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Vaccine disparity reflects social inequities

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

The SARS-CoV-2 virus responsible for the ongoing COVID-19 global crisis does not recognize international borders, nor does it draw a line between rich and poor countries, or differentiate between urban and rural areas. It also does not distinguish between races or ethnicities — Caucasians, Africans, Latinos, Asians are all equally vulnerable to the virus. And, most certainly, the virus does not discriminate between citizens and non-citizens in a country.

Although the virus does not display any bias when it comes to infecting people, the same cannot

be said of people when it comes to administering health safeguards during the ongoing pandemic. This was plainly evident in the inequitable distribution of vaccines worldwide, and even in its accessibility within nations.

While unprecedented cooperation and coordination among various medical and research institutions around the world led to the development of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines in a relatively short time, its equitable distribution around the world has left much to be desired. The innovation, ingenuity and technical prowess, as well as the international collaboration in creating vaccines to combat the virus in record time is doubtfully a remarkable scientific achievement



that the world can justly be proud of. However, its inequitable distribution since then has been a stain on our collective conscience.

The initial euphoria surrounding the vaccine discovery was soon

replaced by the stark realization that global demand would far outstrip vaccine supplies. Not surprisingly, the early distribution of vaccines was confined to countries that had access to production facilities,

and its availability elsewhere was determined by a country's ability to afford vaccine pre-orders at premium prices. The affordability criteria immediately priced-out most middle and low income countries from the vaccine market, taking along with it a significant portion of the global population.

Since the approval of vaccines for public deployment in late 2020, world health institutions and medical experts have repeatedly underscored that mass vaccinations to attain community immunity around the world is the only bulwark in the global fight to vanquish the virus. They have also reiterated that no one is safe until everyone is safe, and that a surge in infections and new variants

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E-Learning during COVID-19

... what did we actually learn?

BY NOURAH AL-OSEIMI
EXCLUSIVE TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

In 2020, our lives were turned upside down in every sense of the word. Everything changed overnight and our daily vernacular started to include expressions and phrases such as 'social distancing', 'PCR test', 'curfew' and my personal favorite, 'full lockdown'.

When considering the impact that all of these experiences have had on us over the past year, it is far too complex to dissect in a single piece of writing as it is a multi-faceted discussion. I also believe that the long-term effects of this pandemic will continue to be studied and unraveled in the years to come.

As an educator, I was particularly curious to see what would transpire in the educational sector, how people would respond to these changes, how we would adapt and most importantly — will we remain committed to our formal education in the same way that we were before the pandemic?

A few important instances come to mind, I observed with interest the rising protests to abstain from written exams. I observed with interest the political pressure on the previous Minister of Education, Dr. Saud Al Harbi, to end the academic year. And finally, I observed with interest the increased resistance towards standardized testing, e-proctoring and regulation of the educational process as a whole.

- As a (somewhat) rational adult, I asked myself several questions:
- Why was political pressure influencing formal education?
- Why did some students resist e-learning?
- Why did some families prefer for their children to be passed automatically without actually acquiring any knowledge or learning anything?

What will happen to this generation of learners that has been taken out of school for a full year (so far)?

Although I work in education, I felt that these questions were far too complex for me to answer by myself. So I turned to a few subject matter experts who were able to shed more light on the issue.

Dr. Kevin Fullbrook, Director at Bayan Bilingual School (BBS), advised that "there were challenges with younger learners because they need a lot of support and guidance especially with the use of technology."

And how about the parents?

"The needs of the parents had to be addressed as well, because a lot more of the burden and responsibility was shifted to the parents. We were fortunate that we could make that shift fairly quickly [at BBS]. We had a lot of wonderful people at school working longer hours to make sure that shift happened."

Parents who are able to afford private schooling for their children often do it due to the superlative quality of private education and a more hands-on approach from the school. This enables parents to have more balance in other areas in their life that require attention such as careers, family and health. Now, this responsibility has shifted back to the parents and they have to be more involved and present for their children's education.

"I can certainly understand how some parents feel that the move to online learning wasn't what they signed up for or wasn't serving the best interests of their children, I can understand their point of view. Everyone was doing the best they could in difficult circumstances. It was no one's choice. We looked at how we can rethink extracurricular



activities or service opportunities online and the ability to connect with different parts of the world." Dr. Fullbrook stated.

A major issue that surfaced, as all schools and universities transitioned to e-learning, was academic integrity and ensuring an authentic learning experience free from academic dishonesty and plagiarism. I was curious to learn more about Dr. Fullbrook's approach in addressing this and what his recommendations were.

"It's about acknowledging what you can control and what you can't control. There's nothing that's foolproof, so we approached it slightly differently and that this is maybe an area of things that we cannot fully control. Having a shift away from major exams and shifting towards ongoing formative learning with regular check-ins is something that worked for us. We've recognized for a while that having one big end of semester exam doesn't necessarily mean improved learning. The pandemic has forced us to look for alternatives and now that we're in the middle of it, we see that they work and they're better for students' learning. Having more discussions, more oral presentations, more group-work and collaboration. They're much better for mastery

to be balanced with public health measures."

I felt more reassured after concluding my conversation with Dr. Fullbrook because he spoke transparently and honestly on what the challenges and opportunities are for learners of various age groups during these times. He was also very optimistic towards the gradual transition to in-class instruction and how that can be navigated smoothly and safely for all.

The questions I had left lingering in my mind focused more on adult learners and how well-prepared they are going to be for their careers. A very important part of being a university student is that you are slowly but surely preparing to transition towards your professional life. A lot of the skills you acquire come from outside the classroom but within campus nonetheless through campus activities, internships and seminars. How has the pandemic changed all of these things? Will young adults struggle to acquire the skills they need?

I turned to Dr. Fahed Al Sumait – Assistant Professor of Mass Communication and Media at the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) for his expert opinion on these issues and more.

"There are aspects of learning that work

"Having to be online, the tribulations of having to repurpose a place in your house to do your education, it's this combination of stress factors that makes it easy for students to want to opt out and that's more explanatory of the general behavior than just laziness. There are certainly some students who are capitalizing on the opportunity to be lazy, but the good students are struggling too, not because they're lazy but because everyone is struggling. And it takes us time to adjust to this whole new mode of delivery. It will affect their concentration, retention of knowledge and information and ability to focus."

How can educators address these challenges and ensure that learning outcomes are fairly and objectively met?

"Rethink assessment, the reason you do exams is to assess how much the student has learned and there are lots of ways to find out if a student has learned something. It's the smart way to go. If this pandemic is prolonged further, that's what institutions need to do. I've switched more to in-class activities, and I assess them on a daily basis rather than waiting till the end of a semester to give a big test. I still give tests but they have to be engaged in class and do things in order to evaluate their performance. People can do more oral-based exams such as presentations and case studies. That's not something students can cheat on and it's good for them because they learn how to do presentations online."

At this point in our conversation, I sensed that there are greater opportunities from this experience that educators are slowly tapping into. Dr. Fahed believes that "we have access to all sorts of conversations happening all over the world, collaboration with people internationally is smoother because now everyone is familiar with video conferencing and the potential to develop international collaborations has improved."

He also added that some of the challenges mentioned earlier will dissipate when in-class instruction resumes, but the added benefits of international collaboration will still be there.

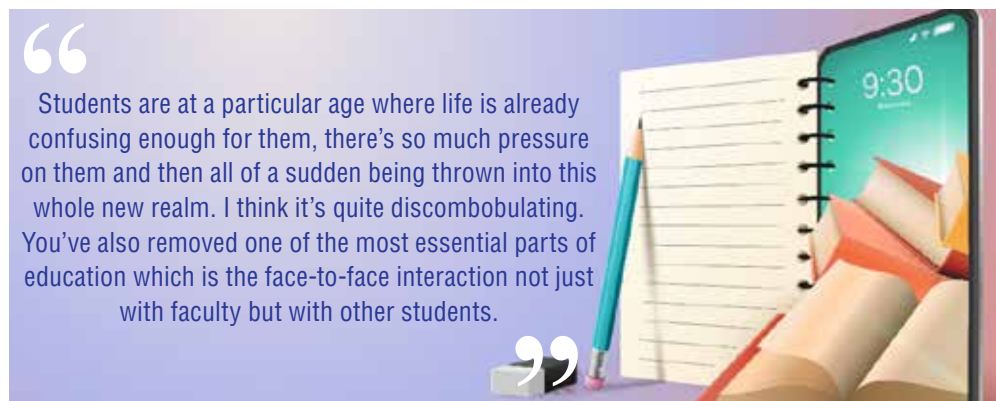
"Everybody develops a whole new set of skills and is moving towards the Internet of Things and towards a Knowledge Economy in Kuwait. We are upskilling people, COVID has forced all of us to experiment with this new digital age faster than expected and on a scale across the demographic board."

"The biggest long-term consequence is how people recover from the trauma of being forced to change our way of life so suddenly. We're going to have to adjust to a new normal. I also think that coming up with the logistics of what hybrid learning will look like is another challenge."

Much like Dr. Fullbrook, Dr. Fahed remains optimistic on the opportunities that lie ahead and that the new skills acquired during this difficult time will certainly help students across all ages in the years to come.

I cannot say for certain what the long-term impact of this will be, all I know after these conversations is that educators are the unsung heroes from this pandemic and their commitment to their duties and their students is awe-inspiring.

[Nourah Al-Oseimi is a 28-year-old Kuwaiti who holds a Master's degree in Business Administration. Nourah has worked in different places such as the Central Bank of Kuwait and the United Nations. She serves as a free-lance contributing writer to The Times Kuwait – Newsmagazine. Her column – Essentially Kuwaiti – features an in-depth look on exceptional young Kuwaitis and their efforts towards the realization of a New Kuwait.]



learning rather than just performance on a single test at the end of a period of learning."

And how has this impacted academic performance? Did grades significantly improve?

"When we looked at the data, we found there wasn't a high level of grade inflation, there was some of it but not significantly."

And so, moving forward, Dr. Fullbrook believes that BBS will look to implement the best practices acquired during this period even when in-person instruction resumes.

As our conversation was coming to a close, Dr. Fullbrook acknowledged the difficulties in navigating these uncertain times and that resistance is expected when we're thrust into new circumstances. He understands that "there are shifting attitudes towards education in terms of people wanting more say and that has

better with online delivery, for example demonstrations, showing videos and using online tools. You have to work harder sometimes, and you have to capitalize on the aspects of learning that work better online. You also have to focus on mental health and wellbeing."

I was curious to know how adult learners adjusted to this new way of learning, did they take to it like fish to water or were there challenges associated with this transition for adults?

"Students are at a particular age where life is already confusing enough for them, there's so much pressure on them and then all of a sudden being thrown into this whole new realm. I think it's quite discombobulating. You've also removed one of the most essential parts of education which is the face-to-face interaction not just with faculty but with other students."

FIFA WORLD CUP QATAR 2022

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SALES AGENT IN KUWAIT FOR
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PROGRAMME**

MATCH Hospitality has today confirmed that leading sports travel agency, ITL World, has been appointed as its Sales Agent in Kuwait for the sale of the Official Hospitality Programme of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™.

MATCH Hospitality is the global rights holder and the only company appointed by FIFA to exclusively promote and sell, either directly or via a network of sales agents, official commercial hospitality packages for the FIFA World Cup 2022™, including guaranteed match tickets.

MATCH Hospitality has successfully operated the FIFA Commercial Hospitality Programmes for the previous three editions of the FIFA World Cup™ and FIFA Confederations Cup in South Africa, Brazil and Russia, and of the FIFA Women's World Cup™ in Germany, Canada and, most recently, France.

Now on Sale in Kuwait

JAIME BYROM, Executive Chairman of MATCH Hospitality, said: "Qatar promises to deliver an amazing tournament that will capitalise on its principal attributes; the close proximity of its eight venues which are all located in or within short driving distance of Doha, and a fascinating region with unique attractions, spectacular state-of-the-art stadiums, and traditional Arabic hospitality. MATCH Hospitality strongly believes in the unique potential of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Official Hospitality Programme and in our ability to deliver truly ground-breaking and unprecedented sales globally. Our Sales Agents will be key to our success, and I am delighted to announce our decision to appoint ITL World."

I have no doubt that ITL World will help deliver the best possible results for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and open the door to a Kuwait market ready for the extraordinary experiences promised by what will be an exceptional FIFA World Cup."

DR. SIDDEEK AHMED, Chairman & Managing Director, ITL World, added: "ITL World is honoured to act as Sales

Agent for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Official Hospitality Programme in Kuwait. Thanks to this agreement, ITL World will bring this territory a lot closer to the most coveted football competition in the world, offering fans a unique opportunity to purchase ticket-inclusive hospitality packages for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022."

AHMAD HAMAD AHMAD ALHAMAD, Partner, ITL World said: "Working in conjunction with MATCH Hospitality, ITL World will provide football fans and corporates across Kuwait for what is expected to be one of the most exciting sporting events in the world and one that is easily accessible and in close proximity. The first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East in 2022 can be a powerful catalyst for unlocking football not just from a spectator perspective but also foreseeing potential and propelling the game forward."

ITL World will also offer various services in conjunction with the hospitality packages, including flights, accommodation, transport and leisure programmes.

MICHAEL KELLY, Chief Revenue Officer

of MATCH Hospitality, said: "As part of our global tender process launched in February 2020, we have received proposals from most of the key territories from where we anticipate high demand for the Official Hospitality Programme for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. We have been most encouraged by the remarkable global response, which has further cemented our belief that despite the unprecedented events of the last year, there remains unwavering enthusiasm and interest in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Official Hospitality Programme. Kuwait represents an important territory within our overall strategic sales operations for the FIFA Hospitality Programme and, working in partnership with ITL World, we are extremely optimistic about its sales potential."

The FIFA Hospitality Programme for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ will offer guests match ticket-inclusive packages which include a wide range of on-site services at facilities at the stadiums, including private suites and lounges, temporary structures, gourmet catering, premium beverages, preferential parking, entertainment and gifts, and also various off-site services as well as additional ancillary services, including accommodation and air transportation.



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Thought for the week

“ Patriotism is when love of your own people comes first; nationalism, when hate for people other than your own comes first.

– Charles de Gaulle

All about paprika

When it comes to spices, paprika is pretty universal – it is one of those items always present in a spice cabinet. The versatility of this striking, crimson-red colored powder makes it something of a miracle spice. It can be used to season a dish, to decorate and beautify a plate, and of course to add color to a meal - or to even dye eggs and cloth. There really is so much to love about this sumptuous spice!

Paprika vs. chili powder

Surprisingly, the most common spice confused with paprika is ground red chili powder. At first sight, the two look pretty much the same - the only physical difference may be a slight difference in color tone. However, where paprika and chili powder differ the most is in the source pepper that is used to make each of them.

For starters, most (but not all) ground chili powders are typically sold by the name of the pepper that was used to prepare them. For example, smoked chipotles once ground into a powder are sold as chipotle powder. It is also important to note that some brands of chili powders will often blend a combination of red peppers to create their powders.

As for paprika powder, it is sourced by very specific peppers found in paprika-producing countries such as Spain and Hungary. So next time you are shopping for paprika, you will know that it cannot be called true paprika if it was made from dried and ground bell peppers or jalapeños, for example.

Sweet, spicy and smoky

The second most obvious difference between paprika powders and general chili powders is their taste. Most people when they think paprika will imagine a sweet tasting red powder, which is correct - but there is more. Paprika varieties can and do have a mild taste, but there are also smoked and spicy paprika as well.

The variety and flavor of paprika can vary greatly depending on the country they were produced in. The most well-known paprika producing countries are Spain and Hungary. In Spain, paprika is actually known as pimentón. Spanish paprikas are sold in several varieties, like dulce (sweet), picante (spicy), agridulce (sweet and spicy combined to create a medium

heat), and lastly, there is the famous smoked pimentón.

As for Hungarian paprika, most people are familiar with a sweet or mild tasting spice. The reason for this is that in most countries outside of Hungary, any of the other types of Hungarian paprika are extremely difficult to come by. Hungarian paprika has eight different grades: special



or különleges which is very bright red and has no heat at all; félédes which is a half sweet and half spicy paprika; delicate and mild called csípősmentes csemege; csemege paprika which is similar to the latter but more pungent; csípős csemege which is actually delicate yet hotter than the latter; rózsza or rose paprika, which is can sometimes have more of an orange-red hue and has a mild taste. Then there are is édesnemes, which has a slight heat and is the most commonly exported paprika. Finally, the most pungent or hottest of the Hungarian paprikas is the erős variety. This paprika has more of a brownish tone to the natural redness.

Hot, or Not?

While both Spanish and Hungarian



paprikas have a 'spicy' or pungent variety, it should be noted that neither type is nearly as hot as ground cayenne. Their heat is generally as hot as or milder than the standard red chili powder. This, of course, is no knock on either the Spanish or Hungarian paprika as they both offer fantastic

flavor in their own right.

So why is some paprika hot and some not? It has to do with how the red powders are produced. The sweet or mild paprika does not contain any capsaicin, which is what give chilies their heat; the reason for this is that when the sweet variety is produced all of the seeds and membranes are removed from the pepper. For the spicy paprikas, some of the seeds, the placenta and the capsaicin glands (or veins) are left on the pepper when they are dried and ground into the powder, which then allows them to have their zestiness.

Amazing ways to use Paprika

In many countries, paprika (no matter the variety) is most often used as a decorative touch to a served plate. It is truly amazing how that dash of red can make a dish, like hummus, look so much fancier and prettier. But do not limit your food to just a decorative touch of paprika - try incorporating it into as many dishes as you can.

In Hungary, paprika is used extensively in their cuisine, with perhaps the most commonly recognized dishes of goulash (beef stew) and chicken paprikash. Paprika is also used to make some Hungarian, and many Eastern European sausages. In Spain, it is used in rice dishes and just about everything.

You can also use paprika anytime you want to give your food a red tint. For example when you make tandoori chicken, paprika makes a good substitute for that Indian ingredient that traditionally gives the chicken its reddish hue. Paprika is great in pasta, over deviled eggs, in soups and stews, as a coloring and smoky flavor for all sorts of meat dishes. Perhaps the most amazing thing about paprika is how it can be combined with fresh and ground spicy peppers. This is especially useful when cooking for people that cannot tolerate much spicy heat. Sometimes occasions arise when you want your dish to still have that reddish color but not the heat. All you have to do is replace a percentage of the spicy pepper with a sweet or smoky paprika.

A great way to use smoky paprika is to add it to marinades and BBQ sauces. You will get the red tone and the sweet smokiness. Also, try adding this variety of paprika to French fry seasoning or when making potato wedges.

RECIPE



Red Devil Curacao Mocktail

Inspired by the Blue Curacao bitter orange flavored drink, I have adapted it here to create an innovative Red Curacao mocktail. (For those of you interested the word Curacao is pronounced cure-ah-sow; the 'sow' part is pronounced like the words 'now'). This is a deeply colorful sweet and refreshing drink, perfect for serving as a cooling drink during the hot summer.

Preparation and making time: 15 to 20 minutes.
Serving: 4 glasses

Ingredients:

- *For Red Curacao Syrup:
 - 1/4 cup sugar
 - 1/2 cup beetroot juice
 - 1/2 inch cinnamon stick
 - 1 tbsp lemon juice
- *For Mocktail:
 - Half a ginger sliced julian (optional)
 - 4 Lemon wedges
 - Few mint leaves
 - Ice cube as required
 - Red curacao syrup
 - Sparkling water (soda)

Preparation:

- *Making Red Curacao Syrup:
 - Add the sugar, beetroot juice to a saucepan and boil till the sugar melts
 - Add the lemon juice, cinnamon stick, and boil for a further 6 to 8 minutes. Turn off Remove from flame, strain the syrup and set aside to cool
- *Making Mocktail:
 - Remove seeds from lemon wedges
 - Place a slice of lemon and 2 ginger julienne slices and a mint leaf to four glass
 - Add two tbsp of red curacao syrup to each glass and crush the lemon slice with a muddler
 - Add ice cubes .
 - Add an additional tbsp of red curacao syrup to each glass
 - Top the drink with sparkling water
 - Garnish with a lemon wedge and mint leaf before serving.



Chef Chhaya Thakker



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

Finance Minister outlines third development plan

Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Khalifa Hamadeh revealed that to achieve the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035, Kuwait is proud to launch the third development plan 2020-2025 to strengthen the private sector as an engine of economic growth, take into account the lessons learned from the implementation of previous plans.

He stated that to strengthen the economy and create job opportunities for all, the development plan will enable the creation of opportunities to expand the role of the private sector in providing services.

The third development plan for Kuwait 2020-2025 issued by the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development stipulates that in order to support the development of high skills in the labor market, Kuwait needs to attract a greater number of high-skilled foreign workers.



The plan affirms its endeavor to restructure the government apparatus to simplify the structures, powers, and governance and to implement a tax system on selective and value-added goods. Furthermore, it is expected that the privatization program would achieve sustainable economic development in partnership with the citizens and the public sector. Improving the business environment to encourage foreign direct investment and the development of small and medium enterprises.

The plan noted that oil represented 90 percent of state revenue, 90 percent of exports, and 50 percent of GDP, and that

Kuwait still relies on oil as a major source of financing for the state's general budget. With the low cost of extracting oil, compared to other countries, and the high oil prices, Kuwait has enjoyed an excellent financial position since the 1950s.

However, over the years, the cost of oil production has been rising, and it is expected to continue to rise, even as oil prices drop. The recent fall in oil prices was a reminder of the volatile nature of oil markets. The oil price fell from \$100 a barrel to less than \$40 in less than two years.

Fall in oil prices resulted in Kuwait losing 60 percent of its revenues, and the state's general budget in the 2014/2015 fiscal year

recorded a fiscal deficit for the first time in 15 years. Since then the budget has recorded recurring deficits, even as expenditures keep rising.

Income of citizens is still highly dependent on the state's oil revenues, especially since nearly 80 percent of nationals work in the public sector, and the budgets, wages, and subsidies account for about 70 percent of the state's general budget.

The third development plan underlined the serious financial situation Kuwait faces and the urgent need for reforms. Some of the highlights include:

- The cost of financial and economic reform will increase the longer we delay in addressing this dilemma. In fact, addressing it may become very difficult with passing years and result in severe and painful economic consequences.
- In light of the state of oil prices, and due to the total dependence of public finances on a single source of income, Kuwait today faces an exceptional and serious



challenge that threatens its ability to continue providing a decent life for citizens and their basic needs, as well as the country's inability to fulfill local and international obligations.

• The state's general budget deficit during the next five years, in the absence of economic and financial reform, is expected to reach KD45 to KD 60 billion.

• Because of current spending rates and the drop in oil prices, Kuwait could lose the assets of its Future Generations Fund and the General Reserve Fund by 2035.

Philippines continue repatriation of OFWs

BY RICKY LAXA
STAFF WRITER

Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) sponsored a flight to help 180 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) return home to the Philippines on 14 June. The flight included 130 passengers under POLO/OWWA and 50 by the sponsors, among the passengers were also three children.

In a brief interview with Atty. Llewelyn Perez, OWWA Welfare Officer, The Times Kuwait learned that the repatriation program of POLO/OWWA is a continuous service rendered to OFWs in Kuwait. The flight was provided for those who were not included in the previous flight that left on 3 June. "Repatriation flights are available for OFWs who are in the embassy shelter, jails and deportation area, as well as general distressed workers, stated Atty. Perez. The Philippine



Embassy, POLO and OWWA provide repatriation flights every quarter of the year.

The flight Monday evening was made possible through the intervention of Philippine Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III which allowed extra passengers on board as against the allowed number of 35 seats. This privilege provided an opportunity for affordable tickets for those bound home to the Philippines.

Atty. Perez urged OFWs not to hesitate to approach POLO

OWWA should they face difficulties with work so they can be guided accordingly. He also cautioned them to refrain from running away from their employers home, and to report individuals who lure household workers to run away and work outside.

OFWs expressed their gratitude to Nasser Mustafa, Philippine Labor Attaché to Kuwait and to the Philippines Ambassador H.E. Mohammad Noordin Pendsina Lomondot. The ambassador praised the team on the success

of successive repatriation flights organized in the recent months. Present during the repatriation flight were Assistant Labor Attaché Cathy Duladul, Welfare Officers Jingles Ardiente and Atty. Llewelyn Perez, POLO OWWA officers. Travel and booking flights were arranged by Dadabhai Kuwait General Manager Muzaffar Parkar and Branch Manager Paulita Ludang who have in the past spearheaded several repatriation flights from Kuwait to the Philippines.

Philippine Embassy to resume consular services

Embassy of the Philippines announced in a circular on its official social media accounts that it would resume consular services on Sunday, 20 June.

The services of the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Pag-IBIG Fund, and Social Security System (SSS) will also reopen on 20 June.

The embassy, which has been operating out of a temporary location in Al Sahel Sports Club, has been closed from 6 June until 17 June due to precautionary measures.

The Embassy advised all applicants with a confirmed online passport appointment to follow the Embassy's official website and social media accounts for new advisories. New appointment dates would be published on the Embassy's Facebook page, so they do not need a new online appointment.



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Indian Embassy celebrates IDY 2021

Embassy of India celebrated the '7th International Day of Yoga (IDY)-2021 on the theme 'Yoga For Wellness' at the embassy premises on 18 June in a hybrid format.

The event is one of the many functions that the embassy has been organizing under the banner of Indian Cultural Network (ICN), during the India@75 and 60th anniversary celebrations of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait. The event also marks the Government of India's initiative to spread awareness about yoga and its benefits, all around the world.

Ambassador of India H.E. Sibi George in his address on the occasion welcomed and thanked the Indian Minister of State (IC) Ministry of AYUSH, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, and Minister of State for Minority Affairs, Kiren Rijiju, for his special video message on International Yoga Day. He expressed his gratitude to the government of Kuwait and other Indian associations and



groups in Kuwait for providing India with medical assistance when it was required the most. The Ambassador also highlighted the improving COVID-19 situation in India. He underlined the importance of yoga in the current scenario and asked all to adopt yoga in their lives.

For his part Minister Rijiju, in his video message, presented his greetings on the



celebration of the 7th International Day of Yoga (IDY)-2021.

He mentioned the importance of yoga and also highlighted the transformation yoga can bring in one's life, especially during these challenging pandemic times. He thanked the leadership of the State of Kuwait for hosting a large Indian community in Kuwait and the people of

Kuwait for the care and support extended to the Indian community during the COVID-19 pandemic. He also thanked and acknowledged the support of Government of State of Kuwait and Indian diaspora in Kuwait for their supply of oxygen to India, during critical times.

In addition to the celebration marking IDY, the embassy also felicitated the winner of 'Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz (BKJQ)' from Kuwait by conferring Silver Medal and Certificate. A special edition of 'AYUSH Bulletin' on Yoga was also released on the occasion.

Video messages from yoga gurus such as Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, Dr. H.R. Nagendra, Shri Kamlesh Patel and Sister Jayanti on the importance of yoga, were also streamed.

The event also witnessed a live demo of yogasanas, while following COVID-19 protocols. The event received a huge response from Kuwait on the embassy's social media platforms.

Required

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Applications are invited for the recruitment of the post of Driver in a reputed company. Applicants should be hard working & have good driving experience in the Kuwait market.

- Knowledge of English, Hindi & Arabic language will be an added advantage.
- Should have a valid driving license and transferable residence.
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- Smart and hard working and should be fluent in Arabic, English & Hindi.

**Interested Applicants Contact
99330567 for an interview**

Send CV by email: erictanny62@gmail.com

Vaccinated expats allowed entry to Kuwait



During its weekly meeting on Thursday, the Cabinet accepted a recommendation from the Supreme Committee for Corona Emergencies to allow vaccinated expats to return to Kuwait.

Announcing this, government spokesperson, Tariq Al-Mazram, said that from 1 August expatriates with valid residence permits and vaccinated with vaccines approved by the health ministry — Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines — would be allowed to enter Kuwait.

Al-Mazram added that expatriates coming to the country would also be required to provide a negative COVID test at least 72 hours before arrival, before being subject to a seven-day home quarantine that would finish when they test negative for COVID-19, the spokesman clarified.

The Cabinet in its meeting last week also decided that access to most public venues, including large shopping malls, gyms and salons, as well as state entities that provide services to

citizens and residents will be restricted to only those people who have received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccines.

The government spokesperson clarified that the ban on non-vaccinated people entering public areas will come into effect from 27 June. He noted that this was a preventive measure taken to contain the recent increase in COVID-19 infections, and the discovery of the highly contagious Delta variant of the virus in Kuwait.

Entry to public venues will be restricted to only those who have valid proof of immunization, which is available for download through the mobile app, 'Immune', said the spokesperson.

Al-Mezrem also added that as of 1 August, only vaccinated Kuwaitis will be allowed to travel overseas. However, children and others who are in the age groups that are so far ineligible for vaccination, as well as people unable to take the inoculation due to health reasons, including non-vaccinated pregnant women with valid maternity certificates, would be exempt from this rule.

V4 integration an example of successful cooperation



*V4 was a great example of Multilateralism and also had great similarities with GCC states
can be emulated for the common betterment of their people through cooperation and alliances*

STAFF REPORT

Ambassador of Poland H.E. Pawel Lechowicz held a gathering of V4 (Visegrad Group) ambassadors at the Polish embassy last week to mark the 30th anniversary of the foundation of the grouping. On 15 February, 1991, the presidents of Czechoslovakia and Poland and the prime minister of Hungary signed the Visegrad Declaration, which marked the beginning of the V4 cooperation.

The Visegrad Group Jubilee took place during the Polish Presidency, which began on 1 July 2020. A short and impressive video presentation of each of the four countries was made to the select gathering at the Polish chancery and guests were able to see the great progress made by the V4 nations during the past 30 years.

The Visegrad Group was established as an alliance of originally three, later four countries for the purpose of furthering their European integration as well as advancing their military, economic and energy cooperation with one another.

The Visegrad Group reflects the efforts of the four Central European countries — the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia — to work together in a number of fields of common interest within the all-European integration.

Addressing the gathering Ambassador Pawel said that the annual presidency coincided with an unprecedented crisis in the world caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has put the functioning of societies to a severe test.

The motto of V4 cooperation during the Polish Presidency was 'Back on track', and our goal of building the image of the Central European region and V4 as a flexible and constructive partner remains an ongoing task. Dialogue is essential in these difficult times. Gestures of solidarity and goodwill also count. The next country to hold the presidency in the V4 Group is Hungary.

Ambassador Pawel further elaborated that the V4 countries exchange information and develop priority programs in order to better cooperate in an increasing number of areas. An important basic principle is that, within the EU, the V4 carry more



Ambassador of Poland
H.E. Pawel Lechowicz

weight as an alliance than they would as individual countries.

Nowadays Visegrad cooperation focuses on internal affairs in the region and takes place at the EU as well as other international organisations. It has resulted in establishing, among others, the Visegrad Battlegroup, the Visegrad Patent Institute and the Visegrad Prize awarded by V4 ministers of culture.

In his address to the gathering H.E. Ambassador Martin Dvorak of Czechia said that his country will always be proud of the idea of President Václav Havel of the then Czechoslovakia who put together three post-communist countries from the Central Europe and worked jointly on reaching the membership of the European Union as well as NATO. During this period, despite the split of Czechoslovakia, the main goal was reached and today the four countries, so called the V4 Group, are proud members of those prestigious alliances, feeling themselves responsible for their own destiny. We really appreciate that collaboration of the V4 has continued until the present time.

Ambassador of Hungary H.E. Istavan Gyula Soos told the gathering that the Visegrad Group, due to its unique historical background and increasing economic importance, will be one of the new emerging powerhouses of this new era. Our close cooperation during the pandemic will enable us to do a swift economic restart and to increase our competitiveness in the changing world, making, hopefully, the V4 alliance one of the winners of the upcoming years.

For his part, Ambassador of



Ambassador of Czechia
H.E. Ambassador Martin Dvorak

Slovakia H.E. Igor Hajdusek stated that "together we are stronger", the history of the 30 years of existence is proof of the close cooperation, benefits, and the strength of V4.

The first high-level summit of V4 was held in the town of Visegrád on 15 February, 1991. The place was selected to symbolically connect the summit to the meetings of three kings in Visegrád in 1335 and 1336, which had been the results of lengthy and complex diplomatic efforts at that time and can be regarded as one of the earliest examples of regional cooperation in Central Europe. Six hundred years later the presidents of the Central European states formed the Visegrád Group.

Moreover, the Visegrad Group is a platform for exchanging experiences between V4 societies. That is why, the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) was established to facilitate links between them. For more than 20 years now the IVF supports the realisation of common projects, grants, artistic and literary programs.



Ambassador of Hungary
H.E. Istavan Gyula Soos

As part of the celebrations of the 30th anniversary of the Visegrad Group, on 17 February 2021 a summit of the V4 prime ministers was held in Krakow with the participation of the President of the European Council Charles Michel.

The summit was an attempt to sum up thirty years of multifaceted cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries. Three decades ago at the Visegrad Castle a new chapter in the history of our four countries began. We have been together for around 360 months and we can say that history has come full circle. However, after these 360 months we are in a completely different place from where we started. The Visegrad Group is a story about unification with Europe, about strengthening and new great ambitions.

V4 and GCC comparison: In spite of the differences of the countries' economic potential and geographical differences, there are certain similarities in the cooperation between V4 countries and GCC states:



Ambassador of Slovakia
H.E. Igor Hajdusek

Shared cultural and historic backgrounds: Influence of Western Christianity (Roman Catholicism), experience of II World War and post war communist regimes in V4 Group. Arab-Islamic roots of GCC states, as well as balancing influence between colonial powers (Ottoman Empire, UK).

Social and economic level of development: GCC economies are based on oil extraction and exports. V4 countries transitioned from socialistic methods of centrally controlled economies to the ideas of free market and freedom of entrepreneurship.

Goals: GCC seek new, other than oil-based development route for their economies. V4 Group states, as a major manufacturer of goods in Europe (heavy industry, automotive, agriculture) seek advancement to the high income – high productivity categories.

The activities of the group are coordinated by V4 countries' foreign ministries but extend to all levels of the government and state administration. With the establishment of the International Visegrad Fund in 2000, support has also been given to non-governmental organizations and civil initiatives for the 'bottom-up' building of the regional alliance. Activities of the Visegrad Group are aimed at strengthening stability and prosperity in the Central European region. V4 member states perceive their cooperation as a value and a proof of their ability to integrate into such structures as the European Union.

An exhibition was also on display showcasing the history of the V4 nations.

Turkey offers safe, smooth tourism

Ambassador of Turkey H.E. Ayşe Hilal Sayan Koytak

STAFF REPORT

In a recent interview with The Times Kuwait on the prevailing travel and tourism aspects of Turkey, the Ambassador of Turkey H.E. Ayşe Hilal Sayan Koytak said that Turkey offered a safe and smooth travel and tourism experience for travelers from Kuwait.

Pointing out that Kuwait sends the most number of tourists to Turkey in proportion to its population, Ambassador Koytak said that tourism between Turkey and Kuwait is quite remarkable. She noted that in 2019, more than 374,000 Kuwaitis visited Turkey, and that last year, despite COVID-19 related travel restrictions, the number of tourists from Kuwait surpassed 120,000. "This year, the tourism season started following the holy month of Ramadan, and we are more than ready to host our Kuwaiti brothers and sisters in our safe tourism destinations this year, the ambassador added.

Tourism sector is not only economically profitable, but also contributes to better understanding between our peoples. In this regard, I wish to also see more Turkish tourists visiting Kuwait, and I hope Kuwait will ease travel restrictions especially for our business people and for those traveling for essential purposes to Kuwait, said Turkey's ambassador.

Elaborating on the level of pandemic infections in the country and the precautions being taken, the ambassador stressed that Turkey is among the most disciplined and successful countries in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted that the country took early measures to protect visitors and citizens. These measures proved effective and as a result, on 31 May of this year, the Turkish Government announced a gradual normalization period.

Ambassador Koytak added that Turkey has also announced a four-tier system on local COVID-19 related restrictions. "Provinces are now divided into four different risk groups based on infection and vaccination rate in those areas: low risk areas are designated blue; medium risk is yellow; high risk areas are labeled orange; and extreme risk places are placed in the red category. Our Government provides information on daily cases, as well as weekly summaries, including regional details." Travelers can access these details online at <https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/>

Turkey is one of the world's top 10 travel destinations, welcoming more than 45 million foreign nationals every year. In a bid to promote tourism during these challenging times, Turkey last year introduced a 'Safe Tourism Certification Program'. The program, which is the first of its kind in the world, helped draw more than 15 million tourists in 2020, despite the ongoing pandemic.

Detailing the 'Safe Tourism Program' Ambassador Koytak said: "This unique program defines and advises an extensive series of measures to be taken with regards to transportation and accommodation of all Turkish citizens and international visitors who will spend their holidays in Turkey. Besides the well-being and health of tourists and visitors, the program also ensures the health and safety of employees working at touristic facilities. In addition, the government has ensured that all employees working in the tourism sector are given priority in the vaccination program.

"The 'Safe Tourism' certificate has



been made compulsory for all hotels with a capacity of 30 and more rooms. And, a Safe Tourism Certification logo is placed in clearly visible areas inside the verified facility. There are QR codes on all logos and through these QR codes, all guests and customers have access to the facility's inspection data," said the ambassador, adding that the entire process is transparent and a list of certified facilities can be reached online at: <https://tga.gov.tr/search-hotel-category-en/>

Clarifying the precautionary measures taken by the government to fight the pandemic, the ambassador said that a curfew was in place from 10am to 5pm from Monday through Saturday, and a full lockdown is in effect during Sundays beginning at 10pm on Saturday and ending

measures in place, including on hygiene and safety. In fact, restaurants and cafes are also included in the 'Safe Tourism Program' and a list of restaurants participating in the program can be reached online at: <https://tga.gov.tr/search-cafe-category-en/>

Visitors are expected to follow the instructions of the authorities. Using masks in open areas and maintaining social distance are among these rules. Accredited PCR test centers are available at all international airports in Turkey, including at Antalya, Muğla, Bodrum, İzmir and İstanbul. In addition, around 480 accredited test centers offer passengers the opportunity to take a COVID-19 test before they leave Turkey. Moreover, within the scope of the 'Safe Tourism' certificate, accommodation facilities with 30 rooms or more provide COVID-19 test service upon



"This unique program defines and advises an extensive series of measures to be taken with regards to transportation and accommodation of all Turkish citizens and international visitors who will spend their holidays in Turkey. Besides the well-being and health of tourists and visitors, the program also ensures the health and safety of employees working at touristic facilities."

at 5am on Mondays. However, she added that foreign tourists are exempt from the COVID-19 restrictions applied in Turkey.

Moreover, museums and cultural sites are currently open only to foreign tourists, and public beaches accept visitors only in line with rules and regulations. Restaurants, historical and archeological sites, shopping venues have also re-opened but with strict

request. A list of the various places offering this service can be availed online at: <https://covid19bilgi.saglik.gov.tr/tr/>.

In addition, within the scope of the 'Safe Tourism' certificate, accommodation facilities with 30 rooms or more provide COVID-19 test service upon request.

Regarding the precautionary measures that Kuwaitis will have to follow to enter

Turkey, Ambassador Koytak clarified that passengers from Kuwait will not be required to submit a negative PCR test result if they submit a document issued by the Kuwaiti authorities stating that the passenger has been vaccinated at least 14 days before the date of entering to Turkey and/or have had the disease and has recovered within the last six months. Quarantine measures will not be applied for these passengers.

If passengers departing from Kuwait cannot submit a vaccine certificate or the documents proving that they have had the disease according to the stated rules, submission of a PCR negative test result made maximum 72 hours before the entrance to Turkey, or a negative rapid antigen test result made maximum 48 hours before the entrance to Turkey will be deemed sufficient. However, people entering Turkey may be subjected to a PCR test on the basis of sampling at their destination.

On the topic of visas, the ambassador noted that though visas are not required for Kuwaiti tourists, all passengers departing to Turkey must complete their digital entry registration online at the following site: <http://register.health.gov.tr/b> within 72 hours before entering Turkey.

After the registration is completed successfully, the passenger will have a personal HES (Hayat Eve Sığar — Life Fits Into Home) code. The HES code must be presented in digital or printed form at check-in and passengers must have it with them during their holiday in Turkey. The 10 or 12 digit HES code must also be used to obtain a ticket to travel within Turkey by public transport.

The code is used to prevent and slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. It provides information on passengers who have been exposed to the virus or who have been in contact with COVID-19 patients. It provides information about the risk level of the area and helps to communicate quickly in case of any contact with a risk situation. It is obligatory to submit the HES code at the entrances to restaurants and cafes, hotels, shopping centers, public transportation vehicles, as well as at museums and cultural centers.

In case a traveler is infected with COVID-19 virus while in Turkey, there is a provision within the 'Safe Tourism Program' that obliges all hospitality facilities with a room capacity of 30 or more, to allocate isolation areas for visitors infected with the virus. If a visitor is diagnosed with COVID-19, the visitor and his/her relatives are provided with rooms set aside for isolation, for the duration and subject to conditions specified in the accommodation contract. If the patient shows severe symptoms, he/she is referred to the hospital.

Regarding health insurance to cover the treatment costs of guests who get infected with the COVID-19 virus during their travel in Turkey, the ambassador said that not all international health insurances may cover possible treatments in Turkey in case of infection with SarsCoV-2 virus. Therefore, I would advise that it should be checked individually before the start of the trip.

Travelers to Turkey can also take out an additional private health insurance before entering the country. There is a list of insurance companies authorized by the Turkish Ministry of Health to issue 'COVID-19 insurance policies' for foreign tourists coming to Turkey. The online site for this is available at: <https://www.covidinsurance4turkey.com/>

Brazil is back at the United Nations Security Council



By Francisco Mauro Brasil de Holanda
Ambassador of Brazil

With an overwhelming majority of 181 votes, including the invaluable support of Kuwait and most Arab countries, Brazil was elected on 10 June for its 11th mandate as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), biennium 2022-23.

Brazil's coming mandate will have the symbolic significance as it coincides with the 200 years of our independence from Portugal, in 1822. Since then, Brazil's trajectory has been marked by stability and prosperity at home and constructive and peaceful

relations with the outside world. The peoples from different races, religions and cultures who settled in Brazil, including an Arab community estimated today at over 11 million people, of whom 35,000 are Muslims, built a Brazilian national identity without losing the attachment to their roots, in an ambience of tolerance and empathy towards each other.

Although occupying more than 50 percent of South American territory, Brazil settled all the border disputes with its 10 neighboring countries through peaceful means, mostly by arbitration. Counting on an energy matrix with more than 40 percent of renewable sources and over 60 percent of hydro resources on power generation, we feel fully prepared to join the international efforts for a cleaner world for the next generations.

Over the past 70 years, Brazil has participated in 41 peacekeeping operations, with more than 55,000 military and police officers. Brazil headed the United Nations Mission for the Stabilization in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for thirteen years and commanded the Maritime Task Force of the Interim Force of Nations Nations of Lebanon (UNIFIL) for almost ten years, from 2011 to 2021.

Brazil currently participates at the UN Mission for Stabilization in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), where it

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commands its military component and provides training in jungle warfare for troops from third countries joining MONUSCO. It also now commands CTF-151, in the framework of the Combined Maritime Forces, a multilateral military partnership made up of 34 member nations. Brazil reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the UNSC reform. It is the Brazilian view that the long overdue reform of the UNSC is essential for the Council to maintain its centrality. Brazil will continue to defend strict respect for international humanitarian and human rights principles and laws, paying utmost attention to individual freedoms and fundamental guarantees.

As a member of the Group of Friends for the Protection of Civilians, Brazil endeavours to reduce the impacts of armed conflicts on civilian population. In fulfilling this mission, Brazil will remain committed to the protection of vulnerable populations, especially women, children, the elderly and handicapped. It will work to guarantee education for children and young people, mainly refugees and internally displaced persons; favor measures to protect hospitals; and ensure access to medical services. It is the Brazilian view that

such measures are even more important in the light of the COVID-19 effects.

As a member of the UNSC in 2022-2023, Brazil will promote the valorization of women's agenda and thus combat abuse and sexual exploitation. As a supporter of the creation of the Peace Building Committee (PBC) in 2005, and president of the agency in 2014, Brazil promoted the participation of developing countries and African regional and sub-regional organizations in the Commission's activities and sought engagement between the PBC and the UNSC.

Since 2007, Brazil has held the presidency of PBC Guinea-Bissau configuration. First among the developing countries to exercise this function, Brazil has worked in close coordination with relevant national, regional and international organizations.

Brazil recognizes the importance of collaboration and joint planning between the UN and relevant regional organizations, such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the African Union (AU), the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) and the Gulf Cooperation Council, among others.

As an active and dedicated founding member of the United Nations, Brazil was assigned with the distinction of opening the high level debates of the annual General Assemblies.

WHO opens permanent office in Kuwait

The official opening ceremony of a permanent office for the World Health Organization (WHO) was held on Tuesday, 15 June in the presence of the Minister of Health Sheikh Dr. Basel Al-Sabah and the representative of WHO in Kuwait Dr. Assad Hafeez, and a number of diplomats.

The opening of a permanent office highlights the enhanced relations between Kuwait and the WHO, said the health minister. For his part, Dr. Hafeez, who will head the WHO office in Kuwait, conveyed regards of WHO's Regional Director Ahmed Al-Mandhari and his appreciation towards the positive relations between both sides.

In a statement issued on the opening of a permanent office in Kuwait, the World Health Organization hailed the move as a significant development and added that the opening of a new headquarters in Kuwait would serve as a launchpad for better cooperation with Kuwait. Kuwait has been among WHO's "trusted partners" in the fight against the COVID pandemic, said Director-General of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in his message on the occasion.

Kuwait's relationship with the global health body is "dotted with highlights and accomplishments," said Dr. Basel Al-Sabah. He also praised Kuwait's foreign minister for his efforts in this regard by saying, "No words can adequately describe Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah's immense contributions towards this initiative, especially at a time when the pandemic has strained healthcare systems the world over." The office represents a "hallmark" of



Minister of Health Sheikh Dr. Basel Al-Sabah meets representative of WHO in Kuwait Dr. Assad Hafeez

Kuwait's storied relationship with WHO, which has "grown stronger" in the face of adversity, said Tarek El Sheikh, the UN's Secretary General Representative and Resident Coordinator to the country. He also acknowledged Kuwait's "life-saving support" given to millions around the globe, ranging from victims of conflicts to natural disasters, all of whom were the ultimate beneficiaries of Kuwait's crucial aid that helped them withstand such distress.

For his part, Dr. Ahmed Al-Mandhari, said better ties with Kuwait has been among his "core objectives," describing the country as one of the health body's most "historic partners." "The office will be instrumental in pushing our common agendas of providing indispensable healthcare to everybody in the Middle East region," he added.

that the effect of the Delta strain in Kuwait would be limited and could be controlled. This was based on several factors, including that the Pfizer-BioNTech and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines used in the country provide nearly 88 percent and 60 percent protection respectively against the Delta variant, especially for those who have received both doses.

The sources pointed out that despite the increase in the number of infections in the United Kingdom due to the Delta variant, the death rate remained unchanged as a result of accelerated vaccination. In the UK, and in many other countries where the mutant strain has appeared, there was no major increase in fatalities, despite the variant's ability to spread quickly and cause more serious symptoms.

Statistical data from the UK also show that those who did not receive any vaccinations against the COVID-19 virus were more likely to be infected and affected by the Delta variant. The new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus is characterized by a combination of two different mutations at the surface protein level, E484Q and L452R, which helps it avoid the immune system.

ASCC reopens with a line-up of live and virtual events

The iconic Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre (ASCC), Kuwait's world-class museum, announced a slew of events on its reopening, including special virtual edition of programs, workshops, talks and seminars, as well as an annual summer camp to be held at the museum premises.

The events are designed to enthrall all age groups, the sessions will deep dive into a world of historical events and future explorations, new-age art and inventions, foundational literacy across different subject matters and the latest innovations that are shaping the nature of the world today.

The month of June will host several activities including lectures by renowned professors who will take their viewers on a journey through time and some of the greatest scientific discoveries in the 'The Management of Architectural Heritage in the Mamluk Sultanate':

the rise of proto-urban studies in the Middle East with examples from Cairo and Syria to different types of ecosystems in our planet, followed by the use, significance and symbolism behind the appearance of the Elephant in Arabic culture and also celebrate the 25th launch anniversary of NASA's NEAR-Shoemaker spacecraft and the 2021 launch of three new asteroid missions, among others.

The sessions can be accessed via the Zoom application or on ASCC's Youtube channel and will continue until 30 June. Participants have the choice to sign up for their preferred sessions on the ASCC website.

Delivered by the Centre's Academy, children between the age group of 8 - 12 years old, can practice their creativity and engage in different and new learning experiences at the summer camp to be held at the Centre.

Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre is one the many projects developed by the Amiri Diwan to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and promote critical, creative, and interpretive thinking within Kuwaiti society through world-class exhibitions and educational public programmes.

To learn more about the program and register, please visit www.ascckw.com or for more inquiries, please email at: info@ascckw.com



Delta strain of virus detected in Kuwait

The highly infectious Delta strain of the virus, which was first identified in India in May, has been reported in Kuwait. Though the Ministry of Health (MoH) first reported the detection of the Delta strain, and admitted that more than one case of the mutant strain has been detected, it did not specify the exact number of people infected or their nationalities. The ministry also could not explain the source of the virus or how it arrived in Kuwait despite all precautionary measures in place.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Supreme Advisory Committee for the CoronaVirus Pandemic, Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah, stressed that vaccination and adherence to health preventive requirements are the best ways to deal with these mutations. Medical experts associated with MoH confirmed

Indian Embassy marks World Blood Donor Day

Embassy of India marked World Blood Donor Day on 14 June at the Embassy premises. The event, held under the banner of the Indian Cultural Network (ICN), came under activities planned as part of the confluence of two important milestones: India@75, and 60th Anniversary celebrations of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador of India H.E. Sibi George commended the silent yet stellar contribution of blood donors in saving lives on a micro-level and in strengthening the healthcare system on a broader macro level. Appreciating the efforts of various Indian community associations in organizing blood donation camps in Kuwait, he underlined the importance of such social activities and encouraged them to continue the good work. Ambassador also felicitated the blood donor heroes and gave away certificates to those Indian nationals who



had donated blood on more than ten occasions in Kuwait.

Ambassador also thanked the leadership of the State of Kuwait for hosting the large Indian community in Kuwait and for the care and support extended to the Indian community during the COVID-19 pandemic. He also acknowledged the support of Indian doctors, nurses, scientists, and medical professionals for their unwavering spirit in the continued

fight against the pandemic all across the world, including here in Kuwait.

During the event, President of the Indian Doctors Forum in Kuwait, Dr. Amir Ahmed, highlighted the significance of blood donation. In a video message delivered on the occasion, Director of Blood Transfusion and Administration Services, Dr. Hanan Al-Awadi, congratulated the blood donors from the Indian community and highlighted the crucial role played by

the well-organized, committed, voluntary Indian blood donor groups. Dr. Hanan also emphasized that the role played by these groups ensured a safe and sufficient blood supply to those in need during these extraordinary times.

The event, which was live-streamed on the embassy's social media handles, witnessed enthusiastic participation and response from people from all walks of life in Kuwait.



Vaccine disparity reflects social inequities

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

appearing in one country places everyone at risk in other countries. However, being cognizant of the need for cohesive action, and agreeing in principle to the need for a global vaccination initiative, is not the same as implementing an equitable vaccine distribution to ensure an equitable worldwide vaccination drive. Leaders of countries that gained early access to the vaccines, and who had the capability to make a difference in the trajectory of the global pandemic by heeding the overwhelming scientific advice, failed the global community. Without exception, the leadership in these countries acquiesced to political and popular pressure at home and acceded to what could at best be described as vaccine nationalism.

These leaders ensured vaccinations were limited to their own people, and, at least in the early stages when vaccines were scarce, the shots were mainly confined to privileged sections of the community. Objective surveys by civil society organizations and health institutions have shown that even within nations where vaccines were available, disparity in its availability and administration were glaringly evident.

In Kuwait, data from the Ministry of Health (MoH) show that the country was no exception to this vaccine disparity. Kuwait, with its resources to negotiate and pre-order the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines from the company early on in the outbreak, began a vaccination campaign in late December 2020. Simultaneously, the MoH also launched an online registration process to identify prioritized segments of the public. Records show that by the third week of February, a total of 215,000 citizens and 238,000 non-citizens had registered online for the vaccination.

Figures from December 2020 to the last week of February 2021 also reveal that during this period vaccines were administered to 119,000 registered

citizens, and to only 18,000 registered non-Kuwaitis. In other words, 55 percent of registered Kuwaitis were administered the vaccine, while only less than 8 percent of registered non-Kuwaitis received the vaccine dose.

Moreover, while initial priority in vaccinations were announced for frontline workers, those above the age of 65, and people with comorbidity risks of infection, in reality, there were several instances where unregistered and lower priority citizens, including teenage children, were being vaccinated. Even among frontline workers, there were cases where doctors and surgeons in specialties unrelated to frontline work were being vaccinated, while expatriate nurses and other health workers in daily contact with infected people remained unvaccinated.

In addition, there was no concerted effort to spread awareness on the need to get vaccinated among expatriates, especially among low income workers who for the most part could not understand the Arabic or English campaigns put out by the authorities. Many people were also unable to register themselves on the online platform for vaccination. There were also no attempts to address misinformation being spread on social media about the efficacy and safety of vaccines, and, before mobile vaccination vans were introduced, there was no interest to provide workers with easier access to healthcare infrastructure.

It needs to be said that since vaccines have become available in larger quantities there has been increased efforts to get more expatriates vaccinated. As of mid-June, Kuwait had administered 2.7 million doses of the vaccine to its population of 4.4 million or 46 doses per 100 people. Though a breakup of the figures based on citizens and non-citizens were no longer provided by MoH, the overall vaccination rate was still among the lowest for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Only Oman, which had administered fewer than

417,000 vaccinations for its 4.9 million population, had a lower vaccination figure than Kuwait.

Among other GCC states, the UAE has administered 14.3 million doses among a population of around 10 million people made up largely of expatriates, and Bahrain has provided 1.8 million vaccines to its population of close to 2 million. Qatar has vaccinated nearly all its population of 2.8 million, and Saudi Arabia has administered 16.5 million vaccines to its population of around 35 million.

Unfortunately, the wide disparity between administering vaccines to citizens and non-citizens, and between nations, at least in the early stages of the vaccination campaign is not limited to Kuwait, it has been reiterated in most of the countries where the vaccines were rolled out initially. Structural inequities that exist in social interactions in nearly all countries are also reflected in the inequitable distribution of vaccines globally and in their availability locally. While prioritizing vaccinations on the basis of nationality, gender, wealth, ethnicity or racial profile is ethically indefensible and morally reprehensible, recurring evidence from ground realities confirm significant discrimination worldwide in administering vaccines during the current pandemic.

For instance, in the United States and elsewhere in the developed world, there is evidence of a vaccine divide along racial lines, with more White people having been vaccinated than other racial groups. As of June 14 of this year, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that race or ethnicity was known for 57 percent of people who had received at least one dose of the vaccine. Among this group, nearly two thirds were White (61%), 15 percent were Hispanic, 9 percent were Black, 6 percent were Asian, and other races made up the rest. In all fairness, with wider availability of vaccines, the CDC has reported that recent vaccinations were reaching larger shares of Hispanic, Asian, and Black populations.

The availability of vaccines to counter the virus have enabled health authorities in several countries to slow-down the incidence rate of infections and slowly begin the process of a return to seeming normalcy. Meanwhile, a large portion of the global population do not have access to the vaccines and remain vulnerable to the virus. More than six months since the initial rollout of effective vaccines, their distribution and accessibility still remains skewed in favor of rich developed countries.

Latest global figures show that as of 18 June, over 2.5 billion doses of vaccine have been administered worldwide, with 35.1 million vaccines now being given each day. Though 21 percent of the global population of 7.7 billion have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, less than 1 percent of people in low-income countries have received one dose. This beggar thy neighbor attitude and lack of leadership in the early stages of the pandemic could be one reason why we

continue to be besieged in our homes by second and third waves of the virus, more than a year and a half after the global pandemic was declared.

But it is not all pessimistic news; around the world there are increasing signs that the initial stupor in responding effectively to the pandemic is slowly wearing off. There are indications that global leadership is finally using better judgement to wean itself away from parochial sentiments and pay heed to what the scientific community has been urging from the start of vaccination rollouts — that it is in everyone's interest to ensure the majority of global population is vaccinated at the earliest, so as to attain community immunity everywhere and foster a return to normalcy worldwide.

At the close of this year's G7 Leaders' summit on 13 June at Cornwall in the United Kingdom, the host, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, announced a donation of an additional 870 million vaccine doses from attendees, which included in addition to leaders of G7 Member states, the heads of Australia, India, Republic of Korea and South Africa, who were invited to attend outreach sessions of the summit as guests.

Additionally, the attendees at the G7 meeting indicated their intention to work together with the private sector, the G20 and other countries to increase their vaccine contribution over the months to come. The majority of the vaccines promised by the G7 are to be delivered within the next year through COVAX, the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID 19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator. ACT is a global collaboration to accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines, which was launched by the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Commission, France and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in April 2020.

A surge in infections and fatalities from a second wave of COVID-19 pandemic in India, blamed on a double-mutant Delta variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, had led to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi calling off his in-person attendance at the summit and taking part in the proceedings virtually. Absence of the Indian prime minister's presence in person was perhaps a stark reminder to leaders at the gathering of the precarious health situation prevailing in many parts of the world. It also highlighted the potential for the virus to mutate and reappear in countries that have successfully overcome the first wave, and more importantly, it pointed to the crucial need to vaccinate more people everywhere at the earliest opportunity.

Director General of WHO, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, addressing G7 leaders at their summit said, "Many other countries are now facing a surge in cases, and they are facing it without vaccines. We are in the race of our lives, but it's not a fair race, and most countries have barely left the starting line. We welcome the generous announcements about donations of vaccines and thank leaders. But we need more, and we need them faster."

Nearly all of COVID-related deaths in Kuwait among unvaccinated

In its latest pandemic-related health statistics, the Ministry of Health (MoH) revealed that 99.1 percent of all COVID-19 related fatalities were among people who had not been vaccinated.

The ministry also added that 90.5 percent of infected patients in the COVID-19 ward, and 89.4 percent of patients admitted in intensive care units, were those who had not been vaccinated.

Despite the serious repercussions from remaining unvaccinated, the ministry said a total of 45,000 citizens, who had registered on the MoH online platform since last December

and received their vaccination appointments, had chosen not to take the vaccination.

Pointing out that skipping the vaccination not only placed that person in danger, but it could also have an impact on the safety of others in the family and community. In this regard, MoH urged both citizens and residents to get their shots at the earliest available opportunity. The ministry has also announced the start of vaccinations for pregnant women who wish to receive the vaccination. The registration for children in the age group from 12 to 15 years for vaccination is also scheduled to begin in July.

FINDING THE PERFECT MATCH

BY HERMOINE MACURA-NOBLE
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES KUWAIT



One of the things that became painfully obvious during the pandemic for many people was the need to find a loving spouse. Whether it was the crisis itself, the months of isolation or countless video dating sessions gone wrong

– one thing became apparent, whom you share most of your time with affects the quality of your life and overall happiness.

Rachel Vida MacLynn, Founder and CEO of The Vida Consultancy, a global matchmaking company that also operates in the GCC, explains. "The pandemic sparked an existential shift in people's minds, and we're seeing single people more focused than ever on finding a life partner. Other goals, such as striving for a



promotion or buying a new car, are pushed down their list of priorities. Searching for a partner globally is bittersweet. One on hand, there is something utterly romantic about leaving no stone unturned to find "the one" anywhere in the world. However, the logistics around meeting someone in another part of the world is a challenge for most of our clients."

Living in the age of information and dating apps, many people all too often neglect their personal life and often waste their most valuable commodity on the distractions of the digital evolution and fleeting pleasures of our era. Many others who thrive on professional success often

put relationships on the back burner until way too late.

Relationship Coach Olga Fernandez unpacks why many women today are choosing to get married later in life. "Women today have so many options and opportunities to live their dreams.... Also, decades of scientific research into love, sex and relationships have taught them that several behaviors can predict when a couple is solid or heading for troubled waters. As a result, women are making wiser choices when it comes to choosing their spouse. We all know good relationships don't happen overnight. They take commitment, compromise, forgiveness and most of all — effort."

For some, the allure of hiring a matchmaker seems like the fast track to finding the perfect spouse when time is of the essence. Matchmaking is a concept unknown to many, unclear to most and nonsensical to some. But, in a decreasing social society, it is becoming a sought-after service. Here in the Gulf, where some find it challenging to settle down due to the transient culture, other specific requests also make the search slightly harder for matchmakers.

"A global search raise concerns around cultural differences, and this is why we assess people through human values. Values form the foundation of a compatible relationship, and every human on the planet holds them. We, therefore, do not need to stereotype or make assumptions

when we deliver our matchmaking model. Our success rate for international clients is 80 per cent," adds MacLynn.

It's OK to have a list of qualities you want in a potential partner — however, remember that you need to be the kind of person who will attract your dream spouse.

"Many people in the GCC often have requirements from their family, culture and traditions, high on their list. Some insist on marrying from the same faith; however, they don't want to be the second or third wife," says psychologist Dorothy Rais.

Generally, matchmakers will seek out people who come from similar backgrounds, nearby geographic locations and equivalent education levels. However, they also help singles to set realistic expectations.

"If you share or have complementing beliefs, then your relationship is more likely to be compatible, and you'll experience a more harmonious marriage. You also want to know your partner shares your goals around not just marriage but children and lifestyle. How many children would you like to have? When? How would they be raised? Where would you live?" Says MacLynn. These are just some questions to think about when looking for a spouse.

Most people ignore: Do I personally live up to the expectations that I have for someone else? "Often, the answer is no," Fernandez says. "It is easy to come up with a list of 'must-haves in a partner, but it is a lot harder to turn that list around and judge yourself. For example, if you are not passionate about your life, how will you attract someone who is? If you are not living your life true to your values, how are you going to attract someone who does?" she concludes.

The solution? "Take time to work on yourself," Fernandez explains. "Strive to be more like the kind of person you want to attract and prepare yourself to be "the best friend" of your future spouse."

Finding a partner shouldn't feel like a never-ending wish list. Approach it systematically by building an accurate representation of who you are genuinely compatible with. "Our matchmaking process is built on a foundation of assessing values, attitudes and beliefs.... For example, someone could have a core value of kindness. For them, kindness manifests through the love they give to their family. For someone else, kindness could be expressed through philanthropic

activities," concludes MacLynn.

The world is changing, and stereotypical roles in marriages are getting reinvented. The dynamics between a couple are changing, and marriages are becoming more of a partnership. Across the board, most experts still say that if you're not ready to get married, don't. You could be saving your future self from a world of trouble. "I meet people every day who have gone through endless paychecks settling nasty divorces," Fernandez explains. "If marriage doesn't feel right, it's not right. Don't settle."

Hermoine Macura-Noble is the first Australian English speaking News Anchor in the Middle East. She is also the Author of Faces of the Middle East and Founder of US based 501c3 charity - The House of Rest which helps to ease the suffering of victims of war. For more from our Contributing Editor, you can follow her on Instagram @Hello_Hermoine



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Growing irrelevance of the G7

**JEFFREY D. SACHS**

University Professor at Columbia University, and President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. He has served as adviser to three UN Secretaries-General, and currently serves as an SDG Advocate under Secretary-General António Guterres. He has penned several books, most recently, *The Ages of Globalization*.

The latest G7 summit was a waste of resources. If it had to be held at all, it should have been conducted online, saving time, logistical costs, and airplane emissions. But, more fundamentally, G7 summits are an anachronism. Political leaders need to stop devoting their energy to an exercise that is unrepresentative of today's global economy and results in a near-complete disconnect between stated aims and the means adopted to achieve them.

There was absolutely nothing at the G7 summit that could not have been accomplished much more cheaply, easily, and routinely by Zoom. The most useful diplomatic meeting this year was President Joe Biden's online meeting with 40 world leaders in April to discuss climate change. Routine online international meetings by politicians, parliamentarians, scientists, and activists are important. They normalize international discussions.

But why should those discussions occur within the G7, which has been superseded by the G20? When the G7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) began their annual summit meetings in the 1970s, they still dominated the world economy. In 1980, they constituted 51 percent of world GDP (measured at international prices), whereas the developing countries of Asia accounted for just 8.8 percent. In 2021, the G7 countries produce a mere 31 percent of world GDP, while the same Asian countries produce 32.9 percent.

The G20, by including China, India, Indonesia, and other large developing countries, represents around 81 percent of world output, and balances the interests of its high-income and developing economies. It is not perfect, as it leaves out smaller and poorer countries and should add the African Union (AU) as a member, but at least the G20 offers a fruitful format for discussing global topics covering most of the world economy. The annual EU-US Summit can accomplish much that the G7 originally aimed to cover.

The G7 is particularly irrelevant because its leaders do not deliver on their promises. They like making symbolic statements, not solving problems. Worse, they give the appearance of solving global problems, while really leaving them to fester. This year's summit was no different.

Consider COVID-19 vaccines. The G7 leaders set the goal of vaccinating at least 60 percent of the global population. They also pledged to share 870 million doses directly over the next year, presumably meaning enough for 435 million fully immunized individuals (with two doses



per person). But 60 percent of the global population comes to 4.7 billion people, or roughly ten times that number.

The G7 leaders offered no plan for achieving their stated aim of global coverage, and in fact, have not developed one, even though it would not be hard to do. Estimating the monthly production of every COVID-19 vaccine is straightforward, and allocating those doses fairly and efficiently to all countries is entirely feasible.

One reason such a plan has not yet been developed is that the US government so far refuses to sit down with Russian and Chinese leaders to devise such a global allocation.

do so as well. Yet, rather than laying out a financing plan to enable developing countries to achieve that target, they reiterated a financial pledge first made in 2009 and never fulfilled. "We reaffirm the collective developed country goal," they averred, "to jointly mobilize \$100 billion per year from public and private sources, through to 2025 in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation."

It is hard to overstate the cynicism of this oft-repeated pledge. The rich countries missed their own deadline of 2020 for providing the long-promised \$100 billion

classrooms, and supplies. In 2020, UNESCO estimated that the low- and lower-middle-income countries need around \$504 billion per year up to 2030 to ensure that all kids complete a secondary education, but have only around \$356 billion of their own domestic resources, leaving a financing gap of around \$148 billion per year.

So, what does the G7 propose in this year's communiqué? The leaders propose "a target to get 40 million more girls into education and with at least \$2.75 billion for the Global Partnership for Education." These are not serious numbers.

They are pulled out of thin air and would leave hundreds of millions of children out of school, despite the world's firm commitment (enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal 4) to universal secondary education. Large-scale solutions are available, such as mobilizing low-interest financing from multilateral development banks, but the G7 leaders did not propose such solutions.

The world's problems are far too urgent to leave to empty posturing and to measures that are a mere token of what is needed to achieve stated ends. If politics were a mere spectator sport, to be judged by which politicians mugged the cameras best, the G7 summit would perhaps have a role to play. Yet we have urgent global needs to meet: ending a pandemic, decarbonizing the energy system, getting kids in school, and achieving the SDGs.

My recommendations: fewer face-to-face meetings, more serious homework to link means and ends, more routine Zoom meetings to discuss what really needs to be done, and greater reliance on the G20 (plus the AU) as the group that can actually follow through. We need Asia, Africa, and Latin America at the table for any true global problem solving.

“The world's problems are far too urgent to leave to measures that are a mere token of what is needed to achieve. If politics were a spectator sport to judge, who mugged the cameras best, the G7 summit would perhaps have a role to play.”

Another reason is that the G7 governments let the vaccine manufacturers negotiate privately and secretly, rather than as part of a global plan. Perhaps a third reason is that the G7 looked at global targets without thinking hard enough about the needs of each recipient country.

Yet another example of the G7's false promises is climate change. At the latest summit, G7 leaders rightly embraced the goal of global decarbonization by 2050, and called on developing countries to

per year — a mere 0.2 percent of rich countries' annual GDP. And the promised \$100 billion is itself a small fraction of what developing countries need for decarbonization and climate adaptation.

The disconnect between the G7's soaring aims and meager means is apparent in education as well. Hundreds of millions of children in poor countries lack access to primary and secondary education because their governments do not have the financial means to provide teachers,



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Digital Bridge to Social Support



LAURA EFFERS

Director of the Social Protection Programme at Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing.

For all its devastation, the COVID-19 crisis does have a silver lining: it has shone a spotlight on important policy lapses — beginning with the lack of social protection for the world's two billion informal workers. But addressing this failure will require more than social programs; it will also require governments to bridge the digital divide.

During the pandemic, social programs supporting the 'missing middle' — informal workers who are excluded from standard employment-linked social security and often do not qualify for social programs that target the very poor — relied heavily on digital technologies. Registration happened on smartphones. Governments verified beneficiaries using digital identification systems. Payments landed in e-wallets.

This welcome use of digital technology streamlined procedures and enabled workers to avoid face-to-face interactions when they applied for or collected benefits. But this approach also implies an obvious risk: exclusion of those on the wrong side of the digital divide.

The experience of informal waste reclaimers here in Johannesburg is instructive. When the South African government introduced the Social Relief of Distress cash grant for adults excluded from other forms of government support during the pandemic, applications were to be submitted by a website form, email, WhatsApp, or an Unstructured Supplementary Data code.

This promised efficiency, but also kept the application out of reach for many waste reclaimers. According to Steven Leeuw, an active member of the African Reclaimers Organization (ARO), "Over 90 percent of the people we work with do not have a cell phone. If they do, it's usually an old one that doesn't really work, or they don't have money for data, or anywhere to access free WiFi."

Fortunately, the ARO stepped in to help members apply. That meant not only filling in and submitting applications, but also performing any additional administrative steps if the initial application was rejected. According to Leeuw, "It would have just been easier if [the South African Social Security Agency] had sent officials around to our workplaces to help



people sign up for the grant."

There are similar stories around the world. In Mexico City, the cash grant offered to non-salaried workers was initially accessible only through an online application. "I went three times to the internet cafe to scan documents and send emails," said one worker. "How are those who don't know how to read and write and who can't pay for the internet cafe going to do it?" After protests by workers' organizations, the government added a manual application option.

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As governments invest in the digital transition, they must also support the work of grassroots organizations providing essential last-mile services to connect people to their entitlements.

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Likewise, in Delhi, informal workers struggled with digital applications for the Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (SVANidhi) scheme — a government loan program designed to support street vendors. Not only was the application available only online, it was also not written in colloquial Hindi, and the website crashed frequently.

Moreover, applicants were initially required to have an Aadhar Card (a form of digital identification linked to biometric and demographic data) linked to a mobile phone number, which created a host of

other problems. "Not all workers have an Aadhar Card," according to Shalini Sinha, Delhi Coordinator for Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing. "Or if they are migrant workers, the card might be back in the village, and then they might not have the same mobile phone number, and have to go through the process of linking a new number to the card."

These are hardly isolated incidents or cherry-picked anecdotes. A 2019 report by the then-United Nations Special Rapporteur

responsibility from the state to grassroots organizations serving the poor. Governments that apply digital technologies to social-welfare programs must also ensure equity in the systems and institutions in which these programs are embedded.

For starters, as governments invest in the digital transition (including by directing large amounts of funds to the private sector), they must also support the work of grassroots organizations providing essential last-mile services to connect people to their entitlements.

As it stands, few grassroots organizations in the Global South are able to raise the financial resources needed to sustain their work. Moreover, governments must create mechanisms for meaningful consultation with these organizations, in order to design programs that meet target groups' needs, monitor and assess progress, and make necessary changes. Frontline bureaucratic workers, such as social workers and registration officials, will also need greater support, including to expand their ranks in some cases.

Of course, closing the digital divide should also be a high priority. That means expanding access to digital technologies, including mobile phones and broadband internet, and ensuring that people have the knowledge to use them. And grassroots organizations have a vital role to play here as well. But, in the meantime, the digital divide must be bridged to enable the most vulnerable to access crucial government support.

on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, found that the digitization of welfare often leads to "deep reductions in the overall welfare budget, a narrowing of the beneficiary pool, [and] the elimination of some services." In fact, Alston warned, digital welfare systems often "punish the poorer classes." For example, unrestricted data matching is used to expose and penalize the "slightest irregularities" in the records of welfare beneficiaries, sometimes resulting in denial of critical services.

Technological solutions cannot be used as a means to slash budgets and shift

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Rethinking Globalization role in Innovation



DALIA MARIN

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Globalization encourages innovation, or so the conventional wisdom goes. But emerging evidence suggests that this assumption, like so many economic shibboleths, must be rethought.

The conventional wisdom is based on a 1991 study by Gene M. Grossman and Elhanan Helpman, which showed that, by creating larger, more integrated markets, globalization bolstered efficiency, encouraged specialization, and strengthened incentives for profit-seeking entrepreneurs to invest in research and development (R&D). The result was an increase in the global rate of innovation.

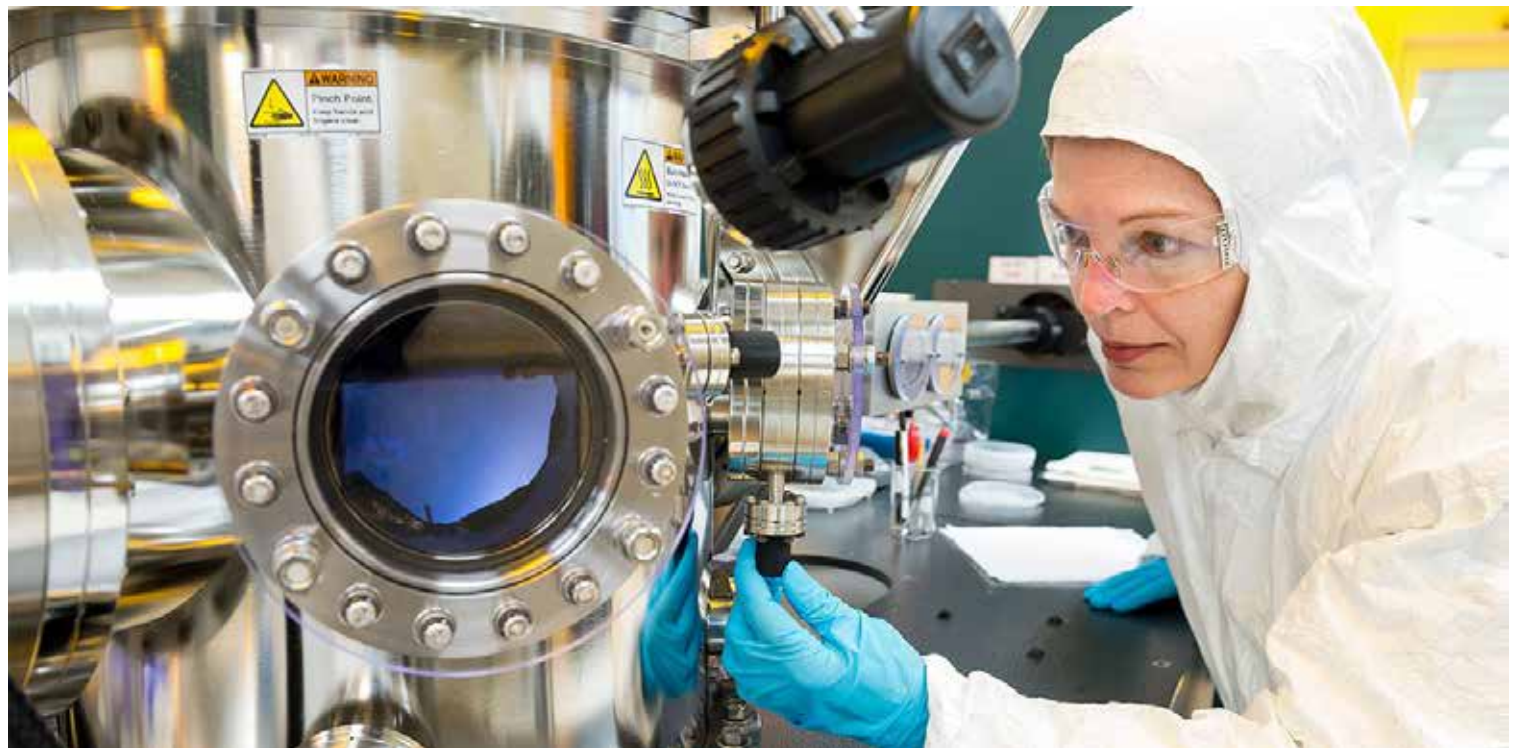
Yet recent research on China's global impact indicates that the relationship between globalization and innovation is not so unambiguous. On one hand, Nicholas Bloom and his colleagues find that greater competition from China has contributed to an increase in patents in Europe. On the other hand, David Autor and his colleagues point out that the 'China shock' has reduced the innovation rate in the United States.

What explains these divergent outcomes? One possible answer lies in changes to the manufacturing sector.

Manufacturing is traditionally where most innovation happens. But in rich countries, in particular the US, manufacturing as a share of output and employment has been declining for decades, as multinational firms have moved labor-intensive production to lower-wage economies, such as China or Eastern European countries. If innovation happens where production takes place, it makes sense that China's rise as a manufacturing powerhouse would be correlated with falling innovation in a country like the US.

Yet this outcome is not unavoidable. Whether the loss of manufacturing jobs undermines innovation depends significantly on the way a multinational firm is organized, especially the linkages between the production and innovation sides of the business.

If a company's output depends on face-to-face interaction between the two sides, manufacturing and innovative activities should be located in close geographical proximity. Otherwise, innovation is likely to decline. This is often the case for US firms:



subsidiaries operating farther away from their parent company tend to undertake less patenting.

If, however, managers facilitate and direct the flow of information across these two groups of workers, the geographic co-location of the two activities may matter less. This would sustain innovation in advanced economies, even if manufacturing is happening on the other side of the globe.

My research examining the migration of manufacturing jobs to Eastern Europe after the fall of communism reinforces this reading. In the 1990s, Eastern European countries had low per capita income, but were rich in skills, particularly in engineering.

in Eastern Europe employed five times as many people with academic degrees, as a percentage of staff, as their parent firms did. They also had 25 percent more research personnel working in their labs. Likewise, German affiliates in Eastern Europe employed three times as many workers with academic degrees, and 11 percent more researchers, as their parent firms did.

But there was a major difference between German and Austrian multinationals. German multinationals transferred the firm's organizational structure to the subsidiaries in Eastern Europe, and sent German managers to run things. This ensured that knowledge created in the

to guarantee that the knowledge created in the subsidiary also benefited the parent company.

Over the last decade, Germany has generally thrived economically, while Austria has suffered from low growth rates and high unemployment. Austria's struggles may well have their origins in the reverse pattern of specialization in innovation with Eastern Europe. Austria's skill endowment, as measured by the share of the work force with a university degree, was 0.07 in 1998, compared to 0.14 for Central European countries.

As Germany has shown, innovation does not depend on the presence of physical production. Moreover, declining innovation in manufacturing can be offset, at least partly, by increased R&D in other sectors. This has occurred in the US: in 2016, the manufacturing sector accounted for only 54 percent of US patents and 59 percent of R&D expenditure — compared to 91 percent and 99 percent, respectively, in 1977, with non-manufacturing firms now accounting for 46 percent of all US patent grants.

But manufacturing and innovation still complement each other. And, as the very different experiences of Austria and Germany show, offshoring manufacturing alone does not necessarily undermine innovation. If parent companies implement mechanisms for acquiring the knowledge created in their affiliate firms, they can seize the benefits of globalization, including offshoring, without losing out on innovation.

“ In rich countries, manufacturing as a share of output and employment has been declining for decades, as multinational firms have moved labor-intensive production to lower-wage economies, such as China or Eastern European countries. ”

That made them ideal environments for low-cost innovation.

This appealed, in particular, to Germany and Austria — both of which were far wealthier, located nearby, and facing acute skills shortages. So, in the ensuing years, German and Austrian firms moved not only manufacturing jobs, but also activities that required specialized skills and important research, to Eastern Europe.

From 1990 to 2001, Austrian subsidiaries

Eastern European research labs flowed back to the parent company, which thus had more control over innovation.

By contrast, Austrian multinationals — themselves mostly subsidiaries of foreign firms — adapted their Eastern European subsidiaries' organizational structure to the local environment, and hired more local managers. As a result, their subsidiaries were more autonomous in their innovation decisions. No mechanism was put in place

Adding spice up to your health

You may have heard the expression, 'Spice up your life' with regard to adding something interesting or exciting to enliven your life. And you probably already know that besides adding flavor to your food, spices provide potential benefits to your health, including its anti-inflammatory properties.

New research has now shown two additional positive health benefits from adding spices to your diet. Scientists at the universities of Penn State and at Clemson in the United States have done separate studies that reveal the benefits of herb and spice consumption on cardiovascular health.

One study found that adding herbs and spices to meals may help reduce blood pressure in people at risk of heart disease. The other study

linked spice supplements to lower cholesterol levels in people with type 2 diabetes.

The research is expected to help researchers evaluate dosage, usage, and short-term effects, and the potential for future studies to provide evidence on the long-term effects of spices and herbs.

For their study, the researchers examined the cardiometabolic effects of adding herbs and spices to the typical American diet. Their findings suggest that adding dried herbs and spices to foods have a beneficial effect on blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for heart disease.

Over the course of the first study, participants ate a typical American diet, with 50 percent of calories coming from carbohydrates, 17



percent from protein, and 33 percent from fat, including 11 percent from saturated fat. Every 4 weeks, the participants rotated through three different versions of the diet: A low spice version, with 0.5 grams per day of mixed herbs and spices; A medium spice version, with 3.3 grams per day of mixed herbs and spices; A high spice version, with 6.6 grams per day of mixed herbs and spices.

The researchers found that participants had lower 24-hour blood pressure levels when they ate a high spice diet. However, they found no differences in blood cholesterol or blood sugar levels.

In the second study, researchers conducted a systematic review of available journal articles on ginger, cinnamon, turmeric, curcumin, and curcuminoids to find a link between consumption of spices and an improved lipid profile that resulted

in lower cholesterol levels in people with type 2 diabetes.

The review included 28 randomized controlled trials, in which people with type 2 diabetes received ginger, cinnamon, turmeric, curcumin, or curcuminoid supplements. Curcumin and curcuminoid are derived from turmeric. The researchers concluded that their preliminary findings suggest that these spices may offer a potential benefit for people with type 2 diabetes and unhealthy high cholesterol levels.

The trials ran for a duration of 1 to 3 months and yielded different findings for different spices and supplement dosages. Approximately 30 percent of the trials found no significant effects from supplementation.

Although more research is needed to understand the specific

health effects of herbs and spices, evidence shows that adding these nutrient-rich seasonings to your meals has potential benefits.

However, prepackaged herb and spice mixes often contain added salt, which can unintentionally increase sodium consumption that results in high blood pressure and heart issues in many people. In addition, some herb and spice blends also contain processed sugar or other additives.

A better option that the study suggested is to make your own salt-free seasoning blends using the bulk herbs and spices at the store. By mixing together your own herbs and spices blends, you can avoid additives, sugars, and added salts without sacrificing any flavor. Additionally, many herbs and spices are also available in supplement form as capsules, extracts, tinctures, or teas.

While supplements allow you to take a defined dose of a specific herb or spice in quantities that tend to be larger than what is normally added to foods. Although certain herb and spice supplements may have health benefits, some supplements can interact with certain medications or cause other side effects. As a result certain supplements may not be safe for everyone to take.

It is recommended that before taking supplements, you should always speak with your doctor or healthcare professional.

Early waking wards off depression



A new study suggests that a person's chronotype — the propensity for an individual to sleep at a particular time during a 24-hour period — has a major influence on the risk of them developing depression.

Researchers at University of Colorado Boulder and the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard in the US, studied

over 840,000 people to provide the strongest evidence yet of the impact that chronotype has on depression risk. The study is also the first of its kind to quantify how much, or how little, change is required to influence mental risk

Results from the sweeping genetic study suggests that waking up just one hour earlier could reduce a person's risk of major depression by 23 percent. The findings could have a serious impact on many people, as countries begin emerging from the shadow of the pandemic and offices and schools resume in-person attendance, as they would have to change their delayed sleep patterns that prevailed during the 'work-from-home' period. Previous observational studies have shown that night owls are as much as twice as likely to suffer from depression as early risers, regardless of how long they sleep. But because mood disorders themselves can disrupt sleep patterns, researchers have had a hard time deciphering what causes what. But these studies had smaller sample sizes, relied on questionnaires from a single time point, or did not account for environmental factors which can influence both sleep timing and mood, potentially confounding results.

To get a clearer sense of whether shifting sleep time earlier is truly protective, and how much shift is required, researchers in the latest study turned to data from the DNA testing company '23 and Me' and the biomedical database 'UK Biobank'. They then used a method called 'Mendelian randomization' that leverages genetic associations to help decipher cause and effect.


Our genetics are set at birth so some of the biases that affect other kinds of epidemiological research tend not to affect genetic studies. More than 340 common genetic variants, including variants in the so-called 'clock gene' PER2, are known to influence a person's chronotype, and genetics collectively explains 12-42 percent of our sleep timing preference.

The researchers assessed genetic data on these variants from up to 850,000 individuals, including data from 85,000 who had worn wearable sleep trackers for 7 days and 250,000 who had filled out sleep-preference questionnaires. This gave them a more granular picture, down to the hour, of how variants in genes influence when we sleep and wake up.


In the largest of these samples, about a third of surveyed subjects self-identified as morning larks, 9 percent were night owls and the rest were in the middle. Overall, the average sleep midpoint was 3am, meaning they went to bed at 11 pm. and got up at 6 am.

With this information in hand, the researchers turned to a different sample which included genetic information along with anonymized medical and prescription records and surveys about diagnoses of major depressive disorder. Using novel statistical techniques, they asked: Do those with genetic variants which predispose them to be early risers also have lower risk of depression? The answer was a firm yes. Each one-hour earlier sleep midpoint (halfway between bedtime and wake time) corresponded with a 23 percent lower risk of major depressive disorder.

This suggests that if someone who normally goes to bed at 1am, goes to bed at midnight instead and sleeps the same duration, they could cut their risk by 23 percent; if they go to bed at 11pm, they could cut it by about 40 percent.



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