

What's On

# RISE Center at AUK hosts Kuwait's NASA Space Apps Challenge 2019



Group photo of the judges with Dr Amir Zeid and Dr Rawda Awwad.



Group photo of the winning teams with Dr Rawda Awwad and Dr Amir Zeid.

The Center for Research in Informatics, Sciences, and Engineering (RISE) at the American University of Kuwait (AUK) concluded the second year of Kuwait's local edition of the NASA Space Apps Challenge in collaboration with its strategic partner, Kuwait Projects Company (KIPCO). The 48-hour hackathon was attended by a myriad of eager contestants, including high school students, AUK alumni and professors. The closing ceremony unveiled the two winning teams "Oxylus Kuwait" and "Tempest", both of which have qualified to join the world finals.

The NASA Space Apps Challenge is the world's largest hackathon introduced by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The international competition occurred in more than 75 countries around the globe. The Kuwait competition took place at Marina Hotel and brought together around 80 people from around Kuwait to solve problems related to Earth and space.

As witnessed throughout the weekend, NASA Space Apps lived up to its ethos and inspired collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Twelve competing teams composed of scientists, coders, space enthusiasts, graphic designers and business analysts-worked over 48 hours to create apps, games, and websites that addressed the challenges provided by NASA Space Apps. These included, Earth's Oceans, Our Moon, Planets Near and Far, To The Stars, and Living in Our World. Subject matter experts from different institutions were available throughout the event to mentor participants and help with questions related to Earth, space science, and technology.



Dr Amir Zeid addressing the participants.



AUK President Dr Rawda Awwad addressing the participants.

The 2-day event concluded with a closing ceremony, in which the two winning teams were announced. During his closing speech, Dr Amir Zeid, Dean of the AUK College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, congratulated all participants on their vigilance and perseverance in working long hours to produce a marketable software solution within a short period of time.

"Hackathons are increasingly becoming an effective developmental platform to generate young innovations and new business ideas of international significance. Throughout the past 48 hours, our NASA Space Apps teams have been working around the clock to produce comprehensive software solutions. I am amazed by the level of energy and enthusiasm these young people radiate, and I am even more thrilled to see this number of high school

participants coming to the stage to showcase their talents and innovative ideas," said Dr Zeid. "We treasure KIPCO's strategic partnership for the second year, and we hope to continue working with them on more youth empowerment initiatives in the future," he added.

#### Youth empowerment

Stressing on the essence of youth empowerment in Kuwait, Abeer Al-Omar, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at KIPCO noted, "This is KIPCO's second year supporting the NASA Space Apps Challenge as it aligns with KIPCO CSR strategy of youth welfare. We are very proud of the creative ideas that are coming from Kuwait's youth, and we continue to offer our sincere support and congratulations to the winners for

their devotion and commitment during the duration of this challenge."

The atmosphere at Six Palms (Marina Hotel) radiated devotion and commitment, but the teams did not only think of creating projects that would win the competition, rather, similar to last year, they made sure to weigh in the social and ethical impacts of their ideas. Commenting on this, AUK President Dr Rawda Awwad said in her closing remarks, "At AUK, experiential learning is not merely a concept; rather, it is our practice. However, the level of engagement at NASA Space Apps Challenge is something entirely new. It is spaces such as these, that often become the site for something that is groundbreaking. This is AUK's version of education; and to say that we are proud of you is an understatement."

Three judges convened to select the first and second place teams who will move on to compete globally against winners from other locations. The judges, Mazen Hawwa, KIPCO Senior Vice President of Finance and Operations; Yacoub Yousef Al-Bash, Team Leader of Information Technology Services at Kuwait Oil Company (KOC); and Dr Bassem Alfeeli, Director of Innovation and Enterprise at KFAS, represented a variety of expertise and provided a balanced perspective. Each team had 5 minutes to explain and demonstrate their projects to the judges, after which the judges made their final choice of winners.

The first winning project "Oxylus" led by AUK alumnus Ali Kalkawi, is a multi-tier application which allows communities at risk of wildfire to serve each other as well as to be better assisted by authorities. The application allows communities to offer

services such as shelters to other people, carpool and volunteer with the authorities when needed, all this built on top of a previous iteration of the application which allowed users to report wildfires in the vicinity to alert their community.

The mobile application developed is also able to safely navigate users away from danger zones to their required destination. A prediction model was also developed to predict fires based on a location's given features (temperature, humidity, wind etc.) to be able to better allocate resources to areas at risk. "It is always a pleasure to gather as a community of developers in Kuwait to tackle different issues through the use of technology. The challenges encouraged us to think outside the box to come up with innovative solutions in the theme of Earth and Space, and I am extremely proud of the level of quality that my team was able to deliver in this year's challenge," said Kalkawi.

The second winning project "My Verse", led by AUK alumnus Omar Khalil, is a mobile AR application that allows users to create, customize, and simulate interactive solar systems using accurate and real algorithms. Players can create planets that can be comprehensively customized in a wide variety of ways such as terrain textures, ocean levels, and the colors of every element. Planets then interact with each other and the star that the player has customized to create a solar system that behaves realistically. For example, a planet can harbor water if it is the right distance from the sun and contains atmospheric gases. Finally, players can contribute by creating planets and placing them into other people's solar systems in real-time.

## Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging Week

Nuclear medicine departments in Kuwait, along with their world counterparts annually celebrate the Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging Week, which has been annually held in October since 2004, with a new message each year. This year's celebration will be under the patronage of Ahmadi Medical Zone Director Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti under the slogan "Making the Invisible Visible" on October 25 at the Gate Mall.

In this regard, Adan hospital's senior nuclear medicine technician and specialist, Ayesha Al-Qattan said that the Nuclear Week ceremony is marked with support and appreciation to those working in the field. The week is open for nuclear doctors, specialists and nursing staff members to enhance their role in diagnosing various diseases and



Ayesha Al-Qattan

exploring the latest in nuclear medicine. "The Nuclear Week will also include special lectures and activities to be held in various public and private schools and various malls with the aim of boosting public awareness concerning this line of medicine", Al-Qattan concluded.

## Symphony Style appoints a new general manager

With over 15 years of experience in managing four and five-star hotels in addition to 13 years in driving sales and operations across the GCC hospitality sector, Pike began his career in hospitality and managing hotels with the Radisson Blu Group, serving as the General Manager for Hotel Radisson Blu Waterfront, Cape Town - South Africa; Radisson Blu Hotel Birmingham - United Kingdom; Radisson Blu Hotel, Addis Ababa - Ethiopia; and Hormuz Grand Hotel, Muscat - Oman. Pike also served as the General Manager of the Radisson Blu Hotel Apartment Dubai Silicon Oasis - UAE, a position he held before joining Symphony Style Kuwait.

Pike has an extensive network and a desire to explore new avenues to maximize growth potential in the hospitality sector in all of Europe, the Middle East



and Africa. He is also renowned for his capability to foreshadow the markets, cultures and diverse challenges of the labor market. Utilizing his experience, Pike has proven his strength in meeting the requirements for unique revenue generation, cost control, foreseeing challenges and opportunities across cultures and the geographic location of the facility. In addition to all the above, Pike is always keen to make the guest experience exceptional by all standards. Pike will work alongside the hotel's highly qualified and experienced staff in the Kuwait market to achieve the objectives and strategies of the hotel and enhance its position in the local and international market.

## Al-Sarraf: Horeca helps hospitality sector develop consumer health

In view of the growing number of companies announcing intention to take part in the Horeca Kuwait 2020 exhibition to be organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Co. at Mishref International Fair Ground in the period of January 20-22, 2020, The National Medical Consumable Industries Co. (NatMed) recently announced joining the exhibition sponsors.

"Cooperation between hospitality manufacturers in the field of food safety, quality and environment saves billions of dollars that could be spent on direct and indirect damage resulting from the production, manufacture and preparation of food and consumer good", said NatMed's managing director, Mohammed Ahmed Al-Sarraf.

Al-Sarraf stressed that changes in the world of trade and services made specialized exhibitions such as Horeca Kuwait indispensable on setting successful marketing strategies for any sector at national, regional or international scales.

Al-Sarraf also stressed that NatMed thinks highly of Horeca Kuwait as one of a kind exhibition adding that his company would display products and services of interest to the hotels and restaurants including disposable aluminum and plastic packs and over 2,000 items of other paper and plastic products used in food serving and packaging in addition to disposable medical products.

"NatMed was founded in 1989, with a Capital of KD 100,000 (US\$ 330,000) and a limited number of staff members. Those numbers gradually multiplied and our products multiplied to around 2,000 items and our company is now considered the number one supplier in its field, servicing hotels, catering companies, restaurants, medical centers, supermarkets, food industries, and many other organizations", Al-Sarraf explained. Further, Al-Sarraf pointed that the economic value of medical care in the hospitality field had recently multiplied in Kuwait and elsewhere in the world as more countries are now keen on making and joining international agreements with specialized organizations such as the FAO, WHO, WTO. "The FAO estimates the economic impact of food safety at \$ 95 billion", he concluded.



Mohammed Al-Sarraf

## ICSK Khaitan conducts K-Rays 2019

Science Exhibitions develop scientific attitude in the young generation of our country; it helps to inculcate the sense of pride in their talent and to promote interest in Science and Technology. ICSK Khaitan organized its Science Exhibition K-Rays 2019 on 17th October Thursday in the school premises.

The Exhibition was inaugurated by Dr Mohan Rana - a senior Research Scientist in Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research. He showed keen interest in the working models and said that parents must encourage children and should enhance their creative endeavors. Azharuddin Amir Mohammed, Hon. Secretary, Board of Trustees of ICSK also graced the occasion.

The exhibits were displayed subject wise, all the teachers and students put forth their best efforts. Students exhibited working models, still models and charts on the relevant subjects. The entire campus was abuzz with energy and admiration. The auditorium was filled with exhibits of KG children. Art, music and dance projects were also displayed there. Models depicting seasons, houses, zoos, wealth from waste, models of musical instruments, craft work of students were elegantly and proudly displayed in the auditorium which caught the attention of all.

Pillars of Dharma, weapons of early men, Buri Khalifa, Solar Power Station and Chandrayan II were the center of attraction and enthralled the parents and the guests. They were appreciated by the visitors. Students also displayed models of- Early man and their life style, working models of Solar System, Terrestrial Ecosystem, Soil Conservation. The life style of tribals was the main attractions of the Social Science projects. The students of class II Commerce utilized their whole class as a replica of a Bank, which consisted of reception, ATM counter, help desk, locker system, loan counter was very creative and attractive.



Everyone who were present at K Rays were quite impressed with the dedication and grasp of students and appreciated their endeavors in cultivating a scientific temper. The Principal KG Shirath also acknowledged the passion and interest shown by the students through their various exhibits. He also thanked all the teachers, students and parents for making K-Rays a grand success.