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## The Year that was, remembering 2024

The year 2024 had its fair share of good and bad news. Along with crises, conflicts, and climate calamities, humanity had its highlights as well in the year gone by; the uplifting Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games were held this year, as were breakthrough achievements in medicine and health, in science, in space, and in artificial intelligence.

### THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

As the 24th year of the third millennium draws to a close, we take a look at some of the events that made their way to media headlines in 2024. The incessant flow of news, thanks to 24-hour cable television news channels and online media, meant that we were inundated by the good and bad news of 2024, as well as by events that scarred the collective conscience of humanity.

The steady stream of information, as well as misinformation and disinformation, covered a mind-boggling array of stories from dismal crises, conflicts, and catastrophes, to uplifting ones on human achievements in science, sports, and space, as well as on humanitarian initiatives that supported millions of distraught, displaced people worldwide.

Throughout the year, major armed conflicts that overflowed from 2023 continued unabated. From the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the civil wars in Sudan and Myanmar, to simmering insurgencies in other parts of the world.



Meanwhile, the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in Palestine saw it spillover into several countries, most notably into Lebanon. These human-induced catastrophes claimed tens of thousands of lives and devastated millions of livelihoods all over the world.

However, more than wars and conflicts, the year gone by will probably be best remembered as a super election-cycle year, with a quarter of the

global population going to the polls in 2024. As of mid-December, over 1.6 billion eligible voters in 73 countries, home to more than 3.7 billion people, cast votes to elect representatives to their national legislatures. Voters in four out of the five most populous nations in the world—India, United States, Indonesia, and Pakistan—as well as voters in France, Japan, Russia and the United Kingdom headed to polling booths this year.

But 2024 was not just about elections and evolving conflicts; the year gone by also witnessed its fair share and more, of climate-related devastations, including torrential rains, floods, fires, droughts and famines that claimed lives worldwide. However, 2024 was not just bad news all the way, humanity had its highlights as well. The uplifting Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games were held this year, as were breakthrough achievements in medicine and health, in science, in space, and in artificial intelligence.

So without further ado, let us take a look at some of the happenings that shaped narratives around the world in 2024.

**1 January:** The year begins with the entry of Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as new members of the five-nation BRICS grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. With the expansion, the bloc now represents more than 3.7 billion people, or close to half of the global population; accounts for an economy worth over US\$28 trillion; and holds 30 percent of the world's oil.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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# Cabinet approves GMT on multinationals

*The law aims to combat tax evasion and prevent revenue leakage to other countries, while Kuwait's 15% tax on multinational companies may encourage some to restructure operations and form local partnerships.*

The Cabinet during its regular weekly meeting at Bayan Palace, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, endorsed on 24 December a draft resolution, on issuing a law imposing a 15 percent Global Minimum Tax (GMT) on multinational entities that have business in more than one country or state.

In a media-briefing statement following the Cabinet meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji said that with the cabinet approval the law will come into effect as of 1 January 2025.

The GMT, initially proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2021, represents a major step forward in international cooperation on the taxation of multinational enterprises (MNEs). The deal, which imposes a minimum effective rate of 15 percent on corporate profits, aims to end the benefit of shielding multi-million dollar profits in tax havens. The deal has been signed by 140 countries so far.

The GMT will ensure that MNEs with revenues above EUR 750 million are subject to a 15 percent effective minimum tax rate wherever they operate. It aims to address the tax challenges arising from the globalisation and digitalisation of the economy.

The OECD estimates the Global Minimum Tax (GMT) policy will reduce under-taxed profits by around 80 percent, as it applies across geographies, national income boundaries and tax haven structures.

The Cabinet during its weekly meeting also extolled the exemplary organization of the opening ceremonies of the Arabian football cup, KhaleejZain 26 at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium on 21 December, under the auspices of, and in the presence of, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and in attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

The cabinet pointed out that opening ceremonies of the KhaleejZain 26 tournament, which is currently being held in Kuwait from 21 December to 3 January 2025, was remarkable



and expressed gratitude to all teams involved in organizing the event.

The Cabinet commended the role by Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs and head of the supreme organizing committee Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, and all members and heads of sub-committees, as well as Chairman of Kuwait Football Association Sheikh Ahmad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah, along members, Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sports Bashar Abdullah, all officials, public and private sectors, volunteers and civil society organizations.

The Cabinet was also informed by His Highness the Prime Minister on the outcome of the visit by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his accompanying delegation to Kuwait on an official visit last week.

The Kuwaiti premier also provided the cabinet with a gist of Modi's meetings with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Prime Minister also referred to his official talks

that he held with his Indian peer, which focused on means of boosting bilateral historic relations for wider horizons in all fields to serve the two peoples' interest.

The prime minister also highlighted a defense memorandum of understanding signed between the Kuwait and Indian governments, in addition to a sports executive program for 2025-2028 and other deals on enhancing cooperation between the two sides.

His Highness the Prime Minister also told the ministers that Kuwait and India agreed, during a joint statement, on upgrading their ties to the strategic partnership based on deep-seated and cordial relations.

Furthermore, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah detailed the ministers about the results of his official visit to Saudi Arabia on Sunday and Monday, and official talks with Saudi Interior Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz.

He said they discussed security topics of mutual concern, and reviewed means of boosting security

ties between the two states. He further stated that they focused on a mechanism of coordinating joint efforts to face international and regional challenges in a manner that achieves security and stability in the two states..

Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah also briefed the cabinet on the results of his official visit to Iraq's Basra Governorate last Wednesday, where he inaugurated the Surgical Hospital in Basra, which was granted by the Kuwaiti government. He stressed that the opening of the hospital reflects the depth of fraternal ties between the two countries and embodies Kuwait's firm belief in the importance of cooperation and joint work with Iraq.

In light of the Council of Ministers' interest in implementing infrastructure projects for housing cities, reducing the waiting period and accelerating the distribution of housing units to those entitled to housing care, the cabinet decided to assign the Ministry of Public Works, in coordination with the Public Institution for Housing Care, and the entities it deems appropriate, to quickly conclude contracts to implement permanent sewage treatment plant projects for cities, areas and residential suburbs that are currently being built or planned, in a manner that ensures the delivery of these projects on time.

On another front, the ministers reviewed the visual presentation submitted by Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Saud Al-Omar regarding the executive position of the framework agreement between the State of Kuwait and Google Cloud Company, and listened in this regard to an explanation provided by the Chairman of the Supervisory Committee for the Implementation of the Agreement.

The Council of Ministers decided to assign ministers and government agencies to cooperate with the Supervisory Committee to implement the agreement and overcome all obstacles facing it, and tasked the committee to provide the cabinet with a report every three months that includes the latest developments regarding the implementation of the agreement.

## LuLu Hypermarket recognized globally for exceptional data security measures

LuLu Hypermarket, a prominent leader in the regional retail industry, has earned international acclaim for its exceptional data security measures across its global network of outlets. Crossbow Labs, a leading cybersecurity compliance and certification authority, awarded LuLu Hypermarket the Payment Card

safeguard customers' payment transactions and personal data across all Kuwait outlets.

Administered by the PCI Security Standards Council (PCI SSC), an independent body formed by major payment brands such as American Express, Mastercard, Visa, Discover, and JCB, PCI DSS establishes global benchmarks for securely handling credit card information. The certification sets a framework for preventing, detecting, and responding to security incidents, ensuring a safe business environment for retailers and consumers.

Given LuLu Hypermarket's expansive operations and the increasing challenges posed by evolving cybersecurity threats, implementing a secure data protection system aligned with international standards, has been paramount. The PCI DSS certification validates



Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS v4.0.1) Certification of Compliance. The certification was presented during a ceremony held at LuLu Hypermarket's regional office in Kuwait in December.

Top management representatives from both LuLu Hypermarket and Crossbow Labs attended the ceremony. LuLu Hypermarket officials expressed their delight in receiving the latest PCI DSS v4.0.1 certification. They highlighted it as a testament to their stringent security measures to

these efforts and reinforces the hypermarket's resilience against potential data breaches, safeguarding its financial stability and reputation.

This certification offers customers extra confidence in the security of their transaction details with LuLu Hypermarket. By implementing top-tier security protocols, the hypermarket reinforces trust and demonstrates its dedication to safeguarding payment card information and providing a secure shopping experience.



## Indonesia and Kuwait seal deal to recruit skilled labor

H. E. Lena Mariana, Indonesia's Ambassador to the country, announced the completion of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Kuwait and Indonesia on recruiting skilled labor, particularly in the health sector, highlighting Indonesia's abundance of skilled professionals.

She pointed out in a statement to journalists on the sidelines of the annual festival held by the embassy, titled "The Winter Market," that relations between her country and Kuwait are rapidly developing. The number of members of the Indonesian community has risen to 7,000 this year, compared to 6,000 last year, with most working in the hospitality and health sectors.

Ambassador Mariana also revealed that

Indonesia currently exports medical vaccines, as well as food and electronics, to Kuwait, which are widely available in Kuwaiti markets. This trade is one of the promising areas of cooperation between the two countries, especially in the field of food security.

The Indonesian ambassador mentioned ongoing discussions to restart direct flights between Jakarta and Kuwait via Kuwait Airways on a daily basis, following their suspension in 2015.

She also stated that the Indonesian embassy holds the "Winter Market" festival every year to bring the community together in one place, with the presence of heads of diplomatic missions and a large number of Kuwaiti friends.



## Ministry of Interior warns public of fake traffic violation messages

Ministry of Interior has cautioned the public against responding to fraudulent messages or visiting anonymous websites that impersonate the ministry and request payment for traffic violations.

The ministry clarified in a statement to citizens and residents that payment of violations is exclusively conducted through official channels, namely the Ministry of Interior application and the Easy Application.

They emphasized that the ministry does not send text messages from international phone numbers and urged the public to verify the sender's identity and report any suspicious activity immediately through the security service in the Easy Application.

On a traffic-related note, the ministry also announced the launch of a new and exclusive electronic service through the 'Sahel' application, allowing citizens to issue



driving permits via the platform.

The ministry stated that this service is aimed at streamlining the process of issuing driving permits for citizens through the traffic services available in the application.

The ministry added that this new initiative aligns with the ministry's ongoing efforts to advance digital transformation and provide innovative electronic services that save time and effort for beneficiaries.

## Action Group Holdings sponsors cultural events at French Institute

By Shouq AlMulla  
Exclusive for The Times Kuwait

Action Group Holdings announced the renewal of the Golden Sponsorship Program for cultural events in collaboration with the French Institute of Kuwait to further strengthen bilateral relations.

Announcing this, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Action Group Holdings, Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah emphasized, "This sponsorship is designed to enhance cooperation between Kuwait and France in the cultural, educational, and social sectors."

In his remarks on the occasion, Ambassador of France H.E. Olivier Gauvin, expressed gratitude to Action Group Holdings, for renewing and continuing its valuable support for the promotion of cultural programs at the French Institute

He emphasized that this long-term partnership reflects a joint commitment between the French Institute of Kuwait and Action Group Holdings to strengthen French-Kuwaiti friendship and reaffirm the close ties between the peoples of the two countries through the



promotion of cultural dialogue.

Sheikh Mubarak went on to note, "The signing of this memorandum is part of the close, historical, and distinguished relations between the two friendly countries across various fields. It aims to enhance cooperation and cultural exchange, highlighting Kuwait's interest in and openness to different cultures."

Sheikh Mubarak added, "There is a desire in the State of Kuwait, at both the governmental and private sector levels, to enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields. As part of these efforts, we agreed to renew Action Group Holdings' golden

sponsorship of the French Institute

of Kuwait for the cultural events to be held in Kuwait during the 2025 season."

It is worth noting that in 2017, Sheikh Mubarak was awarded the highest French civilian honor, the Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur (Knight of the Legion of Honour), by the French government for his role in strengthening Kuwaiti-French relations.

For his part, Director of the French Institute of Kuwait, Benoit Cathala said, "The French Institute encourages and promotes an interest in French culture and works by

conveying it to Kuwaiti society, as culture is the language that acts as a bridge bringing people closer."

The French Institute of Kuwait was established in 2012 and is committed to promoting cultural initiatives and ideas for mutual benefit through diverse cultural exchanges.

The Polish ambassador encouraged Kuwaiti investors to explore various investment opportunities in Poland, explaining that his country is stable, safe, and home to a highly skilled workforce. He highlighted agriculture and food security as key investment areas.

## Kuwait, Japan to sign comprehensive strategic partnership

Kuwait and Japan convened the fourth round of political consultations at the Assistant foreign ministers' level, last week. The meeting, held at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation across various fields.

During the meeting, the two sides agreed in principle to establish a comprehensive strategic partnership, to be announced during a high-level visit between the two countries in the near future.

The Kuwaiti delegation to the talks was led by Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Asia, Ambassador Samih Hayat, while the Japanese delegation was headed by Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director General of the Middle East and Africa Department, Ambassador Toshihiro Ando.



The two sides emphasized their aspiration to expand the economic partnership between the two countries, covering areas such as food security, cybersecurity, renewable energy, oil and petrochemicals, as well as health, cultural, agricultural, scientific, and technical sectors. They also discussed regional and international issues of common

interest, stressing the importance of enhancing coordination and consultation between their Ministries of Foreign Affairs to support cooperation in international forums, particularly at the United Nations.

The talks coincided with the 63rd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Japan. Both parties underscored the commitment of their leaderships to deepen bilateral ties rooted in mutual trust and credibility.

The meeting was attended on the Kuwaiti side by Sami Al-Zamanan, Kuwait's Ambassador to Japan; Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Asia, Minister Plenipotentiary Khaled Al-Yassin; and several officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Japanese side was represented by Japanese Ambassador H.E. Mukai Kenichiro, as well as the deputy assistant minister of Foreign Affairs for Middle East Affairs; and senior officials from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



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# Poland to extend partnership with Kuwait

*His Excellency Michal Cholewa, a seasoned diplomat with Middle East experience, expressed his commitment to strengthening the 60-year Polish-Kuwaiti relations and boosting high-level political dialogue, trade, investment, and tourism.*

By Shouq AlMulla  
Special to The Times Kuwait

The Embassy of Poland hosted a gathering for local media representatives to introduce the new Head of Mission and review the events organized by the mission for 2024.

The new Ambassador of Poland, H.E. Michal Cholewa, is a career diplomat with experience in the Middle East. He was recently responsible for Maghreb and Mashreq affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Previously, he served as Senior Adviser for the European Neighborhood Policy, among other roles.

Addressing media representatives, Ambassador Cholewa said he was eager to strengthen the long-standing Polish-Kuwaiti relations, which have been established for over 60 years. He also mentioned his intention to encourage more frequent high-level political dialogue between Poland and Kuwait, as well as to promote trade, investment, and tourism between the two countries.

He highlighted that "the total volume of trade exchange between the two countries amounted to \$430 million in 2023, and there are several Kuwaiti investments in Poland. We will work to increase these figures during my tenure in



Kuwait." The ambassador further explained that "Poland is home to some of the most prominent experts in agriculture and nutrition. This month, the embassy participated as a gold sponsor at the Kuwait International Agriculture and Food Exhibition, which serves as an entry point to enhance trade cooperation with Kuwait and the Gulf region in the agricultural and food sectors.

We showcased many Polish companies at this exhibition."

He continued, "Poland is a food-secure country and one of the largest food producers in Europe, known for its high-quality food products. As a stable trading partner, Poland also supports Kuwait's strategy to diversify its sources of food and agricultural imports."

The Polish envoy praised Kuwait's pioneering and distinguished role in resolving regional crises and establishing peace, noting, "My country shares several common values with Kuwait, such as respect for international law. Poland participates in international operations, and our naval forces are stationed in the Kingdom of Bahrain, contributing to regional stability."

He expressed hope that the signing of the military cooperation agreement between Poland and Kuwait in September 2023 would open up opportunities to support and enhance bilateral cooperation in military personnel training. Ambassador Cholewa also pointed out, "Thousands of Kuwaiti tourists visit Poland every year. The opening of the direct flight route between Kuwait and Kraków, via Jazeera Airways, has contributed to an increase in tourist numbers. We hope to expand direct flights between our countries to cover more Polish cities."

He revealed that "Poland will assume the presidency of the European Union in January 2025, while Kuwait currently holds the presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which will contribute to enhancing cooperation and meetings between our two countries."

## Seasonal Delights at LuLu Hypermarket celebrates the joy of Festive



Xmas came alive in all its festive glory at LuLu Hypermarket, with the 'Seasonal Delights' celebrations kicking off at their Dajeej outlet on 26 December. The event, which sparkled with the joy and bonhomie that the magic of Xmas brings, was inaugurated by Kunjumon Key Accountant Manager, IFFCO Kuwait along with the top management of LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait in the presence of a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

The evening was a true Xmas spectacle, starting with the Little Santa Fashion Show,



where adorable kids dressed as cheerful Santa's melted hearts with their charm. The Xmas spirit



continued to shine as families gathered around and kids participated in the Tree Decoration contest, turning plain evergreens into dazzling works of art. In the Cake Decoration contest, kids showcased their creative skills.

As families celebrated the season, the air was filled with the soothing sounds of Xmas music and lively performances that added a melody to the evening. The cheerful jingles, twinkling lights, and festive décor transformed the hypermarket into a winter wonderland where joy and laughter echoed throughout.

Adding to the Xmas cheer, the mega-retailer announced special year-end offers across all their outlets, providing a perfect opportunity for shoppers to purchase last-minute gift items, or indulge in delectable delicacies. LuLu's festive discounts at the year-end are undoubtedly the ultimate way to end the year on a high note.

Stop by any LuLu Hypermarket to explore holiday deals and experience the warmth and wonder of the festive season before the year ends. The event was sponsored by IFFCO Kuwait.

## Kuwait's poliovirus lab earns 100 percent efficiency rating from WHO

*Achieving a perfect score in 2024 PCR testing reflects the Poliovirus Reference Laboratory team's excellence and ability to apply the latest scientific advancements.*

Highlighting Kuwait's dedication to top-tier public health standards, the Poliovirus Reference Laboratory under the Ministry of Health's Department of Public Health has achieved a remarkable milestone. The laboratory

received a perfect 100% efficiency rating for 2024 in partial polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing, as part of the World Health Organization's (WHO) proficiency assessment program.

The Ministry of Health stated in a press release that this achievement is a testament to the laboratory's commitment to applying the latest international standards in diagnosis, ensuring the accuracy and credibility of results in the fight against poliovirus.

Achieving this full evaluation not only reflects the scientific and technical excellence of the laboratory team but also highlights the laboratory's ability to stay abreast of the latest scientific developments and apply them effectively. This enhances its pivotal role in

global efforts to eliminate the disease.

Dr. Sarah Al-Qabandi, the Head of the Department of Public Health Laboratories, expressed her pride in the efforts of the reference laboratory team.

She emphasized that the poliovirus reference laboratory is one of the main pillars of the global public health system, playing a critical role in confirming cases of infection and monitoring the virus's spread through the analysis of environmental and human samples.

Additionally, the laboratory contributes to providing precise data on virus strains, which are instrumental in guiding vaccination and control strategies at the international level.

Dr. Al-Qabandi extended her gratitude and appreciation to all those working in the

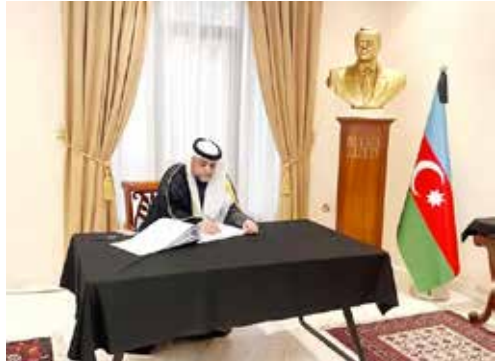


laboratory, the public health sector, and the department, stressing that this achievement serves as a motivation to continue working diligently toward further successes. These efforts enhance Kuwait's position as a major supporter of international initiatives to eradicate polio and safeguard the health and safety of future generations.



# Kuwait expresses condolence on Azerbaijani plane crash

Embassy of Azerbaijan has expressed condolences for the victims of Azerbaijan Airlines flight J2-8243, which was en route from Baku to Grozny in Russia's Chechnya



region. The flight made an emergency landing approximately three kilometers (1.8 miles) from Aktau, resulting in the deaths of 38 passengers, according to Q8-Press.

Ambassador of Azerbaijan H.E. Emil Karimov, described the plane incident as a "tragic disaster" for the Azerbaijani people and nation. He explained that the stricken plane had 67 passengers on board, including five crew members. Of those, 38 were killed, while 16 others survived.

In a statement to journalists, he added, "By order of the President, an investigation committee has been formed to determine the circumstances of the accident, and we are awaiting the official findings from the committee's investigation."

He also noted the the Kuwaiti leadership headed by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, had offered their condolences to the President of Azerbaijan on the tragic incident.

He added that numerous messages of condolences had been received from countries around the world, the United

Nations, and many international organizations, including the Organization of the Islamic Conference(OIC), reflecting the magnitude of the tragic disaster.

Ambassador Karimov also praised the statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which expressed Kuwait's sympathy and solidarity with the government and people of the friendly Republic of Azerbaijan following the crash of the Azerbaijan Airlines plane in western Kazakhstan.



## 'Every Step' drawing initiative promotes migrant awareness in Kuwait

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Kuwait, in collaboration with the Embassy of the Philippines, organized a drawing activity titled "Every Step" to celebrate International Migrants Day. The event brought together participants from various sectors, showcasing the diverse and inclusive spirit of the Kuwaiti community.

H.E. José Cabrera, the Ambassador of the Philippines to Kuwait, said, "The embassy highly appreciates this opportunity to partner with the International Organization for Migration in Kuwait to raise awareness of the role and contribution of the community in the development and prosperity of the countries receiving them."

Ambassador Cabrera added, "The embassy also highly appreciates the measures implemented by the Kuwaiti government that benefit expatriates and workers in Kuwait, and it seeks to continue dialogue and cooperation, particularly with regard to programs and activities that promote harmonious and mutually beneficial relations between migrant workers and employers."

In turn, Mazen AboulHosn, Chief of Mission for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Kuwait, said, "This activity is a testament to the power of art in bringing people together and promoting understanding. Every step a migrant takes is a step toward a brighter future for all, and we are delighted to partner with the Embassy of the

Philippines to celebrate this important day." He pointed out, "This event serves as a platform to raise awareness about the benefits of regular migration pathways, and by supporting such initiatives, the International Organization for Migration in the State of Kuwait and its partners aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for temporary contracted labor, ensuring the



## Kuwait, UK mark 125-year milestone in diplomatic relations

British Ambassador H.E. Belinda Lewis, stated that 2024 has been a remarkable year for UK and Kuwait, as the two governments have come together to celebrate 125 years of official diplomatic relations.

"While collaboration in fields such as trade, investment, defense, and security has long underpinned our special ties, what truly binds us together are the extraordinary links between our people. It was fitting that our first major announcement of the year was February's rollout of the Electronic Travel Authorization



(ETA) scheme for Kuwaiti nationals, which has made short trips to the UK easier and more flexible than ever before," said the ambassador.

Ambassador Belinda added, "I am pleased to report that there has been an extremely strong uptake to date, with a further 47,142 ETAs issued to Kuwaitis between July and September, bringing the total to 95,381 since applications opened in February."

She continued, "On behalf of the British government, I would like to wish everyone traveling to the UK for Christmas, New Year, and beyond a safe and enjoyable trip."



## Al-Sayer and Toyota launch GR Yaris Cup Season 2

Building on the momentum of last year's unforgettable racing after an incredibly successful inaugural season, Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Est Co. has announced the launch of Gazoo Racing (GR) Yaris Cup season 2 supported by Toyota Motor Corporation in association with Kuwait Motor Town and Suffix Sports.

The opening ceremony was attended by Al-Sayer Group Chairman Faisal Bader Al Sayer. Senior Business Director Toyota Group Sales, Martin Aherne, Senior Manager Toyota Marketing, Bader Faisal Al Sayer General Manager of Toyota retail sales, Theo Kruger, Deputy General Manager product planning and sales administration, Hamad Al Fouzan, Group Business Heads and Senior Managers, representatives from the sponsoring brands in the presence of members of the media.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Aherne stated:

"When we launched the first season of the championship, our aim was to contribute to the development of motorsport in the region, so I am delighted to see the great participation this year from racers and sponsors. and great preparations from the organizers."

"This mega event has the advantage of being organized by one manufacturer and distributor, Toyota and AL-Sayer. I would like to note that this championship has been officially accredited by the Federation Internationale de automobile (FIA), which is responsible for motor championships and races around the world."

For his part, Bader Faisal Al Sayer said: "We are here today to conduct the draw to select the contestants and nominate them for the list of sponsors. We are sure that this year's championship will be more successful and advanced with 12 race cars. The second season of this tournament will take place from

December 2024 to April 2025."

"Embarking on a historic journey for the development of motorsport in Kuwait and encouraging young drivers to come forward and participate in unique events, ALSAYER had successfully concluded the first season in March 2024. For season 2 the bar is raised with even more intense competition, enhanced features, and an expanded lineup of talented drivers.

"This year, the event also features a larger group of distinguished sponsors who share our vision and passion for achieving success. The sponsors and drivers are not just part of the event; they are key partners in the success of Season 2."

The inaugural race of the second season was held on 13th December 2024 at Kuwait Motor Town. visitors were treated to a memorable experience and thrilling atmosphere at the venue. The remaining four rounds are scheduled

as follows: Round 2 ( 8–11 January 2025); Round 3 (14–15 February); Round 4 (14–15 March); Round 5 (11–12 April)

The Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) certified one-make race event initiated by an automotive distributor in the region will feature 19 racing drivers backed by a strong track record of achievements in the field of motorsports.

GR Yaris is a sports car developed by experts at the Toyota Gazoo Racing World Rally Team and the 12 units which are part of the GR Yaris Cup Season 2 are being race prepared under FIA regulations, in-house with skill and precision by service technicians at Al Sayer Ahmadi Performance. Carefully selected race specific components are added to the impressive standard specification to create a car at home circuit in the cut-throat environment of a one-make competition.



# Indian PM's visit consolidates centuries-old ties

*Strategic partnership to strengthen shared interests, connect cultures*



## The Times Kuwait Report

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Kuwait on a two-day official visit on 21 December, at the invitation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. On arrival at the Amiri terminal, the Indian premier was received by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, and other high-ranking officials.

On Sunday, the Indian Prime Minister met with His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Bayan Palace. He was received on arrival at the palace by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and other dignitaries. His Highness the Amir and Prime Minister Modi recalled during their meeting the strong historical and friendly ties between the two countries and re-affirmed their full commitment to further expanding and deepening bilateral cooperation.

The two leaders also discussed key issues of common concern, and latest developments on the regional and international arenas. They also agreed to elevate the existing bilateral relationship between the two nations to a strategic partnership. The Indian premier expressed appreciation for the new initiatives being undertaken by Kuwait to fulfill its Vision 2035, and congratulated His Highness the Amir for successfully hosting the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit in early December.

Prime Minister Modi also thanked His Highness the Amir for ensuring the well-being of the over a million-strong Indian community in Kuwait, and extended an invitation to His Highness the Amir to visit India. His Highness the Amir reciprocated the Indian prime minister's sentiments and expressed appreciation for India's role as a valued partner in Kuwait, and said he looked forward to the greater role of India towards realisation of Kuwait Vision



2035. He also expressed appreciation for the contribution of the vibrant Indian community in Kuwait's development.

During the visit, His Highness the Amir also bestowed on Prime Minister Modi Kuwait's highest honor, the Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer, for his role in strengthening relations between the two countries. Prime Minister Modi thanked His Highness the Amir and dedicated the award to the long-standing friendship between India and Kuwait, to the Indian community in Kuwait, and to the 1.4 billion people of India. The award added special significance to the premier's visit, as the Order instituted in 1974, has been conferred only on select global leaders.

The Indian premier also held discussions with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, and fondly recalled his meeting with His Highness the Crown Prince on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in September of this year. In his talks with the Crown Prince, the Indian premier conveyed that India attaches utmost importance to its

bilateral relations with Kuwait.

The two leaders also welcomed the elevation of their bilateral relations to a strategic partnership. They also emphasized the close coordination between both sides in the UN and other multilateral fora. The Indian prime minister also expressed confidence that India's relations with the GCC countries will be further strengthened under Kuwait's Presidency of the GCC. His Highness the Crown Prince also hosted a lunch banquet in honor of the visiting Indian premier.

During his visit to Kuwait, the Indian prime minister held delegation-level discussions with his Kuwaiti counterpart, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The two leaders discussed a roadmap to strengthen the strategic partnership in areas including political, trade, investment, energy, defence, security, health, education, technology, cultural, and people-to-people ties.

Prime ministers of both countries also emphasized the need to deepen economic cooperation between the two countries. The Indian premier invited a delegation comprising

the Kuwaiti Investment Authority and other stakeholders to visit India to look at new opportunities in the fields of energy, defence, medical devices, pharma, and food parks, among others. The leaders also discussed cooperation in traditional medicine and agricultural research.

The two premiers also welcomed the recent signing of the Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC) under which new Joint Working Groups (JWC) in the areas of trade, investment, education, technology, agriculture, security and culture have been set up in addition to the existing JWCs on Health, Manpower and Hydrocarbons.

Following the delegate-level talks, the two leaders witnessed the signing of several bilateral agreements and MoUs by delegates from both sides. These included an overarching Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on defense, which institutionalized defense cooperation in training, exchange of personnel and experts, joint exercises, supply of defence equipment, and collaboration in research and development.

Besides the MoU on defence cooperation, three other MoUs were inked on the occasion. The first, to facilitate a cultural exchange program, the second, an executive program on cooperation in the field of sports, and finally, a framework agreement on Kuwait joining the International Solar Alliance. India and Kuwait already enjoy robust bilateral relations in several areas including in energy and healthcare.

Kuwait is among India's top trading partners, with bilateral trade valued at US\$10.47 billion in the financial year 2023-24. Kuwait is India's sixth largest crude supplier, meeting three percent of the country's energy needs. The Indian community, comprising over a million people, is the largest expatriate community in Kuwait and Indians constitute 21 percent of the total population and account for 30 percent of the workforce in Kuwait.







Earlier on Saturday, Prime Minister Modi visited Indian workers at a labor camp in Mina Abdullah, operated by Gulf Spic Company that employs over 1,500 Indian workers. The prime minister shared snacks with the workers and interacted with a cross-section of workers from various states of India. Later in the afternoon he attended a community event titled 'Hala Modi' at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Sports Stadium in Sabah Al-Salem area.

Addressing the gathering at the 'Hala Modi' event, the Prime Minister pointed out that the relationship between India and Kuwait is one of civilizations, seas and commerce. Noting that India and Kuwait have consistently stood by each other, he added that the India-Kuwait relationship has been profoundly enriched by the Indian community, and they play a pivotal role in fostering ties between the two nations.

The premier also expressed appreciation for the hard work, achievement, and contribution of the community to the development of Kuwait, which, he said, was widely recognized and appreciated by the Kuwaiti government and society. The premier also thanked the leadership of Kuwait for the welfare of the Indian community.

Elaborating on India's rapid progress and transformation, especially in the fields of technology, infrastructure and sustainability, the prime minister noted that in India, smart digital systems are no longer a luxury, but have become an integral part of the everyday life of the common man. He pointed out that apart from being the fifth largest economy in the world, India was the global leader in fintech, the third largest global player in the start-up space and among the most digitally connected societies worldwide.

Reflecting on the shared aspirations of the two countries, India's Viksit Bharat and Kuwait's Vision 2035 New Kuwait Development Plan, Prime Minister Modi said that there were huge opportunities for India and Kuwait to work together for their mutual benefit. He

also pointed out that India's skill capacities and innovation could foster new partnerships between the two countries.

The prime minister concluded his address to the community by stressing that India of the future will be a hub of global development and the growth engine of the world. He added, "As a 'vishwa bandhu', a friend to the world, India is moving forward with a vision that seeks greater global good."

Earlier on arrival during the community welcoming event, Prime Minister Modi interacted with two Kuwaiti nationals, Abdullah Al Baroun and Abdul Lateef Al Neseif, and lauded them for translating and publishing the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata in Arabic. Last October, in his monthly radio program, 'Mann Ki Baat', the premier had thanked the Kuwaitis for promoting Indian heritage on a global platform. He added that their work was, "not just a translation, but a bridge between two great cultures that helps develop a new understanding of Indian literature in the Arab world."







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1 New Year's Day

27 Isra and Miraj

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25 National Day

26 Liberation Day

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Ramadan 2025 begins on Saturday, 01 March and ends on Friday, 30 March.  
Dates may vary\*

31 Eid al-Fitr

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4 Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Birthday



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1 2 Eid Al-Fitr Holiday

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5 Arafat Day 6 Eid Al-Adha  
7 Eid Al-Adha Holiday 26 Islamic New Year

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# India and Kuwait strengthening ties in a changing global landscape

*Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic visit to Kuwait marks a turning point in the evolving relationship between India and Kuwait. To highlight this partnership and the opportunities it brings to both nations, Reconnaissance Research, Kuwait's leading independent think tank, has published an analysis.*

The recent visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kuwait marks a significant moment in the evolving relationship between the two nations.

As Kuwait and India navigate an increasingly interconnected global landscape, the visit underscores the growing importance of their bilateral partnership and its vast potential for expansion in trade, investment, and strategic collaboration.

## Historical and Cultural Foundations

India and Kuwait share a rich legacy of trade and cultural exchange that spans thousands of years. These historical interactions have laid a solid foundation for a modern partnership that goes beyond transactional exchanges, evolving into a deeper, multifaceted relationship.

Today, the Indian expatriate community, numbering over one million in Kuwait, serves as a living bridge between the two nations. Their contributions across sectors such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure play a vital role in Kuwait's economy and social fabric.

This enduring connection aligns with India's view of the Gulf region as its "extended neighborhood." Despite being separated by the Arabian Sea, India and Kuwait share a deeply interdependent relationship. As both nations continue to evolve, their partnership is poised for transformation, expanding in both scope and depth.

## Expanding Economic Synergies

Economic cooperation remains the cornerstone of India-Kuwait relations. Kuwait has long been a reliable energy partner for India, supplying a significant portion of its crude oil needs, while India exports key products such as food, machinery, and textiles to Kuwait.

Bilateral trade reached \$9.5 billion in 2022-23, reflecting consistent growth. However, this figure represents only the beginning, with both nations poised to unlock a much larger potential partnership in the years ahead.

India's broader economic engagement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries reflects this growing momentum. The GCC bloc, which includes Kuwait, accounts for 16% of India's total global trade, reaching \$184 billion in 2022-23.

While the UAE and Saudi Arabia are the leading partners, Kuwait is emerging as a key player in this relationship. As Kuwait progresses with its Vision 2035 economic diversification strategy, India's expertise in technology, renewable energy, and infrastructure development presents significant opportunities for collaboration.

- **Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri (Founder & CEO)**

## Balancing Energy and Food Security

The partnership between India and Kuwait is built on a symbiotic relationship, where Kuwait meets India's rising energy demands, and in turn, India has the capacity to address Kuwait's growing food security needs.



The Gulf region has a significant demand for agricultural and food products, yet India currently accounts for just 4.8% of its food imports. By leveraging its vast agrarian economy and strong export capabilities, India has the potential to position itself as a key supplier to Kuwait and other GCC nations. This would help ensure long-term food security for the region, creating a sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership.

## A Potential Game-Changer: Free Trade Agreements

The prospect of a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the GCC could revolutionize both bilateral and regional trade dynamics.

The success of the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which is projected to boost bilateral trade to \$100 billion within five years, offers a model for similar agreements with other GCC nations, including Kuwait.

For Kuwait, participating in an FTA would provide access to India's vast consumer market while attracting increased investment in critical sectors such as renewable energy, logistics, and technology.

- **Dr. Aftab Kamal Pasha (Head- India Affairs Unit)**

Strategic Significance in a Multipolar World India's strategic importance to Kuwait extends beyond economic cooperation. As a G20 member and an emerging global power, India plays a crucial role in shaping the geopolitical landscape. Its commitment to multilateralism and pragmatic approach to international relations align with Kuwait's

foreign policy principles.

Moreover, closer collaboration between the two nations on key issues such as climate change, renewable energy, and global supply chain resilience can enhance their collective influence, enabling them to address regional and global challenges more effectively.

## Strengthening People-to-People Connections

The Indian community in Kuwait is a cornerstone of the bilateral relationship. Facilitating labor mobility, ensuring the rights of expatriate workers, and promoting cultural and educational exchanges are essential for deepening these ties. Cultural diplomacy, including collaborative initiatives in arts, education, and heritage preservation, can further enhance mutual understanding and respect between the two nations.

## A Vision for the Future

Prime Minister Modi's visit provides a unique opportunity to reimagine the India-Kuwait partnership. By leveraging shared strengths and addressing common challenges, both nations can develop a roadmap for long-term collaboration.

Key initiatives such as expanding agricultural trade, deepening energy cooperation, and fostering joint ventures in technology and innovation can serve as the foundational pillars of this partnership, paving the way for a sustainable and mutually beneficial future.

The broader India-GCC relationship offers further opportunities for Kuwait. The GCC's substantial investments in India, combined with its role as a vital energy supplier, highlight the interdependence between the two regions.

A coordinated strategy to maximize these

opportunities, particularly through trade agreements and enhanced investment flows, will yield significant mutual benefits.

## Conclusion

India and Kuwait are bound by a rich history and a shared vision for the future. The relationship has evolved from its historical roots into a modern partnership, characterized by economic synergies, strategic alignment, and cultural connections. As the global landscape becomes increasingly complex, this partnership stands as a model of resilience and adaptability.

Prime Minister Modi's visit is not only a celebration of the past but also a critical reminder for Kuwait to take proactive steps in deepening its engagement with India.

The Kuwaiti government must focus on expanding avenues of collaboration, particularly in areas such as technology, renewable energy, food security, and infrastructure development.

Strengthening institutional frameworks, fostering people-to-people connections, and investing in joint ventures will be key to ensuring that this partnership continues to thrive and evolve, creating long-term benefits for both nations.

At Reconnaissance Research, we recognized the significance of the India-Kuwait relationship early on, establishing our India Affairs Unit in 2024 to focus on fostering stronger ties between the two nations. Our commitment lies in identifying opportunities for cooperation and facilitating dialogue that serves the mutual interests of both India and Kuwait.

Prime Minister Modi's visit underscores the importance of this work, and we remain steadfast in supporting efforts to build a stronger, more dynamic partnership between Kuwait and India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic visit to Kuwait marks a turning point in the evolving relationship between India and Kuwait. To highlight this partnership and the opportunities it brings to both nations, Reconnaissance Research, Kuwait's leading independent think tank, has published an analysis.

The report, authored by Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri, Founder and CEO of the institution, and Dr. Aftab Kamal Pasha, Head of the India Affairs Unit, delves into the significance of the visit and the potential for deeper bilateral ties.

The paper explores the historical, economic, and strategic dimensions of the India-Kuwait relationship. It also highlights the pivotal role of Reconnaissance Research, which established its India Affairs Unit in 2024, to focus on strengthening ties between the two nations. The unit focuses on providing actionable insights to decision-makers, further deepening the collaboration and understanding between India and Kuwait.

This paper provides a roadmap on how the Kuwaiti government can build on the momentum generated by Prime Minister Modi's visit to achieve deeper and more meaningful collaboration with India.

## Philippines Embassy mourns Kuwaiti household tragedy

Embassy of the Philippines expressed deep shock and sadness following a tragic incident involving a Filipino domestic worker and the death of a Kuwaiti child in her employer's household.

The embassy said in a statement that it extends its heartfelt condolences and



prayers to the bereaved family during this difficult time. The embassy added that it is cooperating with Kuwaiti authorities investigating the incident and is also providing legal assistance to the detained Filipino domestic worker, in accordance with Kuwaiti law and the embassy's

mandate.

This isolated incident does not reflect the character of Filipinos and the Filipino community in Kuwait, who are recognized for their hard work, reliability, and positive contributions to society, the embassy concluded in its statement.



# Manmohan Singh: A Legacy of Economic Reforms and Statesmanship

Special to The Times Kuwait

Former Indian prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh passed away on 26 December, at the age of 92. His funeral was held with full state honors, with leaders from around the world paying tributes to his remarkable life and achievements.

Manmohan Singh, born on 26 September, 1932, in Gah, Punjab (now in Pakistan), was a distinguished economist, academic, and politician who served as the 13th Prime Minister of India from 2004 to 2014. He was the first Sikh to hold the office and is widely regarded as the architect of India's economic reforms.

Manmohan Singh's early life was marked by the partition of India in 1947, which led his family to migrate to India. He pursued his higher education at Punjab University, followed



by a Bachelor's degree from St. John's College, Cambridge, and a DPhil in Economics from Nuffield College, Oxford. His academic excellence laid the foundation for his illustrious career.

Before entering politics, Singh had a distinguished career as an economist. He

worked for the United Nations during the 1960s and held several key positions in the Government of India, including Chief Economic Advisor, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, and head of the Planning Commission. His expertise in economics earned him a reputation as a brilliant policymaker.

Singh's most significant contribution came as the Finance Minister under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1991. At a time when India was facing a severe economic crisis, Singh introduced landmark economic reforms that liberalized the Indian economy. These reforms included deregulation, privatization, and opening up the economy to foreign investment. His efforts transformed India into one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

In 2004, Singh became the Prime Minister of India, leading the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. His tenure was marked by

significant achievements in economic growth, social welfare, and foreign policy. Key initiatives included the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), the Right to Information Act, and the Indo-US Nuclear Deal.

Despite facing challenges such as the global financial crisis and allegations of corruption within his administration, Singh's leadership was characterized by his integrity, humility, and dedication to public service. He was re-elected in 2009, becoming the first Prime Minister since Jawaharlal Nehru to be re-elected after completing a full five-year term.

Manmohan Singh's legacy as a reformist and statesman will continue to inspire future generations. His contributions as an economist, policymaker, and Prime Minister to India's economic transformation and his commitment to inclusive development have left an indelible mark on the nation's history.

## Egypt 'Mother of the World' beckons travelers from all walks of life

By Fajr Sabah  
Special to The Times Kuwait

The phrase, 'Egypt, the Mother of the World' is uniquely tied and instinctively associated with this remarkable nation. Some say Egypt earned this title as the cradle of civilization, a land that has nurtured all religions



and cultures. Others believe it was bestowed upon Egypt due to its mention in the Qur'an as a place of safety and refuge.

All of this, and perhaps even more, justifies why Egypt is a country suited for all seasons. A visitor need not restrict themselves to just one season, as Egypt is a destination that appeals to everyone.

The first time I visited Egypt as a child, I thought it did not offer much tourism suited to my interests. However, when I visited again



*Egypt, a land that has embraced all cultures and religions, is a year-round destination offering something for everyone, making it an undeniably distinguished tourist destination.*

last November, I was genuinely surprised to discover that Egypt offers every type of tourism, making it suitable for people of all ages.

During my visit, I explored both ancient and modern museums, attended world-class shows, visited art galleries and exhibitions, and enjoyed both academic and popular theater performances. I listened to orchestral music, attended premiere film screenings, and wandered through shopping malls, downtown areas, and local markets.

I sipped coffee in modern cafes and enjoyed tea in traditional settings like Al-Husseini. I



attended Brazilian, Dutch, Korean, and Arab festivals and events, walked along the Corniche, dined in upscale restaurants, and tried light snacks by the sea.

I rode horses and camels in the desert, experienced tuk-tuks and carriages in the

streets, and captured photos at the pyramids. My experience was truly comprehensive, blending literature, culture, and art with commerce, tourism, and entertainment.

Indeed, Egypt is undeniably a distinguished tourist destination.

## Heartfelt Condolences



Dr. Manmohan Singh

Indian Business and Professional Council, Kuwait is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Manmohan Singh, India's 13th Prime Minister. He was a visionary leader and the architect of India's economic reforms.

Dr. Singh's tireless efforts to transform India's economy and his commitment to social justice have left an indelible mark on our country's history. His leadership and guidance inspired a generation of Indians, and his legacy will continue to inspire us in the years to come.

As IBPC, we extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and loved ones. May his soul rest in peace, and may his family find strength and solace in the memories of his remarkable life.



Indian Business and Professional Council

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# The Year that was, remembering 2024

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The first day of the year also witnessed people living in the Noto Peninsula, along the western coast of Japan, experiencing a 7.5 Mww earthquake that killed at least 462 people and injured 1,344 others.



**19 January:** Japan becomes the fifth country to break into the exclusive club of nations that have successfully landed spacecraft on the Moon, with its SLIM mission achieving a soft landing on the Moon.

**8 February:** The general election in Pakistan leads to Shehbaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) returning as prime minister for the second time, with support from a coalition of parties that include the Pakistan People's Party and others. Independent candidates backed by former prime minister Imran Khan's party wins a plurality of seats but fails to gather a majority in the assembly.

**22 February:** The 'Nova-C Lander' owned by Intuitive Machines, a US-based private company becomes the first commercial vehicle to land on the Moon.

**13 March:** The European Union passes the world's first comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for Artificial Intelligence, the 'Artificial Intelligence Act'.

**15-17 March:** Russian presidential election leads to incumbent Vladimir Putin being reelected as Russian President for a fifth term.

**25 March:** The UN Security Council passes a resolution calling for an "immediate ceasefire" in Gaza and demanding the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.



**15-17 April:** Torrential rains over parts of Iran and the south-eastern Arabian Peninsula lead to flash floods that cause the death of at least 48 people across the area. Although Oman and the UAE are the worst affected, with the UAE witnessing its heaviest rains in 75 years, the cascading downpour also causes havoc in Bahrain, Qatar, and eastern Saudi Arabia.

**29 April:** In Brazil, heavy floods in the state of Rio Grande do Sul causes dozens of deaths and leaves thousands homeless. Further afield, in Africa, 50 people are killed, and 84 reported missing, when a railway embankment fails near Mai Mahiu, Kenya. This adds to the woes caused by floods in that country and neighboring Tanzania, which leads to the death of 488 people and displacement of over half a million.

**30 April:** The G7 group of countries—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States—agree to phase out 'unabated' coal power by 2030-2035. Unabated coal power refers to power derived from coal without the use of technologies to limit carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions.

**10 May:** United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) passes a resolution to grant the State of Palestine the right to be seated among member states in the Assembly.

**20 May:** The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) seeks arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar over alleged war crimes. Four days later on 24 May, the UN's highest court the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rules



that Israel must halt its military offensive in Rafah, southern Gaza.

**29 May:** South African general election sees the ANC party failing to win a majority of the vote for the first time in the country's post-apartheid history. However, two weeks later, on 14 June, the party formed a national unity government with support from the Democratic Alliance and other parties, with Cyril Ramaphosa of ANC retaining his post as President of South Africa.

**1 June:** Indian general election, which began on April 19 and concluded on 1 June results in the incumbent ruling party, the BJP, losing its majority in the Lok Sabha (Parliament), but its electoral alliance, the National Democratic Alliance retains majority, and Narendra Modi is sworn-in as Prime Minister of India for a third term..

**1-29 June:** India wins the Men's T20 World Cup 2024, co-hosted by the West Indies and the United States.

**6-9 June:** Election to the European Parliament is held across the European Union. The EPP, of incumbent Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, retains its status as the largest group in parliament amid notable gains by far-right political groups.



**23 June:** A severe heat wave during the annual Muslim Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, results in the death of more than 1,300 people.

**24 June:** Australian activist and founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange, is freed from prison in the United Kingdom, after spending the last 12 years in the UK, first as a refugee in the Ecuadorian Embassy in 2012, and then from 2019 as a prisoner in a British jail. The United States had sought his extradition from the UK, under its Espionage Act for publishing a series of leaks from Chelsea Manning, a US Army intelligence analyst in 2010.

**4 July:** General election in the United Kingdom sees Keir Starmer lead the Labour Party to a landslide victory, the first time in 14 years that his party had won a general election,

**5 July:** Early presidential election in Iran, due to the death of incumbent president Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash on 19 May, results in Masoud Pezeshkian being elected as president of Iran.

**7 July:** French legislative election sees the left-wing New Popular Front win the most seats in the National Assembly, upsetting a first-round victory by the far-right National Rally, but the Front fails to achieve a majority.

**19 July:** A faulty update to the Falcon Sensor security software, distributed by American cybersecurity company CrowdStrike causes widespread problems with systems running the software. Around 8.5 million systems worldwide crashed and were unable to properly restart, in what has been called the largest outage in the history of information technology.



**26 July-11 August:** France hosts the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris and in metropolitan cities across France. The US emerged at the top of the medal tally with 126 medals, followed by China (91 medals), the UK (65), host France (64) and Australia in fifth spot with 54 medals. Despite controversies related to the opening ceremony and conditions in the Olympic Village, the games overall were a resounding success, breaking an all-time record with ticket sales of 9.5 million.

**30 July:** At least 334 people are killed, over 200 injured and 281 missing following landslides triggered by heavy rains in the southern Indian state of Kerala's Wayanad district.

**5 August:** Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, who was elected to office for a fourth term in January, is forced to resign by the Army and flees to India, after nationwide protests against her government. An interim administration, with Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus as Chief Adviser is formed on 8 August.



**28 August-8 September:** The 2024 Summer Paralympics is held in Paris, France. China tops the medal table winning 221 medals. Great Britain comes in second with 124 medals. The United States is in third position with 105 medals, followed by Brazil winning 89 medals, and Ukraine in fifth spot with 82 medals.

**21 September:** Sri Lankan presidential election results in Anura Kumara Disanayake being elected President with a second round of vote counting held for the first time in Sri Lanka's history.

**30 September:** The UK becomes the first G7 country to phase out coal power for electric generation, after 142 years of using the energy source.

**1 October:** The Israel Defense Forces invade southern Lebanon, expanding its conflict against Hezbollah.



**9 October:** The Swedish Academy of Sciences awards the 2024 Nobel Prizes for achievements to 12 laureates, considered to have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind. The laureates are John Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton in Physics; David Baker, Demis Hassabis and John Jumper in Chemistry; Victor Ambrose and Gary Ruvkun in Physiology or Medicine; Han Kang in Literature; and Nihon Hidankyo in Peace. In addition, the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences went to Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson.

**13 October:** SpaceX, the US space technology company founded by US billionaire Elon Musk, achieves the first successful return and capture of a Super Heavy booster from Starship, the biggest and most powerful rocket ever to fly.



**30 October:** Torrential rainfall in several eastern areas of Spain results in the country's worst

flooding in half a century. With more than a year's worth of rain falling in less than eight hours in some areas, the floods leave over 200 killed and many more missing.



**5 November:** Presidential election in the United States leads to Donald Trump being elected for a second non-consecutive term as US President.



**11-22 November:** The 29th iteration of the annual global climate gathering, COP29 is held in Baku, Azerbaijan, with a commitment to triple finance to developing countries to \$300 billion annually by 2035, as well as to scale up finance to developing countries from public and private sources to \$1.3 trillion yearly by 2035.



**26 November:** A ceasefire deal announced by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu aims to end fighting with Hezbollah in Lebanon.



**30 November:** Opposition forces seize control of most of the Syrian city of Aleppo, and in the span of a week sweeps through various other cities in Syria. President Bashar al-Assad fled the capital Damascus on 8 December ahead of the opposition forces capturing the city. He and his family are provided asylum in Russia. The opposition forces form the Syrian Transitional Government.



**12 December:** Indian chess prodigy Gukesh Dommaraju becomes the youngest World Chess Champion after defeating former world champion Ding Liren of China in the 2024 World Chess Championship. With his win Gukesh, aged 18, breaks the previous age record of 22 set by chess legend Garry Kasparov.

**24 December:** The US space agency, NASA, announces that its Parker Solar Probe survived its closest approach to the Sun's surface, breaking its previous record by flying just 3.8 million miles (6.1 million km) above the surface of the Sun. The Probe hurtled through the solar atmosphere at a blazing speed of 692,000 kilometers per hour—faster than any human-made object ever moved.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Good Growth Requires Getting Public-Private Partnerships Right



**Mariana Mazzucato**  
*Professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London and author, most recently, of Mission Economy: A Moonshot Guide to Changing Capitalism.*



The United Kingdom's Labour government has given serious thought to the public investment needed to get the economy back on track after 14 years of austerity, neglect of social infrastructure, and capital flight triggered by Brexit and uncertain economic conditions. It understands that the situation demands a new strategy to tackle big problems like child poverty, health inequities, a weak industrial base, and struggling public infrastructure.

What should this look like? The UK Department for Business and Trade's recent industrial strategy 'green paper', Invest 2035, is a promising start. However, in my own response during the public consultation period, I stressed that an industrial strategy should be oriented around key 'missions' like achieving net-zero emissions, rather than around specific sectors, as the government appears to be doing. While the government has set itself five 'missions', they seem more like goals with some targets, rather than being central to the way government and industry work together.

For Labour to deliver on its agenda, it must get its public-private partnerships right. Historically, public-private collaborations in the UK have involved the state overpaying and the private sector under-delivering. Following the Brexit referendum, for example, the government secretly gave Nissan £61 million

advisers across the public and private sector. A UK Treasury analysis later showed that the general costs of PFIs were double that of government borrowing.

Fortunately, many public-private partnerships globally have produced more positive results. Germany's national development bank, KfW, offers low-interest loans to companies that agree to decarbonize. Similarly, the French government's COVID-19 bailout of Air France was conditional on the carrier curbing emissions per passenger and reducing domestic flights; by contrast, the UK bailed out easyJet with no strings attached.

In the United States, the CHIPS and Science Act required companies that benefit from public funds to commit to climate and workforce development plans, provide childcare, and pay a living wage. Preference is also given to companies that reinvest profits instead of using share buybacks.

The UK does have some experience in shaping markets around clear goals. In developing the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, the government used a risk- and reward-sharing model in which it provided 95 percent of the funding in exchange for certain commitments from the company. AstraZeneca would provide the first 100 million doses to the UK and allow the government to donate and reassign surplus vaccines.

Similarly, Octopus Energy's acquisition of energy supplier Bulb allowed the UK government to reap £1.5 billion in profit as Octopus repaid the public support it had received through an earlier profit-sharing deal. This agreement safeguarded jobs and prevented consumers from incurring any extra costs.

With a mission-oriented strategy, the Labour government could scale up and systematize this type of public-private engagement. Rather than being 'unreservedly pro-business', as it claims to be in its green paper, it should ensure that public investment targets clear objectives: to crowd in private capital, create new markets, and increase long-term competitiveness. Consider the UK's net-zero-emissions target, which is not only about clean power but also about how we eat, move, and build. The state has a crucial role to play as a first-mover, shaping markets so that private incentives are aligned with public goals. Yet judged by this standard, recent moves by the Labour government appear to fall short.

For example, Prime Minister Keir Starmer's deals with Macquarie (an investment bank), Blackstone (asset management), and others raised more than £60 billion without setting clear, outcomes-oriented expectations or ensuring that both risks and rewards are shared. Equally, the government's support of carbon capture and storage (to the tune of £22 billion so far) allows funds to flow to incumbent oil giants without holding them accountable in the green transition.

These deals are structured to achieve growth

directed investment. If the UK's climate transition is going to deliver for people and the planet over the long term, the government's engagement with the private sector must reflect confidence, not capitulation.

This can start by deploying tools that the government already has. The new National Wealth Fund and Great British Energy (a publicly owned clean-energy company that is expected to launch early next year) could make a huge difference, but only if policymakers get the implementation right.

For example, the National Wealth Fund should introduce conditionalities for public investments; provide public access to intellectual property and patents for research; create subsidies and other incentives for mission-aligned investments; and use loan guarantees and bailouts to move companies toward decarbonization, improved working conditions, and fewer share buybacks. Procurement is also a strong lever, because it represents one-third of the government's total spending and can direct investment toward strategically important goals.

Ultimately, the UK government must shift from a sectoral approach to a mission-oriented one that embraces a confident, outcomes-oriented form of public-private partnership, incentivizing the private sector to do its part. Labour understands the problem, but its proposed solution still needs some work.

at any cost, when what the UK really needs is growth that is inclusive and sustainable. That requires better corporate governance to prevent situations like Thames Water (a water and waste utility) being saddled with over £2 billion in debt after Macquarie became a major shareholder in 2006.

As I have said before, growth itself is not a mission; it is the result of public and private investment, and good growth is a result of

“Rather than being ‘unreservedly pro-business’, as it claims to be in its green paper, it should ensure that public investment targets clear objectives: to crowd in private capital, create new markets, and increase long-term competitiveness.”

(\$76 million) to build new cars in the UK. But Nissan still abandoned a planned expansion at its Sunderland plant, and the promised jobs never materialized.

Likewise, under the failed 'private finance initiative' schemes of the 1990s, the state would pay inflated sums to private contractors to operate public services such as prisons, schools, and hospitals before handing them back to the state, often in poor condition and without any clear improvement to the service. This approach was widely used in the construction of National Health Service hospitals, with the first 15 contracts generating £45 million in fees—some 4 percent of the capital value of the deals—for

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# UPF in diet increases health risks throughout life

*Every 10 percent increase in the amount of UPF in a person's diet is linked with a 17 percent increase in type 2 diabetes risk.*

Global dietary patterns are increasingly turning to relatively cheap, readily available highly palatable, ready-to-eat ultra processed foods (UPF) such as packaged snacks, fast foods, frozen meals, processed meats, soft drinks, and many baked goods. But UPFs have been associated with a host of health risks, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, cancer, mental disorders, type 2 diabetes, and early death.

Despite their negative health implications, UPF consumption is on the rise. Globally UPF now constitute 10 to 70 percent of daily energy intake depending on countries and regions. According to studies by the National Institutes of Health in the United States, around 50 to 60 percent of the energy content in the diet of an average American, British, or Canadian consumer now comes from UPF. Ultra-processed foods are usually described as industrially processed edible substances derived from natural food or synthesized from other organic compounds. These products are made hyperpalatable and attractive through the use of food additives including added sugars and salt, as well as emulsifiers, colorings and flavorings.

Previous studies have linked UPF to poor health, but broad assessment of the evidence in this area has been lacking for long. To bridge this gap, researchers from a number of leading institutions, including Johns Hopkins University in the United States, University of Sydney in Australia, and Sorbonne University in France, carried out an umbrella review, which is basically a high-level evidence summary. The researchers studied 45 meta-analyses from 14 review articles associating UPF with adverse health outcomes,



and involving nearly 10 million people.

The study revealed that a higher exposure to UPF was consistently associated with an increased risk of 32 adverse health outcomes. In addition, convincing evidence showed that higher UPF intake was associated with nearly a 50 percent increased risk of cardiovascular disease-related death, a 50 percent higher risk of anxiety and common mental disorders, a 21 percent greater risk of death from any cause, and a 12

percent greater risk of type 2 diabetes. There was also evidence of links between UPF and asthma, gastrointestinal health, and some cancers.

On a related note, a separate study by researchers at University College London, University of Cambridge, and at Imperial College London examined the relationship between the degree of food processing and type 2 diabetes risk, as well as investigated which UPFs had the highest risk. The team analyzed UPF intake

and health outcomes for 311,892 individuals from eight European countries over a period of nearly 11 years, during which time 14,236 people developed type 2 diabetes. The study found that every 10 percent increase in the amount of UPF in a person's diet was linked with a 17 percent increase in type 2 diabetes risk. The study did not determine the exact links between UPF and type 2 diabetes, though several factors have been implied, including overconsumption and weight gain.

For their study, the researchers divided the food and drink consumed by the toddlers into four groups based on the Nova Classification, devised by researchers at San Paulo University in Brazil in 2009. This classification categorizes foods into four groups: Unprocessed foods (UF) or minimally processed foods (MCF) include eggs, milk, vegetables, fish and fruit. Processed culinary ingredients (PCI) are ingredients such as salt, butter, oil. Processed foods (PF) include tinned fish, peanut butter, cheese; and Ultra processed foods (UPF) are products such as flavored cereals and yogurts, industrially made sliced bread, biscuits, sausages, and crisps. Since the UPFs were industrially produced, they also contained several ingredients not usually used in home cooking, such as emulsifiers, colorings and sweeteners.

The researchers also performed 'substitution modeling' on the data to see how, theoretically, replacing one Nova food group with another would affect type 2 diabetes risk. The results showed that substituting 10 percent of UPF in the diet with 10 percent of MPF/PCI, reduced type 2 diabetes risk by 14 percent. Substituting 10 percent of UPF in the diet with 10 percent of PF reduced diabetes risk by 18 percent.

In order to better understand how level of processing affects type 2 diabetes risk, the researchers then performed additional analysis on the data to separate UPF into nine subgroups—Breads, biscuits and breakfast cereals; Sauces, spreads, and condiments; Sweets and desserts; Savory snacks; Plant-based alternatives; Animal-based products; Ready-to-eat/heat mixed dishes; Artificially and sugar-sweetened beverages; Alcoholic drinks; and other ultra-processed foods.

Analysis of the nine UPF subgroups showed that savory snacks, animal-based products, ready meals, and sugar-sweetened and artificially-sweetened beverages were associated with higher incidence of type 2 diabetes. High proportions of these less healthy foods contributed to overall type 2 diabetes risk. In the top 25 percent of UPF consumers, where UPF made up 23.5 percent of their total diet, sweetened beverages alone accounted for nearly 40 percent of their UPF intake and 9 percent of their diet overall.

The UPF subgroup analysis in this study is revealing as it confirms that not all foods categorized as UPF are alike in terms of the health risks associated with them. UPF breads, biscuits and breakfast cereals, sweets and desserts, and plant-based alternatives were associated with lower incidence of type 2 diabetes.

The researchers warned that due to the observational nature of the study, it can only measure associations rather than causal effects. The UCL team is currently conducting a trial to assess the impact of UPF versus MPF diets meeting healthy diet guidance, which will further clarify the results of this study. The results of this trial are expected to be published in 2025.

## Toddlers found to obtain nearly half their daily calories from UPF

A recent study in the United Kingdom found that children in the one-to-three age group are on average obtaining 47 percent of their daily calories from Ultra processed foods and that this rises to 59 percent by the age of seven. The study, led by researchers at University College London (UCL), examined data from 2,591 children born in the UK in 2007 and 2008 whose parents recorded what their children ate and drank over three days.



The toddlers—who were 21 months when their parents recorded their diets—were being fed with flavored yogurts and wholegrain breakfast cereals. By the age of seven, the most common UPFs were sweet cereals, white bread and puddings. Although the foods eaten by the toddlers would be termed healthy by many standards, the study found that some wholegrain cereals and flavored yogurts had high levels of added sugar and salt.

The study reflected this, as the toddlers who consumed more ultra-

processed foods also had a higher intake of sugar and salt. Aside from sugar and salt, providing toddlers with a diet that includes a lot of ultra-processed food, could lead to children becoming accustomed to the added flavors of UPF, and likely to reject the flavors of natural foods in future. This could encourage unhealthy eating habits later in life.

Pediatricians point out that eating patterns in the early years are important, as they help set habits that can persist through childhood and into adulthood. The study substantiated this behavior, with 21-month-olds who ate more ultra-processed foods also becoming higher consumers of ultra-processed foods by age seven.

The researchers called for policies to redress the balance of children's diets towards a lower proportion of UPFs, such as restricting the promotion of unhealthy foods marketed towards children, adding warning labels to products (e.g. those that are high in sugar), and subsidizing fresh and minimally processed food.

The research team also said there was a range of commercial products intended for young children that would not be classified as a UPF as they did not contain UPF-style ingredients such as added sugar or salt, but these foods mimicked the texture of UPFs. This included vegetable sticks or puffs, or snacks that resembled fruits, which although it did not have unhealthy nutritional content, could still discourage children from naturally healthy alternatives such as fresh vegetables and fruits as they grow up.

Social activists point out that it is not easy to feed children health promoting foods as the current food environment favors UPF. Highly processed foods are often cheaper than the foods parents would like to give their children, such as fresh fruit and vegetables. Additionally, despite labels suggesting they are a healthy choice, UPFs marketed for children often contain too much sugar and salt, which makes it harder for parents to make healthy choices."





RECIPE

# Turmeric Lemon Rice

An easy to prepare dish, Lemon Rice is tangy, crunchy and bursting with lemon flavor. It is a delicious way to turn plain rice into an exotic dish and is the perfect accompaniment to any meats or veggies as a side-dish. It is a healthy option that is surprisingly refreshing and pairs perfectly with pickle or papadum as accompaniment for a great dinner meal.

**Total time:** 30 minutes  
**Serving:** 3 to 4

**Ingredients:**

- 2 cups Basmati Rice , (Washed, rinsed and soaked)
- Salt to taste
- For tempering:
- 1 tbsp chana dal
- 1 tbsp urad dal
- 2 tbsp peanuts
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 2 dry red chillies
- 5-10 curry leaves
- 3-4 green chillies, (Slit)
- 1/4 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tbsp grated ginger
- 1 lemon juice



Chef Chhaya Thakker

- 1 tsp lemon zest
- For garnishing:
- Few coriander leaves
- 1 tsp oil/ghee (optional)

**Instructions:**

- Cook the rice, fluff and set aside
- Heat oil in a pan, when hot add mustard seeds and let them start to pop
- Add curry leaves, peanuts and wait for a few seconds
- Add turmeric and red chili and stir together
- Add in the rice and freshly squeezed lemon juice, lemon zest and gently mix well
- Add salt if the cooked rice was not salted.
- Cook for 2 minutes, taste and adjust salt and

lemon.

- Take off the heat and let it sit covered for 2 minutes
- Before serving, garnish with coriander leaves and a dash of ghee.

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



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# False Promise of 'Responsible Mining'



**Chelsea Hodgkins**  
Senior Electric-Vehicle Advocate  
in Public Citizen's Climate  
Program.



“  
ICMM member companies, whether through direct ownership or joint ventures, account for more than half of the 20 firms responsible for the majority of alleged human-rights violations in critical minerals mining.  
”

In July, the Serbian government reinstated the permits for Rio Tinto's lithium mining project, after canceling them in 2022 following public protests. The decision triggered demonstrations, with thousands of people taking to the streets of Belgrade over concerns that the mine would pose a threat to water sources and public health. After all, Rio Tinto had already demonstrated its willingness to circumvent the country's environmental regulations.

Rio Tinto has a long history of alleged human-rights violations and water mismanagement and contamination at its mines around the world. But it is not just Rio Tinto: corruption and negligence are endemic in the mining industry. A US judge ordered Glencore to pay \$700 million in fines for its decade-long scheme to bribe officials in several countries. Mining giant BHP and its Brazilian partner Vale are tied up in legal battles over the collapse of the Fundão tailings dam—Brazil's worst environmental disaster.

As the European Union plans to increase domestic mining of materials that are essential to the green transition, as well as to numerous defense technologies and digital products, policymakers and populations are seeking reassurance that such efforts will be sustainable. To that end, the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM)—an association that Rio Tinto helped establish and includes Glencore, Vale, and BHP—and other major industry players are working to create a global standard, called the Consolidated Mining Standard Initiative (CMSI), to certify minerals as responsibly produced. Given their track record, can these mining giants be trusted to set their own rules and hold themselves accountable?

Voluntary standards and certifications are hardly new. They exist across a range of industries, from agriculture to construction, and many such initiatives already exist in the mining sector. In fact, the four associations leading the CMSI—the

ICMM, the Mining Association of Canada, the World Gold Council, and the Copper Mark—each have their own assurance framework.

But evaluations of these voluntary schemes, conducted by Germanwatch, Mercedes-Benz, and others, have shown that most lack transparency, rigor, and oversight, and cannot ensure that their requirements are implemented. In short, they constitute a sophisticated form of greenwashing. In February, Lead the Charge published an assessment of third-party assurance and accreditation programs in the raw-materials sector, evaluating each one against a series of minimum criteria for credibility. Tellingly, the ICMM's Performance Expectations Validation process met only 16 percent of the criteria.

These failing grades have real-world implications for indigenous peoples, workers, and local communities. According to the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, ICMM member companies, whether through direct ownership or joint ventures, account for more than half of the 20 firms responsible for the majority of alleged human-rights violations in critical minerals mining.

Policymakers and financial institutions are channeling billions of dollars into mining projects around the world based on voluntary certifications like the proposed CMSI. For example, the EU's

Critical Raw Materials Act uses these assurances as a proxy for determining whether companies are responsibly sourcing raw materials. And 78 percent of automakers evaluated in Lead the Charge's assessment reported using them to inform sourcing decisions, especially as the uptake of electric vehicles increases.

In fact, a recent analysis of the proposed CMSI, conducted by indigenous groups, civil-society organizations, and policy experts, highlights several gaps in the framework that would harm communities and, crucially, pose risks for automakers. The standard is divided into three practice levels: foundational, good, and leading. But the requirements for the foundational level, which, it should be noted, companies are permitted to fall below during the assurance process, do not align with international laws, legal norms, or widely accepted standards, such as the International Finance Corporation's Performance Standards. Mining firms will therefore not be forced to address serious human-rights abuses, which could lead to penalties for automakers down the line.

Moreover, the draft standard does not protect the right of indigenous peoples—who are disproportionately harmed by mining—to free, prior, and informed consent, which is derived from their right to govern their territories and

resources and to self-determination. Protecting this right must be a minimum requirement for the foundational practice level. But the very notion that respect for fundamental rights can be broken down and parceled into varying levels of performance reflects the CMSI's flawed design. This approach would cause even more harm to indigenous communities, given that more than half of critical minerals are on or near their lands.

Despite the efforts of the ICMM and its partners, including CMSI advisory group members like BMW and Tesla, to market the standard as a tool for responsible mining, it is nothing more than an attempt by the industry to present a clean, green face to the public. If successful, the CMSI will consolidate the power and influence of mining giants like Rio Tinto, Glencore, and BHP, and allow them to act with impunity while providing false assurances to all major stakeholders.

Instead of delivering a just energy transition, the CMSI would allow extractive industries to prioritize profit over clean air and water, human rights, and a livable planet, and expose automakers, governments, and investors to reputational risk. Given the increasing demand for minerals to fuel the energy transition, setting high expectations and establishing strong, enforceable rules for the mining sector is more important than ever.

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