



LOCAL

Let us choose to Create from waste

2

SOAPBOX

4

LOCAL

Inspiring Women to Dream

9



Food service industry needs to adapt to thrive

STAFF REPORT

Over 5,500 new food service outlets have opened, or are poised to open in the region between 2017 and 2020. The profusion of new outlets is raising concerns within the food service industry and proving a challenge to many established players in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bloc.

Increased competition from the slew of food service startups that include full-fledged restaurants, fast-food venues, pop-up kitchens, delivery-only options and other non-traditional formats, is only the latest of woes confronting food service operators. The industry as a whole, already plagued by slump in sales, rise in costs, fall in margins and having to cope with inconsistent labor policies of

governments, is said to be struggling to stay in the black.

Many in the industry are reporting between 5 to 20 percent drop in same-store sales, as margins that were once comfortably above 20 percent dwindle in the face of increasing cost of labor, supplies and rent. To contend with the downturn, many organizations have resorted to hiking their prices, shrinking portion sizes in menus, squeezing vendors for better prices on food supplies, and renegotiating rents.

Some operators have even shelved or slashed investments in repairs and refurbishments essential to revive their stalling businesses. It is estimated that around 3 percent of annual



revenue, which would normally go into marketing, and nearly 2 percent that would be earmarked for yearly maintenance, are now being diverted to

shore up falling margins.

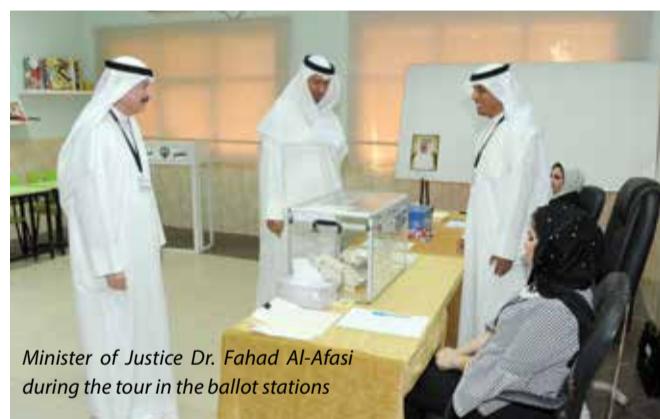
According to a recent report by global restaurant consultants, AaronAllen & Associates on the food service and

hospitality industry in GCC, while half of the downturn in performance could be attributed to market changes, the other half came down to mismanagement. Unfortunately, many in the industry are willing to accept and address the half outside their control, while ignoring what they can change.

The report reveals a mix of external and internal factors for the current predicament. Since the sharp fall in oil prices in mid-2014, many GCC states were compelled to implement economic reforms, including by encouraging Foreign Direct Investments (FDI). While opening up of the market made the region attractive to foreign investments, it also attracted a horde of global food service chains that now pose a challenge to established domestic businesses.

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Strong turnout in 12th by-elections



Minister of Justice Dr. Fahad Al-Afasi during the tour in the ballot stations

The 12th by-election to Kuwait's National Assembly (Parliament) got under way on Saturday, 16 March with a total of 47 candidates, including five women, vying to occupy two parliamentary seats from the second and third constituencies.

According to official figures, out of the there are 62,457 voters registered to cast their ballots in the second constituency and 96,528 voters in the third constituency. The country, with a little over 483,000 eligible voters, is divided into five electoral constituencies. The ten candidates receiving the highest number of votes from each constituency will represent their area in the 50-member parliament. The parliament also includes 15 ex-officio members, nominated by the prime-minister and who serve in the cabinet as ministers.

At the end of the 10-day registration period, following announcement of the 12th by-elections over a month ago, five women and 56 men had jumped in to vie for the two seats to parliament. A total of 26 hopefuls, including one woman, signed up to contest the second constituency seat, while 35, including four women, put their names up from the third constituency.

However, by election day there were only 47 nominees left in the fray, including the initial five women candidates. A total of 18 candidates, including one woman, remained in the second constituency, while there were 29 men and four women in the third constituency.

Despite impressive gains accomplished by Kuwaiti women in several fields, their political representation in the 50-seat parliament is currently limited to a single MP, Safa Al Hashem, who was the lone woman winner in the last elections.

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Let us choose to Create

from waste



MERYL MATHEW
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

Did you know that each person in Kuwait produces about 1.5 kgs of waste per day that results to fill the tens to hundreds of hectares of landfills in Kuwait?

Although there is much waste that is already accumulated, the awareness is slowly touching people through a few teams who have started various projects and organizations to curb this issue and recycle and upcycle waste.

In-order to achieve the LEED Gold certificate, it was a requirement target to recycle 75% of the waste materials from the Kuwait International Airport T2 construction



site and this lead Limak as the project contractor to recycle and divert this waste materials from the landfills.

The recycling project began from dedicated containers to collect and store different types of wastes at the construction site to the waste segregation areas where the waste was segregated by dedicated workers into recyclables and non-recyclables. Then this waste was sent out to recycling plants, thus resulting in diverting more than 88 % of the waste generated to recycling facilities rather than going to landfills.



It was during this ongoing recycling process that Project UCON, approached the Ministry of Public Works for a strategic sponsorship in-order for them to feature the T2 airport as a case study on Sustainability in Kuwait.

Thus, the MPW assigned lead architect on terminal 2, Abrar Alebrahim the task of developing the program for Project UCON on behalf of the MPW.

Arch. Abrar developed the program detailing how PROJECT UCON would best be able to shed light on Terminal 2 and then lead and formed a team with the architects from Limak, Foster+Partners, Gulf Consult and MPW and focused on producing the benches and curating the exhibition.

Thus, the project was born under the strategic sponsorship from the MPW, Limak and with Platinum Sponsorships from Zain, Kuwait Portland Cement and United Steel Industrial Co. The project was also sponsored by Gulf Consult, and Foster+Partners and several other collaborating sponsors.

This was when at one of the LEED follow up team meetings on Mondays where discussions on the updates regarding the certification took place that the idea came up not only just to recycle but to also upcycle the waste generated at T2.

Thus, Arch Abrar decided to develop a program to upcycle the waste that was generated at the construction site in a way as to create social awareness.

As a part of the upcycling works architects were invited to use the construction waste materials to construct pavilions that were later kept on display in Al Shaheed park for the duration of the awareness event. Those pavilions are also an innovative method to document the history of the construction and create social awareness on sustainability.

The program also held talks, seminars, and upcycling workshops at the Shaheed park with the Kuwait Woman in Philanthropy Group and through collaborations with City Group, Kuwait Commute, Ru7la and Madeenah tours of Kuwait City.

We do hope other buildings take similar initiatives such as T2 and that the awareness continues.

Special Thanks- To Abrar Alebrahim, Orcun Ozhelvaci & Yasmeen Alkandari who spoke exclusively to The Times Kuwait

create

Create began as a concept and an extension to the Kuwait Academy of Art at a time when we felt we needed to start an initiative that would give something back to the environment. It was just over coffee with a friend about 2 years back when we talked about the waste generated in Kuwait and how even if small we must do something about it.

That's how create was born in 2018 and we a small team of artists got together every week to upcycle and create our first set of products which was displayed on our Instagram and Facebook page.

All the products on our page is created from something that could have gone to waste and is handmade by an artist. We use various waste materials to make our products such as CDs, wood and cloths.

Our dream is to have a lot more artists join us to serve the cause and be part of our upcycling community, to spread awareness on saving our environment and of course create more useful products to convert waste into use.

Special Thanks- To Sepideh Behbehani who spoke exclusively to The Times Kuwait



ARTSPACE you create

Founded in 2013 Artspace was introduced in Kuwait aiming to spread art as a form of expression to all ages.

Initially we started by hosting in house workshops and camps. In time we initiated more collaborative community events also to create awareness on environmental and social aspects.

Every team meeting, we brainstorm a topic that later turns into life. One such topic of requirement was upcycling which we initiated within Artspace in 2015 to reuse the waste our studio itself produced by creating art and furniture pieces which was then included in our educational curriculums that we started teaching students. Now we host upcycling/recycling courses for kids and adults and collaborate with others for outdoors activities to create more public awareness.

We hope to touch the community such that upcycling becomes a lifestyle and sustainability becomes an individual cause. It can be as simple as substituting a tote bag for plastic, for example.

We hope to continue inspiring with example and influence the community on the importance of recycling and minimizing waste through our workshops and by pitching our upcycling ideas for their waste. That's how we hope to create change, be a good influence and continue to challenge ourselves through non-familiarity yet beneficial causes.

Special Thanks- To Sarah Chouari who spoke exclusively to The Times Kuwait

Lambah Co started in 2015 as a platform for struggling artists and designers to find their desired jobs in the private sector in Kuwait. We also work towards encouraging these new graduates to continue their learning process and be advanced in their skills through our regularly organized workshops and seminars.



Upcycling as a concept came about within Lambah Co when we realized how much waste we generated from our workshops and we knew we must do something about it. What started as upcycling from that workshops waste turned into the concept of re-create which we hope to organize as a yearly exhibition and competition that invite artists to upcycle then display their artwork at our exhibition.

In 2018 we had a very successful event and we hope to have an even more successful event this year.

I am honestly grateful that we did initiate upcycling within Lambah Co as we could see how it created vision in people to re-use and recycle and learn how they can do it on their own from our workshops.

Lambah Co hopes to continue this initiative along with our core function and of course bring young talents and designers to the limelight through us.

Special Thanks- To the founder who spoke exclusively to The Times Kuwait



The Mission and Vision of The Scientific Center is focused on STEM education and environmental sustainability. The center was looking to provide an experience that combined these two concepts to educate, engage and inspire today's youth to work towards a more sustainable future.

Thus, Re-Use was introduced as part of TSC to serve this purpose.

The concept has an exhibition and several workshops running until the April 6th 2019 around the theme of sustainability, recycling and upcycling.

The exhibition includes various exhibits like videos showing real world environmental disasters taking place in Kuwait's waters, and plenty of information on Kuwait's environment. They also have displays like the musical instrument section which is completely made from upcycled materials.

The Workshops have a lot of activities for children and adults. Among them the most recently introduced workshop being on how children can build their own robots with recycled materials and a basketball activity where the nets and boards were made from recycled materials.

It was indeed be seen that the TSC Re-Use concept is slowly influencing the people wherein even children as young as 5 are requesting their schools to integrate recycling programs and educators are seriously taking up the task.

Special thanks to Khaled M Al-Ramly who spoke exclusively to The Times Kuwait



Omniya began on August 5th 2015 as an initiative of Farah Shaban, Saud Al Fozan and Sanna Al Ghemlas to spread the awareness about recycling in Kuwait when they saw that there was an actual need to recycle as the consumption levels in Kuwait increased and landfills doubled.

We started by giving out boxes to schools and homes for people to collect their plastics especially water bottles. In the first year we managed to give out 40000 boxes and visited 95 schools across Kuwait to spread the awareness. Our major activities started from spreading awareness and elevating the recycling levels in the households across the community. Today Omniya as a proud winner of The Best SME business in the Gulf Region award, we are operating the first recycling plant for PET plastics and we work with all the entities we can to install collection points at schools, offices and co-operative's where people can easily dispose their collected plastic for recycling.

Indeed, Omniya has succeed to be the change and has developed the recycling industry in Kuwait to reuse plastics at factories and in-turn reduce the plastic waste that was filling up the landfills. We hope to continue to impact the community and create awareness on recycling and in future to expand our factory to support this recycling especially the recycling of PET plastics.

Special thanks to Sana AL Ghemlas who spoke exclusively to The Times Kuwait

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Inspiring Women to Dream

BY NITA BHATKAR CHOGLE
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

Following this year's International Women's Day on 8 March, The Promenade Mall, Bazaar Studios and Soroptimist Kuwait came up with the perfect event to inspire women, both young and old, to dream. Not just dream, but to dream big, to follow their dreams and to break the barriers that stop them from turning their dreams into reality.

The event included the screening of two powerful movies that captured the essence and strength of women professionals, followed by a panel discussion on the



issues and challenges faced by working women in Kuwait and their experiences. Popcorn, cookies and coffee with a copy of the Bazaar magazine, a calendar from Promenade and little notes to write your dreams on created the right vibe for the evening to follow.

The first screening was a summary of Grit, a documentary series on inspirational women in Kuwait, produced and directed by Victoria Hogg. The movie was also written, filmed and edited by an all women crew.

'Dream, Girl' the second movie of the evening was a documentary film showcasing the stories of inspiring and ambitious female entrepreneurs.

The panel discussion was moderated by the host for the evening, Samar Al Mutawa, a certified Life Coach who guided the discussion with panelists Tamara Qabazard, a veterinarian at the Kuwait Zoo, Noor Al-Obaid founder of the non-profit Bake and Educate, Eman Alwadh, a professional in the oil sector and member of Soroptimist Kuwait, and Victoria Hogg.



Feedback from the panelists led to interactive discussions on working mom's guilt, sexism, misogyny in the workplace, glass ceilings, support crews, never giving up, and inspirational takeaways.

Overall, the evening was a breath of fresh air on the topic of empowering

women; it gave wings to conversations centered around women and women's issues, and hopefully there is no turning back now.

Kudos to the organizers and look forward to more such effective evenings in Kuwait.

Toyota genuine spare parts reinforces anti-counterfeit campaign

Mohamed Naser Al Sayer, a subsidiary of Al Sayer Holding and Toyota Genuine Spare Parts recently hosted a display stand at Avenues Mall to spread the awareness about the danger of using counterfeit parts. Members from the Group Parts Division interacted with visitors and explained the key benefits of using genuine quality parts to support long engine life and improve overall vehicle performance.

The specially designed stand featured touch and feel display of genuine and counterfeit parts where spare parts specialists educated the various ways the products harmed the car. Visitors at the stand were keen to understand the different grades and quality of products available in the market and the importance of checking the genuine trademark label and the appropriate product codes



during their purchase.

Al Sayer has been active with seminars and workshop involving concerned government and customs officials in the field of campaigning against anti-counterfeit parts entering the market. The main objective of the seminar was to associate the strategic objective of fostering partnership among the official authorities directly concerned with matters corresponding to intellectual property rights such as private sector companies represented by MNNS, professional experts and government agencies.

PwC and UN Migration Agency to support Expat Government Shelter

The PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Kuwait, in collaboration with the UN Migration Agency celebrated International Women's Day by pledging their commitment to supporting Kuwait's Government Shelter for Foreign Workers.

Through this partnership, PwC Kuwait has committed to funding the provision of essential supplies to the shelter's residents – comprised of female migrant domestic workers who had fled hardship at the hands of their employers. The donation was presented by PwC Kuwait's Chairman, Khaled Al Shatti and Managing Partner Sherif Shawki, as part of the firm's commitment to support the country's ongoing efforts to combat human trafficking and prevent future abuses.

In his comments, Khaled Al Shatti, Partner and Chairman of PwC in Kuwait, said: "We are committed to working with the Kuwaiti Government and with International Organizations like



UN Migration, whose values align with ours, to bring to light this important matter in the hope for a better future, living and working conditions for women (and men) in Kuwait and beyond."

Recognizing the involvement of more private sector in support of the government-run shelter, Iman Ereiqat, Chief of Mission for UN Migration office in Kuwait, said: "In recent years, women have represented an incrementally larger percentage of overseas contract workers in Kuwait. The Government of Kuwait has made considerable

progress in labor mobility management, enhancing protection of migrants' human rights and actively working to combat trafficking in persons – most notably by establishing the Government Shelter for Foreign Workers in 2014."

"The Shelter can house up to 500 residents who are provided with accommodation, food, psycho-social support and sustainable exit strategies. The Agency is pleased to scale up the support for the women at the shelter and to get more actors involved," he said.

Thai Textile exhibition to be held on 18 and 19 March

The Thai Embassy in cooperation with the Al-Sadu House is hosting a cultural event 'Thai Textiles: The Touch of Thai' on 18 and 19 March 2019 at the Al-Sadu House.

The program will include a Thai textiles exhibition and fashion show, cultural and music performances, lecture and workshop, and a reception. The main objective of this event is to promote the endeavors of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit to preserve Thailand's unique textile heritage and to help provide a source of income for the poor rural families in Thailand. More than 30 cultural officials and textiles experts from Thailand will take part in the event.

Ambassador of Thailand to Kuwait H.E. Dusit Manapan, expresses his appreciation to Sheikha Bibi Duaij Al-Sabah, Chairperson for Al-Sadu House Society, as well as the good cooperation from the National Council Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) in facilitating the preparations and arrangements for the event. This cooperation reflects the excellent relations between the Kingdom of Thailand and the State of Kuwait as well as their people.

He is also very honored that Eng. Ali Al Youha, Secretary General of the NCCAL will be present at



the event. The Ambassador welcomes the public to the exhibition, which will feature Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's project and demonstrate how Thai textiles are transformed into sophisticated and modern wear.

The exhibition will be held on Monday, 18 March, 2019 at 2pm and is open to the public. However, interested people have to make a seat reservation for the lecture and workshop to be held on Tuesday, 19 March, 2019 at 10am. Contact Ms. Iman, mobile no. 99848046. All events are free of charge.

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Security cameras to cover more areas in Kuwait



To strengthen the security of the country and the safety of the citizens, the Council of Ministers has decided to add 37 more government facilities and markets in the country to the list of places which are already protected by the CCTV cameras.

The sources said the government is keen to protect the safety and security of vital installations and the citizens and has sought funds from the Ministry of Finance to complete the installation of cameras.

The vital places in the list include the mosques, places of worship, marinas and shooting fields, oil installations, such as the oil fields, refineries, petrol depots and oil export ports.

The decision, which is published

in the Official Gazette under No. 207 of 2019, includes the infrastructure facilities of power stations and water distillation plants, the gas stations, sewage treatment plants, irrigation stations and call centers, as well as sea, land and air ports, radio and television stations, the Kuwaiti News Agency, satellite channels, free zones, marine control boats of the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fisheries, and transport facilities, stores, workshops and public transport depots.

The decision includes health facilities of various types, such as health centers, pharmacies, medical examination laboratories, government and private medical centers, drug stores, blood donation vehicles, ambulances, physiotherapy centers, drug sales companies and the central blood bank.

The decision of the Council of Ministers did not exclude the popular markets represented in: Mubarkiya, Gharballi, Blocks Market, Arms, Merchants, Seas, Folklore, Cesarean, Vegetables, Fish Market, Meat Market, Central Markets, People's Markets, Souq Al Jumaa (Friday Market) and Al-Haraj (auction) Souqs.

DDI holds French Diabetes Days conference



The Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), organized the French Diabetes Days Conference in collaboration with the French Embassy in Kuwait.

The conference was held at the DDI grounds on 10 and 11 March, and was well attended by many healthcare professionals, scientists, researchers and others from all over Kuwait.

It allowed a platform for participants to discuss the latest issues and findings on diabetes and its complications, opportunities for networking and forming new partnerships. Many international guest speakers from Imperial College, Weill Cornell, Nice University presented at the conference, in addition to chairpersons and speakers from the Institute, Kuwait University and the Ministry of Health.

European artistes give excellent performances



The Austrian embassy in Kuwait, in collaboration with Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, organized a concert titled 'An Evening of Variety' at the Yarmouk Cultural Center on 13 March. The two European artistes, Vera Karner, who played the clarinet, and Maciej Skarbek, who performed on the piano, gave renditions of classical music pieces from well-known musicians. Among the highlights of the concert were renditions from compositions by Wolfgang A. Mozart, Maurice Ravel, Jean Francaix and Johannes Brahms.

Vera Karner, a young clarinetist and chamber

musician from Austria, has performed as a soloist with a number of ensembles, including the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Varna State Opera and the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Stara Zagora State Opera. She has won several prizes at national and international music competitions, as well as received awards and grants.

Maciej Skarbek, born in Poland, studied at the University for Music und darstellende Kunst Vienna, and is currently doing his master's degree in Vienna. He has also received many international awards and prizes.



Diplomatic Women's Committee lauds accomplishments of Kuwaiti women

Diplomatic Women's Committee, a group made up of female Ambassadors and spouses of Ambassadors in Kuwait, held a ceremony to mark International Woman's Day on 8 March.

Narjes Al-Shatti, committee advisor, pointed out that the political leadership paved the way for Kuwaiti women to contribute to the development of their country through their occupation of senior ministerial positions.

Al-Shatti, pointed out that International Woman Day was a moment of reflection to

see "what we have achieved as individuals, communities, people and nations."

She added that women have proven they are as qualified as a man in sacrifices and burden-sharing. Al-Shatti said the women in Kuwait were granted full political rights, so she could vote, run for parliament, and so many women have reached the position of ministers. She underscored that International Woman's Day was a reminder for Kuwaiti females that more work needed to be done by Kuwaiti women in the service of their country.



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Entrepreneurs present proposals for New Kuwait 2035

A coterie of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs have presented to ministers and state officials a variety of new proposals as the government moves ahead plans to turn His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's vision of New Kuwait 2035, which aims to transform the country into a financial, commercial and cultural center in the region.

In their meeting held last week under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the entrepreneurs discussed in depths their plans with ministers and top government officials.

The discussions, which were held at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, saw entrepreneur Dr. Manar Al-Jazaf present an initiative for improving school food to help cut the rising obesity rates among students. Minister

of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr. Hamid Al-Azmi welcomed her initiative and pointed out that the ministry has formed a special committee with the Kuwait Flour Mills & Bakeries Company to provide healthy food for school students.

For his part, Health Minister Sheikh Dr. Basil Al-Sabah stressed the need for promoting a healthy diet and lifestyles among school students. He noted that there was a proposal from the Council of Ministers of Health of the GCC countries to add a full hour of sport practicing to the school day to achieve this goal.

Entrepreneur Abdulrahman Al-Duaj presented an initiative about managing risks in small projects. Al-Duaj argued that his idea would help increase job opportunities in Kuwait, rationalize funds, encourage investment and



manage risks for all SME financing entities.

Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan stressed the importance of the idea of risk management in small and medium-sized enterprises, adding that the Credit Information Exchange Act had been approved and it would help reduce risks and boost economic growth.

Hamad Khalaf, another entrepreneur,

introduced a proposal for privatizing the management of medical facilities to solve the problem of overcrowded hospitals and primary care centers and to reduce the budget of overseas treatment. Health Minister Sheikh Bassil Al-Sabah said the initiative was in line with the government's vision of strengthening health care system in the country.

Abdul Aziz Al-Lughani presented his entrepreneurial initiative on the topic of 'governance in boards of government bodies', while Dr. Zahra Al-Ali presented an initiative on using drones to monitor Kuwait's natural reserves. Entrepreneur Ahmed Nabil proposed the creation of new mechanism to provide job opportunities for talented Kuwaitis and Minister of Education, Dr. Hamid Al-Azmi said a ministerial decree had been taken in this regard.



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Website launched for hiring domestic workers

Director of Information Technology Department in Public Authority for Manpower, Eng Rabab Al-Osaimi has announced the launch of a website for recruitment of domestic workers.

Speaking to media, Al-Osaimi explained that people who desire to hire domestic workers can visit the website and check the advertisements of various domestic labor offices. After choosing a suitable domestic worker, they can pay the required amount online to reserve the services of that domestic worker. The website is expected to further facilitate the process of finding and hiring domestic workers in Kuwait.



NECK opens Bible School for children

The inaugural function of the St. Peter's C.S.I Vacation Bible School (VBS) was held on 15 March at National Evangelical Church, Kuwait (NECK). The program commenced with a colorful rally after which the Vicar, Rev. Johnson Alexander welcomed the gathering and introduced the director Rev. Gibin Thampy (C.S.I Madhya Kerala Diocese).

The Vicar of Ahmadi St. Paul's C.S.I Church, Rev. Levin Koshy inaugurated the VBS by cutting the ribbon. The VBS Convener, Della Merin Daniel led the cheering students along with VBS Secretary Asha Leela Thomas and other team members. The program commenced with a music session led by Ruben Thomas Varghese along with the music team. The VBS Director, Rev. Gibin Thampy made a dramatic entrance in disguise, which thrilled the children. The closing day of the VBS will be on 29 March, 2019 at the NECK.



Legislation to improve business atmosphere in country

A package of legislation will be adopted in the coming period to improve the local business atmosphere in the country, said Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan on Sunday. In a speech during the Kuwait Projects Company (KIPCO) conference, Al-Roudhan said that the legislation would focus on laws within insurance and group funding, as well as an adjustment to the companies' regulations concerning electronic voting.

He indicated that several obstacles facing issuing licenses for companies



were removed and this resulted in approval of 24,000 licenses last year, compared to 12,000 in 2017. The ministry also allowed investment companies and banks to hold general assembly meetings without prior

approval from it, said Al-Roudhan.

He added that Kuwait had the capability to implement its Vision 2035 and that as part of this strategic vision, a percentage of government spending was dedicated to small and

medium-size enterprises.

On his part, deputy chairman of KIPCO Faisal Al-Ayyar said that the private sector was eager to contribute to the country's development vision of turning Kuwait into a regional and international hub for business and commerce. Kuwait has the resources to implement the development plan, stressed Al-Ayyar who indicated that part of the transformation included a shift into the digital realm, a step that has been achieved in the banking sector. The shift to digital will have a positive impact on several spheres,



including that of charitable work and social services, which rely heavily on social media and the digital domain to deliver their messages and achieve their purpose.

Social activist Daya Bai interacts with ICSK students

Well-known Indian social activist for tribal welfare, Daya Bai, interacted with students at the Indian Community School Kuwait (ICSK), Senior on 17 February.

Mercy Mathew, commonly known as Daya Bai is a well-known social activist. From the age of sixteen, she has been working for the upliftment of tribal and other oppressed communities in different parts of India. Aside from fighting and striking for the rights of the endosulphur victims in Kasaragod district, Kerala, India, she is also active in supporting their treatment. She was in the war zone of Bangladesh serving the war victims. A noted environmentalist, she participated in enormous agitations like Narmada Bachao Andolan.

She explained that after living with the tribal people for some time, she realized her



calling was to work for their upliftment.

She felt that fighting for equality and to give a voice for such people is what she had to do.

Daya Bai said, "Tribes didn't trust me when I started working with them. I felt it difficult and hard to adapt to their lifestyle in the beginning. But as time passed by I grew to love it. After monitoring my actions for a few

months, they accepted me", she said.

She explained how she has always been discriminated, "But when Daya Bai became famous, people started to greet and even click a selfie," she said. Even after years of such experiences she never felt like giving up. Through a real life story, she explained how conflicting experiences in childhood had helped a man work for the needy in life.

"She is an epitome of humanity. She is an inspiration to umpteen number of people," said Dr. V Binumon, the Principal of ICSK senior when welcoming her. Dr. Sam T Kuruvilla, the Vice-Principal, ICSK senior honoured her with a memento.

The management of ICSK, aiming at encouraging the holistic education of the students have always been facilitating discourse with such inspirational models.



Slovak cheese featured at gathering

The Slovak Deputy Head of Mission Marian Mulik introduced a new prime Slovak product to a gathering at the embassy premises on 14 March. The presentation showcased the latest Slovak variety of cheese that will be a good import to Kuwait, and samples were enjoyed by those present.

Lulu Hypermarket launches 'Beautiful Britain 2019'



Lulu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, launched its much-anticipated 'Beautiful Britain 2019' festival on 13 March at its Egaila outlet. Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Kuwait H.E. Michael Davenport inaugurated the festival in the presence of top Lulu management, well-wishers and media personnel.

The 11-day promotion, which showcased the best products and produce from Britain, ran till 23 March at all Lulu outlets in Kuwait. Adding to the atmosphere of British shopping festival were large cardboard cutouts of iconic British landmarks.

A wide selection of high-quality and popular British brands, including Baker Street Billington,

Bisto, Branston, Coldpress, Costa, Delamere, Doves Farm, Groovy Food, John West, Infinity Foods, Minvita, Onken, Rachels, Rowse, Soysolei, St Pierre, Vimto, Walkers and Warrior Crunch among others were available at very competitive prices during the festival.

The 'Beautiful Britain 2019' is part of Lulu

Hypermarket's commitment to create unique and special shopping experiences for their customers, while providing a range of quality products at affordable prices. In addition, the hypermarket has consistently undertaken various innovative initiatives and special promotions as part of its approach to enhancing customer relations.

The advertisement features the Haldiram's logo and the text 'Irresistible Indian Sweets'. It includes images of three sweet boxes: 'Gulab Jamun', 'Rasgulla', and 'Soan Papdi'. Below the boxes are bowls of sweets. To the left, there's a 'Happy Diwali' graphic with the text 'The Original'. The background has a purple and gold pattern.

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India leading in Advanced Healthcare

Healthcare has emerged as one of the fastest growing segments of the Indian economy. India has become a sought-after destination for medical travel and is today one of the top 10 medical travel destinations in the world. According to a 2018 report by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the medical value travel industry in India was valued at around US\$ 3 billion in 2015 and has been growing at a CAGR of 15 percent with around half a million foreign patients seeking treatment in India. By 2020, the industry is expected to be valued at US\$ 9 billion. Fitch Solutions has also highlighted Indian Medical and Healthcare sector as the key driver of growth for the Indian tourism market, which has been projected to grow at 8.6 percent annually, witness 15 million tourist inflow, and generate around US\$ 45 billion by 2023.

Driving this rapid growth is the high quality healthcare service, both modern and traditional medicine and therapy, coupled

with India's rich cultural heritage, diversity and its exotic locales. Healthcare industry has made tremendous strides over the last decade with remarkable improvement in infrastructure, technology and innovation. In terms of quality of healthcare, be it infrastructure, technology, medical personnel (doctors, nurses, paramedic staff), India competes confidently with the best in the world.

India has the finest and one of the largest pools of qualified, specialist doctors, nurses and other paramedics in South Asia (1.2 million doctors, 0.17 million dental surgeons, 2 million nurses). Many of them have established their credentials as leaders around the world. The doctor-population ratio in India is way ahead of 1:1,000, the prescribed figure by World Health Organization (WHO), as for every 921 people in the country there is one doctor, as of December 2018. This is on the back of sustained investments in healthcare infrastructure, which is further set



to rise, benefiting both 'hard' (hospitals) and 'soft' (R&D, education) infrastructure. There are 38 Joint Commission International (JCI) accredited hospitals in India and this number is growing fast. Additionally, around 600 hospitals are accredited by the National Board of Accreditation for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH). Similarly, rapid growth has been witnessed in medical educational infrastructure with the number of medical colleges increasing to 476 in 2018 (314 in 2011).

India's expertise in highly specialized

medical treatments like - high-end cardiac surgeries, including pediatric cardiac surgery, cancer treatments, neurosurgery, spine surgery, transplants, bariatric surgery, trauma-related orthopedic surgery etc. - has made India a hub for international medical travel. Medical innovations by Indian doctors like robotic liver transplant, robotic cardiac surgery, fractional flow reserve, cyberknife radiosurgery, first awake cardiac bypass surgery etc. are yet another reason for international patients to see India as the place to go for high quality and yet affordable treatment.

India's offering in the traditional, alternative medicine/ wellness domain through its ancient systems such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) is also attracting increasingly large numbers of people from across the world. India's AYUSH industry was estimated to be worth around \$2.4 billion in 2014-15, according to FICCI. India had 460 Government recognized Ayurveda and Homeopathy colleges in 2017-18 and the overall pool of Ayurveda practitioners stood at around 430,000 in 2017.

Given the immense potential of the global medical travel market (a US\$30 billion rapidly growing market), Government of India has identified it as one of the priority areas of facilitation. Four Ministries namely Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of AYUSH, and several other government and industry agencies are promoting and developing India as a hub for this sector. Various initiatives including expansion of e-visa facility to medical tourists from a number of countries (166 as of December 2018 and the list continues to evolve and expand) are being undertaken as part of the facilitation efforts.

With all the healthcare basics covered (high-end facilities, cutting-edge frontier technologies, finest doctors, fast tracked, personalized service, competitive, affordable cost), India, referred to as 'the Pharmacy to the World', is undoubtedly on its way to become 'the Provider to the World' and 'The Destination of Choice' for medical travel.



India values patient care

Compassionate, efficient and responsive handling of patient or his dependents is of utmost importance.

India is on the way to emerging as a formidable destination for Medical Value Travel (MVT), this being a sunrise industry. As national borders become increasingly porous, MVT experts and healthcare providers need to explore new ways of managing international medical travel. This business is driven, inter alia, by word of mouth and things could go awry pretty quickly, if patients are not satisfied with the services provided. In the long term, only good quality of overall patient experience, affordability and exceptional outcomes will drive this business. Lately, however, we have had challenges in delivery and there have been alleged instances of cheating, suboptimal outcomes and cost escalations.

MVT Value Chain

Right from the time a query is raised till a patient reaches a hospital, compassionate,

efficient and responsive handling of patient and his/her dependents is of utmost importance.

Continuity of care post-treatment is equally important too. A typical MVT value chain may involve the following:

- Receipt of investigations and diagnostic reports from the patient and a feedback by provider to patient on diagnosis, line of treatment, scope of services and commercials.
- Assistance in pre-travel formalities and procedures (medical visa, travel and staying arrangements and arrival formalities et al).
- Treatment in the hospital in line with best practices.
- Provide post-travel post treatment support and ensuring continuity of care to the patient.
- Extension of language and cultural support.
- Financial support.
- Optimizing the respective roles of the physician/surgeon, International Patient Services Team (IPS) hospital, nurse and case manager in risk reduction and patient clinical care.
- Minimize potential risks and clinical care deficiencies in medical/surgical travel practices, hospitals and aftercare facilities.



Maximizing the Hospital Experience:

Most hospitals have a full-fledged IPS team and translators who help the physicians in delivery of care.

- **Prevention of Malpractices:** Canvassing and pestering of patients right from the airport onwards have been reported occasionally, at least in NCR. Such is the competition that there have also been reported cases of patient 'theft'. Cases of inflated billing, ill-treatment and botched outcomes have also been reported off and on. This menace must stop, as it gives a bad name to the industry and dents its overall image.

Accreditation of MVT Companies:

A notable trend in accreditation of MVT facilitators also augurs well for the industry. This will set benchmarking standards for many others to follow suit and bring in quality and improvements into the MVT protocols.

- **Telemedicine and Post Treatment Review:** Telemedicine is fast catching up in the country and can provide follow up consultations and clinical reviews for patients coming from Africa, Middle-East and other regions.

Country Visits:

Continuity of care by doctors visiting some of these countries for OPD, medical camps and other promotional activities can also see the patients and review their medical condition. This helps build trust and provide continuity of care.

- **Self Help Groups:** Some hospitals have also created self-help groups in social media to help answer their medical queries and mitigate post treatment clinical and lifestyle related concerns.

- **Physical Presence:** Some providers are establishing hospitals and other healthcare facilities in some of these

target countries to ensure care. Many others have opened facilitation centers or have even started 'surgery camps' with some local players to bring care closer to patients. These initiatives have their definitive upside in increasing patient outreach and establishing long-term partnership and confidence.

Measuring Quality of Care

Accreditation of the providers, including those of healthcare facilitators, will help drive quality. All hospital staff needs to be trained too. The following KPIs will need to be monitored to ensure exceptional patient delight:

- Patient satisfaction at critical touch points outside the clinical setting such as the hotel or transportation.
- Average treatment charges.
- Service delivery times and TATs – many providers struggle on this count.
- The average time it takes to respond to a prospect.
- Patient follow up.

Technology is the Driver

To ensure the continuum of care, HIPAA compliant ICT technologies are being developed globally to store and retrieve medical information in hospitals, in a centralized information infrastructure about treatment and care plans, while preserving confidentiality of personal information. Telemedicine, AI, EMR/EHR and Blockchain are the future of medicine in the country and going to help the MVT industry immensely. These will also help ensure continuity of care, long after the patient has left for his/her own country after getting good treatment.

Kerala as Medical Travel Hub

There are more than 100 government-certified Green and Olive leaf Ayurveda centers in Kerala. Medical tourism is a growing sector in India. The Indian medical tourism market is expected to grow from around US\$ 3 billion a few years ago to over \$8 billion by 2020. The primary reason that attracts medical value travel to India is cost – effectiveness and treatment from accredited facilities at par with developed countries.



Medical tourism market Report: India offers one of the lowest costs and highest quality among global medical tourism destinations — providing a wide variety of medical procedures at about one-tenth the cost of similar procedures in the US.

Why Kerala?

'Kerala', the mesmerizing land located in the south of India, enjoys geographical features that are unique in the world tourism map for its natural beauty and cultural heritage. The state is ideally suited for medical tourism because of its moderate weather throughout the year, advanced hospitals with world class facilities, renowned doctors specialized in major disciplines, trained para medical staff and technicians and international connectivity. While on one side Kerala boasts of traditional medical systems like Ayurveda, Sidha, Naturopathy, Panchakarma, and others, on the other hand it also gives relevance to modern medicine with many accredited private healthcare institutions with state-of-the-art facilities. Currently, it attracts only 4 – 5 percent of medical tourists but has the potential to increase its share to 10 – 12 percent of the overall market.



India values patient care

Maintaining Transparency

Some cases of violence have been reported in the recent past because of fatalities or lack of transparency in pricing. This has given the industry a bad name and affects India's story as a destination for medical value travel. The presence of large number of touts and many other fly-by-night operators severely affect the patient interests and dent the quality of healthcare delivery.

Road Ahead

The MVT industry is becoming highly competitive. The continuing regulatory pressures will further put downward pressure on healthcare providers. This may increase costs of treatment and derail the movement of people moving to India, seeking world class treatment at cheaper rates. It is very important for any organization

Qualified Manpower Surplus

The state with the highest literacy rate in the country is also considered as the 'nursing hub' for countries around the world regions West of Europe. The average population per nurse in Kerala is 138, while the overall figure for India is 472.

Wellness and Ayurveda

Alternative medicine is increasingly becoming popular especially in German speaking areas of Europe. Ayurveda plays a leading role within a trend of deeply relaxing wellness therapies and Kerala possesses an unbroken tradition of Ayurveda that has surpassed many invasions and intrusions. Unlike the other Indian states, the status of Ayurveda in Kerala is not that of an alternative but is main stream. There are more than 100 government-certified Green and Olive leaf Ayurveda centers in the state. Hence we can see more and more foreign tourists, especially from developed countries throng the state to avail such services.

Infrastructure

Kerala boasts of four international airports in Kochi, Trivandrum, Calicut and Kannur with direct connectivity to GCC countries and most Asian countries. In terms of medical infrastructure, the health system in the state fares better than the national average, resulting in the state recording among the lowest IMR and MMR in the country. Also the average population served per government hospital bed in Kerala is 918, while the overall in India is 1833.

However, there are a few roadblocks that need to be overcome, including:

- Lack of insurance policy for this sector.
- Low investments in health infrastructure.
- Shortage of specialists in this field.
- Strong competition from other countries – Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines.
- Different pricing policy in hospitals.
- Lack of coordination between various players in the industry – airlines, hotels and hospitals.

Despite these obstacles, it is time for Kerala to leverage its tourism brand and secure a leading place in medical tourism.

Qualified Manpower Surplus

'Best of Indian Healthcare Expo 2019' to open today



STAFF REPORT

A high-profile medical services exhibition titled 'Best of Indian Healthcare Expo 2019' will be held by the Embassy of India, in association with the Indian Doctors Forum (IDF), Kuwait Medical Association (KMA), Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), disclosed the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Jeeva Sagar, at a press briefing held at the embassy premises today.

The two-day exhibition, which will be held at the Radisson Blu Hotel on 17 and 18 of March, will witness participation from more than 20 exhibitors, including the leading Indian hospitals and healthcare centers, alternative healthcare providers, wellness centers and prominent medical package planners from several cities in India.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Salem Kandari, secretary general at Kuwait Medical Association pointed out that India was proving to be an excellent destination for health care with its highly experienced medical workforce and value for money treatment.

He added that Indian doctors have been excelling the world over for the high quality treatment that they have been imparting, and in Kuwait, Indian doctors have gained the confidence and trust of the local population.

Speaking to the media, Dr. Grover of the Indian Doctors Forum said the exhibition will showcase the great medical advancement that have taken place in India and also provide an opportunity to witness first-hand some of these accomplishments.

President of Indian Business Council Shiy Bhasin also reiterated India's development and progress in the medical field and mentioned how the country was now a preferred destination for treatment because of the quality and value of the services being rendered.

Ambassador Sagar pointed out that India received more than half a million medical tourists in 2017 and the number is fast growing.

Dr. Amir Ahmed, ex-president of IDF added that healthcare in India was of the best quality and the value provided was second to one.

The list of exhibitors include globally reputed health care providers such as Apollo Hospital, Max Super Specialty Hospital, Aster DM Healthcare, Kerala Institute of Medical Sciences, Saifee Hospital, Unity Care and Health Services, Iqraa Hospitals, A.J. Hospital, Children's Hospital, Manipal Health Enterprises Pvt. Ltd., Asten Orthopaedic Hospital, Metromed International Cardiac Center, Advancells, Aryavaidya Salas, Kottakkal, Somatheeram Ayurveda Village, Ayur

Green, and a whole host of other healthcare providers from India.

These internationally acclaimed exhibitors have been imparting advanced healthcare services through their world class facilities, at a competitive and affordable price to millions of patients annually, including hundreds of thousands of international patients. Some of the exhibitors are also world leaders in many medical disciplines like solid organ transplant, private cancer care, ayurvedic treatments and a host of other super-specialties.

The high-end healthcare system in India ranks at the top in international rankings and Indian doctors are widely acknowledged and globally reputed as among the most highly skilled and the world's finest. Along with specialist doctors, India also has the largest pool of well-trained paramedics in South Asia.

Cutting edge technology to support medical diagnostics and medical procedures are employed by specialists at the medical facilities in India. Various medical advancements in areas like robotic surgeries, radiation surgery or radio therapies with cyberknife stereotactic options, IMRT / IGRT, transplant support systems, advanced neuro and spinal options are all available in India at highly competitive prices.

Indian Healthcare Expo 2019 will provide an excellent opportunity for citizens and residents in Kuwait to witness some of the most highly advanced medical technologies which would be on display, and also to interact with some of the top Indian medical experts from various medical disciplines. The exhibition will also facilitate networking and information exchange opportunities between healthcare professionals from India and their counterparts in Kuwait.

It will give a welcome opportunity for patients and their caregivers in Kuwait to make timely choices regarding the best and most cost-effective treatments that are readily available in Indian hospitals and health care centers. India, widely-regarded for its culture of welcoming guests and according them warm hospitality, offers an unmatched, fast-tracked, personalized, affordable, high-quality healthcare service. The country is also home to a unique, traditional system of healing and rejuvenation known as Ayurveda, one of the oldest medical systems in the world, offered in serene surroundings.

The 2-day exhibition will be open to the public on a free-entry basis from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm on Sunday and Monday, 17 & 18 of March at Hotel Radison Blu (Al Hashemi Foyer), Kuwait.



For a complete list of featured restaurants, visit
http://www.timeskuwait.com/News_Dining In Kuwait

Thought for the week

Time And health are two precious assets that we don't recognize and appreciate until they have been depleted.

- Denis Waitley

Avoid late night cravings

Ask Mira : Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



If you want to lose weight naturally, then you need to control your nighttime food cravings.

Mostly unhealthy sugar and food cravings directly impact your diet, as they encourage you to eat unhealthy, and make the wrong choices. However, it is the ones that hit you late at night that seem to be the worst enemy against diets. Late night cravings have a link to fast weight gain as your metabolism tends to go down at night, so anything you eat is more likely to be stored as fat.

That is why you should not skip breakfast and lunch at all, which helps you control your nighttime eating habits. Also, you need to have a healthy dinner as well. You should also be mindful that cutting down on the calories will not help you lose weight; it will just set you up for more food cravings later in the evening. The best decision is to eat a medium-sized dinner that includes lots of high-fiber foods (like veggies, salads, and whole-grain breads). In addition, reduce your fat intake at night which will reduce your fat storage as well. But I understand that many of you, including me, like to munch on something, especially late night after a long busy day. We usually call this mindless snacking, which happens usually while watching TV, or while browsing the net. To satisfy the nighttime craving, go for healthier options such as:

- Carrot and cucumber sticks with some low-fat yogurt dip.
- Broccoli and cauliflower raw crunchy pieces, with cocktail

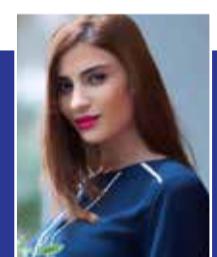


dip (mustard, ketchup and low-fat mayo).

- One small bowl of low-fat popcorn. It is full of fiber, super healthy and light.
- One fresh fruit of your choice. Excellent high fiber content.
- One handful of mixed nuts, full of protein and fiber
- One mug of whole wheat

cereal with low-fat milk or yogurt

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



Saravanna Bhavan opens third branch in Kuwait



Saravanna Bhavan Kuwait, a prime destination for lovers of South Indian vegetarian cuisine, launched its third branch at Anfal Mall in Salmiya on 13 March. Indian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. K. Jeeva Sagar alongside the Malaysian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Dato Mohammad Ali Selamat inaugurated the new branch in the presence of a large gathering of

members from the Indian community.

Saravanna Bhavan offers some of the most authentic and high-quality South Indian vegetarian dishes incorporating fresh ingredients and prepared by specially-trained chefs. The restaurant features an elegant décor that creates a refined ambiance and backdrop for the great dining experience.

The two ambassadors along with the franchise owners in Kuwait, Mrs & Mr Natarajan, and the Managing Director of Saravanna Bhavan Kuwait, P. R. Shiva Kumar lit the traditional lamp to inaugurate the restaurant, amidst cheers and applause from the gathering. The restaurant, which opened to the public on 14 March, boasts an extensive menu that offers various delicious

South Indian dishes, with a special juice counter to provide exotic concoctions.

Founded in 1981 in Chennai, India, Saravanna Bhavan is the largest South Indian vegetarian restaurant chain in the world, with branches in various cities of India, as well as in several countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.



Fix grapefruit that is too bitter or sour

While it may seem counterintuitive, salt — not sugar — can make grapefruit taste less bitter and more sweet. Sure, sugar can drown out the bitterness and sour flavor if you sprinkle it on thick enough, but salt actually balances these tastes



rather than covering them up. What salt basically does is neutralize the strong bitter, sour flavor in grapefruit so that it ends up tasting sweeter. You do not need much for it to be effective, either — a heavy hand will make the fruit salty, which you are obviously trying to avoid. Just a light sprinkling on a grapefruit half or segments is all you need.

This salt trick can be applied to any fruit that tastes bitter or sour, whether it is oranges that are not at their best, under ripe kiwi or berries, or even just a tart green apple. A light salt sprinkle will allow you to perceive sweetness instead of bitterness or sourness.

Millennials could be most obese generation

According to new study conducted in the United Kingdom by Cancer Research UK, more than 7 in 10 millennials (those born between 1981 and 1996) will be obese by the time they reach middle age, making them one of the heaviest generations in history.

The study shows that the average body weight in the 1960s compared to what it was in the 80s, to what it is now, shows a significant rise in the prevalence of obesity in the 80s, when the millennial generation started to be born.

The stats point to processed foods as one of the culprits behind the obesity epidemic. Processed foods first started to crowd grocery aisles in the 80s when people were unaware of how really bad added sugars were for health. The public craze-diet back then was on eating low fat, higher carb, added sugar foods. Many processed foods during that era had a high glycemic index, meaning

they increased blood sugar which then stimulated the production of hormone insulin to process the sugars. Insulin is now implicated in rising obesity rates.

When you have elevated insulin levels for prolonged periods, it is a precursor to developing obesity.

Millennials may be more educated about food, nutrition, and food transparency than previous generations, nevertheless, they chose processed foods to match their fast-paced, instant-gratification lifestyle. When food is more readily available, and more processed than it was in the past, you are more likely to gain weight. It is projected that more than half of today's children will be obese by the time they are 35 years old.

We can turn the obesity epidemic around with public health initiatives, such as improving school lunches, designing cities with biking and walking paths to encourage activity, and providing more

communities with access to affordable healthy foods. Millennials may have suffered from things that they did not have control over, but that is no reason why they cannot change now. Some of the steps millennials can take to improve their health is to:

Eat more veggies: Rather than fill your plate with rice or pasta, add half a plate of vegetables to every meal.

Know what you are eating: Reading labels is the first step to understanding food. Find out what ingredients have been added to food and the processing it undergoes, as that determines the nutritional value of what you are eating.

Get your heart rate up: Start with attainable goals while exercising; just getting your heart rate up twice a week can help combat weight. This could be achieved by brisk walking, jogging or



lifting weights and does not have to be intense or for prolonged periods.

Limit screen time: For millennials and older, most of their screen time is deeply woven into their lives. They use it to do work, get information, communicate with people. But they can put healthy limits on screen use in the same way people in their 80s put limits on watching television.

Blood plasma, a potential baldness treatment



Going bald as they age may seem to be a fact of life for many men and women, but that could very well change as dermatologists introduce novel treatments.

There have been very few breakthroughs in recent years for the treatment of hereditary hair loss other than the use of drugs such as Rogaine or Propecia. Now some dermatologists are offering an innovative treatment using a person's own blood.

Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) therapy is already used to speed up healing in a wide range of applications, from dentistry to orthopedics, but it could end up being the next big thing in treating hair loss.

Since research on the therapy remains in the early stages, the Food and Drug Administration

(FDA) in the United States has not yet approved it for treating hair loss. PRP therapy involves drawing a person's own blood and putting it into a centrifuge that separates red blood cells from the plasma. The plasma, which contains growth factors, is then injected back into the person.

In hair treatment using PRP, the plasma is injected into a person's hair follicles using tiny acupuncture-type needles. It involves minimal discomfort and can take only about 10 minutes. After the first treatment, people have injections monthly for three months, then once every three to six months. Within a few months of treatment, they can notice less hair loss. Soon after, they may experience an increase in thickness or regrowth.

Studies have shown that people with hereditary hair loss or male or female pattern baldness can potentially curb or even regrow some hair after PRP injections. This does not mean that if you are almost completely bald, PRP could revive hair growth. The ideal candidates for PRP treatment are those with mild to moderate hair thinning. Both men and women were found to respond well to the treatment, particularly those with genetic hair loss by the temples or crown.

PRP therapy seems to work well for the most common type of hair loss, which is known as androgenetic alopecia or male pattern baldness. But dermatologists are also examining if it can be used for other types of baldness, including autoimmune-induced hair loss called alopecia areata. PRP therapy may also work for traction alopecia caused by a regular pulling and straining of the hair.

Ingredient in toothpaste, mouthwash may cause antibiotic resistance

Triclosan, an antimicrobial chemical used in toothpastes and mouthwash, may reduce the effectiveness of some antibiotic drugs by 100-fold, says a new study by researchers at Washington University in the United States.

The new study involving mice found that triclosan in the bloodstream made bactericidal antibiotics significantly less effective. Antibiotics like triclosan kill bacterial cells rather than simply inhibiting their growth. Normally, one in a million bacterial cells survive antibiotics, but a functioning immune system can control them.

However, constant use of triclosan was found to shift the number of bacterial cells that can survive. Instead of only one in a million bacteria surviving, triclosan upped the figure to one in ten organisms surviving after 20 hours and overwhelming the immune system.

Triclosan created antibiotic resistance in a wide range of antibiotics, but the most notable was ciprofloxacin (brand name Cipro), commonly used to treat urinary tract infections (UTIs). That is a potential recipe for disaster as

Cipro is a first-line treatment for UTIs, which is common infection among the general public.

In fact, the researchers found 100 times more bacteria in mice treated for UTIs who drank water dosed with triclosan compared to those that were not exposed to the antibacterial compound.



Evidence of triclosan's potential negative effects — from endocrine disruption to reduce sperm count to the creation of antibiotic 'superbugs' — led the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the US to tell companies to stop marketing hand and bar soaps as well as body washes that contain the compound back in 2016. But that recommendation did not extend to toothpastes and mouthwashes, where triclosan use persists.

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India Color, spice and ancient beauty

Stretching from the frozen summits of the Himalayas to the tropical greenery of Kerala, India's expansive borders encompass an incomparable range of landscapes, cultures and people. Due to the country's immense size and variety of cultures, it is impossible to experience all of India, or even half, in one trip. The north of the country is made up of Mughal and Rajput architecture, ancient cities and temples, deserts and Buddhism while the south is a haven of scenic beaches, Hinduism, colonial coastal towns and a much more easy-going approach. New Delhi, the heart of India, sits in the North, with Mumbai in the West, Goa in the east and popular tourist regions Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south. Here are a few states that give you a glimpse of all that India offers.

Delhi: India's capital, Delhi is the hub of the country: a buzzing international metropolis which draws people from across India and the globe. Tucked away inside Delhi's modern suburbs and developments are tombs, temples and ruins dating back centuries.



Delhi is divided into two main parts. Old Delhi is the city of the Mughals and dates back to the seventeenth century. Old Delhi's teeming bazaars have a tale to tell, its greatest monuments are undoubtedly the magnificent constructions of the Mughals, most notably the mighty Red Fort, and the Jama Masjid, India's largest and most impressive mosque.

To the south, encompassing the modern city centre is New Delhi, built by the British to be the capital of their empire's key possession. A spacious city of tree-lined boulevards, New Delhi is also impressive in its own way. The Rajpath, stretching from India Gate to the Presidential Palace, is at least as mighty a



statement of imperial power as the Red Fort, and it is among the broad avenues of New Delhi that you will find most of the city's museums, and its prime shopping area, centered around the colonnaded facades of Connaught Place.

Quite apart from its historical treasures, the city has a host of museums and art treasures, cultural performances and crafts that showcase the country's diverse heritage. Its growing nightlife scene boasts designer bars, chic cafés and decent clubs.

Rajasthan: The state of Rajasthan is a mosaic of twenty-two feudal kingdoms, known in the British era as Rajputana, 'Land of Kings'. Running northeast from Mount Abu, near the border with Gujarat, to within a stone's throw of the ruins of ancient Delhi, its backbone is formed by the bare brown hills of the Aravalli Range, which divide the fertile Dhundar basin from the shifting sands of the mighty Thar Desert, one of the driest places on earth.

Rajasthan's extravagant palaces, forts and finely carved temples comprise one of the country's richest crops of architectural monuments. Color also distinguishes Rajasthan's most important tourist cities. Jaipur, the vibrant state capital, is



known as the 'Pink City' thanks to the reddish paint applied to its ornate facades and palaces. Jodhpur, the 'Blue City', is centered on a labyrinthine old walled town, whose sky-blue mass of cubic houses is overlooked by India's most imposing hilltop fort. Further west, the magical desert city of Jaisalmer, built from local sandstone, is termed the 'Golden City'. In the far south of the state, Udaipur hasn't gained a color tag yet, but it could be called the 'White City': coated in decaying limewash, its waterside palaces and havelis are framed by a distant vista of sawtooth hills.

Another attraction is Rajasthan's wonderful wildlife sanctuaries. Of these, the tiger sanctuary at Ranthambore is deservedly the most popular, while Keoladeo National Park, on the eastern border of Rajasthan near Agra, is unmatched in South Asia for its incredible avian population.

Maharashtra: Vast and rugged, the modern state of Maharashtra is the third largest in India and one of the most visited by foreign tourists, though most people venture no further than its seething port capital, Mumbai. Maharashtra's greatest treasures are its extraordinary cave temples and monasteries; the finest of all are found near Aurangabad, renamed after the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and home to the Bibi-ka-Maqbara, dedicated to his wife. The busy commercial city is the obvious base for visits to the Buddhist caves at

Ajanta, with their fabulous and still-vibrant murals, and the monolithic temples of Ellora, where the astonishing Hindu Kailash temple was carved in its entirety from one single rock.

Away from the cities, one of the most characteristic features of the landscape is a plenitude of forts. Rising abruptly a short distance inland from the sea, the Sahyadri Hills – part of the Western Ghats – form a series of huge steps that march up from the narrow coastal strip to the edge of the Deccan plateau.



To the west, Maharashtra occupies 500km of the Konkan coast on the Arabian Sea, from Gujarat to Goa. The little-explored palm-fringed coast winds back and forth with countless inlets, ridges and valleys; highlights include Murud-Janjira, whose extraordinary fortress was the only one never conquered by the Mughals, and Ganpatipule, the region's chief pilgrimage centre, with kilometres of virtually deserted, palm-fringed beaches.

Tamil Nadu: The great Tamil temples are merely the largest landmarks in a vast network of sacred sites – shrines, bathing places, holy trees, rocks and rivers – interconnected by a web of ancient pilgrims' routes. Tamil Nadu harbors 274 of India's holiest Shiva temples, and 108 are dedicated to Vishnu. In addition, five shrines devoted to the five Vedic elements (Earth, Wind, Fire, Water and Ether) are to be found here, along with eight to the planets, as well as other places revered by Christians and Muslims. Scattered from the pale orange crags and forests of the Western Ghats, across the fertile deltas of the Vaigai and Kaveri rivers to the Coromandel coast on the Bay of Bengal, these sites were celebrated in the hymns of the Tamil saints, composed between one and two thousand years ago. With its seafront fort, grand mansions and excellence as a centre for the performing arts, the state capital Chennai is nonetheless a hot, chaotic, noisy Indian metropolis that still carries faint echoes of the Raj. However, it can be used as a base for visiting Kanchipuram, a major pilgrimage and sari-weaving Centre, filled with reminders of an illustrious past.

While Tamil Nadu's temples are undeniably its major attraction, the hill stations of Kodaikanal and Udhagamandalam (Ooty) in the west of the state are popular destinations on the well-beaten tourist trail between Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The verdant, cool hills offer mountain views and gentle trails through the forests and tea and coffee plantations. You can also spot wildlife in the teak forests of Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary and bamboo groves of Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary, situated in the Palani Hills.





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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Fighting Climate Change Means Fighting Organized Crime



ROBERT MUGGAH, ADRIANA ABDENUR, AND ILONA SZABÓ

Robert Muggah is co-founder of the Igarapé Institute and SecDev Group. Adriana Abdenur is Coordinator of the Peace and International Security Division at the Igarapé Institute. Ilona Szabó is the co-founder and executive director of the Igarapé Institute.

As the world's largest terrestrial carbon sink, the Amazon is a key front in the fight against climate change. But it is also host to a thriving criminal underworld that could undermine efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. In fact, reversing climate change is not just about regulating polluters; it is also about fighting organized crime.

Deforestation in the Amazon has accelerated rapidly in recent years, resulting in a dramatic loss of tree cover. Since the 1970s, around one-fifth of the area has been razed for agro-industry, logging, and mining; 50-80 percent of that deforestation is due to illegal activities, including gold mining. If the current trend continues, another 20 percent of existing tree cover will be gone by 2030.

Among the many threats to the Amazon, mining is especially destructive, because it also strips away earth, prevents



manganese, nickel, tin, and especially gold.

And now, Brazil's newly elected president, Jair Bolsonaro, has promised to give mining giants access to even more protected lands, including areas belonging to indigenous communities. The Bolsonaro government's approach to the Amazon is directly at odds with its promise to crack down on corruption. By weakening government regulatory bodies, offering more tax subsidies and incentives to logging and mining companies, and selling off land, it will further embolden those engaged in organized crime.

Tens of thousands of garimpeiros, or artisanal gold diggers, already depend on illegal gold mining to survive. In small Brazilian towns like Itaituba, along the Amazon River, illegal mining accounts for 50-70 percent of the local economy. And an estimated 20,000 Brazilians work in clandestine mines on the border with French Guiana. As makeshift settlements continue to spring up across the region, gambling, prostitution, human trafficking, slave labor, and violent crime are on the rise, and indigenous and quilombola (Afro-descendant) people are bearing the brunt of the costs.

But wildcat miners are hardly the only players scrambling for Amazonian riches. Because the Amazon basin straddles the world's three major coca-producing countries – Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru – Colombian/Peruvian cartels and Brazilian gangs have also gotten into the business of illegal gold mining. They have found that gold – easy to extract and sell for

an attractive market price, and rendered safe by complicit government agents where it is mined – is often a safer financial bet than cocaine.

Hence, criminal groups are expanding their involvement in illegal mining. Along the Brazilian-Colombian border, for example, former members of the now-disbanded Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), as well as the still-active National Liberation Army (ELN), control large mining sites. And while the Brazilian military and Colombian authorities have conducted operations to wrest back control of these areas, they are often outgunned. Making matters worse, some senior Venezuelan government officials, seeking to supplement declining oil revenues with those from illicit gold, are supporting criminal groups in Western Guyana and Northern Brazil.

All of this is having dire environmental consequences. For starters, mining is fueling much more deforestation than previously thought, and now accounts for an estimated 10 percent of the decline in tree cover. Beyond that, dredged and dynamited rivers are destroying local ecosystems and releasing mercury into food supplies across the basin. In some Yanomami villages on the Brazil-Venezuela border, more than 90 percent of recently tested individuals were found to be contaminated.

Moreover, there are worrying signs of increased violence near illegal mining sites, with the Amazonian cities Belém, Macapá, and Manaus currently registering homicide rates that are among the highest in the world. They are also among the most dangerous places on the planet for environmental activists and journalists.

Tackling the criminal activities that are contributing to climate change will require increased investment in, and coordination of, federal police, prosecutors, public defenders, intelligence agencies, and the armed forces. Public agencies like Brazil's

Institute of Environment and Natural Resources (IBAMA) need a cash injection and more autonomy, and poorer areas ravaged by illicit gold mining need targeted investment, so that their young men will not be drawn toward crime.

Stewardship of the Amazon is in the entire world's interest. Yet international cooperation has been lacking, especially within South America. For example, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) – comprising Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela – has gained little traction, owing to member-state governments' wariness about infringements on their national sovereignty. Confidence measures will be needed to address such concerns.

When it comes to fighting environmental crime, a coordinated approach is the only option. The elites, bureaucrats, and criminals profiting from illegal mining will have to be confronted, which will require courage on the part of elected officials and activists. But there are also technical solutions, such as the satellite-monitoring systems that the Bolivian and Peruvian governments have deployed against drug traffickers. And, of course, traditional policing operations have an important role to play – though they must be conducted with respect for human rights.

More broadly, durable progress will depend on high-level political action. National governments need to align their environmental and security priorities, both internally and multilaterally, and this will require careful diplomacy; robust, coordinated oversight of extractive companies; and a commitment to transparency, with penalties for non-compliance. The broader international community should support such efforts. Our common survival may depend on them.

“Besides dredged and dynamited rivers that destroy local ecosystems, mining is fueling much more deforestation than previously thought, and now accounts for an estimated 10 percent of the decline in tree cover.
”

regrowth, and pollutes rivers. Nonetheless, large mining corporations such as Anglo American and Vale have spent tens of billions of dollars to build access roads into some of the Amazon's – and the world's – most environmentally vulnerable regions. They have been abetted by politicians, who issue generous tax incentives to scale up extraction of bauxite, copper, iron ore,

Strong turnout in 12th by-elections to Parliament

...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The final candidate figures for the 12th by-elections was announced following the end of the period allocated for withdrawals and after ruling out of ineligible candidacies by the committee tasked with checking the fulfillment of requirements by candidates. Article 84 of the Kuwaiti Constitution states, "If, for any reason, a seat in the National Assembly becomes vacant before the end of the term, the vacancy is filled by election within two months from the date on which the Assembly declares the vacancy. The mandate of the new member lasts until the end of that of his predecessor."

Under Kuwait election laws, candidates competing for seats in parliament must be Kuwaitis and at least 30 years old. They must speak and write Arabic and must have an impeccable security record. The winners in the by-elections will serve until the end of the four-year term of the current parliament, which was elected in November 2016.

Though turnout was sluggish when polling stations opened at 8am, it gradually picked up pace and by evening a sizable number of eligible voters had arrived to cast their votes. Unless there are any unforeseen events, results are expected to be announced shortly after polling ends at 8pm.

The authorities have transformed 38 schools into ballot stations and medical teams have been stationed at the voting centers to heed to any health issues. Following his visit to polling stations, the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Dr. Fahad Al-Afasi, said that everything was proceeding at ease and without any problems. He lauded judges and state officials for supervising the polling process.

The two seats were made vacant when sitting parliamentarians, Dr. Jam'an Al-Herbesh from the second constituency and Dr. Waleed Al-Tabtabai from the third constituency, were stripped of their membership in the National Assembly by a court order. Expulsion of the parliamentarians came

following a court sentencing them to jail for their role in the 'storming' of the parliament building in November 2011 at the end of a rally that called for the resignation or removal of then Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al Mohammad.

The two MPs, currently out of Kuwait, were among a group of 67 defendants that included 10 former and sitting lawmakers who stormed the parliament building in November 2011.

The case against the two parliamentarians remained pending until December 2013 when the Criminal Court acquitted all suspects. However, the Court of Appeals in November 2017 rejected the ruling, and sentenced the defendants to jail terms ranging from one to nine years. Al Tabtabai received a jail-term of three years while Al Harbush was sentenced to six months. The verdict was confirmed by the Cassation Court, the highest court in the country, in May last year.

However, in October, the parliament after heated debate cited Article 16 of its bylaws voted to retain

parliamentary membership of the two lawmakers. The case was then referred to the Constitutional Court which said that Article 16 was unconstitutional, annulling the parliament's decision and ordering the two lawmakers to serve their prison terms.

The judges argued that Article 16 made court rulings "hostage" to the will of the parliament and amounted to blatant interference in legal instances and a violation of the principle of separation of powers. The legislative branch cannot interfere in the work assigned by the Constitution to the judiciary or violate court rulings or undermine their right or independence, they said.

"Lawmakers are not above or beyond the law. Immunity is not a privilege, but is part of public interest. Lawmakers have no more rights than any other Kuwaiti to comply with the law. The law must take its natural course for all people without discrimination and the lawmakers' immunity is not intended to confront decisions, nor is it a means of breaking the law with impunity," they said.

New Paradigm for Plastics



LILI FUHR AND JANE PATTON

Lili Fuhr heads the International Environmental Policy Division at the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Jane Patton, a global anti-plastic activist and campaigner, is the interim coordinator for the US region of the Break Free From Plastic movement.

We have long known that the accumulation of plastic in the world's landfills and oceans represents a growing environmental risk. More recently, we have come to understand that plastic poses an urgent, even deadly, threat to public health, too. And yet, global efforts to address the plastic crisis remain consistently focused on the wrong end of the life cycle: waste management.

The debate that will resume this month at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) is a case in point, because it will focus on "marine litter and microplastics." These are important issues, but they constitute just one small part of a much larger problem. To be sure, plastic has played an essential role in global economic growth for decades. Its seemingly countless applications include life-saving medical devices, clothes, toys, various industrial and agricultural uses, and so on. Some have even touted plastic as part of the solution to climate change, arguing incorrectly that it has a smaller carbon footprint than other materials. In fact, plastic releases significant greenhouse gases like methane and ethylene as it decomposes in the land and marine environments.

In fact, 99 percent of plastics are made from fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas. And new research shows that plastic is harmful to our bodies at every stage of its life cycle, from its extraction as a fossil fuel to its widespread use as a packaging for food, and on through the waste-management



process (which includes landfills, recycling centers, and incinerators).

One way or another, almost every organism on the planet is affected by the production, use, or disposal of plastic, the toxic effects of which linger and accumulate endlessly in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the soil under our feet. Some of the leading impacts of plastic production include harm to the immune and reproductive systems, liver and kidney damage, and even cancer; as we move through the lifecycle of plastic products, the threats to reproductive systems and from cancer continue, with added harm to neurological development and other systems. Making matters worse, plastic production is increasing, and will continue to do so. The US plastics industry alone plans to boost production by 30 percent in the next few years.

Though the public associates plastic with life-saving wonder materials, an estimated 40 percent of global plastic production is for single-use packaging. By design, it is used temporarily for transport and storage, and then simply thrown away. As a result, nearly 80 percent of all the plastic ever produced has ended up either in a landfill or loose in the natural environment, despite years of industry

messaging to encourage recycling. Not only do we lack the recycling capacity to manage the plastic already in circulation; recent innovations in recycling appear to be causing further damage to the environment and public health, through air pollution, toxic ash, and other externalities. A debate that focuses solely on waste suits the plastics industry just fine. For years, producers have been investing in marketing and advertising campaigns to convince consumers that they themselves bear responsibility for the plastics crisis. And they and their lobbyists have been busy persuading governments, including those participating in the UNEA, that waste management should be their primary focus.

So far, these efforts have succeeded in preventing measures that would limit production, and therefore profits. When the industry spends \$1 billion to launch a high-profile 'Alliance to End Plastic Waste', its real goal is to maintain the status quo, and to protect its \$200 billion investment in expanded production over the next five years.

Still, there is cause for hope. Break Free From Plastic, a growing global movement of nongovernmental organizations, has been working to inform governments and their representatives of the harms and risks associated with new plastic production. In the 15 months since UNEA-3, an Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group has met twice to assess the options available for addressing the plastic crisis holistically. Their findings, bolstered by

multiple UN-sponsored analyses and independent reports, point to major gaps and insufficient coordination in current governance structures.

The Expert Group's recommendations have given significant momentum to the push for a new global framework to reduce the production and consumption of plastic. At UNEA-4, a resolution proposed by Norway calls for stronger global-governance structures to address marine litter and microplastics. But the hope is that this will serve as a first step toward a legally binding treaty with a multi-layered approach to solving the problem.

A new global convention to confront the plastics crisis would improve coordination between governments and existing regulatory structures, and would also provide additional financial and technical support. More importantly, its central focus would be preventing both growth in plastics pollution and harm to human health at all phases of the production cycle.

We all have a right to live in a healthy environment. But that right will not be secure until we adopt legally binding measures to limit production of plastics, and to hold companies and governments accountable for the damage plastic does to our bodies, communities, and ecosystems. Educating people about the importance of recycling is not enough. We are optimistic that the UNEA will recognize this and join with those who are already leading a groundbreaking initiative to protect human and environmental health.

Food service industry needs to adapt to thrive

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Rather than depend on local franchisees, as in the past, many Western food chains have chosen to directly enter regional markets or to make strategic acquisitions of domestic concepts. Global chains, which already had a significant share in local markets, are growing their footprints more than twice as fast as domestic independents. It is projected that within the next few years, 40 percent of the growth in the industry will come from global chains.

On another note, the AaronAllen report shows that three of the biggest expenses for restaurant operators usually comes from food, rent and labor. While food and rent costs tend to fluctuate with the rise and fall in oil prices, the cost of labor is only going up. The job nationalization drive being implemented by several regional governments is only likely to make labor costs even higher in future, as more foreigners get replaced by locals.

Also, an unintended consequence of the job nationalization policy is that an estimated 730,000 expatriates are reported to have left Saudi Arabia in recent years. This exodus has further rattled nerves of food industry operators, as they not only reduced available workforce and made hiring new labor more expensive, but also impacted the bottom line through loss in revenue from the spending by expatriate customers dining out. In Kuwait, which is calling for cutting expatriate numbers by half in the next five

years, the impact on the food service industry could be even larger than that in Saudi Arabia.

The AaronAllen report points out that while disillusionment in the present circumstances is understandable, there is no reason for despondence among operators. While the region may have the fastest falling margins among major food service economies around the world, it still performs at relatively high levels. The US\$4 billion in annual growth is projected to take the industry to over \$20 billion in the next couple of years.

Moreover, the report notes that the growth figure estimates could be on the conservative side, as they do not take into account growing tourism numbers in the region. Domestic tourism promotion initiatives by individual states, as well as the hosting of two mega international events in the next few years are likely to boost tourism to the region and prove a blessing to the food service industry.

In addition to Saudi Arabia gearing up to receive over 30 million tourists, both religious and secular to the kingdom by 2030, the UAE is preparing to welcome over 17 million visitors to the World Expo 2020 in Dubai, and is Qatar planning for a similar spurt in visitors to the FIFA World Cup Football tournament in 2022. All of this augurs well for the region's hospitality and food service industry.

The report urges industry operators to blend business acumen with exceptional service by offering guests an appealing ambiance, quality

foods, speed of service, convenience and value. By remaining relevant, sharing values and providing a differentiated, yet consistent experience, local food service operators can prove resilient and thrive in the changing circumstances, said the report.

Some of the salient recommendations from the report are:

Training: Many operators see training employees as an unnecessary investment. But untrained, or poorly trained, cooks and servers impact the bottom line. Proper training has been shown to reduce food costs by 0.5 percent of revenue, which may appear inconsequential until one projects it across a \$100 million annual business. In that instance, a training program focusing just on preventing food waste could save the business over \$500,000 annually.

Restaurants that do not invest in training also tend to have higher rates of worker churn. Since the cost of replacing an employee is about 1.5x their wages, a 50 percent turnover rate would drain about 10 percent of the revenue from an operation. Most training programs cost only half that.

Investing in upkeep: The best and surest way to cut costs is to increase sales. And the surest way to increase sales is to invest in the existing operation. Performing basic repairs and maintenance, improving cleanliness standards, and conducting regular quality audits can lead to fast same-store

sales gains. Remodeling and refurbishing, if done correctly, has been shown to create average sales lifts of between 3 and 10 percent.

Embracing technology: With some of the highest smartphone usage rates in the world, GCC guests, especially the mobile savvy younger generation, are increasing turning to mobile apps in ordering food. Restaurants that invest in innovative technologies such as mobile ordering apps, self-service kiosks, predictive analytics and automated kitchens, are likely to gain more market share than those that rely on foot traffic alone.

Delivering convenience: Increasingly guests are turning to convenience and privacy when dining out, with many spurning bustling malls for quiet local dining experiences. Rather than open full-fledged services in rent-heavy newly opened malls, operators should look at delivery-only locations, pop-up kitchens, food halls, and other non-traditional formats that create new dining experiences and offer another way for brands to stand out.

In this era of massive disruptions, food service operations that cling to the old way of doing things will find it difficult to survive, let alone thrive. It is time to invest and innovate, to build food service systems that can thrive in the new normal and compete successfully with operations from all over the world.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Journalism's Risky Tech Attraction



BORCHARDT ALEXANDRA

Director of Leadership Programs at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Technology was supposed to solve some of the world's biggest problems. Connect everyone to the Internet, it was once assumed, and democracy would follow. Collect enough data, and all of our questions would be answered. Put everything online, and algorithms would do the rest. The world would practically run itself.

Instead, we now know that digital technology can be used to undermine democracy; that it raises more questions than it answers; and that a world that runs itself seems more like an Orwellian nightmare scenario than a noble goal. But while technology is not the solution, it is not really the problem either; our single-minded focus on it is.

Consider the experience of the media industry, where the digital revolution has wreaked havoc on prevailing business models over the last decade. Publishers and editors responded by putting all their faith in technology: tracking all manner of metrics, embracing data journalism, hiring video teams, and opening podcast studios.

More recently, media organizations have shifted their attention toward artificial-intelligence solutions that track audience preferences, automatically produce desired content and translations, alert journalists to breaking news, and much more. In the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism's latest annual report on media trends, 78 percent of respondents in a non-representative survey of international media leaders said that they planned to invest more in AI this year.

But the final frontier in the quest to save journalism, many believe, is the blockchain – the distributed ledger technology that underpins cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin. That remains to be seen: the first attempt to leverage the blockchain to free journalists from ad-driven business models, by Civil Media Company, had a bumpy start.

There is nothing wrong with using technology to solve problems, including those created by technology, or to give a company a competitive edge. That is what The Washington Post, for example, has been doing in the six years since Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos purchased it (at a time when it was hemorrhaging money and shedding jobs). But not even the most advanced tech will save the media industry, or anybody else, if there is no regard for the people using it. And that does not mean just audiences. After years of chasing the latest tech trends, the media industry is increasingly confronting burnout among existing management and staff, and a shrinking pool of new talent.

According to the Reuters Institute report, some 60 percent of media leaders are concerned about burnout on their teams, and 75 percent now worry about retaining and attracting



staff. Another report, Lucy Kueng's Going Digital: A Roadmap for Organizational Transformation, shows that middle managers, in particular, have been exiting the industry.

This should not be surprising. Journalists have always faced pressure in managing the churn of time-sensitive, demanding, and constantly changing news situations. But, in the past, they could at least count on the news organizations that employed them to offer stability and consistency. Now, they must also navigate relentless, tech-driven organizational change — often poorly explained and hastily introduced. The level of uncertainty can drive away even the most loyal staff.

To be sure, change is unavoidable; the digital age demands constant adaptation. But making needed adjustments without destroying morale requires implementing a people-oriented approach. This is not a straightforward process. For tech solutions, managers can attend shiny digital conferences, take some sales team's advice, sign a contract, and dump the new tools on their newsrooms. With people, they have to listen carefully, acquire an in-depth understanding of the problem, and then devise their own strategy.

A good place to start is leadership. In any industry, the key responsibilities of an organization's leaders include making their employees feel secure and appreciated. That means paying attention to employees' needs and fostering an organizational culture that provides them with a sense of belonging and purpose.

A similar approach must be applied to audiences. Not even the most accurate metrics can provide the needed guidance, if nobody understands what they actually mean, why they were chosen, or what their psychological impact would be (on audiences or staff). While data can deliver useful insights about audience preferences, listening to people can lead to very different impressions and conclusions.

For example, the data might show that more content means more page views; but if audiences long for fewer distractions and higher-quality reporting, flooding the market with robot-produced content will not satisfy them. Likewise, users might click on a larger share of articles if algorithms are used to personalize their experience;

newsroom employees, bringing the total number of journalists there to an historic high of 1,600.

For organizations without the clout and digital revenue of the Times, a people-oriented approach may also be needed to secure investment. With the limits of the ad-driven business model becoming increasingly apparent, many media leaders — close to one-third, according to the Reuters Institute survey — believe that in the future foundations and non-profits will play a central role in supporting the media. But persuading foundations and philanthropists to open their hearts and wallets will require human connection and engagement, not algorithms or AI-enabled software. Potential funders need to be convinced that journalism is as noble a cause as, say, cancer research.

Technology alone cannot encourage democracy, help answer important questions, and facilitate effective leadership by boosting accountability. But, to some extent, high-quality, responsible journalism can. If it is to fulfill that purpose, however, news organizations must not allow themselves to be swept up by every new tech trend. If they treat technology as more than a tool for implementing people-centered strategies, the people they need, both staff and audiences, will continue to vote with their feet.

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