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Expatriates abandon hopes of visiting home this summer



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250 Fils

Sixty years of marching to a democratic drum



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

It was on a scorching Monday morning in summer, on 19 June, 1961 that Kuwait first heard the drums rolls of democracy. On this day, Kuwait announced the abrogation of its protectorate status with Great Britain and decided to take its rightful place in the comity of nations as a fully independent country. The National Day that we celebrate every year in February resulted from a law enacted in 1963 that shifted the Independence Day to 25 February, to honor the ascension on that date in 1950 of the first Amir and eleventh ruler of Kuwait Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Regarded as the architect of Kuwait's independence and its



transition to a modern independent democratic country, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah was instrumental in moving the country along a democratic path. Even before independence there were undercurrents of a democratic

streak among the public as early as 1930. Back then, members of elite families in Kuwait chose from among them 11 members to form a Municipal Council to administer public health,

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India Kuwait relations:

Friendship that grows stronger over the years

BY REAVEN D'SOUZA
MANAGING EDITOR

"Kuwait is a very notable example of the rebalancing of relations with India in a world after COVID-19, as we discover that we can help each other in times of pressure," Indian Minister of External Affairs Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar told The Times Kuwait during his visit last week to the country.

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India Kuwait relations:

Friendship that grows stronger over the years

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Part of this rebalancing was realizing that we can do many things for each other with capabilities that we did not have before," the minister explained. Elaborating on this, he added, last year India had sent a team of medical personnel to Kuwait and also provided vaccine doses to this country, as well as to others in the region, as part of our joint effort against the pandemic. Then, last month, when India faced an intense second wave of the virus and required emergency medical oxygen, the countries in the region came to the rescue and readily shipped oxygen and other medical equipment, the most notable among them was Kuwait.

"In the past relief or support would come from fairly distant countries but today, whether it is natural disasters, pandemics, food security or energy security, we look at the capabilities and possibilities of our immediate neighbors; this will make for a very different world," he noted.

In India we now give a lot of importance to the Gulf region, especially Kuwait which we see as one of our historical partners, the minister pointed out. "Kuwait is a strong partner for India within this

important region. Our bilateral ties with Kuwait are expanding rapidly with increased engagements at the highest levels and enhanced trade, economic and investment linkages between our two countries.

The Indian External Affairs Minister arrived in Kuwait on an official three-day visit on 9 June. During his visit Dr. Jaishankar met with Kuwait's Prime Minister and delivered a letter from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Sabah. The visit also comes against the backdrop of India and Kuwait celebrating 60 years of diplomatic relations.

"My counterpart, H E Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs, visited India in March 2021. During his visit, we upgraded the Joint Ministerial Commission to the Foreign Ministers level. This is a significant shift in our institutional dialogue mechanism; we will also be setting up new Joint Working Groups across various fields including trade, investments, renewable energy, defence, tourism, education and so on."

Noting that there was excitement, enthusiasm and more importantly optimism on both sides to take the partnerships to newer heights, the



minister added, "My visit comes in this context of increased political engagements at the highest levels between our two countries. I also had very good discussions with Kuwait interlocutors and made significant progress on all issues of mutual interest."

The Indian minister reiterated that India viewed the region and particularly Kuwait as a very important long-term partner. "Our bilateral relationship is definitely poised to move to a higher trajectory. We are fully committed to increasing our cooperation in all areas of mutual interest to both countries and I am quite confident that we will significantly transform this relationship into a mutually enriching

and forward looking partnership," he stressed.

Elaborating on the key takeaways from the current visit, the minister noted that there were multiple outcomes from the visit. "We have imparted a new momentum to our bilateral relationship. There was a positive discussion on a wide range of areas. Both sides are enthused to take the relations to a higher level. We now have an upgraded institutional dialogue mechanism at the level of Foreign Ministers. This is a significant step in elevating the level of our relationship. We have agreed on setting up new Joint Working Groups in various domains.

"These focused institutional engagements in various new

areas will surely open a plethora of opportunities for mutual collaboration. We also signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Domestic Service Workers; this I believe is a significant development which will help in further streamlining the manpower. To summarize, this is a key visit which comes when our ties are at an inflection point."

On the COVID-19 situation in India, the minister pointed out that it had improved significantly over the last couple of weeks.

The number of new daily infections have now come down to less than a quarter of the peak level. The requirement for medical oxygen has also consequently come down. Many states in India have now witnessed their COVID positivity rates dip below the 1 percent mark. "Our COVID vaccination campaign continues at a fast pace, we have vaccinated more than 246 million people. Our vaccine manufacturing companies are ramping up production and this will be reflected in the ground situation. In this regard, I would like to express my appreciation to the leadership, Government and the friendly people of Kuwait for their timely dispatch of medical oxygen supplies to India," concluded the Indian minister.

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A SIDE GTC and Naturo bring freshness of fruits all year round

Fresh fruits are a luxurious treat in Kuwait but their availability is often subject to seasonal variations. Now you can enjoy the fresh richness of natural fruits with Naturo Fruit products, brought to you by A SIDE General Trading Company (A SIDE GTC), a relatively young and innovative company.

Committed to providing branded, unique, healthy, and delicious food products and services to its customers, A SIDE GTC is one of the fastest-growing companies in Kuwait with ethical and transparent business practices.

Founded in 2019, by Indian entrepreneur Ratheesh Babu, A SIDE GTC is the sole marketer and distributor of the full range of food products introduced by Naturo, the largest fruit bar manufacturing company in India.

“Some of the popular high-quality Naturo snacks marketed in Kuwait by A Side GTC include Fruit Bars, Candied Fruit, Sugar-Free Fruit Snacks, Sweet and Spicy Fruit Snacks, Mango/Apple/Pineapple Fruit Bars; Amla(Gooseberry) Immunity Booster Bar; Mango/Apple/Pineapple Fruit Bits; and Mango/Apple/Pineapple Candied Fruit Bars.

”

Naturo fruit products, as the name suggests, are healthy wholesome snacks made of natural and organic fruit pulp, which preserve the essential nutrition, as well as the natural color and flavor of fresh fruits. Every Naturo product contributes to the recommended daily fruit intake of 100g/day.

Naturo, which has been preserving the natural goodness of fruits in their products since 1986, has an array of fruit products that allow customers to savor the tantalizing taste and richness of natural fruits, and to enjoy all its health benefits throughout the year, irrespective of whether the fruit is in-season or out-of-season.

Some of the popular high-quality Naturo snacks marketed in Kuwait by A Side GTC include Fruit Bars, Candied Fruit, Sugar-Free Fruit Snacks, Sweet and Spicy Fruit Snacks, Mango/Apple/Pineapple Fruit Bars; Amla(Gooseberry) Immunity Booster Bar; Mango/Apple/Pineapple Fruit Bits; and Mango/Apple/Pineapple Candied Fruit Bars.

The latest Naturo product, Mango Blast, a spicy raw mango bar, is sure to evoke nostalgia among many people with memories of spending lazy hot summer days in their youth, nibbling on tart green mango slices dipped in a fiery salt-spice mix.

Another popular product, especially in these troubling pandemic times is Gooseberry (Amla) immunity bar. Developed by the R&D team of Naturo to maximize the inherent nutrition, flavor, and color of Amla, the immunity bar is filled with the healthy goodness of vitamin C, considered



A SIDE GTC Entrepreneur
Ratheesh Babu
with product range

an elixir for maintaining good health.

Naturo, which began as part of the Nutriline Group, one of the leading confectionery manufacturers in India, has spent over three decades of research to come up with Naturo

fruit products. Today, Naturo fruit products, using quality ingredients and cutting-edge technology, have achieved the right balance to produce delicious and refreshing fruit-based snacks.

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MoH to validate certificate of those vaccinated abroad



Ministry of Health (MoH) is in the process of validating vaccination certificates issued abroad to those who received any of the four vaccines currently approved in Kuwait — Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna and, Johnson and Johnson. The validation by MoH will enable those vaccinated to enjoy the same benefits and privileges as that of those vaccinated in Kuwait.

To register their vaccination certificate obtained abroad, one should click on, or copy the following link to their browser:

https://vaxcert.moh.gov.kw/SPCMS/PH/CVD_19_Vaccine_External_Registration.aspx

Enter their Civil ID number issued by the Public Authority for Civil Information in Kuwait, and an active email address, and reconfirm the email.

Click on: Send Verification Code. You will now receive a One-time Verification code via email to the email address you provided.

Enter this verification code on the code verification page.

Upon validation, you will be allowed access

to the registration page where you will fill in the demographic details, mobile number, and vaccination information.

Upload the vaccine document issued by the appropriate authority of the country from where you received the vaccination. The certificate should be Pdf document of size less than 500 KB. Once you are sure that all information entered is correct and have checked the declaration confirming that all information registered is correct, click on Submit.

It will take three working days for the MoH to verify and send the status of approval of the submitted document and related information.

If approved, then download the IMMUNE App from Apple's App Store or Google Play store and register to access vaccination details through Immune App.

The download link for the app on Apple App store is: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/immune-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9/id1558661183>

The download link for the app on Google Play Store is:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mohkuwait.immune>

For those who are vaccinated with one dose, from the 14th day Immune app will display the status as Vaccinated (First dose Only) in 'Green' thereby providing free movement to public locations such as theaters, museums and malls. Those who are vaccinated with two doses will maintain their 'Green' status post vaccination.

For those who are vaccinated with one dose and have not passed 14 days, the status will be Vaccinated (First Dose Only) but in 'Red'. Those who are not vaccinated their status will be Not Vaccinated in Red.

For those arriving from abroad, if their status is Green, then they will be able to proceed to home quarantine. Those who are of Red status, they will be directed to institutional quarantine.

Extra guarantees from expats to hire Filipino domestic workers

Expatriates in Kuwait seeking to hire Filipino domestic workers will have to undertake additional guarantees before the embassy grants its approval. Expatriates are now required to obtain approval of their sponsor and must have a minimum salary of KD2,500 to recruit Filipino domestic workers.

Clarifying the new rules, Ambassador of the Philippines H.E. Mohamed Nouredine Lomondot, confirmed that there is no decision to reject the requests of expatriates living in Kuwait, but the permission is subject to several conditions.

He stated that among the additional documents required of non-Kuwaitis, is a certificate from the resident's sponsor that he does not object to the expat sponsoring the domestic worker from the Philippines, and another certificate of his salary to determine his ability to fulfill the obligations noting that his request may be rejected if his salary is low.

Lomondot pointed out that the embassy does not discriminate, but these conditions were set to avoid what happened in the past years. He pointed out that in the past, some expatriates had made their Filipino domestic worker work in countries other than Kuwait, without the knowledge of the embassy or even the consent of the workers.



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French Embassy to resume accepting visa applications

Ambassador of France H.E. Anne-Claire Legendre revealed that the embassy would resume receiving new visa applications from Kuwaitis and residents of Kuwait starting from 1 July.

Speaking during a meeting with local media, Ambassador Legendre said that since the end of May, the embassy has received many requests for student visas and requests to renew visas that expired in the last one year by visa holders who were unable to travel due to the closure of the airspace. She added that the French visa center operates from 8am to 4pm every day, except on weekends. She added that the visa center receives between 50-80 requests per day.

Elaborating on epidemiological classification for passengers arriving in France, the ambassador explained that Kuwait was on the orange list, which meant passengers arriving from this country are required to be fully vaccinated with two doses of vaccine approved by the European Union, and to also

have results from a PCR test conducted 72 hours before traveling. However, those in the age groups between 12-16 years are excluded from vaccination, provided that their parents have received both doses of approved vaccines.

She revealed that obtaining a Schengen visa does not grant the traveler freedom of movement between European countries, and they should review the conditions set by each country separately regarding travel restrictions and quarantine.

Regarding the possibility of traveling directly from Kuwait to France, the ambassador said that currently there are no direct flights, but that it is possible to travel to France through many other destinations. She added that discussions on direct flights were going on with the authorities in Kuwait.

Regarding the latest developments in French-Kuwait relations, the French ambassador indicated that she witnessed remarkable developments in all fields. She

also met with the Prime Minister and other ministers to discuss many issues related to the fields of health, education, and defense. She stressed that the two countries have strong relations concerning security and military cooperation.

She pointed out that the cooperation between the navies between the two countries is distinguished, revealing an expected visit of a French frigate to Kuwait soon, as well as the continuation of cooperation in the training of military students.

She also stated that she discussed with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled the issue of Kuwait and France's celebration of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between them, which will include high-level visits by many officials of the two countries. She indicated that work is currently underway to prepare for holding a strategic dialogue committee between them.



Regarding her recent meeting with the Minister of Health, the ambassador said that she met him recently and it was agreed to train medical and nursing cadres, revealing that an agreement was expected to be signed to establish a French hospital in Kuwait within the next ten days.

Toyota announces winners of Genuine Parts Winter promotion

Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Co. (MNSS) Group Spare Parts Division distributed the final raffle draw prizes to the winners of Toyota Genuine Parts Winter Promotion 2021, on 17 May at the Canada Dry Parts Retail outlet.

Electronic raffle draw through the Ministry of Commerce and Industry computer system selected the winners, who collected their prizes adhering to the ministry guidelines and maintaining the health precautions of COVID-19. Toyota Parts Division is committed to the Kuwait government health norms and has customers and employee safety foremost in its daily operations.

Desmond Lew, Business Director for Group Parts, Accessories and Logistics handed over the

prizes to the winners. According to Desmond Lew "I thank all our valued customers for choosing Toyota Genuine Parts. Your valuable support made this special campaign a big success during these trying times. At ALSAYER we are passionate to deliver outstanding service and our products and services always reflect the Toyota value of customer first".

Toyota Genuine Spare Parts Winter Promotion 2021 which commenced on 14 January concluded on 16 April. With every KD 5 spent at any ALSAYER Toyota Parts Retail outlets, customers were eligible to participate in the electronic raffle draw for a chance to win cash prizes of KD 1000 and many other attractive prizes. Total of 225 winners



were selected in the three draws.

Top five winners of the final raffle draw are: Mohammed Motlaq Naser Alotaibi (First Prize of KD1000); Ahmad Dojan Doan AlDiferi (Second

Prize of an iPhone 12); Mohammad Mazyad Tami Almutairi (Third Prize of an iPhone 12); Nayef Nouri Abdelkareem (Fourth Prize of an Apple Watch); Ezathullah Rahim Haji Pour (Fifth Prize of an Apple AirPods Pro). In addition to the top five winners, 70 additional winners were also selected who won Toyota Parts Vouchers worth KD21 each.

Mohamed Naser Al Sayer continues to guarantee the highest level of customer satisfaction through quality assured genuine products at fair competitive prices. Al Sayer Toyota Genuine Spare Parts operates 16 exclusive outlets across Kuwait to offer an enhanced customer experience through better accessibility and convenience.



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Thought “ It is not titles that make men illustrious, but men who make titles illustrious.

for the week

– Niccolo Machiavelli,
Political philosopher and author

Anxiety and Body Inflammation

Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



Anxiety disorders are common. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 3.6 percent of the global population has different forms of anxiety disorders, which is around 264 million people. Many studies have also linked anxiety to chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, atherosclerosis, metabolic syndrome, and arthritis.

Scientists still do not know the precise causes of anxiety, but some likely factors include overactivity in certain parts of the brain, an imbalance of neurotransmitters, low serotonin levels, genetics, traumas or personality traits. But over the recent years, evidence of the links between anxiety and inflammation has grown stronger.



Link between anxiety, stress and inflammation: Inflammation is a protective internal response of the body to rid itself of any bacteria or virus. However, if inflammation persists, it can damage the cells and tissues designed to be protected.

Inflammation can also occur in the brain, and although some of this inflammation may be protective, researchers have found a strong correlation between chronic inflammation and the development of mental disorders.

In particular, high levels of anxiety and more specifically the phobic anxiety have been associated with increased levels of inflammatory markers that damage the immune system leaving individuals at an increased risk of physical illness. Anxiety and mental disorders are now often considered as the outcome of inflammatory processes, not psychological.

Scientists have also found a strong link between anxiety and changes in gut bacteria that causes digestive and boating problems. Chronic inflammation and anxiety have been found to be effectively treated by promoting a healthy flora in the gut using probiotics and prebiotics. Probiotic foods contain live microorganisms, and prebiotics are nondigestible ingredients that promote the growth of bacteria.

Another way to decrease anxiety is to reduce the stress response and shut down those inflammatory cells that destroy your body. If your body is inflamed, you are going to feel anxious. You can reduce stress through mindfulness, meditation, relaxation, staying away from processed foods, refined carbohydrates and processed omega-6 vegetable oils, which are all proinflammatory, and by following an anti-inflammatory diet.

Based on that, I have incorporated a new program for 6 weeks, the Anti-Inflammatory diet plan that will refresh your gut health, treat your anxiety and all the undesirable symptoms like bloating, water retention, skin acne, allergies and much more. The anti-inflammatory diet plan should be well-balanced, well customized, incorporating foods with beneficial effects at every meal for each person, each case and each preference. Start now! Boost your health, reduce inflammation, reduce anxiety, clean your liver, lose weight and be the best version of yourself from the inside out.

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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

RECIPE



Dahi Vada (Bhalla) Trifle

Dahi vada or Dahi Bhalla is a popular Indian snack (chaat). It can be served as an appetizer or as a side dish with dinner. The dish is naturally vegetarian and gluten free.

Preparation and cooking time: 30 minutes

Soaking Time : 4 to 5 hours

Serving: 5-6 persons

Ingredients:

- 1,1/2 cup urad dal
- Salt as per taste
- 1 tbsp ginger paste
- 1 tsp chili paste
- 1 tsp cumin
- Oil for frying the vadas
- Serving:
- 2 cups Yogurt chilled
- Salt, adjust to taste
- 2 tbsp sugar, adjust to taste
- 2 tbsp tamarind chutney to taste
- 2 tbsp green chutney to taste
- 1/2 tsp roasted cumin (Jeera) powder
- 1/4 tsp red chili powder
- Garnish:
- Masala boondi
- Pomegranate seeds
- Coriander leaves



Chef Chhaya Thakker

Preparation:

- Wash and soak urad dal for about 4-5 hours and grind to a thick paste, with as little water as possible, till light and fluffy. Transfer to a bowl and aerate the batter with a hand whisk.
- Test the vada batter for the right consistency by dropping a small spoonful of batter in a bowl filled with water. The batter should be light enough so it floats.
- Place a pan on high flame and add oil for deep frying
- Reduce the heat to medium and spoon out small balls of dal batter into the hot oil. Cook for 2-3 minutes.
- Add a pinch of asafoetida to lukewarm water in a bowl. Dunk the fried vadas and keep them soaked for 10 minutes or more.
- Remove each vada and gently press between your palms to remove excess water.
- Whisk the yogurt and season it with salt and sugar. If the yogurt is too thick, add some water to get the right consistency.
- Place 2 tbsp of yogurt in a glass, pour 1 tsp sweet tamarind chutney and 1 tsp green chutney over the yogurt
- Sprinkle with the masala boondi and pomegranate seeds and coriander leaves.
- Place a vada in each glass, sprinkle some red chili and cumin powder on top

You can also enjoy this treat in a chilled dessert form.

Indian Chef Chhaya Thakker, who has a huge following online on WhatsApp and YouTube will be sharing her favorite recipes and cooking tips with readers of The Times Kuwait. For feedback, you can write to editortimeskuwait@gmail.com

Kuwait, a regional mediator, humanitarian donor

Last week, in her first meeting with the press since taking over as the British Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Belinda Lewis said that Kuwait has a well-deserved reputation as a regional mediator and humanitarian donor. She pointed to the recent resolution of the GCC dispute as an example of Kuwaiti mediation. This year Kuwait has also supported international humanitarian appeals for Yemen and Syria and has a proud tradition in this area, said the British envoy.

She added that increased stability and security in the Gulf is a shared objective for the UK and Kuwait. "There are many challenges in the region and we have many concerns in common, for example, about Yemen where the situation continues to deteriorate; and in relation to Iran where we are keen to see a return to its Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) commitments. Both of our governments agree on the need to make the ceasefire in Gaza durable, end the cycle of violence and support a long lasting two state solution."

Though her country has long maintained a "deep relationship" with Kuwait, the envoy said she still sees more room for progress in sectors that run the gamut from defense and trade to education and cyber security. On common challenges, the UK diplomat pinpointed the areas of "food security and health system resilience" as matters of mutual concern, while preserving regional peace and security was a shared goal, she added.

She said that the UK Minister of State for the Middle East, Rt. Hon. James Cleverly MP, visited Kuwait last month and held extensive discussions with the Foreign Minister, Deputy Foreign Minister and other dignitaries on a range of regional and bilateral issues.

Ambassador Lewis noted that while London, long a hotspot for Kuwaitis, continues to receive visa applications from Kuwait, arrivals from here will need to quarantine at home as per rules applied to



H.E. Belinda Lewis
British Ambassador to Kuwait

'amber list' destinations. She also revealed that despite the pandemic, the Visa Application Centre for the UK remained open in Kuwait. "Currently, Kuwait is on the Amber list for travel to the UK. There are detailed instructions on the UK's www.gov.uk website which explain the steps to be taken in order to travel to the UK, and provides information about quarantine requirements."

She stressed that visas that have expired during the pandemic will not be renewed automatically.

Ambassador Lewis raised concerns on the restrictions of foreigners from entering Kuwait which creates many hardships and uncertainties. "The Embassy was in close contact with Kuwait authorities on the entry of British nationals in general and some specific cases, but decisions on entry were ultimately made by the Kuwait government. The entry of British nationals was still under consideration by the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers. Other countries around

and technology capabilities with our Innotech campaign. Education links continue to grow and we are undertaking important work with the EPA on protection of the marine environment and more. There are also shared challenges to face, particularly in the areas of food security and health system resilience.

Ambassador Lewis noted that the Joint Steering Group (JSG) continued to be a strong vehicle for bilateral cooperation. The Group provided structure to progress shared objectives including Cyber; Defence; Security; Trade & Investment; Development; Health; Education; and Science & Culture. The last JSG was held virtually in 2020. The next session of the Kuwaiti-British JSG will be held later this summer, hosted in the UK and hopefully in person if permitted.

On trade and investment, Ambassador Lewis said that Kuwait had a historical investment relationship with the UK. The Kuwaiti Sovereign Wealth Fund was established in London in 1953 under the Kuwait Investment Office (KIO). The UK continues to welcome a wide range of corporate and private investments from Kuwait. "And of course, Kuwaiti investment in the UK predates the UK's membership of the EU and has continued since the UK's exit from the EU."

Meanwhile investor confidence remained high across the UK. "We are keen to build on the support we provide to investors. Last year the British Prime Minister announced the creation of the Office for Investment (OFI). The OFI will attract the most strategic investments to the UK focused on a range of sectors, including Life Sciences, Clean Energy, Technology and Infrastructure. The UK welcomes Kuwaiti investors who wish to explore these important sectors," she added.

Regarding Kuwait's Vision 2035 Ambassador Lewis said it provided a range of exciting opportunities for British businesses. The Department for International Trade (DIT) based at British Embassy

promotes business opportunities to encourage foreign investment and export trade between the two countries.

One key project is the Kuwait Airport Expansion which includes the new state of the art Terminal 2 and the construction of the runway. British companies have played a key role in designing the new terminal, drawing on our world leading capabilities. "We are also working with Kuwait on water infrastructure projects where UK companies excel in technical and advisory services," she noted

Ambassador Lewis pointed out that the upcoming COP26, hosted in Glasgow in November, the development of renewable energy in Kuwait is an area of huge interest. The Shagaya project will help Kuwait meet its ambitious target for renewable energy, and I hope will draw on UK companies with expertise in design, supply chains and grid management.

On the defence side, she noted that they were working on joint naval and air defence training which will help ensure Kuwait's security. Cybersecurity is another area where we are collaborating closely with the Kuwait government to address this challenge.

On Education she said she was proud that there were approximately 5,000 Kuwaitis studying in the UK and the next generation of students were keen to continue their education at British universities. "The Ministry of Higher Education will award the next round of international scholarships between 19 June and 5 of July and Kuwait has recently published its approved list of UK university courses."

She said The British Council worked with UK universities, with local agents, with the Ministry of Higher Education, and also helped applicants to prepare and certify their English via IELTS. The British Council and the British Embassy very much hope that the UK remains the number one destination of choice for Kuwaiti students.



Applications for new visas could be made at the website www.gov.uk or at the Visa Application Centre at Al Raya Tower. However travel restrictions were in place in the UK using the Red, Amber and Green system. This color coding is regularly reviewed, currently every three weeks. Being vaccinated does not prevent you from carrying the virus, which is why the UK's entry policy, like Kuwait's, relies on PCR results, said the envoy.

the world, including the UK, are also restricting entry for public health reasons, she noted.

New opportunities to build on our existing strong and deep relationship are presenting themselves all the time. Traditional partnerships in defence, trade and investments are supplemented by new links in cyber security and technology — this year we are highlighting the particular strength of the UK's innovation



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Respite for those aged 60 and over expected soon

A major decision to resolve the uncertainty surrounding renewal of residence permits for those above sixty years old is expected in the coming days.

Around 90,000 expatriates stand to be affected this year if the decision not to renew the residence permits of expatriates aged 60 and over who only have high school diplomas and lower is implemented.

The possibility of the decision being implemented has created a lot of uncertainty and anxiety as this will create a major vacuum in the private sector job

market, in addition to causing among other things displacement of families, financial loss to employers who will not be able to find replacements, uncertain business environment and also the exit of skilled workers.

The Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) has referred the issue to the Minister of Commerce who has been under tremendous pressure from various quarters to find a solution that will be acceptable to businesses, as well as to human rights advocates and civil society.

Among the options on the table are a fixed fee for all expatriates over



60 irrespective of their degree that is reasonable and acceptable. An amount ranging from KD500 to KD700 as an annual fee is being seriously considered as a solution to this predicament.

Regularising the labor market has been a major challenge for PAM as the country is seeking to hire more nationals in the private sector. However at this time of a global COVID-19 pandemic bringing in new rules and regulations have created a sense of discomfort for expatriates who are facing an uncertain future due to slow down in business and job loss, as well as inability to relocate back home at this time.

Oncost announces winner of monthly KD10,000 membership prize-draw

Oncost, Kuwait's leading family grocer, is continuing its popular membership campaign that offers attractive prizes to customers who join the exclusive Oncost Membership program.

Following this month's monthly draw, Oncost announced that it was their pleasure to congratulate the winner of this month's draw, Rafi Ahmad who is from India. This month's winner, who lives in Farwaniya, expressed his happiness to win the prize and added that it would allow the family to realize their dream of buying a new house in India.



Members who shop for KD10 or more, at any of the 23 Oncost outlets in the country, are enrolled in a monthly membership draw that could see them win the monthly prize of KD10,000.

To be eligible to win the KD10,000 prize, all that customers have to do is join the Oncost family membership program, which



offers three types of membership cards to choose from.

In addition, there will be promotion exclusively for Oncost family membership card holders valid from 9th to 29th June 2021 at all Oncost stores and there will be 10 Lucky Winners. With every purchase of KD5 Oncost members will get a chance to win fabulous prizes. The draw will be on 2nd July, the winners will get the prizes from different stores.

Blackberry card members instantly receive up to 10 percent discount every time they shop from Oncost for light household products and Oncost private label products,

as well as 5 percent discount on fresh fruits and vegetables and 6 percent on all other products they purchase. Besides discounts, Blackberry members are also entitled to get access to special promotions prior to their launch date at the store. All this is in addition to the monthly prize draw, where they stand to win KD10,000 in cash each month by shopping for KD10 at any Oncost outlet.

Raspberry card members instantly receive up to 8 percent discount every time they shop at Oncost, including 5 percent on light household products, 8 percent on Oncost Private Label products, 3.5 percent on fresh fruits and vegetables, and 3 percent

on all other products. They also get to shop for KD10 each month and get a chance to win KD10,000 in cash every month, as well as shop for KD4,500 in one year and earn a free upgrade to Blackberry membership.

Blueberry cardmembers get an instant discount of up to 5 percent every time they shop at Oncost, including 5 percent on light household products, 3 percent on Oncost private label products, 2.5 percent on fresh fruits and vegetables, and 1.5 percent discount on all other products. They also get to shop for KD10 each month and stand a chance to win KD10,000 in cash every month.



Green Hands Environmental Team marks World Environment Day

Members of the Green Hands Environmental Team celebrated World Environmental Day for encouraging awareness and action for the protection of the environment.

As part of the celebrations the team organized week-long activities at the Islamic Health Center, while adhering to all the guidelines and procedures in place during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Children, Star Scouts Teams and people from different walks of life visited and planted tree saplings to honor the day.

President Green Hands Environmental Team Dr. Samia Hamad Al-Saidan and Consultant Fawad Al-Juma, organized lectures and activities to encourage the young generation about their roles to protect their motherland and environment.

During the celebrations, many competitions were held to show the importance of nature, the environment, and the younger generation's role in making our Earth and environment greener.

DGCA signs contract to equip new control tower at KIA

Directorate-General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) last week signed a contract with the Spanish firm Indra to provide communication equipment worth K9.2 million for the new control tower at Kuwait International Airport (KIA).

As per the contract, Indra will also transfer standby navigation devices at the airport. Saad Al-Otaibi, Deputy Director-General for Planning and Projects at DGCA, said following the contract signing that it would be implemented in 18 months, and was part of a government plan to upgrade the infrastructure of Kuwait International Airport by providing state-of-art navigation devices



for the new tower.

The contract, signed by DGCA President Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Sabah and Indra representative in Kuwait Yahya Al-Shaibani, also stipulated a 48-month guarantee following the end

of equipment installation.

The contract, which would facilitate the operation of a new runway, also mandates providing training to Kuwaiti nationals on operations and maintenance of the new communication system.

Spain opens its border for tourists from Kuwait

Spain has opened its borders to vaccinated Kuwaiti travellers as well as travellers from all over the world, Spanish ambassador H E Miguel José Moro Aguilar told The Times Kuwait

Kuwaitis are welcome to travel to Spain for holiday based on the recent recommendation of the European Union to ease some restrictions on travel for the purpose of tourism for arrivals from countries outside the Union.

The Visa outsourcing centre in Kuwait is fully operational and visas can be obtained after submitting the necessary documents.

The Government of the Kingdom of Spain issued Decision No. INT /552 / 2021 / of the 4th of June 2021 concerning entry of tourists from third countries to Spain.

As regards the travelers to the Kingdom of Spain from the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Bahrain, citizens and residents, as of June 7th, the most important aspects in this new regulation are the following:

1- All travelers to the Kingdom of Spain over 12 years old have to comply with all the vaccination doses required for each type

and should have passed 14 days from the last dose when arriving to Spain and to submit the valid vaccination certificate issued by the competent national authorities.

2- Children up to 12 years old will not need to submit any certificate (however a QR code has to be shown upon arrival as specified below in number 6 of this note).

3- To be valid all mentioned and required certificates must be in one of the following languages:

Spanish
English
French
German

4- All mentioned and required certificates must contain all of the following information details:

Full name
Type of vaccine
Number of doses
Date of administration of each dose
The authority issuing the certificate
Country of issuance

5- The types of vaccines approved to enter

Spain are exclusively those recognized by the European Union (European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the World Health Organization WHO):

A- Pfizer
B- Astra Zeneca.
C- Moderna
D- J & J Janssen
E- Sinopharma
F- Sinovac

6- All passengers traveling to Spain must register before boarding on the following application: SpTH (Spain Travel Health) which must be shown to the airline and also to the health authorities upon arrival in Spain. Make sure you have completed all fields, especially those in Sections 6, 7 and 8 relating to the information on your vaccination certificate. The application will eventually generate a QR code that will reflect the statement DOCUMENTAL CONTROL.

Those who need a Schengen visa to travel to Spain have to set an appointment to submit their applications for their visa through the following website:



[www.https://kuwait.blsspainvisa.com/](https://kuwait.blsspainvisa.com/)
As long as travel restrictions due to Covid-19 are in place, all Schengen visas should be used in accordance with each Schengen country sanitary restrictions.

If you intend to travel to another Schengen country besides Spain, please make sure that you comply with the other Schengen country sanitary restrictions before doing so.

Quota system for return of expatriates



Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) is said to be evaluating options to ease the various restrictions on travel through Kuwait International Airport (KIA) and to implement them in the coming weeks.

Among the options being considered are increasing the operational capacity of KIA to 30 percent for arrivals and departures, and allow the entry of valid residence holders based on a quota system and conditional on that they are vaccinated against the coronavirus with one of the four vaccines approved by Kuwait — Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna

and Johnsons & Johnsons vaccine.

In addition, expatriates on arrival will have to undergo quarantine, and a PCR examination within three days of arrival. If the result proves negative, the quarantine period can be ended and the person can resume his or her duties.

Meanwhile, the airport is currently witnessing an increase in departing traffic with the movement of students studying abroad and citizens wishing to spend their summer vacation abroad, as well as some expatriates deciding to travel to their home country for good.

In related news, last week, the DGCA issued a circular to airlines operating at KIA to add KD3 as airport fee to the price of tickets for departures and KD2 per ticket on arriving flights.

The circular also urged all airlines operating at KIA to commit to submitting the passenger manifest of flights arriving and departing from the airport so as to manage the financial aspects of collecting the airport fee. The DGCA warned that in the event of non-compliance with these instructions, the fees of the arriving passengers would be collected based on the aircraft's cargo without exemptions.

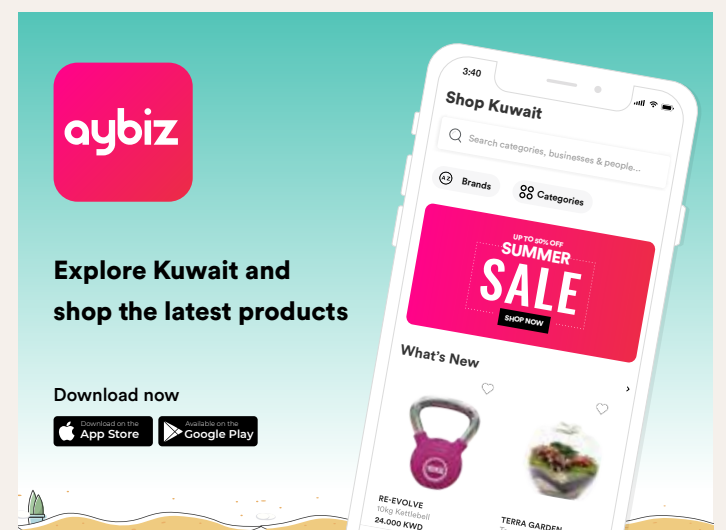
Aybiz, a tour guide on local businesses, a one-stop shop in the region

If you are an Arabic native speaker, you would know that Ay means 'any' or 'which' in Kuwaiti slang. 'Biz' is short for business. Merging the two words together, you get Aybiz, a mobile application that makes your life easier by listing all the businesses in Kuwait.

More than just a business finder, users are able to search, review, check in to the business, chat and even add photos to their favorite business page. With these exciting features, users are then able to easily track the trend, avoid decision paralysis, read genuine reviews and interact with real people, in real time, when looking to buy a product or seeking a service in Kuwait.

Available on iOS and Android, Aybiz gives the user a filtered experience by categories. From Beauty & Cosmetics to Pet shops, users can select their preferred category and start their smart search. Creating a smooth and fluid experience, users will then save time comparing restaurants, cafes or gyms simultaneously.

Aybiz recently unveiled a new feature and is excited to announce that it has revamped itself as a marketplace as well. This solid footprint is an opportunity to expand the scope and offering of Aybiz by finding new customers and suppliers from this new community. Buyers can inquire, compare and research a product



offered on the marketplace and have it delivered within 24 hours. Moreover, buyers will also be able to checkout with different vendors all in one cart.

"More exciting features are cooking and will be launched shortly," said Mohammed AlEisa, CEO at Aybiz. For the time being, why not have a bird's eye view of what's hip and happening in town with some purchases here and there.

Keep the community alive and be live on Aybiz; Be an Aybizer, an explorer and an online shopaholic in town.

Delivery bikes to be banned from highways

Food delivery bikes are a common sight on highways as they whizz past cars and other vehicles, weaving their way from one lane to another with scant attention to traffic rules, and without any regard for their own safety or that of others.

In addition to being the cause of many accidents on highways, the annoyance that

delivery bikes create for other drivers and traffic has been recorded by the General Directorate of Traffic of the Ministry of Interior. The ministry is likely to issue a decision that would soon prohibit delivery bike riders from highways and limit them to driving only on internal roads.

Besides causing accidents and injuries on highways, there have been a number of cases

where the bike riders have lost their own lives by not adhering to traffic rules and regulations. Some of the deaths were the result of not wearing helmets, or overspeeding. The General Traffic Department has also found that some of the bike riders did not even possess a driving license or complete knowledge on how to ride a bike.



IWG holds virtual meeting on 'Well-being'



The International Women's Group- Kuwait held an interesting and informative virtual meeting on the topic of 'Well-Being' as their final event of 2020-2021.

Ambreen Mustafa, spouse of the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, delivered her final address as president of IWG and welcomed Cristiana Turchetti Baldocci, spouse of the Ambassador of Italy, as the incoming IWG president for 2021-2022.

In her address, Mrs. Mustafa thanked Sheikha Hanouf Bader Al Mohamad Al Sabah, spouse to Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Honorary President of the International Women's Group- Kuwait (IWG), for her invaluable guidance and support throughout the challenging times faced by all during the pandemic. She also

thanked Sheikha Hanouf for taking part in her earlier farewell and handover ceremony wherein Sheikha Hanouf lauded the exceptional creativity, resilience and hard work of the IWG. Mrs. Mustafa praised the outstanding teamwork of the IWG Board saying that the IWG had emerged stronger and was the only organization of its kind in Kuwait which had produced, without fail, interesting and inspiring monthly programs for its members throughout the year.

Acknowledging the importance of teamwork, Mrs. Mustafa talked about the awards ceremony held earlier for the friends of the IWG who supported the organization throughout the year. Her final thanks were for the IWG members whose constant encouragement, interest and

appreciation gave meaning and purpose to the events.

Layla Boulos, IWG PR Coordinator, acting as master of ceremonies, then proceeded to introduce the virtual program on 'Well-Being'. Presented live from the Netherlands by Xandra Spijker, Life Coach and Mindful Analyst and former IWG board member.

Very familiar with life in Kuwait, having just recently returned to the Netherlands after many years here, Mrs. Spijker covered topics on nutrition, physical activity, stress, energy and happiness; highlighting daily simple changes that can be made for a healthier life. Closing her informative presentation she reminded viewers that 'Happiness' is not a goal to be reached only at the 'end of the horizon', but rather in 'the

everyday small things' that create fulfilment in life.

To the further delight of members, Noura Fawzi AlNadji, Fitness Instructor and Personal Trainer, also presented a segment of daily toning and stretching exercises to complete the 'Well-Being' segment. In keeping with the theme of the program, the IWG board members had together compiled a short segment on 'Happiness' and each included a picture with a caption of what happiness means to them.

The proceedings concluded with well-wishes to all for a safe, healthy and happy summer break and the commitment to coming back in September to yet another productive, informative and enjoyable IWG membership year.

Sixty years of marching to a democratic drum

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

education, and social mores under the leadership of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the tenth ruler of Kuwait.

However, the discovery of abundant oil in 1938 and the first exports of the 'black gold' in 1946 changed the political and social calculus in Kuwait. Until then, Kuwait's ruling class was dependent on the merchant families for financial support and sustenance of the government. The growing economic self-sufficiency from oil wealth allowed the ruling family to wean itself from the dominance of the merchant families and their influence on the state. This led to increased political tensions that eventually resulted in the ruling family agreeing to cede some administrative power to an elected elite.

The first elected legislature in the history of the country that came into existence in 1938 was headed by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and included members from select influential families in Kuwait. In what could probably be construed as a harbinger of future political upheavals in the country, the first legislature was dissolved a year later, over charges that some members had conspired to overthrow the government.

Independence of the country in June 1961 paved the way for further political reforms and the introduction of underpinnings of a structured democracy, including the adoption of a contractual Constitution. In December, shortly after independence, elections were held for a Constituent Assembly, which was tasked with drafting the country's constitution. The drafted Constitution, which combines aspects of both presidential and parliamentary systems of government, was approved and promulgated in November, 1962.

Among other things, Kuwait's Constitution espouses that sovereignty resides in the people, the source of all powers; it enshrines the separation of powers between the three branches of government — the executive, the legislative and the judiciary; and it calls for a 50-member parliament, the National Assembly, elected by eligible members of the electorate. The first parliamentary elections held in January 1963, had a great impact among the public. For the first time it raised awareness of people's participation and the democratic principles of consultation, consensus and cooperation in organizing matters of state through its various institutions.

Elections in Kuwait are a relatively straightforward process. Each eligible voter casts one vote for the candidates registered in one of the total five constituencies in Kuwait. Ten candidates with the most votes are elected from the constituency,

with no minimum threshold of votes needed to win a seat. There are also no limits on the number of terms a parliamentarian can serve. If candidates receive an identical number of votes, the election committee draws a lot to pick the winner.

Political parties are not recognized in Kuwait and members often run as independents, but after elections they come together to form informal political and sectarian blocs in parliament. Major de facto political parties in parliament have included the National Democratic Alliance, Popular Action Bloc, Hadas (Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood), National Islamic Alliance and Justice and Peace Alliance. Together the blocs account for a mosaic mix of political flavors that include liberals, tribals, urbanities, populists, nationalists and Islamist.

Behind what appears on the surface as a simple straight-forward electoral system and a partly parliamentary, partly presidential, semi-democratic style of governance in the country, lie several nuances. These subtleties, or anomalies if you like, determine who gets to vote, who does not; how electoral districts are determined and how the electoral process and democratic parliamentary life in Kuwait often gets undermined.

For starters, more than two-thirds of those who reside in Kuwait are expatriates who do not have a vote or take part in parliamentary elections. Also, among the remaining population, citizenship is granted to only those who descend, in the male line, from residents of Kuwait in 1920. Children of women married to foreigners are not considered citizens. Until 2005, only 15 percent of the Kuwaiti citizen population was allowed to vote, with women and all members of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces excluded. It was only in 2005, that parliament passed a law in favor of permitting suffrage to women with a 35-23 majority.

The unicameral National Assembly, has in total 65 members, of whom 50 are elected every four years by the electorate, while the prime minister is nominated by the Amir. The prime minister selects up to a maximum of 15 ex-officio members who form the Council of Ministers, with the provision that at least one of the appointed ministers, and up to a maximum of three, has to be an elected representative.

The National Assembly has the power to raise interpellation motions against all ministers and call for a vote of confidence that could lead to the dismissal of the minister. The parliament also has the right to grill the prime minister but cannot call for his ouster and needs to put forward a non-cooperation motion against the executive to the Amir, who can then appoint a new prime minister or dissolve parliament and call for new elections within two months.

Despite wide leverage granted to the elected parliament, the Constitution also endows Kuwait's Amir with broad powers, including the right to appoint the government, suspend the Constitution, dissolve parliament, and participate in the legislation process through the executive, and to be the ultimate authority on all legislative matters. Over the years, the Amir has wielded his power to dissolve the parliament with great restraint.

Nevertheless, since 1963 the ruling Amir has dissolved the elected parliament from 1976 to 1981, and from 1986 to 1991, due to irresolvable conflicts between the executive and the legislative. Parliament has also been dissolved for shorter periods in 1999 and 2009 with fresh elections held within two months of dissolution as demanded by the constitution. In addition, conflicts with the legislative have led to the resignation of numerous cabinets since the country began its tryst with democratic parliamentary life.

Since its inception, Kuwait's parliament has witnessed the swearing in of 38 cabinets. The current cabinet, which took office on 2 March, 2021 is headed by His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He was re-appointed on 24 January 2021, by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, following his Cabinet's resignation over differences with parliament.

The resignation of cabinets and swearing in of new ministers have occurred with such dizzying frequency, that many believe this to be the only unfailing aspect of parliamentary life in the country. However, the problem is that frequent cabinet reshuffles and repeated elections have failed to evince any real change in the political dynamics of the state. After every election, the newly sworn in cabinet promises transparency, cooperation and coordination in its working with the legislative. But before the ink on their oath of office signature dries, the opposition raises a new bout of confrontation with contentious issues and interpellations.

The last parliamentary elections held in December 2020 is likely to result in a rinse and repeat of the by now formulaic script of resignation, reappointment, and probably a dissolution and fresh election soon. This prognosis stems from the fact that the December election resulted in a significant gain for traditionalist Islamic and tribal candidates who generally form the main opposition bloc in parliament, at the expense of many incumbents who supported the existing political establishment.

Despite fears of infection from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, voter turnout in the 2020 election was high at over 65 percent, with

increased political activity and voting among the younger generation. Despite this rise in younger voters, and in contradiction to the common notion that younger people tend to be more liberal in their attitudes, not one of the 29 women candidates who stood in the elections won a seat. Traditional views ingrained in the public psyche are apparently difficult to shake off.

Entrenched societal attitudes and influence of a patriarchal system have hampered more active participation by women in the political sphere and electoral process. This has resulted in the interests of women being poorly represented in the legislature and in legislations. Generally, traditionalists, whether Islamists or tribalists, do not favor women's participation as candidates, nor do they promote women's issues in parliament.

Despite these shortcomings in its parliamentary style of governance, Kuwait is often regarded as a pioneer in the vanguard of democratic developments in the Arab world. Citizens enjoy greater personal and political freedom; it has a relatively free media space; and largely free and fair parliamentary elections have been held regularly since 1963.

Moreover, opposition blocs in parliament have proven to be an active and effective force in monitoring executive actions, as well as in introducing and hindering social, political and economic reforms over the years. In general, the political and governing landscape in the country has also shown to be flexible enough to accommodate a contentious parliamentary opposition and vociferous dissent in the public and political space.

But the frequent rows and deadlocks between the appointed government and elected parliament have led to successive government reshuffles and dissolutions of parliament over decades. This has hampered investment and economic and fiscal reforms resulting in significant repercussions on social, political and economic progress and growth of the country. While some people would attribute the recurring strained relationship between the executive and legislative as an immature expression of democracy in Kuwait, it is high time for the government and opposition to get their act together.

Rather than resorting to populist proposals and catering to parochial or personal interests that have little positive impact, the opposition needs to come up with viable alternatives to economic reforms suggested by the government. For its part, the executive needs to accept the opposition's genuine grievances and work with them to identify effective strategies for creating a socially, economically and politically sustainable future for Kuwait.

Message of

MOHD. NOORDIN PENDOSINA N. LOMONDOT

Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to the State of Kuwait

On Philippine Independence Day 2021

“UNITY AND HEALING”



Iwish to express my warmest greetings to the 220,000-strong Filipino Community in Kuwait on the 123rd anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence. It has been 123 years since General Emilio Aguinaldo declared independence from Spain, paving the way for the establishment of Asia's first republic.

While we take stock of the freedoms that we now cherish, this day also reminds us of our continuing struggle to be free from the Coronavirus Disease. It is through bayanihan, the collective will and action of the Filipino people, that today's celebration carries the theme: “Kalayaan 2021: Spirit of Freedom in Unity and National Healing.”

I take this opportunity to express my sincere and profound appreciation to His Highness The Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the Government

of the State of Kuwait for their continuous hospitality extended to almost a quarter of a million Overseas Filipinos who have made Kuwait their second home, especially during the pandemic.

In April 2020, the Philippines became the first country that benefited from the Kuwaiti government's amnesty program for undocumented residents, bringing home more than 2,200 Filipinos. In December 2020, when the Kuwaiti government rolled out its COVID-19 vaccination program, among the first who received their shots are Filipino front liners.

Since the opening of diplomatic ties in 1979, the relations between the Philippines and Kuwait have been cordial and friendly as the two countries are continuously endeavoring together in taking significant steps to further boost and strengthen their diplomatic relations.

The Philippines-Kuwait Agreement on the Employment of Domestic Workers was signed in Kuwait in May 2018 to protect the rights and promote the welfare of Filipino domestic workers. Three years on, we hope to live up to the noble intentions of this agreement, including the full implementation of the new Standard Contract for Domestic Workers.

The friendly relations between the Philippines and Kuwait will always remain strong based on trust, confidence, and mutual cooperation.

I express my faith that the Philippines and Kuwait, linked by historical and people-to-people ties, could overcome any issue and would continue to work together to achieve our mutual goals and interests.

May the Almighty continue to bless the Philippines and Kuwait. Mabuhay!

Friendship that grows stronger over the years

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

The Indian minister also expressed interest to participate in Kuwait's Vision 2035 strategic plan. “India has expertise and technical know-how in many of the key areas where Kuwait is looking to diversify into. Some of our companies are already in Kuwait and executing projects successfully. I see more opportunities for many other top Indian companies in Kuwait's transformational journey towards becoming a regional trade and investment hub. In this regard, I am glad that I had an excellent discussion with His Excellency the Commerce Minister Dr. Abdullah Issa Al Salman yesterday. We discussed working on these complementarities between our two countries and leveraging these synergies for mutual growth and development,” he explained.

During his visit, Dr. Jaishakar also addressed the Indian community and interacted virtually with select members of the Indian community. He also answered queries raised on issues of concern to the community. He pointed out that the region was special to India particularly because of the large Indian community that was

playing a significant role and acting as a bridge between the two countries. Elaborating on the role of the large Indian community in Kuwait, he noted that people-to-people relations form the core of the bilateral relations between the two countries.

“There are close to a million Indian nationals working and living peacefully and contributing significantly to the growth and development of this country. And, I am proud to say that I have heard effusive praise and admiration from the entire leadership of Kuwait for the Indian community in Kuwait. Nonetheless, given the size of the community, there are bound to be some issues or matters concerning the Indian diaspora that were featured in our bilateral talks. I am pleased to say that we have made progress on these issues as well,” said the minister.

He applauded the community and said that it in many ways defines India abroad. “My message to the community is simple; the contribution you make, the respect you earn, the support that you provide, and the bridge you constitute is what makes India's interaction with the world unique... Keep the Indian flag flying high here in Kuwait,” he said in conclusion.

Expatriates abandon hopes of visiting home this summer



Summer and the travel season are here, but expatriates in Kuwait are reluctant to travel out of the country for fear of being denied entry on return. Most of them, who have not seen their loved ones back home for over a year now, have given up any hope of being able to visit home this summer too. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of expatriates from Kuwait currently stranded abroad, continue to languish unable to enter Kuwait and grow increasingly worried over the prospects of ever being able to return to resume their lives and livelihood in this country.

Since the start of COVID-19 crisis early last year, Kuwait has imposed stringent regulations on the movement of people into and out of the country. At the first signs of virus infections in the country in March 2020, the authorities promptly shutdown all operations through Kuwait International Airport.

The airport cautiously resumed operations in August, but direct passenger flights from over 30 countries, deemed to be of ‘high-risk’ with regard to the virus, were banned from entering Kuwait. They could however enter Kuwait provided they spent 14-days in quarantine in a third country not on the banned list. Most of those stranded abroad due to this decision, were from the Indian subcontinent, the Philippines and Egypt.

In late December, following the outbreak of a new strain of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, Kuwait once again shutdown all commercial flights through the airport. Though the airport resumed operations at the start of the year, the ban on direct flights from 35 countries still remained. And, in February, a blanket ban was placed on the entry of all non-Kuwaitis to the country, with the exception of diplomats, medical personnel, and a few other select categories.

The restrictions on re-entry to Kuwait have placed many expatriates living in the country in the proverbial ‘Catch-22’ situation of being caught between a rock and a hard place. They would very much love to go home and visit their near and dear ones whom they have not seen for well over a year. But if they do travel, there is no guarantee that they will be able to return any time soon.

The situation has grown worse in recent weeks with the advent of peak summer travel time. Usually, during this period, there is a rush for tickets, as school holidays prompt families to seek refuge from the sweltering summer heat of Kuwait, by visiting their home countries or taking a vacation abroad. But for a second summer season, travel agencies are reporting poor sales.

Besides the ‘Damocles sword’ of not being

able to return hanging over their heads, this year there is an additional factor holding back many expatriate families from traveling. The Ministry of Education, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, has announced plans to launch a comprehensive vaccination campaign for students before the start of schools in September.

Those families willing to risk traveling abroad could end up by missing the vaccination shot for their children, which could probably prevent them from attending classes when schools resume. But, of course, this is a secondary concern, the main issue is whether they would be allowed back in when they return from their summer vacation.

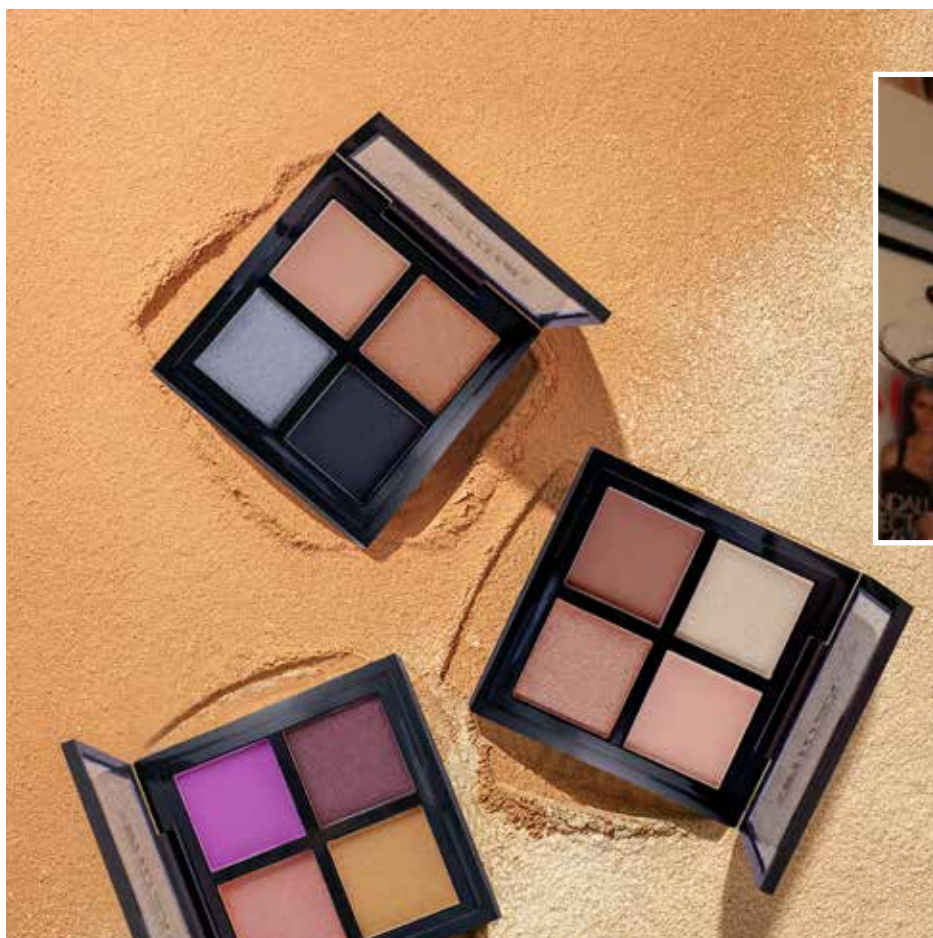
Meanwhile, foreigners stranded outside Kuwait have been in a limbo since March 2020. In all fairness it needs to be said that at the start of the ban on flights, Kuwait suspended the rule that a six-month stay outside the country would automatically annul the entry visa of expatriates. Later, the authorities also allowed the sponsor of those stranded abroad to renew the visas of their workers online before its expiry date.

Nevertheless, thousands of expatriates who were unable to renew their visas due to laxity on the part of their sponsors, or for other reasons, have lost the right to return with the expiry of their residency permit. They can only hope that when the issuance of new visas resume, the sponsor will obtain a new residency permit for them. Even those who have had their residency permits extended by their sponsor, especially if they were employed in the private sector, have been living for over a year without any income.

Although there are different figures on the total number of foreigners stranded abroad since the start of the pandemic, estimates are that more than 200,000 expatriates from nearly 20 different countries have lost their residencies in the last one year, as they were unable to renew their residency statuses. Official statistics for the period from 10 March 2020 to 15 March 2021 show that the majority of those who lost their residency status were Egyptian nationals, followed by members of the Indian and Sri Lankan communities.

In the meantime, figures from the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) show that the work permits of 19,995 expats were cancelled between 12 January and 7 March of this year. Of these, 12,391 belonged to foreigners whose residence permits expired while they were stranded abroad. The Authority also revealed that over 6,245 expatriates, who were in Kuwait at the start of the pandemic, have decided to cancel their residences and leave the country permanently.





2021

Makeup Trends

BY HERMOINE MACURA-NOBLE
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES KUWAIT



The pandemic has created a massive shift when it comes to makeup and beauty as not only is the face covered much more now, but women are feeling slightly more suffocated when their skin feels too caked up. As a result, organic

skincare and clean beauty are growing in popularity, with many women returning to more minimal makeup looks, including very light bases.

GCC Celebrity & Bridal Makeup Artist Zareen Shah explains. "Before Covid, people were raving about Estee Lauder's Double Wear, and now it's the complete opposite...US Singer, Selena Gomez, launched her makeup line, RARE BEAUTY, and started a trend called the #dotfoundationchallenge. As a result, more and more women realise that they want a face product that can give them coverage and radiance yet feels light and weightless."

And while there will always be a demand for the full-coverage foundation for those of us who don't have the perfect skin, how you apply it might change, as a natural-looking complexion—with varied tones, freckles, and moles—take the stage.

Pastel pinks have been popular for

quite some time now, but experts are now moving into more muted colours like tans, sage greens, pistachios, and baby blues with many graphic liner looks. And with the influence of makeup gurus on TikTok using swirling colours of pastels on the eyes, one thing is clear, eyeliner is no longer just black, and there is a move away from shimmers.

"There is a definite sense of individuality that is becoming more acceptable, which is why graphic liner is huge right now. Gen Z



isn't afraid to experiment with colours and break traditional styles, unlike the majority of Millennials that prefer a more subtle and classic approach to makeup," says Shah.



However, the essential smokey eye is here to stay. Even if you only have an eyeliner handy, you can create a soft, smokey look with a light smudge of your finger or opt for a classic smokey eye look. Makeup Artist Rebecca Marino explains. "An easy smokey eye every girl should know is to first blend a matte base shade all over your eyelid, followed by a dark-tone shadow to the outer corners of your eyes – packing the colour at your lash line



and then blending it upward and outward with an eyeshadow brush to smooth any harsh lines. The next step is to sketch a dark pencil eyeliner along your top and bottom lash lines and then blend the liner's top edge with a pencil brush."

Finally, "Always finish with mascara to pull the look together for the ultimate smokey eye," says Marino. It might be time to finally master the art of popping on a pair of false eyelashes, too. "I see eyes and lashes having a major moment in a fun and creative way," concludes Marino.

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A Vaccine for All



Donating vaccines is ethically, economically and epidemiologically the right thing to do, and to do now.

COVID-19 does not discriminate between rich and poor nations. Dangerous surges in infection rates and the emergence of new variants in one country places everyone at risk in other countries. The development of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines is a huge step forward in the global effort to end the pandemic and to get back to doing more of the things we enjoy with the people we love.

But currently there is only a limited number of vaccines, so it is critical to prioritize vaccinations to save lives and to protect public health services in all countries. The COVAX Facility, the global COVID vaccine equity scheme, represents a pathway toward addressing the imbalance in vaccine access between high and low-income countries. But COVAX is undersupplied.

G7 leaders will be meeting from 11 to 13 June in the United Kingdom. The G7 countries together have a potential emergency stop-gap measure readily available: dose donations. G7 countries and other well-supplied nations immediately donating additional available doses to COVAX is a minimum, essential and emergency stop-gap measure, and it is needed right now.



“The unequal distribution of vaccines is not only a moral outrage, but economically and epidemiologically self-defeating. Vaccine equity is the challenge of our time, and we are failing.”

- Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO

COVAX, an abbreviation for COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access, is a worldwide initiative aimed at equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. COVAX is directed by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation (CEPI) and Gavi — formerly the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), and now known as the Vaccine Alliance.

COVAX coordinates international resources to enable low-to-middle-income countries equitable access to COVID-19 tests, therapies, and vaccines. However, as of 11 April 2021, COVAX is falling short of its goal, having delivered 38.5 million doses despite

a goal of 100 million by the end of March.

COVID-19 is a global problem and COVAX is a global solution, says UNICEF. Vaccinating the world against this disease will be the largest vaccine procurement and supply operation in history. UNICEF and partners, with generous support from our donors, are working around the clock to ensure that no country is left behind.

Five things to know about why dose donations are essential:

More than 1.4 billion doses of the COVID-19 vaccine had been administered by late May 2021, yet less than 1 percent of global supply is reaching low-income countries. While we need even more vaccines to meet demand,

there are enough doses available among well-supplied countries to reach the world's most vulnerable people right now.

The longer the virus continues to spread unchecked, the higher the risk of more deadly or contagious variants emerging, placing everyone at risk. While well-supplied countries are vaccinating their entire adult populations against COVID-19, others with very poor vaccination coverage are witnessing dangerous surges in infection rates and the emergence of new variants. The recent deadly spike in India could be a precursor to what will happen across the region, and globally, if this inequity prevails.

Millions of children in poorer countries are at the risk of developing preventable diseases due to the pandemic disrupting routine immunization services. Donating doses now could help resume life-saving services in these countries.

The donation of COVID-19 vaccines from well-supplied countries is one of the only ways to increase the number of doses available to COVAX right now. It is a practical solution to ensure that as many people as possible can access vaccines in every corner of the world as fast as possible in the months ahead.

Well-supplied countries can donate while still meeting commitments to their own populations. According to an analysis by Airfinity, G7 nations and 'Team Europe' group of European Union Member States together will soon have enough vaccine doses to be able to collectively donate more than 150 million to some of the most vulnerable populations in the world if they donated just 20 percent of their available supply over June, July and August.

Call to Action: UNICEF is calling on Governments with surplus doses to begin donating now. COVID-19 vaccines alone are not a silver bullet to end the pandemic. But donating immediately available doses is needed right now.

[Reprinted from UNICEF article]

World Blood Donor Day

A unit of blood saves three lives

Each year the world commemorates World Blood Donor Day on 14 June in honor of the birth anniversary of Austrian biologist, immunologist, physician and Nobel Laureate Karl Landsteiner, who identified the main blood groups — A, B, AB and O.

There is no substitute for human blood, it cannot be manufactured, it needs to be collected through volunteer donations. Here are some facts on blood and blood donation:

Whole blood is what flows in our body. It is made up of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets, all of which are suspended in a liquid called plasma. Our red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets, together make up about 45 percent of the volume of our blood. The remaining 55 percent is liquid plasma.

Whole blood and each of its four components are all valuable tools in modern medicine. Although white blood cells are sometimes used in medicine, they are not derived from a whole blood donation. Red blood cells, platelets, and plasma, as well as cryoprecipitates — a portion of plasma, rich in clotting factors that can reduce blood loss by helping

to slow or stop bleeding — are extracted from blood and can be given to different patients. This is the reason that doctors say a donation of one unit of whole blood can help multiple people.

The amount of blood in a person's body depends on their size (the bigger the person's body is, the more blood it will contain). A newborn baby's body will contain only around a cup of blood whereas a 65 to 80kg adult will have approximately 4.5 to 5.5 liters (or 10 units) of blood in their body. Blood is approximately 10 percent of an adult's weight. A healthy male person can donate a unit of blood every three months, while a healthy female can do so every four months. The body regenerates this blood within 24 to 48 hours after a transfusion.

Typically the label on a bag of packed red blood cells will say, "From 500 ml CPD (or CPDA) whole blood." CPD stands for citrate/phosphate/dextrose, an anticoagulant and preservative, and the extra A is for adenine, which extends the shelf life. Whole blood is not what is transfused, though. The original 500 ml is centrifuged,

and the cells are removed.

The cell portion, which is what most people think of when they see a transfusion, has a hematocrit (percentage by volume of red cells in blood) of about 70 to 75 percent, meaning it is 70 percent red cells and 30 percent liquid, mostly plasma. Given that a typical hematocrit in an adult is about 40 percent, the original bag of blood will have something like 200 ml of packed red blood cells (40% of 500). If the unit has a final hematocrit, after processing, of 70 percent, then the total volume in the unit will on average be around 285 ml (200/0.7).

Thus, a unit of blood drawn from a donor has the following constituency: Around 500ml of blood is drawn from a donor. If the donor is a female, the blood will have a hematocrit of 34.9 to 44.5 percent, and so contains between 174.5 and 222.5 ml of packed cells. If it is from a male, it has a hematocrit of 38.8 to 50 percent, and so contains between 194 and 250 ml of packed cells.

This blood is then centrifuged, and most of the plasma is removed. The final product has a hematocrit of between 70 and 75 percent. If it is



from the female, and her hematocrit is at the lower limit of the normal range, it has a final volume of between 233 and 249 ml (174.5/0.75 and 174.5/0.7), and if from a male at the upper limit of the normal range, it will have a final volume of between 333 and 357 ml (250/0.75 and 250/0.7).

Kuwait Blood Bank was first established in May 1965 with two donation beds in one room of the Central Laboratory of the Amiri Hospital. Prior to this, all blood used in Kuwait hospitals was imported. In 1968, Kuwait stopped the importation of blood and instead relied solely on donors to its blood bank to supply the country's needs. In the initial year a total of over 7,300 units were collected and it met the needs of all hospitals in Kuwait.

In 1987, the Kuwait Central Blood Bank shifted to its current location in Jabriya. The new bank has all the latest cutting-edge technologies and laboratories to draw, analyze and store blood in the most sophisticated environment. It is estimated that there are more than 50,000 units of blood donated each year at the Blood Bank. But the country needs more. Recent studies show that around the world there is a need for blood transfusions every 2 seconds.

An appointment to donate whole blood can take as little as one hour, and the actual donation is only 8-10 minutes of that time. So if you are a healthy male or female within the prescribed ages for donating, then please consider volunteering to donate. One unit of blood donation can save up to three lives.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

School Reopening Cannot Wait



TAKESHI KASAI AND KARIN HULSHOF

Takeshi Kasai is World Health Organization Regional Director for the Western Pacific; Karin Hulshof is UNICEF Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific.

With the COVID-19 pandemic now well into its second year, safely reopening schools has become an urgent priority. School attendance is critical for children's education and lifetime prospects. The long-term costs of closures, both for individual children and society, are simply too large to justify on a continuing basis.

Evidence since the start of the pandemic shows that COVID-19 does not pose a high risk to children, and that schools are not drivers of transmission within the surrounding community. We have also amassed a large body of knowledge about how to reduce the risks to children, teachers, and their families. Using this knowledge, we all need to urgently work toward reopening schools safely to protect our children's future.

Prolonged school closures have a significant impact not just on children's skills attainment and earning prospects, but also on their physical and mental health. While online education can guarantee some continuity of learning for some children, these services are no substitute for in-person attendance. Moreover, access to online learning remains woefully uneven, with disadvantaged children — including those with disabilities, those affected by migration, and excluded minorities — bearing the brunt of the shortcomings of digital education.

The evidence shows increases in anxiety, depression, and self-harm among school-aged children since the start of the pandemic. Children who are not in the classroom also experience increased loneliness, difficulty concentrating, and high levels of learning anxiety. These problems will only grow worse the longer schools remain closed.

School closures have also led to reduced physical activity, poor eating habits, and disrupted sleep patterns. For some children, more time at home has increased the risk of domestic violence, just as more screen time has exacerbated the risks of online harm. And with schools closed, a critical avenue for identifying and reporting abuse and mental-



health issues has been closed off.

In nearly half the countries in developing Asia, schools have been closed for more than 200 days during the pandemic. The region should prepare for a reduction in the expected gains in reading and math skills for children in both preschool and primary school, as well as a wider achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their peers.

The Asian Development Bank warns that the learning losses caused by prolonged school closures will significantly reduce the future productivity and lifetime earnings of affected students in the region. It estimates the present value of these losses to be \$1.25 trillion, which is equivalent to 5.4 percent of

Globally, children account for a very small proportion of confirmed COVID-19 cases. Children of primary-school age and younger are among the least likely cohorts to be infected. And even when they do contract COVID-19, they tend to have milder symptoms than adults (which is why they have not contributed significantly to the proportion of hospitalized cases or reported deaths). And a study of children from the Republic of Korea shows that infected children are less likely to spread the virus.

In short, primary schools, preschools, and early childhood development (ECD) centers are not high-risk settings for transmission, especially if the right safety measures are followed. Transmission levels in these

But overall, the evidence overwhelmingly points to the need for schools, especially preschools and primary schools, to be reopened. The same applies for ECD centers. There is no such thing as zero risk. But the risks are manageable with robust mitigation strategies. The World Health Organization's guidance on operating schools during the pandemic includes several measures to reduce COVID-19 exposure and transmission. These include personal hygiene practices, proper mask use, physical distancing, adequate ventilation, and regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces. Clear and consistent communication with parents and children to ensure compliance both in the classroom and during after-school activities is equally important.

Policymakers must also consider the local context for resuming in-school learning, including factors such as the level of community transmission and the capacity to respond to an increase in infections. In some places, health and education services will need additional resources to implement the necessary safety measures.

Maintaining vigilance and adherence to all of these measures is critical, not only for schools, but also for our broader efforts to contain COVID-19, including the development and spread of virus variants and mutations.

The good news is that school reopenings are not dependent on the availability of vaccines. We need to work toward a sustainable 'new normal' right now. While the relatively low risks of children being in school are easily managed, the consequences of keeping them out of their classrooms are grave and far-reaching. It is time for the school gates to reopen.

“ Schools, especially preschools, primary schools, and Early Childhood Development centers need to be reopened as soon as possible. There is no such thing as zero risk, but the risks are manageable with robust mitigation strategies. ”

the region's 2020 GDP. Achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal for education was already going to be challenging enough before the pandemic. Now, UNICEF and UNESCO estimate that education budgets in the region will need to increase by at least 7 percent to stay within striking distance of those targets.

Despite the obvious costs of school closures, many countries are still reluctant to reopen, citing fears of further transmission. But our focus now should be on using what we know about COVID-19 and children to work towards the safe reopening of schools.

settings have been found to reflect those of the surrounding community.

The one possible exception is secondary schools (high schools), which have accounted for a higher number of outbreaks than primary schools. Because adolescents appear to transmit the virus much like adults, partial closures for secondary schools should remain an option, but only as a last resort and for limited periods where community transmission is surging. When schools are forced to close temporarily, this must be done in conjunction with other community-level public-health and social measures.

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Overwork, a matter of life and death

A recent report released by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) shows that overwork led to 745,000 deaths from stroke and heart disease in 2016. An increase of 29 percent since the year 2000, makes the news even more ominous.

The increasing use of digital paraphernalia in workplaces was supposed to decrease workload and make life easier for the worker, but apparently this is not happening as the report by the UN entities show. The surge in work-related deaths over the years signals that overwork has literally become a matter of life and death, and underlines the need to protect workers from 'working themselves to death'.

Since the start of COVID-19 global pandemic, not only overwork, just going to work has become hazardous for many frontline workers and personnel engaged in essential work where they have to be present in-person to attend to their jobs. Even people supposed to be enjoying leisurely 'work-at-home' schedules have not been spared the onslaught of being under pressure from work-related matters.

Teleworking, which has become the norm in many work sectors, has blurred the boundaries between home and work. Management in many companies, especially in multinational firms that work in different time zones, now expect their staff working from home to be in attendance 24x7. Being 'on-call' at any time to attend to work has been affecting morale and productivity of staff. In addition, in many companies the economic impact of the pandemic has led to downsizing of staff, which increased the workload on remaining workers.

This was confirmed in the WHO-ILO report by the Director-General of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who said that many businesses have been forced to scale back or shut down operations to save money, and people who are still on the payroll end up working longer hours, which is impacting their health.

Several studies in the past have corroborated the findings made by the WHO-ILO report, and have shown that spending too much time working has a deleterious effect on health. With no signs of change in the situation any time soon, and given that the dangers of being overworked are increasing, now could be the right time to examine overwork in more detail. Here we take a closer look at what overworking feels like, and how to protect yourself from its worst impacts.

Though researchers concur that overworking has harmful effects on health, what they have not been able to agree on is, how long is too long before work begins to have negative effects on health.

In their report, the WHO-ILO team defined overworking as more than 55 hours a week. The study found that "working 55 or more hours per week is associated with an estimated 35 percent higher risk of a stroke and a 17 percent higher risk of dying from ischemic heart disease, compared to working 35-40 hours a week.

Using this definition, it should be easy to discern whether you are overworking. But knowing that you are overworked is only one part of the equation. How do you know that this excess work is impacting your health and wellbeing. Feeling tired could be one indication, but

overwork causes more than just physical tiredness, it could lead to a range of negative physical and mental aspects. Here are some of the symptoms people should watch out for:

Physical: Feeling fatigued, experiencing headaches, feeling tense or like you cannot relax, feeling nauseous or sick to your stomach.

Psychological: Feeling foggy-headed, having trouble solving problems, making careless mistakes, being short-tempered, or having lower tolerance for work issues.

Emotional: Being anxious or worried all the time, having a sense of dread, fearing going to work, or feeling a sense of helplessness.

Interpersonal: Avoiding coworkers with whom you had no issues before; getting into conflict with people at work or loved ones at home; blowing up at little things.

Behavioral: Calling out sick more, making more mistakes, sleeping less, turning to drinks or drugs for support.

You might experience more of these symptoms depending on what type of work you do and where you work.

Nurses in particular are seeing high levels of burnout and overwork in the ongoing pandemic related stressful conditions. A recent meta-analysis of nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that 34 percent experienced emotional exhaustion. Two of the factors contributing to that issue were longer working time in quarantine areas and increased workload overall.

The WHO also points out that the effects of overwork are especially prominent for men. Indeed, 72 percent of deaths related to overwork in the WHO study occurred among males.

Quitting work or seeking a lighter workload may not be an option for most people, so how do we protect our health when faced with an overworking environment?



For starters, it is important to deal with the stress or emotional exhaustion that can lead to bigger health problems. So start by taking care of your mental health even during your work hours.

Take time to eat lunch, go for a walk, or even meditate as a method to unwind. These seemingly small steps will not only help you de-stress, they will also boost your productivity in the long term, ultimately helping you to feel more efficient as well.

It is also crucial to set boundaries at work, to the extent that you can. Be clear about how much work you can take on, and say no to things when it becomes too much. If you have control over your schedule, be strategic about adding break time between appointments or meetings, even for five minutes.

Beyond the small breaks, doctors suggest building in time during your commute or at the end of your day for reading, listening to music, or doing some physical activity — anything that releases stress that would otherwise build up and harm your health.

Consider this time of relaxation as your time to just disconnect and think about something else and spend some time just taking care of yourself.

Nanoparticle vaccine to fight flu virus

A new vaccine against the flu virus that is still in the experimental stage, could be a game changer in the fight against the annual influenza virus. And, considering the close link between the flu virus and the SARS-CoV-2 virus responsible for the ongoing global pandemic, the potential for this new vaccine could be enormous.

Typically, flu vaccines contain either deactivated or weakened forms of microbes that cause influenza. The experimental vaccine, which has proven effective in preclinical studies, consists of billions of tiny, nanoparticle sized spherical sacs that carry infection-fighting recombinant proteins throughout the body to stimulate a strong immune response to fight the invading virus.



The new vaccine has the potential to significantly improve the effectiveness of seasonal flu vaccines, which typically work only 40-60 percent of the time, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

It will also take less time to produce large quantities of the vaccine because, unlike most seasonal flu vaccines, it is not created in embryonated chicken eggs.

Moreover, since only smaller doses of the vaccine are required, it will increase vaccine supplies, which can be critical as the current pandemic has shown. The tiny spherical sacs, which are small enough to be considered nanoparticles, form the backbone of what is known in pharmaceutical parlance as a vaccine platform, which is any underlying technology used to develop multiple vaccines.

The same platform is reportedly being used in clinical trials by South Korean biotech company EuBiologics and POP Biotechnologies, a US biotech firm. POP Biotechnologies is also said to be working with Scripps Research, the US medical research and education facility, to use the same platform for a possible HIV vaccine.

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