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Growth to falter as oil output cuts take effect

STAFF REPORT

Home to the sixth-largest oil reserves in the world and the seventh-highest crude oil exports, Kuwait's economic well-being is overwhelmingly tied to global oil prices and trends in the hydrocarbon sector. Every dollar rise or fall in Brent prices, as well as other vagaries in oil markets worldwide, has an outsized impact on the country's exports, the government's fiscal receipts and the nation's Gross Domestic Product.

Decision by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to increase oil production in June of last year, after nearly 18-months of self-imposed production cuts, saw economic growth in Kuwait revive in the second half of 2018. But

this economic growth is unlikely to continue into the new year, as OPEC decided to reinstate production cuts at the end of last year — for a period of six-months starting January 2019.

The OPEC decision calls for removing 800,000 barrels per day from the market through production cuts among member states, and a further 400,000 barrels by non-OPEC members. Though the specific quotas for member countries were not published, it is clear that Kuwait's current production rate of 2.8 million barrels per day will be curbed and total production for the 2019 full year is expected to decline by 1.5 percent.

However, this seemingly marginal fall in production, has an oversized effect on Kuwait and its economy, as hydrocarbon products constitute



90 percent of the country's exports, account for more than 88 percent of government revenues, and form over 55 percent of Kuwait's GDP. The domineering role that hydrocarbon revenues play in Kuwait's economy is

most evident from the government's estimated budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year (FY).

Presenting his estimated budget last week, Kuwait Finance Minister Dr. Nayef Al-Hajraf noted that of the total

KD16.4 billion in revenues expected in next fiscal year, KD14.5 billion would come from oil exports. The remaining KD1.9 billion will come from contributions by the non-oil sector, said the minister.

On expenditure in FY2019-20, which begins in April 2019, the minister said it would touch KD22.5 billion, and after the mandated 10 percent deductions from total revenues to the Future Generation Fund were made, the budget would notch a KD7.7 billion deficit. Elaborating on expenses, Minister Al-Hajraf said the largest chunk of spending would continue to be on public sector wages and employee bonuses, which would account for nearly KD16 billion (71%) of total spending.

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Deportation rate on the decline

A total of 17,000 expatriates were deported from the country in 2018 compared to 29,000 in 2017, a decline of about 45 percent, reports a security source familiar with the issue.

The source pointed out the decline in the number of people who have been living illegally in the country compared to previous years, which

is a major reason for the decrease in the number of deportees.

However, the ministry is said to have issued new instructions not to deport any expatriate arbitrarily or illegally. The sources explained in 2016 about 31,000 people were deported after a series of security campaigns in the country during that period.

ESF Book Week promotes reading



The English School Fahaheel (ESF) recently held its annual book week and character day. The week opened with an impressive book fair at the Lloyd Webber theatre and culminated in a colorful character day session involving the lower and middle schools' students. They dressed up in characters from stories across various media. Awards were presented for best costumes. The idea of the day was to promote reading for fun and to find information.

ICSK encourages charitable endeavors



The day, 20 January, 2019 marked a milestone in the history of Indian Community School Kuwait (ICSK) (Senior) as a special charity assembly was conducted. The occasion was graced by the presence of Dr. Sanjay Thurathel, Specialist in Medical Oncology and Sister Gigimol from Kuwait Cancer Control Center.

Dr. Sanjay mentioned how he was happy to know that ICSK (Senior) has helped many cancer patients over the past 4 years. He also gave tips to avoid cancer to lead a healthy and happy life.

This month's recipients were Meliza

Cruz, Sareebdien Noor, Enrica Dalog Alingog and Vincy Hareesh, who received monetary aid on behalf of the school by Dr. Sanjay and Sister Gigimol. The charity segment was followed by dance performances by students of classes 9-A and 9-B. The highlight of the program was the mesmerizing song by students of class 9-B.

The assembly concluded with the presentation to Master Muqlis Moises of class 11-H with a memento and certificate of appreciation for his participation as a Juror in the Ajyal Film Festival 2018, Qatar.

Twenty14 Holdings marks entry into Switzerland with new IntercityHotel Zurich Airport



Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director, Twenty14 Holdings signing the agreement with Necron AG CEO Gerard van Liempt to develop the IntercityHotel Zurich Airport, in the presence of Yusuff Ali MA, Chairman and Managing Director, LuLu Group International, Thomas Willms, CEO, Deutsche Hospitality and other dignitaries in Zurich, Switzerland.

Twenty14 Holdings (T14H), the hospitality investment arm of Abu Dhabi-based LuLu Group International, has entered into a forward purchase contract with Swiss real-estate developer Necron AG for the upcoming IntercityHotel Zurich Airport in Rümlang, Switzerland.

The addition of the IntercityHotel marks Twenty14 Holdings entry into mainland Europe and joins a portfolio of \$750 million worth of luxury properties across the UK, the Middle East, and India.

The purpose-built, 260-room, 4-star hotel will be located close to the Rümlang station, A1 motorway and offers fantastic transport links, including access to Zurich International Airport in ten minutes, while the city centre is just 15 minutes away. The property will include meeting and event spaces, a restaurant, an indoor fitness centre, and spa area as well as underground and outdoor parking facilities. The property is scheduled to open in 2020.

The hotel will be operated by Deutsche Hospitality (Steigenberger Hotels AG) under a 20-year lease contract. The design of the property will be based on the new Intercity Hotels Matteo Thun design standards, and keeping in mind business travellers

and tourists, the property will feature modern guestrooms and public spaces.

Commenting on the acquisition, Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director, T14H said, "We are excited to mark our entry into mainland Europe with our first property in Zurich. It is an important milestone in our group's portfolio as we work towards becoming a billion-dollar investment firm by 2020." "This is an exciting hotel development and we are delighted to be working in partnership with both Twenty14 Holdings and Deutsche Hospitality. We very much hope this is the start of a successful long-term partnership with both," said Gerard van Liempt, CEO, Necron AG.

"The IntercityHotel Zurich Airport launches our brand in Switzerland and adds a highly attractive location to the portfolio," said Thomas Willms, CEO, Deutsche Hospitality. "This hotel is symbolic of our growing international presence at strategically important locations and we are delighted to have such a reliable partner as the Twenty14 Holdings on our side."

This is Twenty14 Holdings' second property to be operated by Deutsche Hospitality. The German hospitality firm currently operates T14H's Steigenberger Hotel Business Bay in Dubai, UAE.



Congratulations



Honorable President of India Ram Nath Kovind presenting the award to Mr. Rajpal Tyagi

Indian Community in Kuwait congratulates

Mr. Rajpal Tyagi

on being awarded the Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award on 23 January, 2019

(The highest honor conferred on overseas Indians by the Government of India)




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Plan to increase fees of work permits and transfer of residence

The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) plans to endorse a resolution of increasing the fees on transfer or renewal of residence and issuance of work permits for the first time for those who work in the private sector, ranging from KD20 to KD100, according to knowledgeable sources.

The sources explained that

renewing work permit shall cost KD20 for one year while the fees of issuing the work permit for the first time shall be KD70 instead of KD 60 for one year.

Transference of residence shall be KD100 for the first time, KD200 for the second, KD300 for the third and KD400 thereon with no increase for additional number of transfers.

IIS celebrates Annual Day



Integrated Indian School (IIS) celebrated its Quin Decennial (15th Year) Annual Day on 16 January.

Students and staff participated in a stellar program under the theme 'Transition'. The Chief Guest Roji.M.John (MLA, Angamaly, Kerala, India) with Sanjeev Saklani from the Indian embassy and other dignitaries from Ministry of Private Education and the sponsor's family graced the occasion.

The Annual Report 2017-18 was presented by the Principal Arul Dharmaraj Thomas to apprise the audience of the achievements of the previous academic session. The dedicated and meritorious teachers were recognized with mementos and silver coins. The young achievers of IIS were also awarded medals and certificates

for their hard work, commitment and excellence in academics. A thought-provoking speech by the Chief Guest Roji. M. John was truly encouraging.

The evening was filled with performances by the students under the theme 'Transition', which was illustrated through dance performances. The touching scene of 'Emerging Kerala' made the audience very emotional.

The show featuring the School Orchestra, Nature's Emotions, Transition of Love and Colours of Life also was enthralling.

For the grand finale, the participants gathered together and held their illuminated lamps aloft while singing the lyrics of 'Heal the World of Michael Jackson'.

Ukrainian Dance Ensemble gives spectacular performance in Kuwait



The impressive performance by the Virsky National Dance Ensemble of Ukraine at the Abdullhussain Abdulredha Theatre on 21 January was an enthralling display of the culture and heritage of Ukraine.

The event was organized by the Embassy of Ukraine in collaboration with the National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters (NCAAL) as part of the 25th Qurain Cultural Festival, which is Kuwait's leading arts festival. In attendance at the event was the Ambassador of Ukraine to Kuwait, H.E. Dr. Volodymyr Tolkach, and the Secretary General of NCCAL Ali Al-Yoha.

In his address to the gathering, Ambassador Tolkach pointed out that the cultural collaboration for the event reflected the bonds of friendship between Kuwait and Ukraine. He praised the dance ensemble as the best in Ukraine with a long history of showcasing the heritage and culture of the country, and added that they have done many outstanding performances across the world. The ambassador also noted that it is their first performance in Kuwait, and expressed his pride that the Kuwait public will learn about the culture and folk traditions of his country.

The Ukrainian troupe performed several colorful



dances that demonstrated the cultural wealth of various regions of their native land. Among the dances performed were Povzunets, a famous Ukrainian Cossack comedy dance; Oi, Pid Vishneiu (Oh, Under a Cherry Tree), Moriaky (Sailors). The program ended with the traditional and lively 'Hopak' dance, the national dance of the Zaporozchi Cossacks.

At the end of the show, the audience expressed their appreciation by requesting an encore, and many dancers returned to stage to exhibit their individual dance skills.

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Dining IN KUWAIT

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

Savor the authentic flavors of Kuwait at Amiti Noura



Amiti Noura, a contemporary dining destination, presents guests with a culinary journey into the traditional Kuwaiti kitchen and home. The restaurant has opened its doors at The Souk, The Avenues, and invites diners to enjoy a taste of classic Kuwaiti home flavors.



Developed and operated by Alshaya Group, Amiti Noura, which translates to 'Aunt Noura', pays homage to authentic local recipes and reflects the country's spirit of hospitality. Inspired by these traditions, guests at Amiti Noura are promised a journey that captures this generosity. Warm Kuwaiti hospitality is paired with a contemporary and chic ambience, to create an amiable dining destination that allows for nourishment of the soul. The modern welcoming ambience of Amiti Noura is created through a soft fusion of subtle and earthy tones and distinct decor that captures Kuwait's heritage.

Amiti Noura brings friends and families together for heart-warming meals that reflect the comfort and traditions of a Kuwaiti home kitchen.

For breakfast, lunch and dinner, guests will discover a wide choice of classic home-style dishes that are defined by family recipes and offer a unique combination of distinct flavors and spices.

Breakfast specials are served with Tanoor and Regag bread while classic staples like Hamsat and Sambusa are served all day long. Lunch and dinner options feature a wide selection of chicken, meat and seafood dishes, while the delicious range of desserts includes classics like Sab Al Gafsha and Lgaimat.

Location: Located at The Souk at The Avenues.

Timings: From 9:00 am and 11:30 pm on week days and until 12 midnight on weekends.

Follow @AmitiNoura on Instagram for the authentic Kuwaiti culinary experience and updates.



Every week, our 'Dining in Kuwait' section features selected restaurants in the country that provide sumptuous cuisines from around the world. Want to feature your restaurant in our 'Dining in Kuwait' section and reach out to our wide reader base? Email us at editor@timeskuwait.com with a brief about your restaurant along with images in high resolution.

Thought for the week

“ We spend money we don't have, on things we don't need, to make impressions that won't last on people we don't care about.”

- Tim Jackson,
British ecological economist

Possibility of multivitamins aiding in weight lose

Ask Mira : Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy

There is still no magic pill for weight loss, but taking a multivitamin might be the secret to a slimmer you!

In a new study of more than 80 obese women in China, those who took a multivitamin once a day while continuing to eat their normal diets, lost in an average about 1.5kg over 6 months. Meanwhile, those who took a placebo lost no weight. One of the reasons given was that the women were burning fatter for energy compared to the others, and was likely due to an improvement in metabolism, that lead to an improvement in cholesterol.

The findings reported in February 2010 in the International Journal of Obesity, linked vitamins and minerals to weight loss.



But scientists still are unable to figure out which vitamins and minerals exactly have the biggest influence over appetite and weight control.

Things you should know:

Calcium seems to help: Clinical trials have shown that consuming 1200 milligrams of calcium daily can boost weight loss by up to 60 percent, most probably because it binds to fat in the gastrointestinal tract, which reduces



absorption of fat in the body. This works best for people who are not getting enough of this mineral.

Vitamin D deficiency contributes to weight plateau, and taking injections or pills of that vitamin boost your weight loss.

Other nutrients are also beneficial. Women in the previous Chinese study who took multivitamins also lost weight. This can be explained that when your body is low in vitamins and minerals, your appetite increases, making you eat more to replenish the nutrients you are missing.

That is why taking a daily multivitamin supplement will keep

your appetite under control.

Now honestly, the best way to get these nutrients is surely from food directly. But when dieters cut back on calories, they are more likely to miss some important nutritional requirements.

Always ask a dietitian before taking any multivitamin as they might have harmful effects on your health.

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



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

Ways to use leftover fruit salad



Add the fruit to smoothies: Tossed in the blender, you will never know that fruit salad is not at its peak anymore. Leftovers of any mix of fruit are great blended with yogurt or just ice into a quick and satisfying smoothie.

Cook it down into a quick fruit sauce: Simmer the fruit salad with a little sugar and water and it will cook down into a warm compote. Serve it over pancakes or waffles, ice cream, or yogurt.

Freeze it to make fruit ice cubes: Fill an ice cube tray with the fruit and water, freeze until solid, and you've got colorful and flavorful ice cubes to add to your summer drinks. Drop a handful into a glass of water, iced tea, or lemonade for a fruity twist.

Make an easy fruit sorbet or granita: Blend the fruit salad with water and sugar and churn it in an ice cream machine for sorbet or freeze it in a flat container and scrape for granita. Either dessert is a sweet way to cool you down.

Rajpal Tyagi awarded prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman award

STAFF REPORT

Rajpal Tyagi was awarded the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman award today by the Honorable President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind at a gala event held to mark the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas in Varanasi.

After a significantly long hiatus, a Kuwait based NRI was among the 30 recipients of this year's prestigious award. In his more than 40 years of stay in Kuwait as a non-resident Indian, Tyagi has always been a firm believer in leading from the front in all aspects of his life. He is actively involved in the community, including in cultural groups and gatherings, the Indian Veteran Cricket Club, and the Indian Business Council, among others. "I believe that if you can contribute to society in any way, you must.

Tyagi helps International



Interiors as its Managing Director and Partner. He studied architecture at the University of Roorkee, in Northern India, which is today known as Indian Institute of Technology-Roorkee.

Always one to pick the road less traveled, he pursued architecture to set himself apart from the bevy of students pursuing degrees in civil, electrical, and mechanical engineering.

"I always wanted to do something different from what everyone else was doing and architecture gave me the opportunity to create something of my own. In

this field, you get to exercise your creativity every day and receive a lot of personal satisfaction from completing projects.

Tyagi came to Kuwait in 1978 in search of prosperity and thrived in his career as an architect at three local companies. "Everybody dreams of going abroad and making it big, but without God's blessings nothing is possible. I believe in destiny and that my life is fully controlled and blessed by the Almighty."

During his career he not only witnessed the continuing boom in construction but also the devastation of the Iraqi Invasion



in 1990. After coming back to a liberated Kuwait as an architect, he was at the forefront of rebuilding a nation. "The company I was working for back then wanted me to join them as soon as possible. I was back in Kuwait by May 1991 and we played a significant role in the development and reconstruction of Kuwait."

He also acknowledges the support

and sacrifice of his wife, "When you are active in society, it consumes a lot of your time, and since time is limited, some of it gets taken from the family. They have sacrificed and supported me, they are my backbone and my inspiration, and without their support I could not have achieved whatever I have achieved in Kuwait, however big or small."

LuLu Hypermarket launches Flavors of India 2019



Lulu hypermarket, the largest retailer in the region, launched the 'Flavors of India 2019' festival at the hypermarket's Al-Rai outlet on 24 January. The Indian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. K Jeeva Sagar inaugurated the event in the presence of top Lulu



Hypermarket management in Kuwait, and a large presence of shoppers, well-wishers and media personnel.

During the 11-day promotional period, from 23 January to 2 February, all LuLu Hypermarket outlets in the country are offering special promotional prices on a variety of Indian products. A range of food products, including groceries, fresh foods, vegetables and meat are available at unbeatable prices. The special promotion also covers Indian-made garments, and other goods imported for India.

Another attractive aspect of the festival is the Indian food stalls laden with food-delights from the country. Adding to the festival mood at the hypermarket's venues are several large cut-out displays of well-known heritage monuments of India that emphasize India's rich culture and history. Lulu Hypermarket is the destination of choice for discerning shoppers in the country largely due to its customer-centric approach and commitment to providing the widest range of high-quality products at attractive prices.

Dr. Susovana Nair wins prestigious 'She the Change - Nari Udyami Award 2019'

Dr. Susovana Sujit Nair, a renowned Medical Oncologist working in Kuwait, was accorded the prestigious 'She the Change - Nari Udyami Award 2019' at an event held on the sidelines of the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas that took place in Varanasi on 21-23 January. She is a renowned public figure in Kuwait, who is currently employed at the Department of Medical Oncology Kuwait Cancer Control Center.

The 'She the Change: Nari Udyami Award' event honors accomplished women for their work related to women's empowerment. Dr. Susovana is the joint-community-secretary of Indian Doctors Forum (IDF) Kuwait, and is well-regarded for leading many medical seminars and workshops to raise awareness among the expatriate community in Kuwait about breast cancer. She has also delivered lectures and led awareness campaigns in schools, voluntary organizations and worked with the under-privileged sections of the society.



She has also been a part of various medical health camps organized by Indian associations in Kuwait, and has been a driving force in improving cancer awareness, particularly breast cancer. Other ways in which she has helped the Indian community in Kuwait is by organizing screening camps that also function as informative sessions for ladies to highlight the importance of regular check-ups, regular self-breast examination and spreading information on breast cancer. Another important achievement is her collaboration with NGO's in India to help their various outreach programs that emphasize the importance of 'Early detection, Better cure'.

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India marks 70th Republic Day with festive celebrations



India's 70th Republic Day was celebrated by a large and enthusiastic crowd of Indian citizens at the embassy premises on 26 January. Indians from all walks of life, school children and large gathering of families, joined Indian embassy staff in attending the flag-hoisting ceremony in front of the embassy.

The Ambassador of India to Kuwait H.E. K. Jeeva Sagar first placed a garland on the Mahatma Gandhi statue and then, unfurled the National Flag. The crowd saluted the flag and sang the Indian National Anthem as it was raised.

The Indian ambassador then addressed the community and read a message from Honorable President of India. In his speech, Ambassador Sagar lauded the continued close and friendly relations between India and Kuwait, and stressed that the Indian government is keen to further strengthen and expand the enriching relationship between the two countries.

He delved into the brief history of India's Republic day before shifting his focus to the present by noting, "Today's India is strong,



robust and remarkably resilient. It is the third largest economy in the world on purchasing power parity, and is a proud member of the G20 group of large and powerful economies. India stood like a rock of stability amidst the financial turbulence not many years ago. The Indian economy defied that crisis, and it

was a major contributory factor behind the faster recovery of the global economy in the following years."

With regards to India's remarkable achievements, he pointed out that India continues to be a global growth leader, maintaining its position as one of the fastest

growing large economies. He noted that various initiatives undertaken by the present government has led to record FDI inflows and an unprecedented rise in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business rankings. "India offers huge investment opportunities for the global industry and business," said the ambassador.

Expressing his pride in the Indian community in Kuwait, the ambassador said, "The Indian community in Kuwait, which is present in almost all segments of Kuwaiti economy, has been playing a major role in the constantly growing upward trajectory of India-Kuwait relations. It would be my endeavor as India's envoy to Kuwait to work closely with the Government of Kuwait to ensure that this human resource and people-defined dimension becomes an even more important and positive instrument towards furthering India's ever-blossoming bilateral relationship with Kuwait."

Colorful festivities marked the occasion, with the Bohra band playing and students from various Indian schools giving renditions of patriotic songs. The celebration concluded with an open-house reception.



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KFH's acquisition of Ahli United Bank to proceed

Kuwait Finance House's (KFH) acquisition of Ahli United Bank (AUB) is proceeding after the KFH finalized relevant feasibility studies for the move, said Chairman Hamad Al-Marzouq.

Al-Marzouq, cited in a report issued by the finance bank on Saturday, affirmed that the bank had conducted required studies with renowned local and international agencies, namely Goldman Sachs, J.P. Morgan, Merrie Lynch and Shell consultancy.

The acquisition feasibility lies in prospected hike of profit per share in the coming three years, also increasing of the acclimated earnings by 90 percent, compared to those posted in 2018, added Al-Marzouq. Moreover, the move will lead to

beefing up financial status of the house to the level of turning into one of the largest Islamic banks at the global and regional levels, with assets' volume exceeding US\$ 94 billion and shareholders' equity leaping over US\$ 10 billion.

Furthermore, the acquisition of the AUB would enhance the house capacity to fund mega

projects, local and regional infrastructural ventures and its competition potentials.

Other forecast advantages are boosting geographical presence of the group, entering new markets such as Egypt and the United Kingdom as well as benefiting from the total basis of the two banks' clients.



Gulf airlines denied direct flights to new Kerala airport

Ministry of Civil Aviation in India has decided to defer granting direct flights by Gulf airlines to the newly opened Kannur International Airport in Kerala, for a further six months. Kannur International Airport Ltd (KIAL) authorities had approached the civil aviation ministry requesting special permission for airlines from Gulf countries to operate two direct flights daily to Kannur, beyond the existing bilateral air services agreement between India and countries in the Gulf. A special permission to allow flights to the Gulf countries, outside the bilateral rights on airline capacities, was allowed to both Cochin and Calicut international airports when they began operations.

Airline seat capacities between India and most Gulf states are currently nearing the maximum under existing bilateral agreements and constraining attempts by Gulf and Indian airlines from starting more flights. In its proposal, KIAL had suggested that along with allowing Gulf carriers to operate two flights daily to Kannur, other Indian carriers would also be able to operate a matching number of flights to various destinations in Gulf region. The ministry's decision was announced last week following a high-powered meeting chaired jointly by the state's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the Secretary at the Civil Aviation Ministry, held in



Thiruvananthapuram, the state capital. The civil aviation secretary said the request for special permission had been turned down for the time being. However, he added the proposal could be reviewed after about six months.

The decision comes as a blow to several airlines from the Gulf, such as Emirates, Etihad, Saudia and FlyDubai that were planning to begin operations in this lucrative sector. National carrier, Air India Express, is at present the only airline operating international flights from Kannur to destinations including Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Doha and Saudi Arabia. On a positive note, the civil aviation ministry agreed to consider the suggestions for including Kannur airport under the 'open sky policy' between India and the ASEAN countries. If approved, it could lead to more international flights from Kannur, including to Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

Germany and France sign the Treaty of Aachen



A new treaty on Franco-German Cooperation and Integration was signed on 22 January by German Federal Chancellor Merkel and French President Macron in the city of Aachen in Germany.

Proof of this friendship between France and Germany, can be seen in Kuwait: It is the only place in the world, where the French and German Embassy share the same floor of a high-rise building. The offices are side by side and common office spaces, like the reception, meeting rooms and the kitchen are shared. The synergy effects are huge, the ambassadors can communicate in person on a daily basis, administration is less for each side and costs are shared.

The close cooperation between Germany and France started with the Elysée Treaty, a treaty of friendship between France and Germany, signed by President Charles de Gaulle and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer on 22 January 1963 at the Elysée Palace in Paris. On this occasion, Germany and France drew the lessons from their past by concluding the historic Elysée Treaty, setting out a major new course for their relationship. What for centuries had been regarded as a traditional enmity was able to develop into Franco-German friendship. The confrontation, that time and again, led to wars which wreaked havoc on Europe, became the engine of European integration. The new 'Treaty of Aachen', that will be signed today, builds on, but does not replace, the Elysée Treaty of 1963.

Preparing for the future together

Germany and France firmly believe that closer cooperation does not come at the cost of national sovereignty, but instead makes countries stronger together. They will thus not only remain committed to the success story that is European integration, but also lay the foundations for the next generation to continue on this path. The Treaty will significantly intensify cooperation with France on foreign and security policy, topics concerning the future, culture, education and cross-border collaboration. Germany and France aim to work even more closely together than before in the EU and United Nations. The priority of the Treaty of Aachen is to safeguard the future together. As a venue for dialogue and an interface between politics, business, research and civil society, a Franco-German forum for the future will develop joint answers to new challenges or needs for regulations.

Focus on border regions

Integration between border regions will be a priority in the future. The main aim is to reduce the disadvantages arising from a peripheral location by carrying out cross-border projects. Decision-makers in the border regions are to be given scope to go beyond the existing possible types of cross-border cooperation. The focus will be on tangibly improving people's daily lives in border regions, such as the work of companies and administrations, day care for children, healthcare, schools and vocational training, cross-border job placement services and transnational infrastructure projects. The goal is to identify solutions for daily life in border regions that could point the way forward for European integration.

German Ambassador Karlfried Bergner said: "We are living proof that neighboring countries, that used to be at war with each other, can overcome the past and be really close friends. By setting this example, we are hoping to inspire more countries at war or in conflicts with neighboring countries to choose collaboration and consultation over rivalry and conflict. This is of political importance in many hotspots around the globe."

French Ambassador Marie Masdupuy said: "The human factor in relations between countries is of paramount importance. In Europe, we see it with all our neighbors, but without the closest relation we succeeded to establish between France and Germany, it would not make sense. Here in Kuwait, the human factor in relations between neighbors is also very well understood." But how can countries become friends? You have to enable and encourage the people of both countries to come together. The 'Franco-German Youth Office', for example, has enabled 9 million young people from France and Germany to participate in 320,000 exchange programs since 1963.

Today there is also a huge civil-society network between Germany and France, for example, there are 2,220 towns and cities in Germany who have a French partner city. People from the different cities visit each other throughout the year. Be it choirs, sports club or the mayor, they meet up with their counterparts and discover the other side has very much in common with them. This is where personal Franco-German friendships are born.

Kuwait's 25th Al-Qurain Cultural Festival ends with Czech Philharmonic Orchestra performance

The Czech Philharmonic Orchestra gave a stellar performance of classical music at the Abdhussain Abdulridha Theater on 25 January, where they played six classical musical pieces of cultural significance to bring Kuwait's 25th Al-Qurain Cultural Festival to a close.

Many important events were part of the cultural festival including a tribute to noteworthy Kuwaiti figures like the late Redha Al-Feeli, who had outstanding achievements in media and management, and Abdhussain Abdulredha, a prominent Kuwait actor. Another event dealt with role of the late Abdulaziz Hussein



and his role in promoting culture and education in Kuwait.

A variety of exhibitions of photos, paintings and artifacts were held as well as a seminar about Kuwait's 2035 vision. The

Al-Qurain Cultural Festival also celebrated this year the 120th anniversary of an agreement between Kuwait and Britain according to which the UK would provide protection for the state.



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Argentina

Studded with outstanding natural wonders and endowed with some of the world's hot-list cities, Argentina is a vast and varied land. The country encompasses a staggering diversity of terrains, from the lush wetlands of the Litoral and the bone-dry Andean plateaux of the Northwest to the end-of-the-world archipelago of Tierra del Fuego. Its most emblematic landscapes are the verdant flatlands of the Pampas and the dramatic steppe of Patagonia, whose very name evokes windswept plains inhabited by hardy pioneers.

One of Argentina's top attractions is the leviathan metropolis of Buenos Aires, the most fascinating of all South American capitals. The main cities worth visiting are colonial Salta in the Northwest, beguiling Rosario – the birthplace of Che Guevara – and Ushuaia, which, in addition to being the world's most southerly city, enjoys a fabulous waterfront setting on the Beagle Channel. Here are the top destinations to visit in Argentina.

Buenos Aires: Seductive and cultured, sophisticated yet earthy, eclectic but with a strong identity, it never bores, seldom sleeps and invariably mesmerizes its visitors. Influenced by the great European cities, Buenos Aires nonetheless has its own distinct personality enhanced by proud traditions, including football, tango and mate.

Modern Buenos Aires features elegant restaurants, glamorous bars, historic cafés and trendy nightclubs, plus a world-class opera house, countless theatres, multiscreen cinemas, avant-garde galleries and French-style palaces all underscore its attachment to the arts and its eternal sense of style.

The Central Sierras: This landlocked region offers some exquisite Jesuit architecture in and around the historic city of Córdoba, as well as excellent outdoor activities in the surrounding countryside.

Lying about midway between the Andes and Buenos Aires, the province of Córdoba you find the stark juxtaposition of the flat pampas with the rolling sierras, the first mountain chain one encounters when moving west toward the Andes.

There are three chains of mountains in the western part of Córdoba province, all of which run parallel to each other, from north to south. They are the Sierra Chica in the east, the Sierra Grande in the center, and the Sierra del Pocho in the west. The Sierras de Córdoba are neither as high nor as extensive as many of the other mountain



Cool cities, endless Pampas, rugged peaks and Patagonian glaciers



formations east of the Andes, but their easy accessibility, and their beauty, as well as the myriad of small rivers and watercourses, have established a strong reputation as an ideal environment for trekking, horseback riding, water sports, and fishing.

Added to these sporting options are opportunities to exploring the diverse settlements in the Punilla Valley, discover Jesuit architecture on the Jesuit trail and in Alta Gracia.

The city of Córdoba, Argentina's second largest, holds some of the country's finest examples of colonial architecture, both secular and religious. One of the oldest cities in the country, it was founded by Jerónimo Luis de Cabrera in 1573.



The Lake District: Argentina's Lake District – the northwestern wedge of Argentine Patagonia – is a land of picture-perfect glacial lakes surrounded by luxuriant forests, jagged peaks and extinct volcanoes. The undisputed modern capital, Bariloche, offers amazing adventures while north is the stunning Seven Lakes Route, and to the south is the splendid Parque Nacional Los Alerces, home to more fabulous lakes and ancient alerce trees. Further south still lurks a trio of curiosities: Butch Cassidy's cabin, the Welsh settlement of Trevelin and the historic railway at La Trochita.

However, the real attraction is the sheer unspoiled beauty of the goliath Parque Nacional Nahuel Huapi, one of Argentina's most-visited national parks. The park's centerpiece is Lago Nahuel Huapi, a glacial remnant. To the west, a ridge of high peaks separates Argentina from Chile; the tallest is 3554m Monte Tronador, an extinct volcano

that still lives up to its name (meaning 'Thunderer') when blocks of ice tumble from its glaciers.

Neuquén, the namesake capital of Argentina's only palindromically named province, is a pleasant enough city to relax in, but its indisputable draw has to be the nearby treasure-trove of giant dinosaur fossils, earning it the nickname of Dinosaur Paradise.



El Cuyo: Argentina's midwestern region, generally known as EL CUYO, is formed by the provinces of Mendoza, San Juan and La Rioja plus the neighboring province of San Luis. This massive territory stretches all the way from the chocolate-brown pampas of La Payunia, on the northern borders of Patagonia, to the remote highland steppes of the Reserva Las Vicuñas, on the edge of the altiplano. The sophisticated metropolis of Mendoza, one of Argentina's biggest cities, is the epicentre of the country's wine tourism.

The region's dynamics are overwhelmingly about its highly varied landscapes and wildlife. In the west of the provinces loom the world's loftiest peaks outside the Himalayas, culminating in the defiant Aconcagua, whose summit is only a shade under 7000m. Ranging from these snowy Andean heights to totally flat pampas in the east, from green, fertile valleys to barren volcanoes – including the world's second-highest cone, extinct Monte Pissis – the scenery also includes two of the country's most photographed national parks: the Talampaya and the Ischigualasto. All this provides a backdrop for some of Argentina's best opportunities for extreme

sport – from skiing in exclusive Las Leñas, to whitewater rafting, rock climbing, and even the ascent of Aconcagua or the Mercedario and Tupungato peaks.

Patagonia: An immense land of arid steppe, seemingly stretching into infinity, Patagonia is famed for its adventures and adventures, for marvelous myths and fabulous facts. As a region of extremes, it has few equals in the world: from the biting winds that howl off the Southern Patagonian Icecap – the planet's largest area of permanent ice away from the poles – to the hearthside warmth of old-time Patagonian hospitality; from the lowest point on the South American continent, the Gran Bajo de San Julián, to the savagely beautiful peaks of the Fitz Roy



massif; from the mesmerizingly sterile plains along the coastline to the astoundingly rich marine fauna that thrives and breeds just offshore. One of southern Argentina's principal arteries, the RN-3 stretches from the capital all the way down to austral Río Gallegos. The highlight of this Atlantic fringe of Patagonia is the wildlife, most notably at the nature reserve of Península Valdés, famous for its whale-watching, but also at Punta Tombo, the continent's largest penguin colony.

The region's climax is reached, however, with two of the country's star attractions: the trekking and climbing paradise of the Fitz Roy sector of Parque Nacional Los Glaciares, accessed from the laidback village of El Chaltén; and the patriotically blue-and-white hues of craggy Glaciar Perito Moreno, one of the world's natural wonders, within easy reach of the tourist hotspot of El Calafate.

Dishes to try

Provoleta: Provoleta is the country's variant on provolone cheese. Pungent and sharp, sliced discs are topped with herbs, like oregano and chilli flakes then grilled. The nearly-melted cheese is crispy and slightly caramelized on the outside, gooey and smoky on the interior. Top it off with a drizzle of olive oil, or a spoonful of chimichurri.



Dulce de leche: Loosely translated as "milk jam," this thick caramel is the result of condensed milk, reduced slowly until sweetened and sticky. Look for in it everything from alfajores, to dessert empanadas, to another national favourite, helado (or, ice cream) where it is liberally drizzled in and downed by the kilo-full.



Locro: A hearty stew, locro is a national dish traditionally served on May 25, the date marking Argentina's May Revolution.

Made from white corn, beef, tripe and red chorizo, as well as other vegetables including white beans, squash and pumpkin, and seasoned with cumin and bay leaf, this tasty meal in a bowl is an ideal winter warmer. It can be ramped up with a dash of quiquirimichi, a hot salsa made from paprika, spring onion and chilli.



Bacterial protection against flu

A recent study by researchers at the University of Michigan in the United States raises the possibility of using microbiome in our respiratory system to defeat the influenza virus.

Usually when people use the term microbiome it is to refer to the bacteria that inhabit our gut. But bacteria are found all over the body, both inside and outside, and the term 'microbiome' refers to all of this abundance of bacteria.

Scientists studying the potential of manipulating these bacteria to combat or reduce the risk of diseases, believe that rather than seeing bacteria as an enemy, we could use them to help fight against illnesses. In particular, the researchers were interested in learning more about the role that the microbiome in the respiratory tract play in our susceptibility to the flu (influenza) virus.

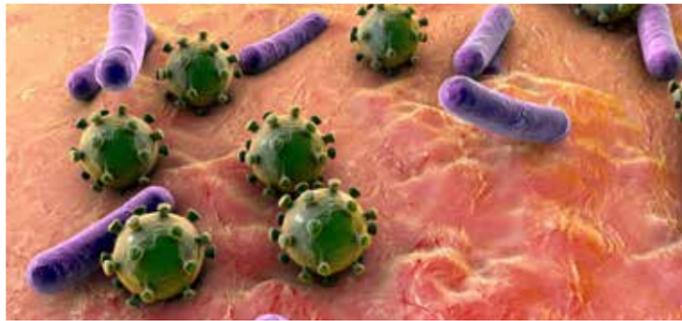
Combating the flu virus is important, especially for the very

young, pregnant women or the very old in whom the virus could cause serious complications, such as pneumonia.

Although vaccines currently available against influenza are effective, they are not universal in impact against all strains, and not everyone has easy access to these vaccines. Finding a cost-effective and simple way to reduce flu affliction is an urgent public health concern, as according to the World Health Organization (WHO), each year, worldwide more than 650,000 people die as a result of influenza.

Influenza viruses mainly target the epithelial cells of the upper and lower respiratory tract that are lined by swarms of bacteria communities. Researchers wanted to find out whether these colonies impact the ability of influenza virus cause illness.

Previous studies had shown that manipulating the microbiome can change susceptibility to disease. For instance, one study found that



treating mice with oral antibiotics led to increased degeneration of the bronchiole epithelium and a higher risk of death after infection with influenza.

Also, earlier research had shown people suffering from influenza had heightened levels of bacteria, most notably Streptococcus pneumoniae and Staphylococcus aureus in their nose and throat. These studies led researchers to infer that there was a clear relationship between the respiratory microbiome and

influenza viral infection. However, so far, an association between the nose/throat microbiome and influenza risk has not been demonstrated in human populations. To investigate this relationship, scientists used data from the Household Transmission Study done in Nicaragua between 2012 and 2014.

The participants were individuals with confirmed influenza. The team followed each of them for 13 days or until they developed flu, whichever came first. The current study took

data from the 537 individuals who tested negative for influenza at the beginning of the study.

The researchers took samples of throat and nose bacteria at the beginning of the program. Using DNA sequencing, they were able to differentiate the types of bacteria present into five clusters, and then controlled for other variables, such as smoking, age, cramped living conditions, and flu vaccination.

The team looked at who had which cluster and whether it made a difference on whether they got influenza. And, they found it did. The study participants were found to have a higher or lower risk of getting flue depending on the bacteria community they had.

These results might help explain why some people are more susceptible to influenza than others. The study is also a first step in determining whether probiotics could be developed to combat influenza in future.



Breath analysis to diagnose several cancers

Researchers at the Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute recently announced that they have developed an innovative breath test that has the potential to diagnose multiple forms of cancer.

The new noninvasive test was developed in coordination with UK-based Owlstone Medical, the company that manufactures and supplies advanced chemical detection solutions. At the heart of the breath analysis is a chemical sensor on a silicon chip — the FAIMS microchip — that Owlstone claims is much cheaper and far smaller than existing technologies.

The chip is able to accurately detect the specific volatile organic compounds (VOC)

in breath of people suffering from a wide range of cancers, as well as inflammatory and infectious diseases. Cells in the body release a wide range of VOCs during their natural processes, but, when they undergo mutations, the type of molecules they produce changes.

Clinical trials are now underway to assess the effectiveness of the new non-invasive test to detect several types of cancer at an early stage. If proven successful, the breath-analyzing diagnosis could help identify the presence of cancer early on, thus allowing people to access treatment immediately and enhance the chances of positive health outcomes. The clinical trial called the PAN Cancer Trial for Early Detection of Cancer in Breath will test for multiple cancer types and potentially pave the way for a universal breath test that provides an entire body health snapshot. Around 1,500 people are participating in the clinical trials and include both, those living with various types of cancer and those who are healthy.

Houseplants that clean the air

People generally rely on High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters to keep out harmful allergens and dust particles from air in their homes.

However, molecules of some hazardous compounds are too small to be trapped in common HEPA filters, such as small molecules like chloroform or benzene that are present in chlorinated water and in gasoline. These small particles bypass HEPA filters and build up in our homes when we shower or boil water, or when we park our vehicles in garages attached to homes. Both benzene and chloroform exposure have been linked to cancer.

Researchers at the University of Washington in the US have now genetically modified a common houseplant, pothos ivy, to remove chloroform and benzene from the air around it.

The team decided to use a protein referred to as 2E1, which is present in all mammals, including humans.

In our bodies, 2E1 turns benzene into a chemical called phenol and chloroform into carbon dioxide and chloride ions. But 2E1 is located in our livers and is thus not available to help us process pollutants in our air. Meanwhile, plants use carbon dioxide and chloride ions to make their food, and they use phenol to help make components of their cell walls. The researchers made a synthetic version of the gene that serves instructions for making 2E1 and then introduced it into pothos ivy, so that each cell in the plant expressed the protein.

They specifically selected pothos ivy because it is a robust houseplant that grows well under all sort of conditions. To find out the effectiveness of the modified plants in removing pollutants from the air, researchers

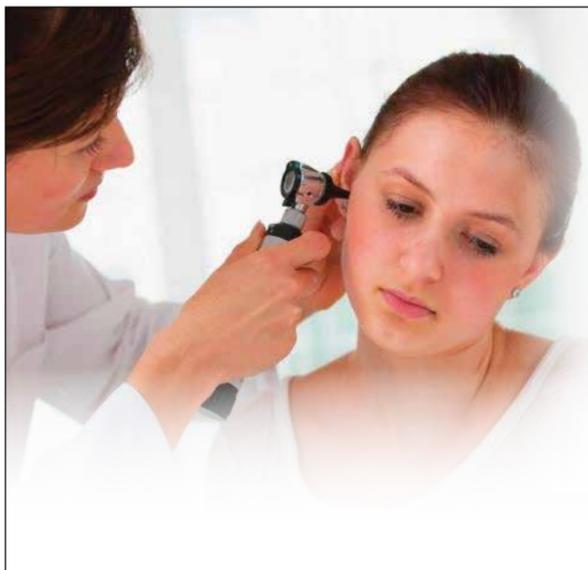


placed both modified and normal pothos plants under glass tubes and then exposed them to either benzene or chloroform gas.

On measuring the concentration of each gas in the glass tube over a 11-day period, the researchers found that for the unmodified plants, the concentration of either gas did not change over the test time. But for the modified plants, the concentration of chloroform dropped by 82 percent after three days, and it was almost undetectable by day six. The concentration of benzene also decreased in the modified plant vials, but more slowly: By day eight, the benzene concentration had dropped by about 75 percent.

Though the researchers used much higher pollutant concentrations in their test than are typically found in homes, the team expects that the home levels of pollutants would drop similarly, if not faster, over the same time frame. They also noted that plants in the home would probably need the assistance of a fan to circulate air past their leaves in order for them to be effective.

The research team is currently working to increase the plants' capabilities by adding a protein that can break down formaldehyde, another hazardous molecule found in home air, and present in some wood products, such as laminate flooring and cabinets, and in tobacco smoke.



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Ocean health in Africa

A comprehensive assessment of the state of the world's oceans, the Ocean Health Index (OHI), published annually by US-based National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS) and global non-profit Conservation International, found Seychelles to top the rankings in Africa. The Island-nation was followed in second spot on the continent by Morocco and in third place by Egypt.

The OHI diagnosis saw Seychelles scoring 77.2 out of a total 100 points, followed by Morocco with a score of 72.3 and Egypt 69.5. At the other end of the spectrum were seven African nations who scored less than 50 and stood at the bottom of the global index. Among those ranked lowest in ocean health were Guinea (49.6), Guinea-Bissau (48.5), Somalia (48.2), Sierra Leone (47.5), Democratic Republic of Congo (47.1), Libya (42.4) and Ivory Coast (41.3).

The assessment, which placed Seychelles at 33 position globally out of the 220 nations and territories studied by NCEAS, provides decision

makers with data and knowledge they can use to implement effective actions for improved sustainable ocean management. Morocco stood in 62nd and Egypt in 83rd position globally.

The 37 jurisdictions assessed in Africa scored an average of 60.2 compared to the average global score of 70. Clearly, there is a need for more to be done to improve the overall management and health of oceans on the continent and beyond, to sustainably maximize the economic, cultural and environment benefits they deliver to people.

Conducted since 2012, the OHI scientifically assesses ocean health by analyzing various sets of data to reveal the current and projected future states of their respective ocean resources and how optimally and sustainably the nations manage the benefits provided by their oceans such as food, recreation, tourism.

A total of 10 elements are assessed to arrive at a country's overall ocean health score, including



food provision, biodiversity, coastal livelihoods and economies, tourism and recreation, artisanal fishing opportunities, clean waters, carbon storage among others.

Globally, the average OHI scores have remained relatively stable around 70 out of 100 and countries around the world are continuing to make commitments towards a sustainable ocean future. The highest scoring in 2018, at 80 or above, were island nations, such as Aruba in the Caribbean and New Caledonia in the south Pacific, or uninhabited islands.

Germany was the only one of these 17 high scorers with a

population exceeding one million people. The nations with the highest scores in Africa were ranked position 33, 62 and 83 respectively in the global rankings.

Additionally, the 2018 OHI indicated that 14 out of 36 coastal countries in Africa experienced marginal improvements in ocean health when measured against the first assessment conducted in 2012, while the rest of the nations recorded declines.

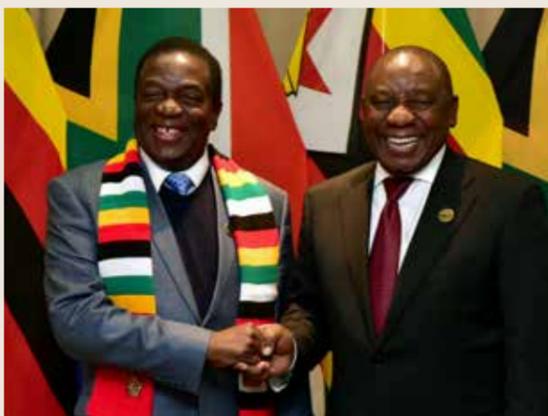
Angola recorded the highest improvement, with its score rising 11 percent from 53.1 in 2012 to 59.3 in 2018 followed by Egypt which rose by 5.4 percent from 65.9 to 69.5.

Significant declines in ocean health scores were noted in Eritrea which fell by 26 percent (68.6 to 50.6) and Equatorial Guinea which dropped by 16 percent (66.6 to 55.7) over the same period. Incidentally, the 2018 score for Seychelles (77.2) though the highest in Africa, is an almost a 5 percent decline from the 81.2 recorded by OHI in 2012.

"By providing an annual comprehensive database baseline for global ocean health, OHI offers all coastal countries, at any level of capacity, a starting place for assessing the status of their marine resources and environments," said Dr. Eva Schemmel, Science Advisor for Conservation International's Centre for Oceans.

Dr. Schemmel indicated that independent assessments of ocean health in Kenya and Tanzania have been conducted using the OHI tool by non-profit research organization Cordio East Africa, on behalf of Conservation International, though it focused on only 2 of the 10 OHI indicators identified as priority for the two nations.

South Africa calls for end to sanctions on Zimbabwe



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who was in Geneva, Switzerland for the release of a report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), urged the European Union to lift whatever sanctions it may still have on the southern African nation because the nation is on the path to great reform.

"We insist that this needs to be supported because Zimbabwe has turned a wonderful corner," Ramaphosa said. The EU and the United States imposed sanctions against Zimbabwe in 2000 after they accused former leader Robert Mugabe of human rights violations, election rigging and the repression of media freedom.

Ramaphosa's statement comes after violent demonstrations over a fuel price hike drove Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa to cancel an appearance at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where he was expected to court foreign investment, and return home.

Meanwhile, it was reliably learned, that South Africa is planning to extend short-term credit to Zimbabwe and also to help it write off its US\$7.4 billion external debt, to prevent its neighbor spiraling out of control into economic and social chaos. However, critics point out that this will be a waste of money unless it can pressure Zanu-PF to make political reforms.

Finance Minister Tito Mboweni disclosed the plan in a recent media interview, as Zimbabwe slipped closer to the brink after a massive fuel price hike on January 12 led to a general strike and then widespread street protests, many of which were violently suppressed by state

"It's an act of self-delusion if you think you can avoid talking politics as you engage Zimbabwe, as in many other places," Piers Pigou, senior consultant to the International Crisis Group said in response to Mboweni's disclosure. Zimbabwe is clearly desperate for a bailout from South Africa or any of its other allies to resolve an economic crisis which is slipping out of control.

Protect our oceans

Oceans cover 70 percent of the earth's surface. For a healthy planet, we need healthy oceans. Some of the biggest challenges our oceans face include: Climate change: Imagine how poorly a fish in an aquarium would fare if we turned up the heat, dripped in acid, and pulled out the oxygen bubbler. This is slowly but surely what we are doing to our oceans through climate change.

Plastic pollution: More than five trillion pieces of plastic pollution are afloat in the oceans. We can all help by refusing single-use plastics such as straws, cutlery, and food containers that are in our lives for a few minutes but then spend centuries circulating in our oceans.

Sustainable seafood: Almost a third of global fish stocks are overfished. In many seafood markets worldwide, endangered seafood species are sold that are the underwater equivalent of a rhino or a panda. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing costs the global economy over \$20 billion annually. Marine protected areas: In addition to preserving charismatic and ecologically important marine wildlife, fish in protected marine areas grow larger and generate more offspring that can be harvested by protecting fishermen. Today, only 2 percent of our global oceans are protected; for sustainability of ocean life we need 30 percent.

Fisheries subsidies: Every year, governments spend \$35 billion on fisheries subsidies, the majority of which directly accelerate harmful overfishing. A large portion of fishing on the high seas, where fish are an internationally shared resource, would likely be unprofitable without fisheries subsidies.

Ethiopia realizing benefits of early investment in agriculture

Since its rapid economic growth averaging 10 percent every year between 2004 and 2014, Ethiopia has emerged as a major engine driving development in Africa. And there are no signs that there will be a let-up in this growth any time soon.

The government has prepared a blueprint to achieve middle-income status — or gross national income of at least US\$1006 per capita — by 2025. This would see a rapid increase in per capita income in Ethiopia, which is currently US\$783, according to the World Bank.

Ethiopia's growth has been propelled by at least two factors: the prioritization of agriculture as a key contributor to development and the fast-paced adoption of new technologies to boost the sector. A third of Ethiopia's GDP is generated through agriculture, and more than 12 million households rely on small-scale farming for their livelihoods.

One of the drivers of growth in the agricultural sector has been the expansion of irrigation in a land that traditionally relied on rainfall to water crops. The country has seen the fastest growth in irrigation of any African country, with area under irrigation having increased by almost 52 percent between 2002 and 2014. This boosted productivity and income for farmers by helping them extend the growing season and become more consistent in their production.

Meanwhile, only 6 percent of arable land is currently irrigated across the whole of Africa. This means that there is huge potential to expand irrigation and unlock economic growth. These factors and more are highlighted in a new report from the Malabo Montpellier Panel. The panel convenes experts in agriculture, ecology, nutrition and food security to guide policy choices by African governments. The aim is to help the continent accelerate progress towards food security and improved nutrition.

The panel's latest report analyses progress, and highlights best practice, in irrigation in six countries: Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Niger and South Africa, in addition to Ethiopia. Other African countries can draw lessons from the report's insights.

The report identified a number of common factors in countries where significant progress has been made to expand irrigation, including key policy and institutional innovations. In the case of Ethiopia, one of the main reasons for its success is that agriculture and



irrigation have been featured on the Ethiopian policy agenda since 1991. In addition, specialized institutions have been set up with clear commitments to maximize the benefits of water control and irrigation systems. Moreover, the government, which has invested significantly in the sector in the past, now aims to allocate a further US\$15 billion to irrigation development by 2020.

Another major area of development has been the collection of data. This is an invaluable asset that allows for careful monitoring and management of resources such as water, especially in times of drought. In 2013, Ethiopia's Agricultural Transformation Agency began mapping more than 32,400 square kms to identify water resources, particularly shallow groundwater, with the potential for irrigation development.

The final results of this mapping in 89 districts revealed nearly 3 billion cubic meters of water at a depth of less than 30 meters. This could allow approximately 100,000 hectares of land to be brought under irrigation, benefiting 376,000 families.

The experience of Ethiopia and other countries leading on irrigation can help other African governments develop country-specific strategies to effectively take irrigation to scale. The benefits of doing so, such as enhancing on-farm productivity and income, and improving resilience and livelihoods, are transformational.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Harnessing the Digital Revolution for Sustainable Development



MARIA RAMOS AND ACHIM STEINER

Maria Ramos is CEO of Absa Group Limited. Achim Steiner is Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Financial digitalization — the digital revolution's system-level transformation of the entire financial ecosystem — could catalyze global efforts to finance sustainable development. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, the expanded use of financial technology could drive growth across developing countries by up to \$3.7 trillion by 2025, thanks mainly to increased productivity gains and broader financial inclusion.

But if the promises of digitalization are to be fulfilled, the world will need to align financing and investment strategies more tightly to sustainable development outcomes. Last month, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres convened a task force on digital financing to tackle this complex challenge. We are honored to serve as co-chairs for this global effort.

“According to the UN Capital Development Fund, financial inclusion for the unbanked and underserved is a direct enabler for at least eight of the SDGs.”

For obvious reasons, financing is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and meeting the emissions targets set by the 2015 Paris climate agreement. But although global savings are more than adequate to fuel the transition to sustainable development, the global financial system has so far failed



to effectively intermediate supply and demand. The modest success that some countries have achieved in financing sustainable development has not been commensurate with the need.

Many factors can influence sustainable development outcomes. For example, the global financial and economic crises that began in 2008, and the subsequent responses by regulators and policymakers, have impacted economic growth, job creation, and income equality. Ventures like China's Belt and Road Initiative, likewise, can unlock fresh funds for infrastructure investment. Any number of national and international policies can determine whether financing delivers, or diverts us from, sustainable development.

But it is digitalization that could make the biggest long-term difference by harnessing the power of new business models driven by technologies including mobile connectivity, artificial intelligence, big data, blockchain, and the Internet of Things. That immense potential, however, is not guaranteed. Ultimately, the impact of digitalization on sustainable development will depend on whether the advent of more and cheaper data, together with faster analytics, results in financing decisions that take greater account of today's social and environmental costs.

Fintech can place citizens center stage

in delivering good development outcomes. Kenya's digital revolution has helped poor households gain access to everything from solar energy to government bond markets. Crowdfunding platforms like the United Kingdom's Abundance, Germany's EcoCrowd, and Japan's NPO Bank are unlocking responsible, sustainable lending solutions. In China, Ant Financial's Ant Forest platform has helped more than 300 million people reduce their ecological footprint. Bicycle-sharing services use app-based fintech payment solutions to make their low-carbon, healthier transportation option available to millions of people in cities all over the world.

In short, there are already tantalizing hints of the power of the digital revolution in advancing finance for sustainability. Changing how people bank and invest, and democratizing access to the financial system, is essential to spurring development more broadly. According to the UN Capital Development Fund, financial inclusion for the unbanked and underserved is a direct enabler for at least eight of the SDGs.

The challenge now is to think and act systemically: to extrapolate from retail-level examples to consider how digitalization can align the financial system to sustainable development; how investors identify, analyze, and mitigate risk; how capital markets move; and how policymakers and regulators approach their work.

The problem is that most solutions are fragmented and narrowly focused, while issues that pose an existential threat to humanity — like climate change — are largely external to most

financing decisions. Domestic savings are not being channeled to fund sustainable infrastructure. Illicit financial flows continue to drain development resources. Sustainable financing for biodiversity remains virtually ignored by the fintech revolution. And even financial inclusion — where fintech has had the biggest development impact to date — has a long way to go in reducing poverty and inequality.

These are just a few of the challenges our task force will study. Our membership includes tech entrepreneurs, bank CEOs, civil society leaders, international standard-setters, capital markets experts, central bank governors, finance and economic ministers, and heads of UN agencies. Throughout 2019, we will work closely with established and emerging leaders to analyze the issues, identify opportunities, and make recommendations to ensure that the transformations being wrought by financial digitalization will be ones that ultimately benefit the planet and its people. We begin our work in January and aim to present our initial set of findings in September 2019.

As Secretary-General Guterres said last month when he announced the launch of the task force, digital technology “can be a game changer” in delivering progress on the SDGs. With leadership and policy guidance, the digitalization of financing can open up roles for empowered citizens to shape the future of the real economy. The focus now must be on seizing this disruptive opportunity to ensure that the finance system fulfills its potential to support inclusive, sustainable development.

Growth to falter as oil output cuts take effect

...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Despite various attempts to encourage greater private sector participation in economy, government spending remains the main driver of market activity. This dependence on government largesse was underscored in the budget estimate, with Minister Al-Hajraf reiterating government commitment to stimulating development and growing the national economy. In addition to KD2.7 billion (12%) of the estimated budget for other expenses, the budget has earmarked KD3.8 billion (17%) on capital spending, said the minister. The emphasis he said would be on completing existing projects and executing infrastructure projects in line with the Kuwait National Development Plan: Vision 2035 'New Kuwait'.

The budget is based on an average oil price of US\$55 per barrel for Kuwait Export Crude, and envisions a break-even oil price range of \$75 to \$80 per barrel, and an average daily oil output of 2.8 million barrels. However, both these figures appear increasingly unlikely, with OPEC-mandated production cuts starting to bite from the start of the year, and Kuwait Export Crude averaging \$56.8 per barrel so

far this year. The preponderant influence of oil on the economy was cited as a worrying feature by global ratings agency Standard & Poor's Financial Services (S&P). In mid-January, while maintaining its 'stable' outlook for Kuwait, the agency lowered the country's GDP growth for 2019 to 2.2 percent from the 3.2 it had predicted earlier. The agency cited production cuts mandated by OPEC as a reason for its predictions of a lower GDP for Kuwait, underlining the overbearing role that hydrocarbons have in the economy.

Brent crude is forecast to average US\$55 per barrel over 2019-2022 period, this is not only lower than previous oil price projections for these years, but also nearly 24 percent lower than the average Brent price of \$72 per barrel in 2018, said S&P. Any sharp decline in global oil prices could see the government's deficit blooming from 6.5 percent of GDP in the last fiscal to an average of 19.5 percent over the next four years, warned S&P. With oil in the range of \$55 per barrel over the medium term, we also anticipate the country's current account surpluses will begin to moderate and reach balance toward 2022 as the import bill continues to grow.

Much of the deficit could be financed by

asset drawdowns from the General Reserve Fund maintained by the country's sovereign wealth fund manager, the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), as well as from debt issuance on domestic and international markets. But, if parliament approves the new debt law, which authorizes raising the ceiling on debts and borrowing terms, and government goes on a borrowing spree, the country's debt is likely to jump to more than 50 percent of GDP in 2022, from the less than 20 percent in 2017, warned S&P.

Beyond 2019, growth rates could rise moderately to an average 2.5 percent over 2020-22 period from the eventual ending of OPEC production cuts and the gradual increase in oil production capacity. Kuwait plans to increase its maximum oil production capacity from the current 2.8 million barrels per day to an ambitious 4.75 million barrels per day by 2040, mainly from new oil discoveries and enhancing output at existing mature fields. In addition, restarting production within the so-called Partitioned Neutral Zone (PNZ) between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which was previously halted due to disagreements between the two countries, could add around 0.3 million barrels per day to Kuwait's daily output.

Besides overdependence on hydrocarbon revenues, the relatively weak institutional and structural reforms in the country were also cited as a cause for concern by S&P. While presenting the estimated budget, the finance minister had pointed out that the government was currently instituting structural economic and fiscal reform programs, and control of expenditures was a necessary precondition for these reforms to succeed over time. “We believe that reform starts with curbing wasteful spending, increasing collection rates of dues to the government's various entities, while maintaining a healthy rate of capital expenditure on infrastructure and minimizing the impact of our fiscal reforms on the Kuwaiti people,” said Al-Hajraf.

The government's previous attempts at diversifying the economy and introducing financial and administrative reforms have been, at best, lackluster. Belt tightening measures and pledges of financial prudence in the wake of low oil price scenarios tend to evaporate every time oil rebounds. However, the downside risk to this misplaced ebullience could come if oil prices fall lower than expected, and stay so longer than expected.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

World Economy Goes Hollywood



Anatole Kaletsky

Chief Economist and Co-Chairman of Gavekal Dragonomics and the author of *Capitalism 4.0, The Birth of a New Economy*.

If there is one useful conclusion that economists and investors can draw from the crazy year that has just ended – indeed, from the whole crazy decade since the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 – it is this: As they say in Hollywood, “Nobody knows anything.” In the film industry, the richest and most experienced studios and producers spend vast amounts of time and money on audience research, but still have no idea if their latest creations will turn out to be hits or flops. So why be surprised if the same is true of financial markets – or, for that matter, of commodity prices, policymaking, and corporate performance?

Why be shocked if the world’s richest company admits, as Apple did after Christmas, that it has no idea how many iPhones it will sell in China? Or if the world’s best-informed energy traders predict a global supply shortage that will boost oil prices above \$100, just when a supply glut sends the market tumbling to \$50? Or if the US president does not know if he hates or loves global trade? Or if stock markets predict a global economic boom when bond markets predict recession and then both reverse suddenly, contradicting each other in the opposite direction?

At this time last year, economic expectations were almost universally optimistic. Every region of the world appeared to be simultaneously booming for the first time since the 2008 financial crisis. Central bankers were confident that they could safely start to withdraw their extraordinary monetary stimulus, and stock-market investors were almost unanimously bullish. Yet 2018 turned into the worst year for investors since the financial crisis, forcing central bankers to begin backing away from their plans to normalize monetary policy, economists to downgrade their growth forecasts, and many businesses to prepare for recession in 2019 or 2020.

What went wrong? Economic data were only slightly weaker than expected in the second half of 2018. The World Bank, for example, has reduced its estimates of global growth in 2018 and 2019 by just 0.1 percentage points, to 3 percent and 2.9 percent, respectively, since its June outlook.

The main cause for concern has been the behavior of financial markets.



“ Before concluding that financial markets can always predict or shape the future, recall that economic and policy changes usually move financial expectations, not vice versa. ”

Many economists saw the simultaneous plunge in long-term interest rates and equity prices in December as an indicator of recession: either investors ‘know something’ awful that is not yet evident in the statistics, or declining market sentiment would become a self-fulfilling prophecy by causing businesses or consumers to cut back. But, before concluding that financial markets can always predict or shape the future, we should recall that economic and policy changes usually move financial expectations, not vice versa.

So what events, apart from market volatility, would cause a recession or severe global slowdown? A popular answer is simply the passage of time. The global economic expansion that began in 2009 has already lasted almost ten years. If a US recession does not occur by 2020, the country will have experienced the longest uninterrupted expansion in its history.

There is nothing in economic theory or historical experience to suggest that expansions die of old age, or that recessions happen spontaneously. But expansions do become more vulnerable to diseases of old age: high interest rates, rising energy prices, accelerating inflation, or banking crises that are triggered when unsustainably high property prices suddenly collapse. And if none of these economic mishaps occurs, eventually political leaders can become

recklessly overconfident, leading to wars, trade conflicts, or gross budgetary mismanagement.

Several of these problems began to appear in 2018: rising interest rates in the US, fiscal tightening in Italy and much of Europe, an escalating tariff war between the US and China; and higher energy prices around the world. It is not surprising, therefore, that the world economy slowed in 2018, instead of accelerating, as most economists (including me) expected.

But many of the forces that caused last year’s slowdown are now reversing. Oil prices have fallen, US bond yields are back to almost where they started in 2018, trade conflicts appear to be subsiding, and China is easing macroeconomic policy at least to some extent (and will probably move to outright stimulus if its economy weakens much further).

The policy changes and political events just described were clearly the main drivers of last year’s market shocks. For example, January’s stock-market correction and volatility surge were clearly caused by fears of US overheating and rising bond yields. Once the overheating concerns subsided, bond repricing turned out to be very limited, equities

everywhere rebounded, and the dollar remained very weak. Dollar weakness and global equity strength reversed abruptly in May, when markets were hit by a perfect storm of the three political shocks that I had considered most likely: soaring oil prices in anticipation of Iran sanctions; the US-China tariff war; and the formation of a left-right populist government in Italy.

In October, with political risks receding, emerging markets started to outperform, stock markets stabilized elsewhere (even in Europe), the oil price returned to what looked like a stable pre-sanctions range of \$60-65, and the strengthening of the dollar ended. In short, markets seemed to move broadly in line with the changing political and macroeconomic fundamentals – until everything suddenly went haywire in early December. For the next three weeks, until December 24, the S&P 500 collapsed by 16 percent for no apparent reason, Brent oil plunged from \$61 to \$50, the dollar again strengthened, and yields on ten-year US bonds fell from 3 percent to 2.7 percent.

If all of the main fundamentals suggest that economic growth in 2019 could end up as strong or even stronger than in 2018, why, did equity prices and bond yields suddenly collapse last month? Could it be that investors are so confused by political chaos that they have given up trying to anticipate what could happen next?

If so, then markets, instead of being predictive, become increasingly reactive, simply extrapolating recent events. In a world where ‘nobody knows anything’, investors may be no better than Hollywood moguls at predicting the future.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Decision Time for the Future of Corporate Taxation



JOSÉ ANTONIO OCAMPO

A board member of Banco de la República, Colombia's central bank, professor at Columbia University, Chair of the UN Economic and Social Council's Committee for Development Policy, and Chair of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation.

At first glance, it appears to be a bureaucratic meeting like any other. But the discussions at the OECD in Paris at the end of this month are of the utmost importance, because the world's richest countries will present new proposals for taxing digital multinational companies such as Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, Netflix, and Uber.

Back in 2012, when scandals related to tax-avoidance schemes by Apple, Amazon, and Google unleashed public anger and forced the G20 to act, the OECD was called on to reform the international corporate tax system. That led, three years later, to a package of reforms known as the 'Base Erosion and Profit Shifting' Project, or BEPS. The reform process was led by OECD countries and opened up to developing countries only after this initial package was unveiled. Today, 125 countries are involved, forming a group called the 'Inclusive Framework'.

BEPS was undoubtedly an important step toward tackling some of the most egregious tax-avoidance strategies used by multinationals. It initiated, for example, the sharing among tax authorities of country-by-country reports on these companies' profits and tax payments. Unfortunately, however, this norm will apply only to very large multinationals, and the reports will not be publicly available, depriving civil society of an essential tool of transparency.

Furthermore, BEPS failed to reach the root of the problem: companies are still permitted to move their profits wherever they want and to take advantage of very-low-tax jurisdictions. Google, for example, moved €19.9 billion (\$22.7 billion) through a Dutch shell company to Bermuda in 2017, and in the same year Facebook paid just



£7.4 million (\$9.6 million) in corporation tax in the United Kingdom, despite generating £1.3 billion in revenue there.

Multinationals can do this legally by using so-called transfer pricing: a parent company sets the prices of transactions among its subsidiaries to guarantee that profits are registered in low-tax countries, rather than where the economic activity that generated the profits actually occurred. For example, Vodafone, the first big multinational to publish country-by-country data voluntarily, revealed that nearly 40 percent of its profits for 2016-17 were allocated to tax havens, with €1.4 billion declared in Luxembourg, where the company is taxed at an effective rate of 0.3 percent.

Tax avoidance can be found in all economic sectors, but digital companies best demonstrate how outdated the current international tax system is. Because these companies' marginal cost of production is zero, the revenue accruing to them is equal to a rent, and it is therefore important to tax this rent effectively. And, contrary to what these companies' leaders claim, this taxation would not negatively affect the supply of digital services.

The Independent Commission for the

“Tax avoidance can be found in all economic sectors, but digital companies best demonstrate how outdated the current international tax system is.”

Reform of International Corporate Taxation (ICRICT), which I chair, believes that the BEPS process has achieved what it could, given the political muscle of big corporations and the army of lawyers and accountants who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. In our latest report, we take stock of what has been achieved and highlight what should happen in the next phase of reform, 'BEPS 2.0'.

The upcoming OECD meeting will be decisive in this respect. For the first time, the OECD will present to the Inclusive Framework, including developing countries, the outlines of the BEPS 2.0 plan and its vision of a deeper transformation of the tax system in response to the challenges posed by the digital economy. It is a unique opportunity for all 125 governments in the Inclusive Framework

to urge the OECD to repudiate transfer pricing and move toward a fairer and more effective system.

The lack of consensus so far on how to tax digital multinationals has led numerous countries to implement (as India, Italy, Spain, and France have done) or promise to implement (in the case of the United Kingdom) turnover-based taxes as a stop-gap measure to raise revenue. But unilateral action is not enough.

The ICRICT supports all discussions that move toward unitary taxation of multinationals, which would eliminate multinationals' use of transfer prices to shift profits, because their global profits and associated taxes could then be allocated geographically according to objective factors such as the company's sales, employment, resources, and even digital users in each country. We also strongly support the introduction of a global minimum effective corporate-tax rate of between 20 percent and 25 percent on all profits earned by multinationals.

The overriding priority now is to establish an international corporate tax system fit for the digital economy. The OECD BEPS process was essentially conceived by developed countries for developed countries. In Paris this month, developing countries must understand what is at stake and make their voices heard, to ensure that any new proposal benefits all.

Verses that penetrate the heart

SA HJ RIZVI

Words, as they say, can penetrate far deeper into the heart than the sword of a valiant soldier. Truly so, the way noted Urdu poet V.K. Tripathi popularly called as VK, with a poetic name of Bashar, weaves magic with words; transforming them into new idioms and metaphors that leave a lasting spell on his readers.

Recently Tripathi's newest collection of poems, 'Meri Zameen Mera Asman', was published by India's most prestigious institution, the Anjuman Tarikhi Urdu (Board for Promotion of Urdu language), and received wide literary acclaim. The fact that the Board decided to publish his collection is a reflection on the quality and scale of his work.

Says Athar Farooqi, Secretary of the Board, V.K. Tripathi's work is grand and the best part is that his poems are in pure metric form and not free verse. "The content and connotation of his work is amazing"

What is surprising is that Urdu did not come natural to him and in his

school days he was never exposed to the world of Urdu language. Coming from a rural background, V.K. Tripathi had a lot of involvement with literary activities in his school and college days as the poet in him slowly beginning to take shape.

That was more because of the then popularity of ghazal singers like Mehdi Hasan, Jagjit Singh, Ghulam Ali, and he was a great admirer of their signing art. He began to weave words into couplets.

It was years after he joined the India Revenue Services as a bureaucrat that VK formally entered into this new world of Urdu poetry all by a chance. Recalling his entry into Urdu poetry, VK says that it was in 1990s that he first ventured into writing ghazals in Urdu. Handicapped with his scant knowledge of the language he took help of his junior colleague to shape his art. He began to add new words in his vocabulary giving new contours to his writing.

Years of hard work gave birth to his first book 'Mere Zameen ke Log', which the late progressive poet Shabnam Naqvi said was fresh, authentic and



gave a new flavor. "He wades his way using meters that were once mastered by legendary poets of the past," he said, adding that VK's works give traces of legendary poets of the past such as Meer, Zauq and Ghalib, yet he maintains his own identity.

Amazingly, VK mostly writes when he is flying during official or personal trips. "Words descend to translate my thoughts and I pen them down in the long haul of journeys," he said.

His fascination for ghazal writing prompted him to learn Urdu and now he mainly writes in that language.

He is very clear that there was no conflict in his persona, but his poems reflect the social conflict which are beautifully woven with words throwing reality off time. VK says he is a straightforward man and does not mince words but as an artist he minces words and sharpens them to reflect new connotations and contours.

Although he asserts that he has lived a contended life, the poet in him has an undying quest to go higher; to unravel new worlds and to conquer new terrain.

His new book displays collection of poems in different colors and hues where he transcends the borders of time and space and emerges as one of the prominent Urdu poets of the present time.

It is to the service of Urdu, the language of his expression, that VK never charges any royalty and whatever comes in his share is returned back to promote the language. "I love the language and want to promote it with whatever means I have, by writing, by expressing my thoughts or financially."

As the octogenarian Urdu literary genius, Ibne Saeed, told him once, "You are a poet of amazing quality and I treat you among the front-row poets."

His collection of poems 'Meri Zameen, Mera Asman' is now being translated into Hindi for those who do not know Urdu language but love Urdu ghazals and is due to hit the market soon.



Fashion tips for Winter

With the drop in temperatures, many women think they will have to temporarily shelve cute outfits in favor of boring fleece and clunky winter boots. Just because it is winter, doesn't mean you have to collectively resign ourselves to giving up on style, it just means you have to think a bit more creatively when getting dressed in the morning. Here, a few of tips to stay stylish and warm.



Become a layering pro: It is a very practical way to dress when it is really cold, so don't be afraid to pile on the layers. You can layer a form-fitting sweater over a long-sleeve T-shirt or throw on a pair of tights or sheer stockings under a pair of ripped jeans.

You will look especially stylish if you invest in some good materials like cashmere and really warm wool pieces. When it comes to layering, start with a thin turtleneck, which is the perfect base to layer everything else over it from slip dresses to blazers. One tip is to wear a colorful turtleneck under a neutral knit so you can only see the neck of the turtleneck from underneath.

Let your boots steal the show: Great winter style really boils down to a great pair of boots. Ankle boots with cuffed jeans or a dress will up your style quotient. Another choice is over the knee boots that can be dressed down with jeans and a jumper for a casual daytime look or glammed up with a skirt or mini dress at night.

Pick flattering accessories: Add new life to your coat by simply belting it. This styling trick will work with just about any coat style, even puffer coats. Another way to accessorize is to work with a trendy blanket wrap scarf, which is a chic and effortless addition to any winter outfit. There are countless ways to style this cold weather accessory, either thrown carelessly over your shoulder or wrapped around multiple times.

Embrace fur: You can wear fur with just about anything to give your outfit an instant upgrade; invest in a statement fur topper, throw on a fur vest or stole over your winter coat to give it some new life, or find cool

fur accent pieces like fur collars or even fur mittens to liven up your winter outfits.

Step out of your color comfort zone: Stand out in a sea of drab with a big pop of color. Feeling a bit on the shy side? Opt for a colored coat or accessory instead of going full rainbow. The turtleneck can be a statement piece—not merely something you throw on underneath the rest of your outfit to stay warm—through neon hues. Stand out with a bold high-necked sweater.



Change your brow shape

It seems all anyone can talk about these days is brows. How to get them, how to grow them, and how to shape them. Here are some tips on how to create the best brows for an ideal look.

Sleek shape: For those who like the tails of their brows to be higher than the tips, you should follow the natural rise of the brow, but trimming down the region it would typically turn downward. These types of brows are most easily done when the end of the brow is either sparse, shaved or waxed off.

Start by lopping off the tail using tweezers to eliminate sparse strands, or wax if it's bushier. But don't go overboard, tweeze brow hair by brow hair. Stop to look in the mirror after plucking two to three hairs from each brow to make sure they're even and you haven't made them too short. Then, draw the end of the arch upwards toward the temple using a budge-proof brow gel and a small angled brush. Tip: Rest your elbow on the counter while crafting the line to steady your hand and pull off an even tail. Let the color set and top with a wax-based brow pencil to ensure a natural finish and hold.

All about the arch: For these rounded arches, one must do a scaled-down version of the above-mentioned tip. Instead of drawing the end of the brow at an upward slant, though, you need to round it out and have it curve downward. Round the shape dramatically in order to get that stylized look. To soften and create an arc, rest a pencil (or makeup brush) vertically against your nose, aligning it with the natural arch of your brow to see where the slope should begin. Using that point as a guide, make long fluid strokes with a pencil to fill thin brows and round the shape down near the outer corner of the eye. Following the same path, add a powder layer using a stiff, angled brush to achieve the arched and feathery shape. Use a light hand at the tail to maintain the look.

Bonus tip: Dab a liquid highlighter into the brow bone using your ring finger to create the illusion of a more lifted brow.

Unique point of view: Super-angular brows need to be brushed up toward the sky. To start with, apply a thin layer of clear brow gel in an upward motion and let it dry for about 30 seconds (do a touch test to be sure it doesn't feel wet). Take a brow pencil and trace directly into the bottom of the brow. Lightly repeat this on the upper brow, making sure to keep the pencil extremely close to the brushed-up shape created by the brow gel. To pump up the point, apply a brow powder with an angled brush into the arched portion, extending just above the point to overstate it. Trace a thin, cream concealer around the brow and blend to really define the shape and arch.

Putting makeup on dry skin in the winter can be a difficult task. With the dry air sucking moisture out of your hands, hair, lips, and face, the idea of putting makeup on top of that is just unappealing. But rather than throw in the towel and skip makeup until spring gets here, here are some helpful tips.

Get rid of flakes: If you're exfoliating only at night, your life is about to get so much better. A quick, mini chemical peel in the morning is a crucial step, especially during the winter. A peel pad with glycolic acid will get rid of flakes and dry skin without the harshness of buffing exfoliants. Heads up: In the winter go super easy around your nose, chin, and brows, which gets most dry. **Mist:** A mist product is very good for the face to get it slightly damp so your moisturizer has some hydration to lock

Makeup application tips for dry and flaky skin

in. It's a small thing, but makes all the difference when you're heading out into a dry, cold wind.

Add a heavy-duty moisturizer: Then we get to the key player: a thick, creamy moisturizer. If you put on moisturizer from the center of your face out (so, the classic dab on each cheek, T-zone, and chin), you're actually doing more harm than

good. You get oily in those spots first, so focusing moisturizer there leaves your makeup slipping away while the rest of your face gets dry. Instead, put on moisturizer starting from the edges of your face and working inward, toward your nose.

Another good tip is layering your moisturizers, which is also a great way to alleviate dry skin and get a better makeup application. Start with a creamy moisturizer that hydrates and puts water back into the skin, then layer on an oil or serum to further the process, adding essential oils back into the skin. This also helps to create a protective layer from the elements, as well as a great base for your makeup application. The smoother and more hydrated the surface, the more even your makeup application will be.

Swipe on eye cream pre-concealer: Of the undereye trifecta of dark, puffy, and

crepey, that last one gets the worst in cold weather. Common sense: Fragile skin gets even more so in harsh conditions. Pick an eye cream that is good for sensitive eyes and leaves a layer of moisture that keeps your concealer from sinking into fine lines.

Dab on an ultra-creamy concealer: Foundation can easily skew cakey in dry weather, so reach for a concealer that allows for allover coverage. To really get concealer to sink in and look natural, skip traditional concealer brushes. Flat brushes can make your concealer look streaky, so use a fluffy eyeshadow brush since it will get into every angle around your nose and eyes to blend.



Video game revenue crosses \$40 billion in 2018



Video game revenue in 2018 reached a new peak of \$43.8 billion, up 18 percent from a year earlier, and surpassing the projected total global box office for the film industry, according to new data released by the Entertainment Software Association and The NPD Group.

According to another data by comScore, preliminary indicators for global box office revenues published at the end of last year indicated that revenue from ticket sales at box offices around the world would hit \$41.7 billion.

The \$43.8 billion tally also surpasses

numbers for streaming services, which are estimated to rake in somewhere around \$28.8 billion in the last year.

Video games and related content have become the new source of entertainment for a generation — and it is something that has new media moguls like Netflix chief executive Reed Hastings concerned. In the company's most recent shareholder letter, Netflix said that popular video game Fortnite was more of a threat to its business than TimeWarner's HBO.

"The impressive economic growth of the industry announced today parallels the growth of the industry in mainstream American culture," said acting ESA president and CEO Stanley Pierre-Louis. "Across the nation, we count people of all backgrounds and stages of life among our most passionate video game players and fans. Interactive entertainment stands today as the most influential form of entertainment in America."

Gains came from across the spectrum of the gaming industry. Console and personal computing, mobile gaming, all saw significant growth, according to Matt Piscatella, a video games industry analyst for The NPD Group.

Chrome Remote Desktop helps access remote computer



If you finished buying and configuring a computer for parents or other relatives, chances are they could soon start calling requiring your assistance. They will ask that you immediately head over to their place to assist them, or at least, walk them through a problem. Both of these options will take time and effort.

Google offers an easy solution to this problem in the form of its Chrome Remote app, provided both you and your perplexed relative use the Chrome browser, or own a Chromebook. Downloading and installing the app allows you to gain temporary control of the relative's computer, to either fix the issue or show them what to do. The app, available for PCs, Macs, Linux systems, and Chromebooks, is also available separately for iOS and Android.

Once you have it installed on both computers and run the app, you are presented with three options.

'Share this computer for another user to see and control', has a very visible green button labeled 'Share'.

'See and control a shared computer', is accompanied by a slightly less obvious button labeled 'Access'.

'Access your own computer from anywhere', which is accompanied by a button labeled 'Get started'.

If you are helping out a relative, the first two options are the choice. So, get on the phone and tell them to press the big green 'Share' button. If this is the first time they are using it, they will first be directed to download the Chrome Remote Desktop Host Installer. However, that is a one-time process.)

When they click on the green 'Share' button, they will get a 12-digit randomly generated numerical code. That is your cue to click on the

'Access' button. Have your friend or relative call or text you the code, and type it into the pop-up box on your computer. The other person will get a message asking if they would like to allow [email address] to see and control your computer?' They have the choice to Share or Cancel.

Assuming they select Share, you will now have control of their computer. The other person never loses control, but you can do anything they can from your computer.

As long as the screen is being shared, there will be a small box reminding both you and the other person of that fact. And after a few minutes, there will be a 'timeout' warning on the client system, which will have to be clicked on or the connection will be lost. This is a safety feature, although it can become irritating if you are in for a long session.

You can probably work your way around this by clicking on, 'Access your own computer from anywhere link'. Click on that 'Get started' button and you will be asked to enable remote connections and to provide a PIN for security. Once that is done, you can then use Remote Desktop from another computer by simply going to Remote Access, finding the system on the list of My Computers, clicking on it, and entering the PIN. Then, there will be no timeouts. However, there is one major caveat: you must be using the same Google account on both systems.

Chrome Remote Desktop is not the only remote access software out there. Windows has its own Remote Desktop app, and Macs offer a Screen Sharing feature, but Chrome Remote Desktop makes it simple for people to share screens cross-platform with very little effort.

Google launches clean energy project in Taiwan

Google has launched its first clean energy project in Asia by announcing last week that it had reached a long-term agreement to buy the output of a 10-megawatt solar array in Tainan City, Taiwan, about 100 km south of its data center in the country. Google already has solar and wind projects across North and South America, as well as Europe.

The agreement is a collaboration between Google, several Taiwanese energy companies, and the country's government, which recently revised Taiwan's Electricity Act to enable non-utility companies to purchase renewable energy directly. The revisions are part of Taiwan's new energy policy, aimed at phasing out nuclear energy by 2025 and increasing the share of electricity generated from renewable sources to 20 percent.

Google is the first corporate power buyers to take advantage of the revised law. Its development partners are Diode Ventures, Taiyen Green Energy, J&V Energy, and New Green Power.

The solar array will be connected to the same regional power grid at Google's Chuanghua County data center, one of two in Asia (the other is in Singapore). The poles supporting the solar



panels will be mounted into commercial fishing ponds, an arrangement that Marsden Hanna, Google's senior lead of energy and infrastructure, said in a blog post will maximize land-use efficiency and respect the local ecology because "fish and solar panels can coexist peacefully." Fishing pond owners will also be compensated for hosting the panels.

The agreement means Google will get a long-term, fixed electricity price for its operations in Taiwan. "As the Taiwanese government pursues further measures to remove market barriers and reduce renewable energy costs, we're hopeful that more companies will purchase renewable energy, driving even larger projects across Taiwan," said Hanna.



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