we affirm our keenness to continue international cooperation to strengthen protection and support systems for victims. This includes, for example, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) formulated in cooperation with the organization that works to prevent this crime and preserve human rights violations.

"To enhance these efforts in shedding light on the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, the International Organization for Migration was present during an awareness raising campaign held by the Public Authority for Manpower in partnership with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Kuwait Trade Union Federation. This is in addition to the participation in a seminar organized by the British Embassy to promote awareness on the day as well as posts on IOM social media platforms.



CBDT clarifies tax clearance certificate not applicable to all Indians

In the wake of media reports that the Union Budget 2024 had made it mandatory for all Indians to obtain a tax clearance certificate from the income-tax authorities prior to departing India, the Indian Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has issued a clarification.

In the wake of media reports that the Union Budget 2024 had made it mandatory for all Indians to obtain a tax clearance certificate from the income-tax authorities prior to departing India, the Indian Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has issued a clarification.

The CBDT clarification states that Section 230 of the Income Tax Act, 1961, does not mandate every individual domiciled in India to secure a tax clearance certificate before departure. The requirement applies only under specific circumstances.

According to the CBDT's Instruction No. 1/2004, dated February 5, 2004, a tax clearance certificate is necessary only for individuals involved in serious financial irregularities or those with significant direct tax arrears exceeding Rs10 lakh (Rs1 million), provided these arrears have not been stayed by any legal authority.

The CBDT clarification also stressed that the issuance of a tax clearance certificate is not an arbitrary process provided by any tax official. The clearance certificate requires documented



reasons and prior approval from the Principal Chief Commissioner of Income-tax or Chief Commissioner of Income-tax.

The clearance certificate will confirm that the individual has no outstanding liabilities under various tax laws, including the Income-tax Act, Wealth-tax Act, Gift-tax Act, Expenditure-tax Act, and the Black Money Act, 2015, proposed in Finance (No. 2) Bill, 2024. This proposal aims to ensure that liabilities under the Black Money Act are also cleared before issuing the tax clearance

certificate. The 2024 Budget has also introduced significant changes to penalties under the Black Money Act. Starting 1 October, 2024, the Rs1 million (Rs10 lakh) penalty for not reporting foreign assets (excluding real estate) with a total value of less than Rs2 million (Rs20 lakh) will be removed. This amendment aims to simplify compliance for individuals with modest foreign holdings.

Residents, who are ordinarily residents of India, must disclose all foreign assets, including investments like shares and securities, as well as any income derived from these assets when filing their Income Tax Return (ITR). Failure to report foreign income and assets or submit the related ITR could result in a penalty of Rs1 million (Rs10 lakh) under sections 42 or 43 of the Black Money Act.

However, these sections do not apply to bank accounts with a total balance not exceeding Rs500,000 (Rs5 lakh) at any time during the previous year. This aims to provide relief for individuals with minimal foreign holdings.

Children need father's consent to exit Kuwait

Ministry of Interior has introduced a new regulation that prevents underage children from leaving the country without the written consent of the father.

Effective immediately, all expatriate children seeking to leave the country must present a written consent form, prepared by the passport department, and signed by their father.

The ministry made clear that this requirement applies to all departing children, whether on their own or even if they are accompanied by their mothers or other family members.



Diplomats pay tribute to former Indonesian vice president



Heads of diplomatic missions visited the Indonesian Embassy in Kuwait for two consecutive days to offer their condolences on the passing of former Vice President of Indonesia Dr. Hamzah Haz.

Diplomats lauded the virtues of the deceased and praised his contributions to social and economic development of his country.

In a statement on the occasion, Ambassador of Indonesia H.E. Lena Maryana expressed her deep sorrow over the passing of her country's former vice-president who was also a mentor to her. She recalled her work with the deceased when he led the Islamic Party, of which she was a member during President Suharto's era.

The Indonesia ambassador noted that he was one of the first supporters of women's political rights, which enabled her to work in various fields. She also

Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs, Ambassador Samih Hayat, offered his deepest condolences and sincere sympathy to the leadership, government, and people of Indonesia on the passing of Dr. Hamzah Haz. He prayed that God bestow His mercy and forgiveness, upon the deceased.



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Russia engages with world youth

By Fajr Al Sabah
Special to The Times Kuwait

It was an honor and a privilege for me to be invited to attend the World Youth Festival, held in the first week of March, in the Sirius Federal Territory in Sochi, Russia. An event considered the largest in the global youth arena, it brought together the most passionate people from all over the world. The event hosted

20,000 young Russian and foreign leaders, aged 18 to 35, from fields like business, media, international cooperation, culture, science, sports, education, volunteering, and charity under one roof, and gave them a global platform to interact and express their views.

The festival kickstarted new friendships, and provided an opportunity for mutual enrichment of various national cultures and traditions. It presented a unique platform for dialogue and search for mutual understanding regardless of one's nationality, political views, or cultural choices.

About 50 percent of the participants were Russian and the other 50 percent from different foreign countries. Participants included 1,000 children as well, aged 14-17, about 500 from Russia, the other 500 from overseas. The teenagers represented various youth organizations and unions in their respective countries.

The concept of the Russian Youth Conference revolves around 'We are young people from different countries of the world who have come together to learn about each other's customs, traditions, and the distinguishing factors of the numerous countries we belong to. Despite our differences in language and dialect, and the

diversity of our beliefs and ideas, we believe and accept different religions and cultures, and we are here on Russian soil, to discover each other.

Russia has brought us together to exchange nuances of our cultures and discover through discussion, dialogue and workshops in artistic, scientific, cultural, literary, heritage, and other popular fields. We exchanged souvenirs that symbolized our countries and highlighted our identities in a way that allows for unconditional mutual acceptance despite the disparity.

What unites us is respect and a passion for nurturing friendships across the world, participating in activities during and post-conference, organized by the conference administration, which enlisted many Russian volunteers fluent in English, Russian, and a little Arabic to ensure the success of this event. The opening exceeded all expectations, followed by round-the-clock transportation to the conference venue, with breakfast at the accommodation where representatives from all countries gathered.

We interacted with each other during breakfast and continued our introductions on the bus until we reached the festival venue, where we were warmly welcomed by volunteers with beautiful smiles.

We then chose suitable lectures, workshops, or conference activities, or looked to join an arranged delegation, in addition to the exhibition representing each country and the parade of each delegation.

In the midst of this energy-driven festival, President Putin himself wanted to prove the success of this conference and its simple yet



profound idea, which was, "We come from different countries, but we can discover each other and exchange varied cultures with love, respect and acceptance of this diversity." He

indeed came in person on the closing day, delivered his rousing speech, welcomed the whole world to his country and home, and reaffirmed that "Russia is a friend to the world."

Fajr Al Sabah, writer and content creator was among the group chosen as a young leader to represent Kuwait and highlight the country's rich culture, history and literature at the World Youth Festival 2024. Fajr Al Sabah is also a Member of the Kuwaiti Traveler's Association and Member of the Media Committee. A graduate of the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts - Department of Criticism and Theatrical Literature, Fajr is a travel enthusiast and can be found on Instagram as fajersabah_blog.



Indian national Senthil retires after yeoman service to community

By Hari Lakshman and Swarna Ramya
Special to The Times Kuwait

A man of passion and perseverance towards public service, Senthilkumar Panneer Selvam retired after a very successful tenure. A chemical engineer by profession, he held a coveted position in Equate, one of the big five petrochemical firms in Kuwait, where he contributed to the growth of the company for the past 28 years, and this year preferred to avail voluntary retirement.

Senthil believed in giving back to the community and decided to reach out to the lesser privileged through Indian Frontliners (IFL) Kuwait, an organization consistently committed to serving the disadvantaged.

As Vice President of IFL, Senthil visited the impoverished households in Kuwait and with a team of volunteers, addressed their needs during the outbreak of the pandemic. His team helped them physically and financially and continued to render their support much before Covid vaccines became available.

Senthil and his wife Padma are blessed with a son named Dhwij and a daughter Nikhi. The children are currently pursuing their master's degrees in the U.S.A and Canada respectively. Senthil remains a patriotic Indian - after spending a dedicated 28 years of life in Kuwait, Senthil Kumar returned to India last month.

IFL, established by writer N.C. Mohandoss, is an officially registered non-profit organization with the Indian Embassy in Kuwait. It strives hard with its motto of encouraging and educating the downtrodden. It has been active for the past 25 years and meets the basic needs of the needy, beyond caste and creed



differences. The organization has collected huge relief funds for providing education, healthcare, and food for the poor, among other humanitarian acts. The organization's services have come in handy during times of the pandemic and natural disasters.





Embassy of Morocco celebrates 25th anniversary of King's ascension

• Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, hailed the strong fraternal ties between Kuwait and Morocco, highlighting their strategic relationship and close bond.

• Kuwaiti investments in Morocco amount to no less than \$1.5 billion in several investment and economic fields. Kuwait has a long history of investments in Morocco dating back to the sixties and seventies.

The Times Kuwait Report

Embassy of Morocco held a celebration to mark the 25th anniversary of the ascension to the throne by His Majesty King Mohammed VI. The occasion, which is celebrated each year on 30 July as Throne Day in Morocco, is a day-long festival during which Moroccans express their national pride and reflect on the country's journey under the wise leadership of the king.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco H.E. Ali bin Issa, stated: "The anniversary of the accession of His Majesty King Mohammed VI to the throne of his ancestors is a day that we are proud of and hold dear to our hearts. Today's gathering expresses the love of everyone gathered here for Morocco and the Moroccan people. There are many who follow the political, economic, and social news of Morocco, that depict the country's achievements in various fields, especially during the past 25 years."

Ambassador bin Issa added that Morocco has launched several major development projects in the automotive industry, aircraft industry, infrastructure, railways, ports, and renewable energy. Morocco has made significant strides over the past 15 years, and this year we launched

Morocco's initiative to produce green hydrogen, for which the Moroccan government has allocated one million hectares. Of this, 300,000 hectares will be designated for investors in this field. The doors are open, and opportunities are available for investment in Morocco. The government has provided several privileges and facilitated the paths to investment, encouraging investors to come to Morocco.

He also praised the State of Kuwait's supportive and steadfast position on the unity of Moroccan territory and the integrity of its lands, and noted that relations between the two countries continue to be friendly and robust in all fields. He pointed out that the number of Kuwaiti tourists is increasing year by year, especially with the opening of new flight routes by Kuwait Airways in 2022. "Now we see three weekly flights, which show the desire of Kuwaiti tourists to visit Morocco, where they find what they seek."

He added that in 2019, before COVID-19, the number of Kuwaiti visitors was approximately 19,000 tourists, and the number of tourists who visited Morocco last year reached 14.5 million. This year, the number will be even greater, indicating the status that Morocco enjoys.

In his speech on the occasion, Kuwait's Minister of Finance and Minister of State for

Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf, lauded the robust and profound fraternal ties between the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Morocco.

He added, "We have a strategic relationship with Morocco, and we are one family. We are proud of Morocco, its progress and development, its heritage and history, and its resilience in the face of challenges, which

is demonstrated by the depth, strength, and resilience of its people."

He said that the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Morocco share several economic initiatives, "and there are distinctive joint experiences through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, which financed many development projects in Moroccan infrastructure".

Oil production costs increase, even as production decreases

Ministry of Finance, in its latest publication of data on oil production and costs, noted that the cost of oil production in the country has increased significantly in recent years, even as oil production suffered a slump.

The ministry's official figures for oil production cost in fiscal year 2023-24 revealed that the cost of Kuwaiti oil production rose by 9.9 percent to KD3.59 billion, from the KD3.27 billion in fiscal year 2022-23. As a result, the cost of producing one barrel of oil rose from KD3.2 to KD3.7.

The numbers also show that while the cost of oil production has gone up, the volume of production has come down. Oil production declined from 2.693 million barrels per day in the fiscal year 2022-23 to 2.650 million barrels per day in the last fiscal year, to mark a daily oil production slump of 43,000 barrels.

Ministry of Oil has attributed the decrease in production to Kuwait's compliance with decisions by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, and their non-OPEC allies (OPEC+) regarding voluntary production cuts to maintain oil price stability in global markets.

Although the finance ministry has urged all government entities to reduce their expenditures to address the financial deficit, the draft budget for fiscal year 2024-25 shows an increase in the cost of oil production to KD4 billion. This brings the cost of producing one barrel in the current fiscal year to KD4.2.

The figures also reveal that while the cost of production went up by 48 percent from fiscal year 2022-23 to the budget estimated for the current fiscal year, the volume of production within the same timeframe dropped by five percent, while between fiscal year

Oil ministry sources explained that despite the overall increase in production costs, the cost of producing a barrel of oil in Kuwait is among the lowest relative to regional peers and most international oil companies.

The cost of producing a barrel of oil is defined as the cost related to the operational processes of production. Operational processes include costs associated with operating and repairing wells, employee salaries, operating and maintaining production centers.

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UK reinforces commitment to Kuwait's sovereignty, security

British Ambassador H.E. Belinda Lewis stressed her country's continued commitment to the security and integrity of Kuwait. Speaking on the anniversary of the brutal invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, Ambassador Lewis said, "On the 34th anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, I want to honor the bravery and resilience of the Kuwaiti people, who faced immense challenges with unwavering strength. We also remember the sacrifices made by the coalition forces, including British servicemen and women, who played a crucial role in Kuwait's liberation. The UK's commitment to Kuwait's

sovereignty and security remains as strong today as it was 34 years ago."

"During Kuwait's most challenging time, a story of extraordinary bravery among its people and strong leadership unfolded," the ambassador noted. "The UK played a vital role as an ally, standing shoulder to shoulder with Kuwait in its darkest hour."

"During the invasion of Kuwait, the UK swiftly provided crucial military assistance and diplomatic backing, ensuring the protection of Kuwait's sovereignty and the restoration of its freedom," added the ambassador.

"Kuwait and the UK have a long-standing



defense relationship that has evolved over several decades, built on mutual respect,

shared values, and a commitment to peace and stability in the region. Our partnership is reflected in defense agreements, military training, education, and regular joint exercises designed to enhance and strengthen our defense capabilities," the British ambassador said.

"This year marks another milestone in our deep historical ties, as we commemorate 125 years of Kuwait-British relations. I look forward to many more years of working together as we jointly face the challenges and embrace the opportunities of the future," added the British ambassador.

'TOYOTA GAZOO Racing MENA Esports Cup' Opens Registration Doors for Fourth Consecutive Year

Building on its resounding success, the TOYOTA GAZOO Racing MENA Esports Cup battle continues for the fourth year in a row, with registration doors opening on 18 July. Officially sponsored by Toyota Motor Corporation, the championship is organized by Desert Fox Racing and supported by the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, which secured the finals venue at the Gaming Dome (Ark Gaming Center) in the capital city of Amman. Held in cooperation with Jordan Motorsport, the championship is backed by the Jordan Esports Federation chaired by HRH Prince Omar bin Faisal. The highly anticipated 2024 season will bring together skillful simulator drivers from 16 countries to compete, with two from each proceeding to the regional qualifiers. Then, the top 24 drivers will go through to the finals taking place between 17 and 19 October. The first-place winner will be granted a USD 10,000 grand prize, while the second-place and

Bustami concluded, "We wish all contestants the best of luck and eagerly anticipate welcoming you to Jordan in October to crown the champion together."

Registration opens for enthusiasts from participating countries starting 18 July through 2 August 2024. With significant advancements in digital racing in the region, this year's races are anticipated to be fiercely competitive. As customary, the winner of the TOYOTA GAZOO Racing MENA Esports Cup will then go on to secure a position in the global final of the TOYOTA GAZOO Racing GT Cup scheduled for the end of this year.

To register, please click here. Participants must select their country and complete all required information. The tournament organizers will review and approve the entries, adding the names of the participants to the contestants list.

The national qualifiers are slated to kick off in Jordan on Thursday 15 August, with countries divided into four groups. The first group comprises Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Lebanon, followed by the second group the subsequent week, featuring Palestine, Iraq, Cyprus and Mauritania. The third group includes Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, with the national qualifiers concluding with the fourth group bringing drivers from Qatar, Kuwait, Yemen and Tunisia. Each country will earn two spots in the regional qualifiers, scheduled for Saturday 14 September.

As always, the organizing entity holds several events alongside the championship competitions. These encompass various tournaments accompanying the main event, notably the Nations Cup, where drivers from each country take turns participating in an endurance race, in addition to the University Challenge and the Jordan Tandem Drift Championship finals.

National Qualifiers Schedule:

- Jordan: 15 August
- Egypt: 16 August
- Morocco: 17 August
- Lebanon: 18 August
- Palestine: 22 August
- Iraq: 23 August
- Cyprus: 24 August
- Mauritania: 25 August
- Saudi Arabia: 29 August
- Oman: 30 August
- Bahrain: 31 August
- United Arab Emirates: 1 September
- Qatar: 5 September
- Kuwait: 6 September
- Yemen: 7 September
- Tunisia: 8 September

The national qualifiers will be streamed live via the TOYOTA GAZOO Racing Middle East YouTube channel. Those interested can find more details and race schedules by visiting the championship's Facebook and Instagram accounts.



third-place winners will receive simulators from Next-Level Racing.

Project Manager of the TOYOTA GAZOO Racing MENA Esports Cup, Izz Bustami, stated, "We are delighted to have earned the trust of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, Toyota and other partners for the fourth consecutive year to host the region's largest championship. We thank them for their continued confidence and ongoing support."

He noted, "In this fourth edition, we are presenting opportunities for over 1,000 gaming athletes to showcase their digital racing talents, empowering participants to challenge their capabilities while also showcasing Toyota's innovative work within the motorsports arena, ultimately ensuring that the joy of motorsports transcends traditional boundaries."

Sheikha Suhaila invited as guest of honour

At the generous invitation of the Regional Network for Social Responsibility, Sheikha Suhaila Fahad Al-Sabah, director of the Journal of Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies at Kuwait University, participated as Guest of Honour in the Third Arab Conference of Advocates of the Principles of the United Nations Global Compact of 2024, in Bahrain.

At the occasion, she also received the 'International Responsible Commitment Award for Sustainable Development'.

The ceremony was held under the honorary patronage of His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Abdul Wahed Qatta, Second Deputy Speaker of the Bahraini House of Representatives.

Earlier Sheikha Suhaila Fahad Al-Sabah was also awarded an honorary membership of



the 'Arab Fund for the Support of Corporate Social Responsibility Research'.



KDIPA signs publication agreement with The Business Year

Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) has renewed a partnership agreement with The Business Year (TBY) for the creation of the seventh annual publication on Kuwait's economy.

The Business Year, a global media group that has been providing investors, businesses, and governments with first-hand insights into the world's most dynamic markets for over a decade.

The MoU was signed in Kuwait City between KDIPA's Assistant Director General for Business Development, Mohammed Yousef Mulla Yacoub and TBY's Country Manager, Agustina Dal Fabbro.

The agreement lays the foundations for the preparation of The Business Year: Kuwait 2025, which will include insights from leading political and business figures to deliver accurate information, objective analysis and strategic advice on the main economic trends in the State of Kuwait.

TBY's team in Kuwait has already started conducting interviews with leaders from



all major sectors of the economy, including finance, energy, industry, transport, health and education, and others. With its seventh edition on Kuwait, TBY aims to promote the country as an important player in the region and a solid investment destination.

The edition will reach a targeted global audience through its print edition and will be available on a range of digital platforms, including Bloomberg Terminal, Dow Jones Factiva, FactSet, and Refinitiv Eikon, not to mention PressReader and Google Books, as well as on the TBY Reader app, available on iOS. The Business Year: Kuwait will be published in the first-quarter of 2025..

Ministerial committee formed to regulate state property

At its weekly meeting on Tuesday at Bayan Palace, chaired by His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister, the Council of Ministers emphasized the importance of stringent protection of state property and holding violators accountable, according to Al Qabas newspaper.

Sharida Abdullah Al-Muasherji, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs stated that the Council heard an explanation from Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef, the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Interior, regarding a violation by a private sector company.

The company was found to be illegally using a plot of state land, measuring over two million square meters, for purposes other than those designated since 2022.

The violation is being addressed, and the company, along with any officials or employees in government agencies involved, will be referred to the competent authorities for legal action.

On the other hand, the Cabinet reviewed a visual presentation submitted by Dr. Anwar Ali

Al-Mudhaf, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, along with the leaders and employees of the State Property Affairs Sector in the Ministry of Finance.

The presentation covered the results of the Committee for Inventorying Unused Lands and Buildings and Leased Sites of Government Entities. It included an overview of the procedures undertaken by the Ministry of Finance, in coordination with relevant authorities, to regulate the disposal of unused government lands and buildings.

Additionally, the Cabinet outlined the establishment of necessary controls and procedures for regulating the rental of buildings from the private sector. The presentation also featured a study on unifying the geographical information system into a central system that would contain detailed data on all lands and buildings owned by the State of Kuwait and government agencies.

Ministerial committee

Based on the government's commitment to preserving state property from both legal and



financial perspectives and ensuring optimal use of these lands to meet current and future needs for industrial, service, commercial, and agricultural purposes, the Council of Ministers decided to form a ministerial committee. This committee will develop necessary concepts to achieve the desired goals for the use of these lands.

As part of the Council of Ministers' follow-up on the latest developments regarding road and street repair projects in Kuwait, Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, the Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, informed

the Council about the Central Agency for Public Tenders' report on the recent bid session.

This session, held last Monday, involved eighteen tenders for the maintenance of highways and internal roads across all governorates. Dr. Al-Mashaan noted that the bids were submitted by international, Gulf, and local companies.

The Council assigned the General Administration of Civil Aviation to coordinate with the Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority and other relevant parties to take the necessary measures for implementing the air cargo city project at Kuwait International Airport.

The Council of Ministers discussed the recommendation from the Ministerial Public Services Committee regarding the periodic report submitted by Kuwait Municipality on the developments related to the cultural, entertainment, and educational center project on Abdullah Al-Ahmad Street.

After reviewing the visual presentation provided, the Council decided to task Kuwait Municipality with continuing its efforts to implement and complete the project.

Human Trafficking a Stain on Our Collective Conscience

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The UNODC defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit. Human trafficking basically involves exploiting men, women, and children for various illegal purposes, including forced labor and sex. Every country in the world is affected by human trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit, or destination of victims.

Kuwaiti anti-trafficking legislation has been shaped in a way that promotes the principles of human rights in a broader sense that includes the fight against human trafficking. However, more than legislations and enforcements, or the need to comply with international conventions and protocols, Kuwait's anti-human trafficking initiatives stem from the country's deeply ingrained humanitarian and religious ethos.

Last week, in a statement on the occasion of WDATIP, Minister of Justice Minister Mohammad Al-Wasmi highlighted the country's progress in combating human trafficking and other forms of human rights violations. He noted that Kuwait's existing human rights legislations and systems, as well as recent judicial reforms provide wide protection to the most vulnerable sections of society, in particular to women and children.

Minister Al-Wasmi also pointed out that Kuwait has formed a national ad hoc committee that includes representatives from various state entities, to implement anti-human trafficking measures and devise strategies aimed at preventing human trafficking of men, women and children, in particular of migrants, as well as providing protection to victims of trafficking and other human rights violations.

The 2022 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (GLOTIP) published by the UNODC shows that the vast majority of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are girls and women, and they are three times more likely to suffer explicit or extreme violence compared to boys and men. Women and children are also at higher risk of experiencing physical violence during trafficking as compared to men, and that children are twice as likely as adults to face violence during trafficking.

According to the GLOTIP, online platforms also pose an additional risk to children as they interact through these sites often without adequate safeguards. Traffickers exploit the lax online environment to lure children into trafficking for various purposes. These include forced labor, crime, begging, illegal adoption, organ removal, sexual abuse and the online dissemination of abusive images, as well as to

recruit them into armed groups.

Reasons for child trafficking are just as numerous as the purposes of trafficking them. Among the reasons identified for child trafficking are poverty, lack or breakdown of social protections, dysfunctional families, absence of parental care, environmental crises, and armed conflicts, as well as the absence of support for unaccompanied minors during the increasing number of migration and refugee flows in recent years.

In addition, armed conflicts and natural calamities that exacerbate vulnerabilities and displace people create an environment that traffickers exploit. Threats and violence or fake promises of education, job opportunities, and a better life are used to coerce or cheat victims into being trafficked. Men, women and children of all ages, backgrounds, and nationalities can become victims of human trafficking.

The GLOTIP report also emphasizes that to date, the fight against human trafficking has not been effective, and that there is an urgent need to take comprehensive measures to address trafficking and provide protection to victims, especially vulnerable groups. This requires joint efforts at national and international level, with countries taking measures to prioritize the protection of victims and people at risk, strengthen laws, and improve law enforcement.

In Kuwait, the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM), which is the primary entity mandated to oversee all labor-related matters, has reiterated its commitment to fighting human trafficking and protecting the rights of migrants. In a recent statement the Authority stressed its focus on safeguarding the dignity and rights of migrant workers, a crucial component of which is the prevention of human trafficking and the protection of migrant rights.

The Authority noted that it plays a pivotal role in ensuring the well-being of migrant workers, including by operating a dedicated shelter that provides essential support and safety to migrant workers in need. Furthermore, PAM actively enforces the country's stringent anti-human trafficking laws, in coordination with other entities to protect the rights of migrant laborers.

PAM spokesperson and Chairperson of the Permanent Coordination Committee, Aseel Al-Moayed, emphasized the complex nature of human trafficking and the necessity of a united front to combat it effectively. She underlined the importance of collaboration among government entities, civil society organizations, and international bodies to address this pressing issue.

Considering the importance of public awareness in preventing human trafficking, the Authority, in collaboration with the Labor

Union, the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the National Committee for the Prevention of Human Trafficking, organized an awareness-raising event to coincide with the World Day Against Human Trafficking on 30 July at the Avenues Mall. The event aimed to educate people about human trafficking, and to stress the importance of collective action and international cooperation in eradicating human trafficking.

The International Organization of Migration (IOM) in Kuwait also underlined the need for international cooperation to prevent human trafficking. Chief of the IOM-Kuwait Mission, Mazen AboulHosn stated that combating the trafficking in persons and assisting victims is one of the priorities of IOM. He noted that the IOM Kuwait Mission has been working for nearly 14 years in cooperation with Kuwait and international entities to strengthen mechanisms and initiatives to combat human trafficking and to enhance protection and support systems for victims.

Trafficking in persons is a heinous crime and a grave violation that deprives victims of their human rights and individual dignity. Reports show that every year tens of thousands of men, women and children fall victim to trafficking, both in their own countries and abroad. Everyone, from governments and civil society organizations, to businesses and individuals should join hands to prevent this egregious activity and protect the victims.

Human trafficking can occur within states, but it is more likely to be transnational, involving a country of origin, transit and destination. Efforts to prevent international trafficking cannot succeed without cooperation, coordination and concerted efforts among all involved countries and regions, as well as support from international entities. Identifying all the concerned countries and working closely with the governments and relevant entities there is vital to effectively tackle and end the scourge of human trafficking.

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Remembering August 2

Reliving Memories of the

Kuwait Invasion



The Times Kuwait Report

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August, 1990 caught everyone by surprise. Despite the passage of 34 years, trauma of the invasion has left indelible scars in the memory of many. Aisha Rao, along with her husband and son, was among the tens of thousands of expatriates who experienced first-hand the dreadful invasion and its aftermath. Here, she recalls how she and her family lived through those harrowing early days of occupation and their subsequent escape from Kuwait through the evacuation organized by the Indian government.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August, 1990 caught everyone by surprise. Despite the passage of 34 years, trauma of the invasion has left indelible scars in the memory of many. Aisha Rao, along with her husband and son, was among the tens of thousands of expatriates who experienced first-hand the dreadful invasion and its aftermath. Here, she recalls how she and her family lived through those harrowing early days of occupation and their subsequent escape from Kuwait through the evacuation organized by the Indian government.

Aisha would like to think of that disastrous event as a closed chapter in her life, but the memories of those dark days continue to haunt her. On the morning of 2 August, as usual she had set off to her office in Kuwait City but slowly realized that something was amiss. There was hardly any traffic on the roads and most of the streets in the city appeared deserted.

By the time she reached her office, she knew something had definitely gone terribly wrong. Some of her colleagues were standing outside the locked doors of the office, faces masked in fear and asking the same question; what was going on? After several futile attempts, they managed to contact their boss, who notified them about the invasion and asked them to go back home. On reaching home, she found her husband and six-year-old son were waiting for her with the same news about the invasion. Aisha's husband, who worked at the airport, told her about military tanks stationed outside the airport and how he had luckily

An Expat's Experience of the 1990 Iraqi

By Sanjay Jangle – 2 August, 2024
Special to The Times Kuwait

The following are my personal experiences during the initial days and months of the invasion in Kuwait, intertwined with other researched information.

On 1 August, 1990 we finished the regular weekly office meeting in the afternoon, and as usual I browsed the news headlines on the Reuters terminal in the office. The first headline was on the failure of the meeting in Jeddah of Arab leaders gathered to diffuse the growing crisis between Kuwait and Iraq. A second headline indicated that the American warship in the Gulf was 'on alert'.

The next day, on the morning of August 2, at about 5:30 am, I was woken up by the roaring sound similar to planes flying overhead, but then dismissed them as possible maneuvers being conducted by the Kuwaiti Air Force. Later I came to know that the roar was of two Scud missiles that flew over the building targeting the telecommunications tower in Fahaheel in South Kuwait. While getting ready for office, I switched on the BBC news on radio and heard the sinister news that Iraq had invaded Kuwait.

In India we had known of two wars, one with China, and one with Pakistan, which were fought on the border, and the feeling in my mind was that this war would be confined to the borders between Kuwait and Iraq. It was naive thinking. At 2am on August 2, Iraq initiated an invasion of Kuwait using four elite Iraqi Republican Guard divisions. After several hours of heavy fighting, Republican Guard tanks entered Kuwait City.

Not knowing any of this, I headed to the office along with two other colleagues in my car. On the 5th Ring Road the traffic was being diverted by military personnel to bypass the Bayan Palace. We could not figure out whether the army personnel were Kuwaiti or Iraqi, but



as we were approaching Subhan, we witnessed battle tanks lined up on Kuwait Airport runway. Now this scene was scary. Anyhow, we reached our office and found that it was closed. The Iraqi watchman informed us that the office was closed and to go back home.

As there was no office from 2nd August onwards, after daily chores, people had nothing to do but to keep talking on land-line telephones. There were no mobile phones at that time. Everyday there used to be some canard spreading on the phones, and there was no method to fact-check. One day my friend told, that he heard that the Salmiya 4th Ring Road fire station had been bombed. We went there in the evening and found it was intact. Next day someone said, the Sultan Centre, a high end supermarket store was bombed, and again we drove there in the evening to find it intact.

Couple of days after 2nd August, my company manager called me and another senior colleague to our office to collect passports of employees in our area and distribute them to the employees. My colleague drove me to our office in Subhan. I vividly remember the



ghastly scene of some dead bodies covered in white cloth lying under the Khaitan overbridge. We saw Iraqi soldiers around and did not have the courage to look around through the window, and instead looked straight ahead.

For the 17 days that we lived in Kuwait after the invasion of August, almost daily we went to Kuwait Flour Mill in Rumaithiya for Khubus, to Salmiya Co-operative store for vegetables and groceries. We stood in line at Salmiya Co-operative for hours for gas cylinders. There once I observed one slender Iraqi soldier overlooking the crowd, in torn canvas shoes and I pitied about his condition that he was suffering for which the country's leader was responsible.

With each passing day, our anxiety grew. How long would this continue? How and when would we be able to leave Kuwait? We knew the Saudi border to the south was sealed, and the only way out was through the northern Kuwait-Iraq border. We lived in constant fear, uncertain of what fate had in store for us. Listening to BBC news about Iraq and the world coalition amassing their military forces was



managed to escape from there. Aisha and her family, who had been living in Kuwait for quite some time prior to the invasion, had many close friends. Though fear and anxiety about the future was a common pervading emotion among all, during the early days of the invasion they called each other whenever possible to offer moral support and assistance.

It was a tough period for everyone in the country. It all happened so suddenly that no one was prepared for the tumultuous events as they unfolded one after another. One week we were living a normal life and then suddenly we found ourselves searching for basic necessities, said Aisha.

The amount of food available was barely sufficient to meet daily needs and supermarkets would be open only for an hour or so each day. On some days there would be no food to go around and we realized the pangs of hunger for the first time in our lives. The country was in turmoil and crime was rampant; calling it the worst days in her life, Aisha recalled how one day while they were out to get supplies, they saw a dead body lying on the road. After asking around, they learned that a shop owner had been robbed and then brutally murdered. "The image of the man lying dead on the road haunts me to this day," said Aisha.

In October, rumors began to spread that if the United States intervened on behalf of Kuwait, Iraq would launch a biological or chemical attack against Kuwait. Everyone became desperate to leave the country and Aisha too decided to leave the country with her family. Following an evacuation plan that took them on a nerve-wracking journey from Kuwait to Baghdad and then through several camps in Jordan, they were finally able to board a flight for Mumbai.

Near the Iraq-Jordan border, we had to reside for days in camps pitched on the 'No-man's Land' and had to rely on food supplied by the Jordanian government. "To this day, I feel grateful to the Jordanian government for providing us with necessary supplies," said Aisha. At the airport in Amman the family had to remain in a long queue and wait for nearly 48 before their turn came to board the Air-India evacuation flight to Mumbai.

While the traumatic experience of those days has left a deep scar in her e and painful memories continue to haunt Aisha, she is determined to view life in a positive manner. "After coming back to Kuwait following the liberation and finding our house completely ransacked and all our possessions lost, we decided to start afresh from scratch. Leaving all the dark memories behind, we vowed to take each day as it comes and to always move forward with hope," said Aisha.



Scars of Invasion, Essence of Liberty, Price of Freedom

By Reaven D'Souza
Executive Managing Editor

On Friday, Kuwait solemnly marks the 34th anniversary of that dark day on 2 August, 1990 when the country's flame of freedom was snuffed out by marauding Iraqi forces. The invasion and subsequent seven-month long occupation witnessed horrendous acts of brutality, wanton destruction of the country's oil infrastructure, its facilities and amenities, as well as rampant looting of government and private properties. The shroud of darkness that descended over Kuwait was finally dispelled only by the liberation of Kuwait in February 1991.

Today, the country is a manifestation of what can be achieved through determination and perseverance of a people who clawed back their freedom from an abyss, when the very existence of their nation was at stake. Despite Kuwait's relatively quick return to normalcy after liberation, the harrowing experience of the invasion and its aftermath has etched an ineradicable scar on the psyche of those that lived through that period.

Thirty four years since the invasion may be a fleeting moment in the timeline of a nation, and for many people in Kuwait today, the brutal invasion and consequences of the seven-month long occupation of Kuwait are a distant memory, or events narrated by their parents. An entire generation has now grown up that had no direct experience of those agonizing seven months in Kuwait's past. For many of them, the entire tragic episode is nothing more than pages in history textbooks. They have grown up in an environment of complete freedom and have come to take this concept for granted. To them freedom is a given, it is something they do not think about twice as they go about their lives.

But for those who lived through the horrors and trauma of the invasion, that dark period is an experience they would like to forget, but cannot. The pain and suffering they endured is something they would like to erase from their memories, but cannot. Physical and mental wounds from the invasion may have healed, but the scars inflicted on their persona are indelible, run deep, and remain very real. These are the people who still remain fully appreciative of the immense value and significance of freedom, and they are the ones most aware that freedom is poignantly felt and most deeply desired when we no longer have it.

For them, every 2 August serves as a reminder that freedom is a priceless commodity and that its availability and continuity cannot, and should not, be taken for granted. Each anniversary of the invasion is a cue that freedom is not 'free', and the price to protect, preserve and continue enjoying the fruits of freedom, is constant and unwavering vigilance. The country and people who lived through the invasion have a moral duty to ensure that the new generation are made fully aware that everlasting vigilance is the essence of sustaining freedom.

This watchfulness should not only be directed against threats to freedom from beyond our borders but also against internal encroachments on our freedom. These intrusions, which often begin as subtle, indiscernible biases and bigotries on the freedoms and human rights of others, often go unnoticed or overlooked by most citizens who fail to flag them as rights violations that deserve to be condemned.

Over time these small discriminatory practices by a few misguided people build up and become everyday occurrences that society becomes immunized to and tends to ignore. But failing to acknowledge and protest these violations leads to the grinding and eroding of the moral fiber of a nation, and eventually it will lead to a situation where we wake up one day and realize that along with those whose freedoms we failed to protect, we too have lost our freedoms.

Apart from teaching a new generation on the need to be eternally watchful against both external and internal threats to liberty, we also have to inculcate in them the need to uphold as sacrosanct the civil and human rights of all people living in the country. Sustaining and perpetuating real freedom for Kuwait can only come about when we take responsibility to ensure that the rights of everyone is protected at all times.

A country, and by extension its people, is judged not just by the level of liberty that its citizens enjoy, but also by the freedom it grants to others residing in their midst. It is judged as much by the actions it takes, as by what it fails to take, to safeguard the rights and liberties of everyone. Freedom, which is the most fundamental of human rights, should not be a privilege granted to a select few, it should be a right imparted to all people in the country, irrespective of their race, religion, or gender.

Protecting and preserving the freedom of everyone promotes unity of all people in the country, and this unity is undeniably vital to help prevent external and internal intrusions. The second of August each year drives home this point. We live in a highly volatile region. Wedged between two powerful countries, Kuwait has had its share of border disputes with its larger neighbors over the centuries.

Prior to the invasion of 2 August 1990, Kuwait and Iraq had shelved their decades-old border dispute, as Iraq engaged in a devastating war with Iran in the 1980s. Kuwait remained an ally of Iraq throughout this war, providing moral and material support in the form of financial loans for Iraq's military purchases. However, with the end of that war in 1988, an economically drained Iraq, burdened by humongous debt from its eight-year conflict, demanded that Kuwait write-off the loans and provide more financial assistance.

When Kuwait understandably refused to comply, Iraq launched a ground and air invasion under the unfounded pretext that Kuwait had for years been using its technically superior drilling techniques to expropriate Iraqi oil from its border areas, and demanded due compensation. The rapid onslaught by the invading troops on 2 August took Kuwait by surprise and the country was overrun, annexed and soon proclaimed as the 19th province of Iraq.

However, Kuwait's strong standing and influence in the global arena helped the country muster a swift condemnation by the international community. Less than four days after the invasion, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. It also imposed a string of stringent embargoes against Iraq, thereby curtailing Baghdad's ability to sustain its economy and maintain its occupation of Kuwait.

In late November of 1990, following Iraq's refusal to heed repeated UN warnings to roll back its invasion, the UNSC authorized the use of "all necessary means" to force Iraq out of Kuwait, if its troops did not withdraw from Kuwait by 15 January, 1991. By mid-January, when Iraq failed to comply with the UN ultimatum, and it was apparent that it had no intention of retreating from Kuwait, an UN-Coalition force led by the United States launched Operation Desert Storm on 17 January, 1991.

The offensive began with a 'shock and awe' aerial bombardment campaign that targeted and devastated Iraqi defenses. The six-week long Desert Storm ended with a 100-hour ground offensive that led to the liberation of Kuwait on the morning of 26 February, 1991. The war, waged at immense cost, resulted in extensive damage to military and civilian infrastructure in Iraq and tens of thousands of casualties, again, largely on the Iraqi side.

Today, Kuwait is once again a free nation. However, to preserve the freedom we once lost, but gratefully regained, we need to be eternally watchful of both external and internal aggressions on our freedom.

Invasion

even more frightening, as we were right in the midst of it.

After about two weeks, a few of my friends and I decided to leave Kuwait. Accordingly, on 19 August, in the early morning, fifteen of us started out in three taxis to Baghdad. Everybody was asked to carry only one small briefcase, so that we would not have to waste time at any customs border. I carried my certificates, a VCR, a few clothes, a camera, and a plastic bag with 7-8 liters of water along with some food stuff with me.

Kuwait to Baghdad distance is about 750 km. At Abdally checkpoint, there was heavy traffic with lots of Iraqi military vehicles flowing into Kuwait, but there was no checkpost on the Kuwait-Iraq border, as per Saddam Kuwait was now part of Iraq.

Until we were about 280 km from Baghdad there was no checking, but once we began approaching the Iraqi capital our taxis were checked six times.

We eventually reached Baghdad at around 4:30pm the same day and went straight to the Air India office and bought an Amman to Bombay air ticket. We faced some difficulties in exchanging Kuwaiti Dinars and in hiring a bus to take us to Jordan. On 20 August, we started our bus journey to Amman. On the way, while still in Iraq, the bus was halted by Iraqi soldiers for about four hours. We were afraid that they would send us back to Baghdad, however it was later revealed that they stopped us to reduce the rush on the border between Iraq and Jordan.

Next day, at about 10:30am we reached the Iraq-Jordan border. It took us about five hours to cross the border, traverse through the no man's land and then cross the Jordan checkpost. We were so relieved at this point, with the feeling of having come out of the war zone. We reached the Indian Embassy in Amman at about 7:30pm on 21 August and finally took off by Air India on 22 night to arrive in Bombay on the morning of 23 August.



MOI extends deadline for biometric fingerprinting

Ministry of Interior (MoI) has announced an extension to the deadline it set for citizens and residents to complete the process of biometric fingerprinting. The ministry has extended the date for citizens to complete their biometric registration to 30 September and for residents to 31 December. The extension follows the large number of people still waiting to complete their fingerprinting process.

After the above dates, anyone who has not completed their biometric scanning will not be able to complete any government transaction. However, those with disabilities or the very elderly who cannot provide the required

documentation will be exempted.

Providing the latest update on the progress of the ministry's fingerprinting campaign, Director-General of the Criminal Evidence Department, Major General Eid Al-Awaihan, stated that so far the response to the campaign has been overwhelming, with approximately 2.5 million individuals, both citizens and residents, having successfully completed the process so far.

However, he noted that there is still a significant portion of the population yet to complete the process, with approximately 22 percent of Kuwaitis and 28.5 percent of residents remaining unregistered. Al-Awaihan emphasized that the



biometric registration is being implemented according to a well-structured plan, as directed by

the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defense, Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef.

To ensure that all residents have the opportunity to complete the registration, the ministry has plans to deploy mobile units equipped with biometric devices. These units will visit the homes or hospitals of elderly individuals and people with disabilities, provided they can present the necessary disability certificates or birth certificates.

Al-Awaihan expressed gratitude for the cooperation of citizens and residents, which he said has been instrumental in the success of this important national project.

Uzbekistan embraces electoral technology for stronger democracy

By Eldor Tulyakov
The Executive Director,
Development Strategy Centre (Uzbekistan)

Uzbekistan's upcoming elections for the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) and the Councils of People's Deputies, scheduled for October 27th, are not just a routine event. They mark a significant milestone in the nation's democratic journey, introducing groundbreaking changes that promise to transform the electoral landscape. The recent meeting of the Central Election Commission unveiled several key innovations that will ensure greater efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity, making these elections a matter of global interest.

commissions, political parties, candidates, observers, and the media, providing real-time statistical data, candidate information, and interactive maps. This technological leap empowers voters with unprecedented access to essential election-related information, making the electoral process more inclusive and transparent.

Inclusivity is another cornerstone of these elections. New election legislation requires political parties to ensure that at least 40% of their candidates are women, a progressive move towards gender equality in political representation. This requirement not only aligns Uzbekistan with advanced democratic standards but also enriches the political discourse by incorporating diverse perspectives.

The elections are taking place in a context where the updated Constitution has significantly enhanced the powers of parliament and representative bodies. The Legislative Chamber's powers have increased from 5 to 12, and the Senate's from 12 to 18. Parliament's oversight functions over executive, judicial, law enforcement, and special services have also been expanded. Additionally, the leadership of local Councils of People's

Deputies by hokims (governors) has been abolished, transferring 33 powers previously held by hokims to local Councils to increase their role in resolving critical state issues.

The slogan "My Choice—My Prosperous Homeland" not only captures the spirit of these elections but also reflects the unwavering commitment of Uzbekistan's leadership to democratic state-building and citizen empowerment. With over 120,000 election commission members, 70,000 citizens, and numerous international observers participating, the elections are set to be a transparent and inclusive process, further demonstrating this commitment.

In conclusion, Uzbekistan is setting a remarkable precedent with its upcoming elections by embracing technological innovation and inclusivity. These initiatives will undoubtedly pave the way for a more prosperous and democratic future, showcasing Uzbekistan's dedication to advancing democratic principles and practices.



For the first time in the nation's history, the Legislative Chamber elections will employ a mixed electoral system, combining majoritarian and proportional representation. This change means that voters will elect seventy-five deputies directly, while another seventy-five will be chosen based on party votes. This system aims to create a more balanced and representative legislature, enhancing democratic legitimacy and ensuring a broader spectrum of political voices.

One of the most notable advancements in Uzbekistan's electoral system is the full digitization of election commission activities. The introduction of the 'E-Saylov' information system is a significant leap forward, revolutionizing the election process. This digital platform not only streamlines the process, reducing bureaucracy and document handling, but also ensures a smoother, more efficient, and transparent electoral experience.

It automates interactions between election

Four Kuwaiti legal luminaries appointed to the PCA

Four eminent legal professionals in Kuwait have once again been appointed to seats at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague, Netherlands. The appointment by the Executive Council of PCA is a testament to the excellence of the Kuwaiti judiciary and the distinguished reputation of Kuwait in international judicial forums.

The four appointees, Dr. Dima Nasser Al-Waqyan, Dr. Hassan Mohammed Al-Rasheed, lawyer Dr. Abdul Wahab Abdul Latif Sadeq, and lawyer Mohammed Abdullah Al-Mutairi, began their six-year tenure at the court from 17 July 2024.

The appointment of four Kuwaiti legal luminaries to the National Committee of the PCA is important to the country, as it ensures their presence on the list of arbitrators accredited by the International Permanent Court of Arbitration. Kuwait will now be able to select one of the four to arbitrate disputes that may arise with other countries.

The selected individuals can participate in workshops held by the court to revise and develop international arbitration laws and regulations,



providing their expertise and experience in this regard. Members of the National Committee also have the right to nominate individuals from their own or other countries for the International Nobel Prize in all its fields. In addition, they have the right to nominate candidates for judges to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

It is noteworthy that Kuwait joined the court in 2003, which was established in 1899 through the dispute settlement agreement reached at the Peace Conference in the Dutch city of The Hague. In April 2015, the court's executive board approved the appointment of four Kuwaiti figures for the first time.

Price platform to monitor, regulate prices in cooperatives

Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies has set up a new online price platform involving all 70 cooperative societies in Kuwait, which will enable the monitoring and regulating of item prices to prevent and reduce manipulation.

Announcing the launch of the new service, Chairman of the Union of Cooperative Societies, Musab Al-Mulla said that the platform will update on a daily basis the prices of items in the cooperatives, including consumer goods, vegetables, and fruits. He added that the goal of this platform is to control prices and inform consumers about the availability and prices of all products before they visit the cooperative society to do their shopping.

He explained that the platform will be monitored by the Union, as well as by the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, with which coordination has been established on this matter.

Pointing out that the Union serves as the first line of interaction between cooperatives and all state institutions and individuals on a



daily basis, Al-Mulla added that cooperative societies are a key part of Kuwaiti culture and an essential element for every home.

Since their establishment, the goal of the cooperatives have been to provide goods at the lowest prices and highest quality, and they are always the first to take the initiative in serving the community.

He noted that there are 75 cooperative societies in Kuwait and eight parallel markets, and that cooperative societies dominate about 75 percent of the retail trade in Kuwait. He also mentioned that there are 493,000 shareholders in these societies, with total annual sales approaching one billion dinars.



Monopolies Are to Blame for Generative AI's Hallucinations



Max von Thun

Director of Europe and Transatlantic Partnerships at the Open Markets Institute.



In May, Google rolled out a long-expected update that incorporated generative artificial intelligence into its dominant search engine. Users searching for information in the United States are now sometimes shown an AI-generated overview that summarizes the results, followed by the usual list of websites ranked by relevance.

Within days, people were reporting bizarre, inaccurate, and downright dangerous answers from the new AI Overviews feature. The model suggested using glue to help cheese stick to pizza, touted the cardiovascular benefits of running with scissors, and claimed that former US President Barack Obama is a Muslim. Google rushed to fix these errors, but many experts argue that they are intrinsic to the technology. Google CEO Sundar Pichai himself described such "hallucinations" as an "unsolved problem" and an "inherent feature" of the technology. Tacitly admitting failure, Google appears to have shrunk the proportion of users who are shown the overviews.

Google was widely, and rightly, panned for launching a technology that is clearly unfit for use and could harm users. But few have considered why the tech behemoth was able to act so

and Facebook increasingly push ads, videos, and other clickbait instead of trustworthy news and updates from friends and family.

The same logic applies to 'upgrades', such as Google's AI Overviews. These intentional and sometimes drastic product changes are sold under the progressive-sounding banner of 'innovation' but often make the user experience much worse. To build on Doctorow's point, one could even call it 'shitovation'.

Google is far from the only monopolist to have released a half-baked AI product. Meta has forced its new AI agents upon millions of Instagram and Facebook users, even though they invent facts and impersonate humans. In February, OpenAI's ChatGPT chatbot began spewing gibberish, including different languages jumbled together. And Microsoft's own engineers have criticized the company for releasing an image generator, based on OpenAI technology, that creates violent, sexualized, and politically biased content. Each firm has introduced targeted fixes, but this whack-a-mole approach is inadequate to what increasingly appears to be a fundamentally unreliable technology.

While the hasty rollout of generative AI is partly driven by monopolistic complacency, it also entrenches Big Tech companies' market power, which afforded them the massive amounts of data, computing power, expertise, and capital that enabled them to develop large language models in the first place. Google and Meta are using generative AI to reinforce their digital-advertising duopoly, while AI-fueled demand for computing power is cementing Microsoft and Amazon's stranglehold on cloud computing. AI tools also feed these companies' data-hungry surveillance and manipulation machines. Whether users benefit from the technology is an afterthought.

The rivalry between tech companies, especially the scramble over generative AI, is sometimes cited as evidence of competitive forces in the industry. But this argument fails to distinguish between competition 'for the market' and competition 'in the market'. Tech giants might appear to compete with one another, but it is almost always a mirage. In fact, each firm is trying to deepen the moat around its own sphere of influence, resulting in a tense but largely static coexistence. And in those rare instances of direct competition, such as between Microsoft and Google in web search, market share remains largely unchanged.

More worryingly, today's AI ecosystem is rife with collusive behavior: tech giants are increasingly forming partnerships akin to the lucrative agreements that Google made to maintain its search dominance. These include

Microsoft's cloud-computing deal with Meta, a recently announced partnership between Apple and OpenAI, and Google's plans to embed its AI technologies in Samsung phones, several of which are already facing scrutiny from antitrust authorities.

Tech giants are competing in one realm: each wants to win investors' approval and avoid giving the impression that it is falling behind in the AI arms race. But the toxic combination of recklessly vying for growth and suppressing competition is fueling the dangerous and wasteful deployment of untested technologies.

Encouraging marginally more competition between tech monopolists, in the hopes that they will be forced to focus more on safety and reliability, will not be enough. Binding regulation, such as the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act, is a necessary first step toward holding these companies to account. But policymakers must also be more imaginative in wielding the tools at their disposal to foster genuine alternatives to the tech giants, and to ensure that users no longer serve as unwitting guinea pigs. That could mean using antitrust policy or investing in companies that could challenge today's cloud-computing and chip-manufacturing monopolies.

Equally important, it is time to stop treating innovation as an end in itself, regardless of what purpose it achieves or whose interests it advances. Instead, we must develop a far more nuanced understanding of how narratives about innovation are shaped and steered by investors, dominant firms, and other powerful actors. Only then can we have a meaningful conversation about the role of AI in our societies.

“Tech giants are increasingly forming partnerships, such as Microsoft's cloud-computing deal with Meta, a recently announced partnership between Apple and OpenAI, and Google's plans to embed its AI technologies in Samsung phones,”

brazenly in the first place. The answer is simple: it is, in the words of Federal Trade Commission Chair Lina Khan, "too big to care." Google controls around 90 percent of the global market for web search and faces little competitive pressure. It can release an unreliable or unsafe product without fear of losing customers to rivals.

Similarly, Google's market power gives it no incentive to maintain quality. Its search engine has been rapidly deteriorating over the past few years, with organic results being increasingly crowded out by ads and spam content. Cory Doctorow coined the term "enshittification" to describe tech companies' practice of providing consumers with helpful and affordable (or free) services and then hiking prices and reducing quality once they corner the market. Examples abound: Amazon has gradually increased seller fees while inundating buyers with more sponsored results, while Meta-owned Instagram

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A Memorable Stay at Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Kempinski Munich

By Nourah Khan
Travel Writer, The Times Kuwait

My recent stay at the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Kempinski Munich was nothing short of extraordinary. From the moment I arrived, I was enveloped in a world of luxury and impeccable service that made my visit truly unforgettable.

Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Kempinski Munich, often referred to as the 'Four Seasons', is steeped in history. Established in 1858 by King Maximilian II of Bavaria, the hotel has long been a symbol of luxury and elegance. Over the decades, it has hosted royalty, celebrities, and dignitaries, cementing its reputation as one of the most prestigious hotels in Europe.

The hotel was built at the behest of King Maximilian II, to provide adequate accommodation for the King's guests, including empress Elisabeth of Austria. The hotel's name Vier Jahreszeiten (Four Seasons) has its origin in the fact that it used to be the only hotel to be open during all seasons of the year



The lobby, also known as 'Munich's most beautiful living room', with its heritage-protected glass dome and the afternoon-tea which is served in two courses

As I approached the hotel, located on the prestigious Maximilianstraße, the grand façade immediately caught my eye. The doorman greeted me with a warm smile and promptly assisted with my luggage. Stepping into the lobby, I was struck by the elegance of the decor. Crystal chandeliers, opulent furnishings, and a sophisticated color palette set the tone for my stay.

Check-in was seamless, and I was quickly escorted to my room. I stayed in a junior suite deluxe which was tastefully decorated with a blend of traditional Bavarian charm and modern luxury.

The hotel is ideally situated on Maximilianstraße, one of Munich's most exclusive shopping streets. This prime location provides guests with easy access to some of the city's most famous landmarks, including the Bavarian State Opera, the Residenz, and the Marienplatz. The area is also known for its high-end boutiques, galleries, and restaurants.

My mornings began with a sumptuous breakfast in the hotel's elegant breakfast room. The buffet featured a wide array of options, from freshly baked pastries to local cheeses and charcuterie, ensuring a delightful start to each day.

The Kempinski Spa was a sanctuary of relaxation. Located on the top floor, it offered stunning panoramic views of Munich. I spent a leisurely afternoon enjoying the indoor pool and indulging in a rejuvenating massage. The therapists were skilled, and the treatment left me feeling completely relaxed and refreshed.



The hotel's prime location made it easy to explore Munich. With the Marienplatz and the Bavarian State Opera just a short walk away, I immersed myself in the city's rich cultural and historical heritage. The concierge provided excellent recommendations for local attractions and dining, ensuring I made the most of my visit.

Also, when you enter



the hotel, you will definitely see the luxurious and elegant perfume shop that is a destination for the world's rich and famous actors and businessmen. Have you ever heard about Krigler perfume?

Sir Albert Crigler, a Berlin-born chemist, created his first perfume, Pleasure Gardenia 79, in 1879 for the Crigler company. Fascinated by the art of perfumery, he opened a perfume factory in 1904 in Saint Petersburg, Russia, and began creating perfumes.

He moved his perfume factory to Berlin for a short period, then settled in the south of France in 1909. Along the way, he gained fame and high-profile clients, including royals and European film stars. In the 1930s, Krigler perfumes were sold at the Plaza Hotel in New York City, Krigler's perfume clients included such Hollywood stars as Audrey Hepburn, Grace Kelly and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

My stay at Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Kempinski Munich was an unforgettable journey into the heart of Bavarian luxury. From the elegant accommodations and exquisite dining to the relaxing spa and outstanding service, every aspect of my visit exceeded my expectations. It is a place where history and modernity coexist harmoniously, offering guests an unparalleled experience in one of Europe's most beautiful cities.

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

What International Tax Negotiations Should Achieve



José Antonio Ocampo

A former United Nations under-secretary-general and a former minister of finance and public credit of Colombia, is a professor at Columbia University, a member of the UN Committee for Development Policy, and a member of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation. He is the author, among others, of *Resetting the International Monetary (Non)System*.



In recent decades, the availability of preferential tax regimes and tax havens has deprived governments worldwide of huge amounts of revenue. According to the EU Tax Observatory, multinational corporations shifted \$1 trillion — the equivalent of 35 percent of all the profits booked outside their headquarter countries — to tax havens in 2022. Meanwhile, super-rich individuals faced very low effective tax rates, equivalent to just 0-0.5 percent of their total collective wealth.

The problem is that, rather than cooperating on taxation, countries have been competing to attract big corporations and wealthy people. Fortunately, steps are now being taken to change this.

The OECD and G20 agreed in 2021 on an Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting, aimed at limiting tax avoidance, ensuring the coherence of international tax rules, and establishing greater global tax transparency. But the agreement was far too limited in scope, requiring only very large multinationals to allocate a small share of their global profits to the countries where their customers are located.

“

The 2021 ‘Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting’, was far too limited in scope. It required only very large multinationals to allocate a small share of their global profits to the countries where their customers are located.

”

And the convention that would implement even this limited requirement has yet to be ratified, with the United States emerging as a key barrier to progress. The Inclusive Framework also agreed to a low minimum tax rate of 15 percent for multinationals, well below these countries’ current average corporate tax rate of 25 percent, and lower than the minimum rate of 21 percent proposed by the US. Yet another flaw in the framework is that signatories would be required to avoid unilateral measures, such as taxes on digital services. Overall, benefits to developing economies were minimal.

Today, however, two initiatives are underway that, while incomplete, represent important improvements on the Inclusive Framework. First, last week in Rio de Janeiro, G20 finance

ministers agreed to work together to ensure that ultra-high-net-worth individuals are taxed more effectively.

Brazil made such an agreement, which was also supported by France, South Africa, Spain, and others, a top priority of its G20 presidency. While the details have yet to be decided, one possible approach — recommended by Gabriel Zucman of the University of California, Berkeley, and of the Independent Commission for the Reform of Corporate Taxation — would be to impose a 2 percent global wealth tax on the world’s billionaires (in US dollar terms). That is roughly 3,000 people.

The second promising initiative is a United Nations framework convention on international tax cooperation, negotiations for which are now underway in New York. The resolution to negotiate such a convention — spearheaded by the African Union — was overwhelmingly approved by the UN General Assembly last November, with developing economies leading the way.

According to the ‘zero draft’, released in June, the convention should include commitments on a ‘fair allocation of taxing rights, including equitable taxation of multinational enterprises’, and ‘effective taxation of high net-worth individuals’. It should also ensure that tax measures contribute to addressing environmental challenges, guarantee ‘transparency and exchange of information for tax purposes’, and enable ‘effective prevention and resolution of tax disputes’.

How should the final document reflect these commitments? For starters, the convention should reallocate taxation rights fairly among all countries where multilateral firms do business, based on the concept of ‘significant economic presence’: if a company engages in substantial business activity in a country, it should have to pay taxes there.

The convention should also include a 25 percent global effective minimum tax on multinationals’ profits, as well as a tax on capital gains. And it should introduce minimum standards for the taxation of the richest people globally and each country’s wealthiest residents, including anti-avoidance instruments, such as a global minimum income tax. All countries should agree to tax both wealth and income appropriately.

The convention should also include coordinated mechanisms for digital-services taxes and clear criteria for taxing activities associated with the exploitation of natural resources. In addition, it should require public, country-by-country reporting of multinationals’ economic activities, and enshrine common principles for ensuring the transparency of wealth ownership, including through the creation of a global asset register that identifies beneficial owners of financial and non-financial assets.

Finally, the UN convention should establish a system of governance for international tax cooperation. To this end, either the UN Committee of Experts on International

Cooperation in Tax Matters could be transformed into an intergovernmental organ, or a new UN organization could be created. Improved regional tax-cooperation processes — supported by a strengthened OECD mechanism for cooperation, African Tax Administration Forum, and Latin American and Caribbean Taxation Platform — are also needed.

By discouraging capital flight, enhancing fiscal and macroeconomic stability, and increasing the resources available to address poverty and inequality, improve public services, and advance climate mitigation and adaptation, such reforms would go a long way toward correcting the economic distortions generated by a handful

of CEOs and ultra-wealthy individuals. But, while there is reason to hope that they will be implemented, the political barriers to progress must not be underestimated.

Most developed economies, including the US, the United Kingdom, and many European countries, voted against the UN resolution to establish the tax convention. One hopes that, both in the current negotiations and during next year’s UN Conference on Financing for Development, where international tax cooperation will also be on the agenda, these countries will come to their senses and recognize that effective international tax cooperation is in their best interest.

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RECIPE

No Bake Fox Nut Bars



These delicious energy bites are an easy to prepare sweet snack that is healthy too. The homemade energy bars can be kept in the refrigerator for when the afternoon hunger strikes. Filled with good-for-you ingredients, these bars make for a calorie-dense snack that helps you stay satiated for long.

Total time : 30-40 minutes
Serving : 20 pieces

Ingredients:

- 1.5 cup fox nut
- 1/2 cup almonds
- 1/4 cup pistachios
- 1/4 cup walnut
- 1 cup medjool dates
- 3 tbsp peanut butter
- 1/2 cup dried apricot
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon powder
- 3 tbsp sesame seeds
- 3 tbsp.pumpkin seeds
- 3 tbsp desiccated coconut
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 cup melted dark chocolate
- 2 tbsp roasted sesame seeds for garnishing.



Chef Chhaya Thakker

Instructions:

- Line a 20x20cm square pan with wax paper.
- Measure out all the ingredients and keep them aside.
- On a medium flame roast the fox nuts until crispy. It will take you about 5-7 minutes. Once roasted, set them aside
- Roast the other nuts for 2-3 minutes to reduce moisture in them and set aside
- Roast the seeds along with desiccated coconut for a minute and set aside
- In a food processor add the roasted foxnuts and other nuts
- Add the salt, medjool dates and peanut butter
- Coarsely grind all the ingredients in the processor
- Remove the ground mixture and transfer to the wax paper-lined pan
- Press it down firmly and then pour melted chocolate on top.
- Sprinkle some roasted sesame seeds over it
- Refrigerate until firm and then cut into squares or bars.



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

Thought for the week

“ If you're helping someone and expecting something in return, you're doing business not kindness.

- Unknown

Late Night Cravings?

Ask Mira : Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



If you want to lose weight faster and naturally, then you need to control your nighttime food cravings. All food cravings are diet-killers (if you make the wrong choices), but the ones that hit you late at night seem to be the worst diet enemy. It causes a fast weight gain simply because your metabolism will go down at night, so anything you eat is more likely to be stored as fat.

One reason why some people tend to skip their breakfast in the morning is because they cannot control their habit of munching on food late at night. Also, do



not consider cutting down your needed calories per day to help you lose weight; it will only set you up for more food cravings later in the evening.

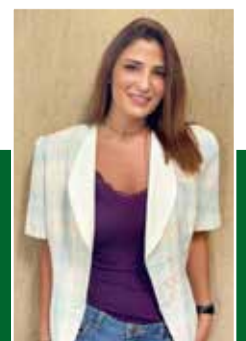
But I understand that many of you, including me, like to munch on something, especially late at night after a long busy day, usually called “the mindless snacking”, which often happens while watching TV, or while browsing the net.

If you must munch late at night, then, instead of munching on junk snacks, choose healthy options from the list below:

- Carrot and cucumber sticks, with some low-fat yogurt dip
- Broccoli, celery, mushrooms, cauliflower raw crunchy pieces, with cocktail dip (mustard, ketchup and a teaspoon of low-fat mayo)
- 1 small bowl of home-made popcorn, full of fiber, super healthy and light
- 1 fresh fruit from your choice (one only). An Excellent high fiber choice
- 1 handful of mixed nuts, full of protein and fiber.
- 1 mug of whole wheat cereal or oats with a cup of low-fat milk or yogurt
- 1 handful of pumpkin or sunflower seeds, non-salted (salt retains water), full of fiber.
- 2 small squares of dark chocolate, rich in antioxidants
- One simple tip that I usually do and helps a lot: Brush your teeth after you eat with menthol toothpaste, it quickly relieves the hunger feeling. Try it.

Eat like Mira
Create healthy habits, not restrictions

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

Study refutes protective role of multivitamins

The new observational study by researchers at the National Cancer Institute in the United States involved around 400,000 adults, without a history of chronic diseases, over a follow-up period of more than 20 years. Those taking a daily multivitamin showed no improvement in mortality risk compared to those who did not.



Millions of people take multivitamin pills daily in order to benefit from the health and protective benefits they purportedly provide. Multivitamins are among the most popular health supplements used today, with surveys revealing that billions of dollars are spent on these products each year. Many people also take multivitamins to either maintain their health and fitness, or to avoid chronic diseases.

Obtaining all necessary vitamins and elements required by the body through downing a multivitamin pill each day is certainly an appealing prospect. However, mounting evidence shows that intake of daily multivitamins may not provide users with any real protective health benefits, in particular when it comes to chronic conditions such as heart disease and cancer. Moreover, in the case of healthy individuals, multivitamins have been proven to provide no added protective benefits to their body, while increasing risk of negative outcomes.

The new observational study by researchers at the National Cancer Institute in the United States involved around 400,000 adults, without a history of chronic diseases, over a follow-up period of more than 20 years. Those taking a daily multivitamin showed no improvement in mortality risk compared to those who did not.

On the contrary, those who were taking the supplement demonstrated a slightly increased (4%) mortality risk.

The study was initiated to augment the limited data currently available to categorically ascertain the benefits and harms from the daily use of multivitamins. The researchers leveraged data from three large and geographically diverse US cohort studies on 390,124 healthy adults with follow-up data spanning a 20-year time period. The study aimed to evaluate the association between the daily use of multivitamins (MV) and mortality outcomes from chronic diseases.

The study's size and length are two of its greatest strengths. However, it is observational in nature, meaning that, unlike a controlled trial, it does not demonstrate causality between two events — in this case, taking a multivitamin and death. Instead, it helps to form a picture of any associations between these events at a large scale in the real world.

Part of the difficulty of conducting a study of this nature is the sheer volume of data to sort through and the potential for confounding. The study also had to filter data based on the 'sick user effect' and the 'healthy user effect', so as to avoid discrepancies in the health outcomes related to MV use.

The 'sick user effect' refers to the possibility that

individuals who are sick may more frequently use multivitamins due to their health condition. On the other hand, the 'healthy user effect' is the opposite, with individuals who already live a healthy lifestyle being more inclined to use a multivitamin as part of their routine than those who are less health conscious. Without proper controls in place, these effects could lead a researcher to two opposing conclusions about the effects of multivitamins on mortality risk.

The researchers were able to control for these distinct effects, by adjusting for lifestyle factors like smoking, diet, and physical activity. They also excluded individuals with major chronic diseases, including cancer, at baseline to account for the 'sick user effect'. After controlling for all these factors, they found that those taking a multivitamin did not have a lower risk of all-cause mortality than those who did not. Nor did they observe any benefits related to specific health outcomes, including cancer, heart disease, and stroke.

The findings are in line with prior research, including recommendations made by the US Preventive Services Task Force in 2014 and in 2022, which said there was little to no benefit in taking them. However, the researchers cautioned that findings from their study were not applicable to people using dietary supplements to address specific vitamin deficiencies. In particular, this did not apply to people who were taking supplements due to anemia, diabetes, or women who were taking them for postmenopausal conditions, on the recommendations of their doctors or other healthcare professionals.

Doctors opined that the findings were not surprising, as the patients observed were all healthy, without any chronic medical conditions. They added that generally, if you are a healthy individual, and you are exercising, eating a regular diet, consuming adequate fruits and vegetables, you are already getting your regular intake of vitamins and supplements. They added that in such cases, the use of MVs were largely superfluous to overall health.

The need to take a MV is based on many factors, including the patient's current health, dietary pattern, other supplements being taken, and personal health goals. Generally, MVs should be recommended only if a person is not meeting their nutrient needs, or has an inadequate diet at baseline due to poor appetite, or is not able to meet everything via diet alone. They cautioned that the use of MVs daily was not an insurance against an unhealthy dietary pattern, and should not be taken to cover unhealthy choices of foods that are not nutritionally dense.

Novel genetic finding could enhance obesity treatment

Obesity is a major health risk that is on the rise in many places around the world. Data from the World Health Organization shows that in 2022, one-in-eight of the global population, or around 890 million adults, were living with obesity. Experts warn that unless prioritized as a critical negative health factor and effectively addressed, the rate of obesity could more than double in the years ahead.

Obesity is a chronic complex disease defined by excessive fat deposits that can impair health. Obesity is also a major risk factor for several health conditions, including cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, cancers, neurological disorders, chronic respiratory diseases, and digestive disorders. Studies into the causes and effects of obesity, as well as treatments, are being conducted worldwide.

In what could be breakthrough finding, an international team of researchers led by scientists at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom, have discovered a novel cause for why people who lack a specific blood group are genetically predisposed to be overweight or obese. Previous studies have shown that genetic factors also have a role in people being overweight or obese.

The research team found that people with a genetic variant that disables the SMIM1 gene have higher body weight because they expend less energy when at rest. The SMIM1 gene was only identified 10 years ago while searching for the gene encoding a specific blood group, known as Vel. One in 5,000 people lack both copies of the gene, making them Vel-negative. The findings from the new research suggest that this group is also more likely to be overweight, a conclusion which could one day lead to new treatments.

The study also found that people without both copies of the gene have other measures linked to obesity, including high levels of fat in the blood, signs of fat tissue dysfunction, increased liver enzymes, as well as lower levels of thyroid hormones. The team now hopes to test whether a cheaply and widely available drug for thyroid dysfunction may be effective in treating obesity in people who lack both copies of SMIM1.

To make the discovery, the team analyzed the genetics of nearly 500,000 participants in the UK Biobank cohort, identifying 104 people with the variant that leads to loss of function in the SMIM1 gene (46 females and 44 males). The team also used fresh blood samples from both Vel negative and positive individuals.

By interrogating the effects they found in four additional cohorts of people with the SMIM1 gene variant, the researchers also found that having the variant had an impact on weight, equating to an average extra 4.6kg in females and 2.4kg in males.

Researchers at Exeter University collaborated with their colleagues at the University of Cambridge and the Sanger Institute in the UK, as well as scientists at Copenhagen University in Denmark, and Lund University in Sweden. In their study published recently, the researchers noted that obesity rates have nearly tripled in the past 50 years, and by 2030, more than one billion individuals worldwide are projected to be obese. The diseases and complications associated with obesity create a significant economic burden on healthcare systems.

The study pointed out that obesity is due to an imbalance between energy intake and expenditure, often a complex interplay of lifestyle, environmental, and genetic factors. In a small minority of people, obesity is caused by genetic variants. The new findings highlight the need to investigate the genetic cause of obesity, to select the most appropriate and effective treatment, but also to reduce the social stigma associated with it.



Kamco Invest, the home-grown regional non-banking leader

“Despite facing challenges this past year, Kamco Invest continued the strategy of being the regional non-banking leader.”

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The Business Year (TBY) recently met with CEO of Kamco Invest, Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, who elaborated on the company's strategies, its expansions, and future plans, as well as on how innovation in the firm was driven by enhancing digital client experiences, and incorporating artificial intelligence for efficiency.

We began by asking the CEO, what are some of the recent milestones for Kamco Invest?

Despite facing challenges this past year, Kamco Invest continued the strategy of being the regional non-banking leader. We enhanced our presence in Saudi Arabia by appointing a new CEO and expanded our operations both in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Our strategy continues to be regionally focused, particularly in bolstering our assets under management. In 2023, we marked a significant milestone by launching our London office that will initially focus on alternative investments, particularly in real estate. On the investment banking front, we have been active and continued to grow with total deals reaching USD36.4 billion since inception. Our efforts have been especially notable in equity and debt capital market transactions within the banking sector. In 2024, we successfully managed four capital increases, three of which were for major Kuwaiti banks, and a few bond issuances. Additionally, we were actively involved in several M&A transactions. On the

asset management side, our focus remains on regional growth and maintaining our leading position in the country. This is significant given the generally negative market conditions, yet we have successfully grown our assets under management by almost 8 percent to reach USD14.9 billion.

How does Kamco Invest strategically navigate the complex high-interest rate landscape?

In 2024, we expect to see interest rate cuts in line with the policies adopted by the US Fed. Looking back, 2023 was a year of expensive borrowing for investors and companies, and mixed performances on the financial landscape. The Kuwaiti market declined by almost double digits till the end of the third quarter followed by a recovery during the fourth quarter. The decline in the market impacted many companies as well as investors' wealth. On the real estate side, we have changed the strategy based on the economic fundamentals and launched different kinds of products. The strategy focuses on the credit side of real estate instead of looking at the equity side for our clients. Meanwhile, the primary fixed-income market has been active during the year with higher issuance of bonds and sukuk. However, the primary equity capital market was relatively quiet. On the other hand, the secondary market and the capital increases in banks were smooth and successful. In terms of interest rates, we believe the impact of higher rates will be evident in the year-end results for some of the companies. In our case, we have rethought how we look at our client's business, by offering new products and opportunities.

How does Kamco Invest plan to leverage the unique growth opportunities in the UK?

This was a strategic decision and a milestone for us. It reinforces our commitment to identifying excellent

opportunities for our clients and executing and overseeing them. The real estate side is the primary focus. It is all about harnessing new opportunities, and access to a more diverse range of real estate investments while strengthening the global reach of our existing portfolio. In the UK and Europe, we have about USD800 million for our clients and our team in London will consider opportunities together with our team in Kuwait and the UAE.

What strategies drive Kamco Invest's innovation?

We have accelerated the development of Kamco Invest App, which focuses on fine-tuning the client journey and strengthening the infrastructure. From the digital side, we are building our capabilities in-house. Our focus is on our clients' digital journey and the ability to offer them data, information, and digital interactivity with Kamco Invest. That is one of our biggest strategic leverages in terms of driving innovation. We are also looking into how we can incorporate AI into what we are doing. For some of our new reports, we are using AI to summarize them in a two-minute video. Regarding technology, our strategic focus will be on client experience. We believe that the easier the client experience becomes and the more convenient their interaction with the company, we can attract more clients.



Faisal Mansour Sarkhou
CEO of Kamco Invest

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