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# Parliament adjourns amid political instability

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

If ministers and legislators were paid daily wages based on their productivity and time worked, one wonders what their earnings would be. Considering their overall output and the fact that they are required to attend just two regular sessions once every two weeks during an annual session that lasts no longer than eight months, their take-home pay would be paltry. Luckily for them, a benevolent state has ensured they receive a massive monthly salary plus prodigious perquisites that allow them to lead a lavish lifestyle, even by Kuwait's über-opulent standards.

Continued disruptive proceed-



ings in parliament due to the ongoing confrontation between the executive and legislative branches of government have left lawmakers with plenty of time on their hands and very little work to do. For the last many weeks, there has been no meaningful work taking place in the National Assembly,

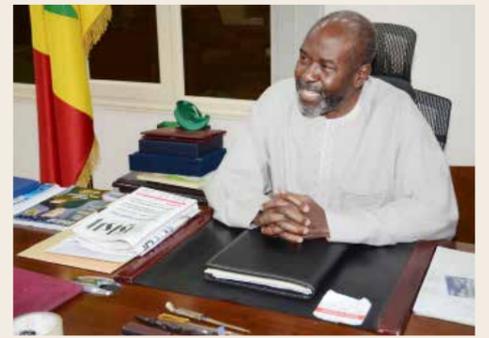
and sessions have been adjourned repeatedly. The opposition bloc insists that no work in parliament will be permitted without the prime-minister taking the podium to face their grilling motion, and the premier just as adamant not to do so.

Last week, Parliament once

again cut short its regular weekly session and ended the current term, sending lawmakers on an extended summer holiday that now stretches until October. An Amiri decree adjourning parliament was announced by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim in a statement last Tuesday that stated, "Parliament's 16th legislative term will adjourn starting this Thursday 1 July, whereby the prime minister is now obliged to inform lawmakers of the news."

A special session called for Thursday to discuss the country's increasingly precarious financial situation, was held in-camera upon request by the government. Accordingly, at the opening of the session on Thursday,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



H.E. Abdelahed Mbaki, Dean of Ambassadors in Kuwait for a record 23 years, will be leaving Kuwait next week after a long and successful tenure in the country. In an emotional interview Ambassador Mbaki, who witnessed the invasion and liberation of Kuwait, says Kuwait will always remain close to his heart no matter where he goes.

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# Low operational capacity limits passenger traffic through KIA



The Cabinet's decision to allow foreigners to enter Kuwait from 1 August has so far failed to evoke the huge rush of passengers that travel agencies were expecting.

Owners of travel and tourism offices in the country say that limiting the airport's capacity to 3,500 passengers per day has resulted in a sharp rise in ticket prices, which could be one explanation for the poor ticket sales among expatriates.

Moreover, many foreigners are also wary of the new permission to enter, following the travel fiasco experienced last year. Back then, the government had opened the airport to international flights only to shut down operations a few days later without any prior warning, stranding passengers enroute to Kuwait in many transit countries.

Flight bookings are expected to increase significantly only after the first two weeks of August, when it becomes clear that the authorities are committed to keeping the airport open to incoming international flights.

In mid-June, the Cabinet had decided to allow foreigners who have been fully vaccinated against the novel coronavirus to enter the country from 1 August. The ban on entry of non-Kuwaitis was imposed in February following the outbreak of a new wave of coronavirus infections in several countries.

Announcing the Cabinet's decision, government spokesperson Tareq Al-Mizrem said foreign travelers will need to have been fully inoculated with one of the four vaccines that Kuwait has approved — two doses of Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca and Moderna or one dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine. In addition, passengers must also hold a negative PCR test conducted a maximum of 72 hours before their departure. They would also have to undergo another test during a seven-day quarantine in the country.

In the meantime, travel agencies have been buoyed by an increase in business from citizens looking to spend the upcoming Eid-Al-Adha holidays abroad. Though fares are reported to have gone up, in some cases by 200 percent, flight

bookings are said to have increased by 300 percent this month compared to the previous month.

Reports suggest that available seats on various airlines to popular destinations in the region have been fully booked for the Eid period. Among the most popular destinations in July, especially for the Eid holiday period, appear to be several cities in Turkey, as well as Dubai, Cairo, Riyadh, Greece, and the Maldives.

Stressing that the government needs to urgently increase the operational capacity of Kuwait International Airport (KIA), a member of the Board of Directors of the Travel Offices Association and Director

General of the Ticket Offices Association, Abdul Rahman Al-Kharafi, said that the high prices that travelers are now facing is due to the failure on the part of the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to increase the capacity of KIA.

He pointed out that though the Cabinet had suggested in May to increase the number of passengers arriving to Kuwait on commercial flights to 5,000 passengers per day, DGCA had maintained the earlier cap of 1,000 arrivals, and only recently raised the number to 3,500 passengers per day, and allowed flights to increase their capacity from their earlier limit of 35, to 70 passengers per flight.

## Heavy fines on establishments if non-vaccinated people enter

Head of Violations Removal Department in Jahra Governorate branch of Kuwait Municipality, Suleiman Al-Ghais, confirmed reports that commercial complexes, restaurants, cafes, clubs and salons permitting entry of non-vaccinated people could face fines of up to KD5,000 per violation.

Al-Ghais said in a statement that starting from 27 June, entry to commercial establishments will be allowed to people only after checking their Kuwait mobile ID and Immunity app to verify their vaccination status. He added that the onus for proving that visitors have taken the vaccination rests with both parties, the establishment and the person seeking entry, unless the facility proves that it has done everything necessary to implement the decision.

Since last week, supervisory teams from Ahmadi and Jahra governorate branches of the municipality have been carrying out inspection tours in the two governorates to



ensure the implementation of the Cabinet's decision to prevent non-vaccinated people from entering commercial establishments.

For his part, Director of the Audit and Follow-up Services Department at the Ahmadi branch of Municipality, Saad Al-Shaiba, said in a press statement that these inspection tours are a continuation of the municipality's inspection of shops to ensure that they implement health requirements aimed at limiting the spread of the coronavirus.



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## KEA Farwaniya launched Poster for Box Cricket League(BCL) 2021

Kasaragod Expatriate Association Kuwait (K. E. A.) Farwaniya Area in association with Badr Al Samaa Medical Centre is conducting One-Day Box Cricket League. The winners will be awarded Rolling Trophy with Cash Award.

In an event held at Medical Centre KEA Chairman Mr.Khalil Adoor released Tournament Logo & Poster in presence of Mr.Abdul Anas (Business Development Coordinator, Badr Al Samaa Clinic).

KEA Chairman Mr.Khalil Adoor inaugurated the function which was presided over by Area President Mr.Iqbal Perumbatta. KEA Chief Patron Mr. Sathar Kunnil, Acting President Mr. Nasser Chullikkara, Acting General Secretary Mr. Sudhan Avikkara, Mr.Treasurer Muhammad Kunhi offered warm wishes to the upcoming event.

BCL Convener Mr.Shuhaib Sheikh welcomed the gathering. The BCL 2021 event will be held on 23rd July 2021.



## AMBASSADOR ABDELAHED MBAKI

# Leaving behind a lasting legacy of diplomacy

STAFF REPORT

**D**ean of the Diplomatic Corps in Kuwait, Ambassador of Senegal, Abdelahed Mbaki has 40 years of diplomatic experience, 33 years of them in Kuwait as ambassador of his country here, and has for the last 23 years been dean of the diplomatic corps. He was one of the last ambassadors to leave Kuwait during the invasion period in 1990, and the first to return after liberation in March 1991 when the oil-well fires were still burning.

Ambassador Mbaki was able to form friendships between different segments of people and residents in Kuwait, and he has many wonderful memories of his time in Kuwait. He was not only a good friend and colleague of the heads of diplomatic missions, but also extended these relations to all journalists, supporting them in their work.

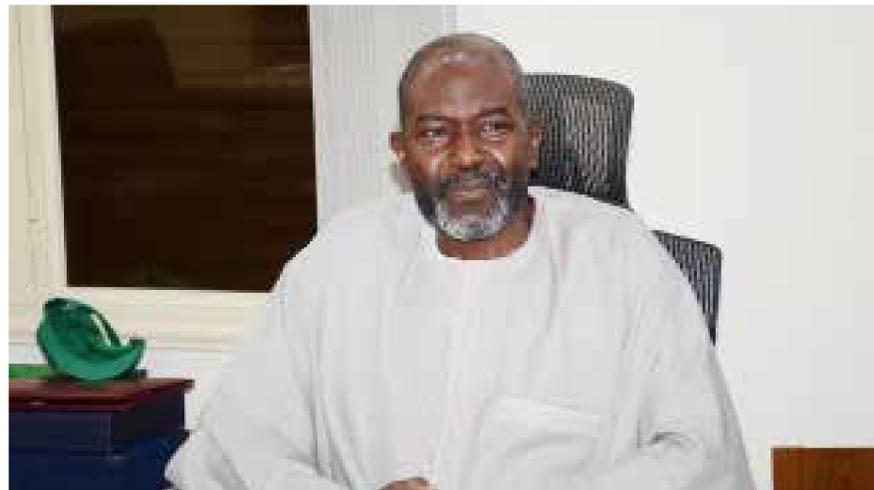
The Times Kuwait met with the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps prior to his departure from the country, following the end of his tenure in Kuwait and his decision to retire from diplomatic work.

He began by thanking us for giving him the opportunity to speak to the Kuwaiti people and the ruling family on the occasion of the end of his duties as Senegalese ambassador to Kuwait, which began in 1988. "Before arriving here I was an advisor at the Senegalese embassy in Jeddah and then the general consul in Jeddah, before moving to Riyadh to open my country's embassy there. In 1988, the Senegalese President Abdou Diouf appointed me as the Ambassador of the Republic of Senegal to Kuwait.

"My first meeting with a Kuwaiti official was with the late Amir H H Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, who was Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time. I presented to His Highness a copy of the credentials, and then I had the honor to meet His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad to present my credentials as the ambassador of my country to Kuwait. I was a referred ambassador to Bahrain and Jordan and then to Lebanon and South Yemen before the union as a non-resident ambassador."

Speaking about his long tenure as Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Kuwait, the ambassador said, "I took over the deanship of the diplomatic corps 23 years ago, and this task in Kuwait was not difficult. I worked with the best ambassadors and developed friendship, fellowship and cooperation with them. At first, the number of embassies in Kuwait was about 60, but when H H Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed took over as prime minister, many embassies were opened until their number almost doubled. This made the mission of deanship much greater, as I used to meet with ambassadors once or twice a week during all national occasions for each country, or in Kuwaiti public and private occasions. But I never felt tired with the mission of the Deanship because I received cooperation from all colleagues and from all officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the past three decades. In my personal opinion, diplomatic work in Kuwait is better than in many countries because it is easy to communicate with all officials."

Recollecting on his experience following the invasion and subsequent liberation of the country in 1991, the dean narrated: "I was one of the last ambassadors to leave Kuwait, as I left it on 24 October, 1990. On the day



of my departure, we were only about six ambassadors in Kuwait, including the British, American, Egyptian, Omani and French. As for the rest of the ambassadors, they left before the deadline set by Iraq for all ambassadors to leave before 14 August. The ambassador to the Iraqi embassy after the occupation asked everyone to leave before this date, and whoever stays after this date will not have immunity. I spoke to the Senegalese president at the time and he told me to stay in Kuwait as long as possible, and on 22 October a delegation from our embassy in Baghdad came to me and asked me to leave. After the Iraqi authorities' decision to deport the diplomats, President Diouf asked us to evacuate all the Senegalese community from Kuwait, so we addressed our embassy in Baghdad and they sent us money, so we rented buses to transport our community and some members of the neighboring countries' communities.

"I returned to Kuwait, as I remember, between March 10-12, 1991. Four days after the liberation of Kuwait, there was a meeting

covered the skies of Kuwait due to the oil well fires, and the landing of the plane was very difficult and dangerous at the same time, but we landed safely and the leader of the Senegalese forces participating in the liberation of Kuwait, numbering 500 commandos, accompanied me. Some of them were to protect the embassy, but I stayed at the hotel for a month and a half until we readied the embassy, which had been looted.

"When His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Jaber returned to Kuwait, I was in Kuwait, and fortunately, I was the first ambassador to receive His Highness in the Diwan of Al-Babtain. He remembered the visit of President Abdo Diouf to His Highness in Taif during the invasion period, and His Highness received me in the presence of the late Minister of Education Anwar Al-Nouri, and His Highness said on that day that Senegalese companies should participate in the reconstruction of Kuwait, with the result that a Senegalese company built 12 schools in the Jahra area. His Highness also ordered to bring technicians



**“** I had a strong relationship with all media in Kuwait and its representatives, and it is still very strong. I never differentiated between newspapers; everyone is my friend, even the photographers. Here I must refer to my friend, who I consider the dean of photojournalists in Kuwait, Amo Amin, who was with me during this long period of my work in Kuwait and did not miss any occasion I attended. **”**

of the Senegalese cabinet, and the first decree issued by President Abdou Diouf was the return of the ambassador to Kuwait, so I left two days later for Paris and from there to Riyadh and stayed in Riyadh for two days until a plane to Kuwait was available. That period was very difficult as black smoke

from Senegal to work in Kuwait. At that time, about 250 Senegalese technicians attended to work in the General Fire Department and stayed in Kuwait for about four years and then returned to Senegal."

On his view about the development of Kuwait from the period after the liberation,

Ambassador Mbaki remarked, "The invasion caused a lot of destruction in buildings, facilities and lives of people. Following liberation, Kuwait and its leadership restored Kuwait to what it was before the invasion, but it was no easy task as the country faced many challenges, including the drop in oil prices and the problems that occurred in its neighboring countries, such as the war in Iraq and after that from what was called the Arab Spring. Overcoming all these challenges successfully was due to the country's balanced and wise policies. His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah played a major role in settling disputes and facilitating tasks in many countries. Kuwait hosted many international conferences, which culminated in the UN honoring His Highness as a leader of humanitarian work.

The ambassador grew emotional when describing his relations with Kuwait and its people. "I do not think that there are words to describe my relations with all of the sons of this good land. I have known elders who considered me their son and younger citizens who considered me as a brother. I have always received love and respect from everyone here, including from residents in this country.

On his relations with the media, the ambassador stated: "I had a strong relationship with all media in Kuwait and its representatives, and it is still very strong. I never differentiated between newspapers; everyone is my friend, even the photographers. Here I must refer to my friend, who I consider the dean of photojournalists in Kuwait, Amo Amin, who was with me during this long period of my work in Kuwait and did not miss any occasion I attended."

Speaking on his retirement plans, the dean said, "After 40 years of diplomatic work, it is time to rest. It is true that my family has always been with me, but I want to discover the world. I have not traveled on any special vacation during the past forty years except to Senegal, Kuwait and the countries I was referred to as ambassador.

However, I will miss everything in this wonderful country, its offices, its social events, its farms, its chalets, its democratic atmosphere, its unique people above all, and the Kuwaiti newspapers, which we consider as diplomats, are the best way to obtain confirmed and correct information, in addition to all kinds of Kuwaiti food and sweets.

Revealing who the next dean of diplomatic corps would be, Ambassador Mbaki said: "He was supposed to be the Ambassador of Botswana, but he is leaving in a week, and after him the Ambassador of Djibouti, but he is also traveling, so the deanship will go to the Ambassador of Tajikistan, Dr. Zbidullah Zabidov, according to seniority, and then the Palestinian Ambassador, Rami Tahboub.

Also, my replacement at our embassy will be my colleague and incumbent Ambassador of Senegal to Morocco, Ibrahim Khalil El-Sik. He was previously the Deputy Secretary-General and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and he is the best representative of my country in Kuwait.

In his parting words to Kuwait, Ambassador Mbaki said: "My message to the Kuwaiti people is that Kuwait will always be in my heart, and I wish Kuwait, its people and residents security, stability and prosperity, and I wish them all to put Kuwait and its interest in mind, for it is what will remain even after all of us leave. I also hope to return to Kuwait soon, visiting my friends when this pandemic is over."

# Thought for the week

“Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people's thinking.”

— Steve Jobs

## LENTIL DAL

### A RICH SOUP

**D**al has a double meaning: It is both the word for lentils and beans and the term for a thick purée or soup made from lentils. Lentil dal is essentially just a lentil soup. However, to say dal is simple also cuts its significance of flavor, of history, and importance at the South Asian table.

Lentil dal is a layered dish with thousands of variations determined by everything from the availability of certain ingredients to family traditions. But amongst them all, two components are essential to dal: tender lentils and tempered spices.

Soft-cooked lentils stewed in an aromatic broth full of onions, garlic, and ginger become the base of most dals. Tomatoes, potatoes, or other vegetables can be added as well, but those elements depend on the cook, the region, and the traditions that influence what goes in the pot.

In this recipe, the preparation of dal starts and finishes with the tempering of aromatics and spices and lentils simmered in a tomato-based broth. This tempering, sometimes called chaunk, tarka, or tadka, is what distinguishes dal from lentil soup.



### A DAL FOR EVERY POT, TABLE, AND TASTE

Dal is comfort food at its finest. Served over rice or with rotis and chapatis, it is as nourishing as it is soothing. Quick-cooking dal is made from split lentils and can be dressed up with the addition of the tempering spices. Once you learn the technique, experiment with a tadka combination of your own to customize this dish. That is the beauty of dal — it is made for personalization.

**Ghee:** Ghee is clarified butter made from butter that has been cooked to remove its moisture and milk fat in order to make it suitable for high-heat cooking. You can find ghee in shelf-stable containers at most grocery stores. Or, with some fresh butter and time, you can make your own at home anytime you need it. Although the milk solid are gone, ghee retains a flavor reminiscent of butter. In dal, it imparts an undercurrent of nuttiness and is the fat used for tempering the spice.



**Lentils:** Lentils or dal are part of the pulse family. Pulses include lentils, split peas, and beans. Pulses are a specific subcategory of the broad legume family, as they are edible, dry beans that are grown specifically for culinary consumption.

Yellow, pink, and red lentils are primarily used for dal. Red split lentils are best for quick-cooking dal and are used in this recipe for that reason. Buy these in bulk and store them in the pantry for up to a year. Before using the lentils, rinse them like you would a grain to remove any rocks or off-color lentils.



### EATING AND SERVING DAL

The dynamics of an Indian meal is what makes a lentil recipe into a dal. More often than not, dal is eaten either with rice or some kind of flat bread. Dal's thickness varies depending on the lentils used and may be thick like a curry or thin like a broth. How much water is used in cooking and any mashing or puréeing at the end will make the soup thinner or thicker. You can strike a middle ground between thick and thin with a recipe that calls for split lentils by using a potato masher. If you prefer a thicker soup, skip the mashing. For a thinner soup, purée with an immersion blender before adding the tadka.

### LENTIL DAL RECIPE

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup split red lentils
- 3 cups water
- 2 tablespoons ghee
- 1 small yellow onion, diced small
- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 (1/2-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1/4 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 (15-ounce) can diced tomatoes, or 2 diced large, ripe tomatoes

#### For the tadka:

- 2 tablespoons ghee
- 1/2 teaspoon whole cumin seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 2 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped

### DIRECTIONS

- Cook the lentils. Sort through the lentils and remove any debris. Rinse in a fine-mesh strainer under cool, running water. Place the lentils and 3 cups water in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat slightly to maintain a simmer, and cook until the lentils are tender, about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, cook the spices.
- Sauté the aromatics and spices. Heat the ghee in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion, garlic, and ginger, and cook until browned, about 8 minutes. Add the salt, cumin, turmeric, coriander, and bay leaf, and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute more.
- Add the tomatoes. Add the tomatoes along with their juices, reduce the heat to low, and keep warm while the lentils cook.
- Add the aromatics and tomatoes to the lentils. Add the tomato mixture to the cooked lentils and stir to combine. Do not be gentle, use a wooden spoon or spatula to mash the lentils and combine the mixture.
- Make the tadka. Heat the ghee in a small saucepan or skillet over medium heat (you can use the same skillet you cooked the aromatics and tomatoes in, just wipe it clean before proceeding). Have a lid handy. Tilt the pan to form a pool of ghee, add the cumin and black pepper, and cover immediately. Once the spices stop spluttering, remove from the heat and add the garlic. It will brown quickly, so transfer the tadka to another bowl for serving after it browns, or add immediately to the lentils.
- Serve. Add the tadka to the lentils, garnish with cilantro if using, stir, and serve hot over rice or with roti.

## RECIPE



# Cajun Spiced Potatoes

*Cajun Spiced Potatoes is a signature starter dish that features on the menu of many popular restaurants in India and elsewhere.*

**C**ajun cuisine is a style of cooking that originated in the US state of Louisiana and incorporates West African, French and Spanish cooking techniques into their original cuisine. Barbecuing of food is one of the several methods employed in cajun cooking. Cajun cuisine is sometimes referred to as a 'rustic cuisine', meaning that it is based on locally available ingredients and preparation is relatively simple.

Preparation and making time: 25 to 30min.

Serving: 3

#### Ingredients:

12 to 15 baby potatoes  
Oil for shallow fry

#### \*For Slurry:

2 tbsp all purpose flour  
2 tbsp cornflour  
1/8 tsp salt  
Water to mix

#### \*For Garnishing:

2 tbsp spring onion (finely chopped)  
Coriander leaves as needed (finely chopped)  
Chilly flakes

#### \*For Cajun Dressing:

5 tbsp mayonnaise  
1 tsp paprika powder.  
1/2 tsp oregano (dried)  
1/2 tsp parsley (dried)  
1/2 tsp thyme (dried)  
1/2 tsp garlic powder.  
1 tsp onion powder.  
1/4 tsp black pepper powder  
2 tbsp milk  
1 tbsp tomato ketchup  
1 tbsp red chilli sauce

#### Preparation:

##### \*Making the Cajun dressing:

Mix all the ingredients for dressing in a bowl  
Add extra spoons of milk if the dressing is too thick to get the right consistency

##### \*Preparing the potatoes:

Wash and clean the potatoes well.  
Microwave the potatoes for 5 minutes or till tender  
(Alternatively, you can pressure cook potatoes for 1 or 2 whistles of steam)  
Drain and let it cool.  
Mash each potato by using the back of a spoon or press it with the help of your palm, while making sure they do not break apart  
Now coat the smashed potatoes in the slurry  
Shallow fry the coated potatoes until crispy and golden brown  
Drain and set aside  
Place the crisp potatoes on a serving plate and pour dressing over it.  
Garnish with finely chopped onions and coriander leaves, chilli flakes and serve immediately.



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**

# Government eases travel restrictions

The Cabinet in its weekly meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and held on Monday at the Seif Palace, decided to ease some of the prevailing travel restrictions, but only to specific people and select countries.

Among the decisions are to allow direct

flights to 12 countries and to permit all fully vaccinated people to travel to the country through land and sea borders, over the course of July and August.

The decision allows resumption of direct flights from Thursday 1 July from the following 12 countries: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Germany, Greece,

Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The select entry of citizens, their relatives and domestic workers through land and sea borders would come into effect from 29 June for a one-month period that would end on 31 July. Their entry will also be conditional on them being vaccinated, with at least the first dose of the vaccines approved by Kuwait against the COVID-19 virus.

In addition, the Cabinet decided to open the land and sea borders from 1 August for everyone who received two doses of the vaccines approved in Kuwait, namely Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca and Moderna, or a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

During the meeting on Monday, the Cabinet was presented with an assessment of the latest epidemiological situation in the country and internationally by the Minister of Health, and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Sheikh Dr. Basil Al-Sabah.

The health minister noted that the new mutated strain of the virus has infected a large number of people worldwide and that there have been many cases in Kuwait as well. He pointed to latest data and statistics



from the health ministry which show a sharp increase in the number of those infected with the new strains and the rise in number of patients needing treatment in intensive care units for the virus.

In this regard, the Cabinet warned citizens and expatriates of the consequences of negligence and urged everyone to adhere to stipulated health guidelines, and to take the vaccine against the virus at the earliest available opportunity. The Cabinet added that it was the common societal responsibility of everyone to take concerted steps to reduce the transmission of infection in order to avoid the renewed spread of the pandemic in Kuwait.

## Full attendance in ministries from 1 August

Ministries and other government entities are to return to normal working hours with full attendance of employees with effect from 1 August.

An official administrative circular in this regard was issued by the Director-General of the Public Authority for Manpower, Ahmed Al-Mousa, based on the manual of policies, procedures and rules for the gradual return to work in government establishments.

Administrative Circular No. (15) of 2021, regarding regulating the process of attendance and departure of employees, was issued last week, stipulating that all public-



sector employees would return to work as of 1 August and with normal work timings from 7.30am to 2.30pm.

The circular also provides exemption to these attendance rules to employees who have so far not received two doses of the vaccine, as well as to disabled employees and those suffering from heart conditions, or undergoing kidney or cancer treatments.



## Migratory birds fly thousands of kms looking for best ecological conditions

Different kinds of Migratory birds fly hundreds and thousands of kilometers to find the best ecological conditions and habitats for feeding, breeding and raising their young. About 400 bird species consider Kuwait as a safe passage because of the innate life and suitable environment that is why the Kuwaiti government has given great attention to know the life cycle of these birds and established

several reserves in the country to secure a safe shelter for them.

The United Nations initiated the World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) in 2006 as an annual awareness-raising campaign to highlight the ecological importance of migratory birds and calls for their global conservation through international cooperation.

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# Drug-related deaths on the rise

Drug-related court cases in Kuwait climbed to 9,787 over the past five years, with deaths from drug-related causes rising to 327, disclosed Head of Al-Sabah Medical Specialist Area Dr. Ahmad Al-Shatti.

Dr. Al-Shatti was speaking on the occasion of the health ministry's celebration of International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, which is marked each year on 26 June.

Urging different stakeholders in this issue to exert further efforts to protect

society from this menace, Dr. Al-Shatti noted that dangers of drugs included young addicts being involved in thefts and other crimes to obtain money to buy drugs, as well as their involvement in larger criminal activities such as smuggling and money-laundering. Many deaths were caused by addicts overspeeding in their vehicles and causing car-crashes that also often include innocent victims.

Highlighting the efforts exerted by the Addiction Treatment Center at Al-Sabah Medical Area, Dr. Al-Shatti said the Center

was focused on treating drug addiction and raising awareness in society on this major issue.

On his part, Head of Addiction Treatment Center, Dr. Adel Al-Zayed said that the coronavirus lockdown period led to a steep rise in drug prices due to difficulty in smuggling it into the country. The high prices made it unaffordable to many, and this in turn prompted them to seek the services of the Center to end their addiction. He added that the Center, which was transformed into a rehabilitation



center in 2010, has been providing continuous programs to help those seeking to overcome their addiction.



## BTC opens upgraded maintenance center in Ahmadi

Bahrah Trading Company (BTC), a subsidiary of Al Sayer Holding, has opened their upgraded Maintenance Center at Ahmadi, as part of the Group's strategic expansion towards delivering services more rapidly to the growing business sector in the governorate.

The opening ceremony was held in the presence of the CEO of Al Sayer, Mubarak Naser Al Sayer, and General Manager BTC, Elie Andraos, along with team members from Bahrah Sales, Service and Spare Parts Department.

Speaking during the occasion Al-Sayer said "Ahmadi is a strategic location for our franchise brands specialized in several sectors including oil, construction, contracting. So it is important for us to be closer to our customers, to provide them with the best level of service. This Center consists of a spare parts outlet as well as workshop for repair and maintenance. We are optimistic about achieving success with the opening of this Center, and we are ready to welcome our customers to offer them excellent service."

"The main objective of this upgradation project is to enhance the capacity of the Center to receive more customers. Ahmadi is a strategic location for Kuwait economy, as it includes oil and



petroleum companies as well as the construction sector, and we can now offer better and faster service to fulfil the needs of our customers while being closer to them," commented Mr. Andraos.

The upgraded Maintenance Center features customer reception and a parts storage area, as well as an enhanced workspace that includes, 2315 square meter service garage with a special roofed workshop with cemented flooring and

equipped with advanced tools and a wash bay. In addition, a 471 square meter air-conditioned parts warehouse has been set up with storage capacity of close to 6000-line items and supported by highly skilled technicians and Parts personnel.

"Now we can receive 10 equipment at the same time for quick service and we have also enhanced the spare parts outlets and developed the services as an exclusive benefit for our customers from Bahrah Trading Company," added Mr. Elie.

BTC has an extensive network of parts distribution centers at key locations in Kuwait, so it was imperative to have a distribution centre close to the major fleet owners who cater to the petroleum sector in Kuwait. Implementing KAIZEN standards for better space optimization, will ensure 90 percent first pick availability for all major franchisees, in addition to shorter delivery periods.

Congratulating the team, Chief Operating Officer at AlSayer, Bengt Schultz, said, "Now we will serve our customers in a more welcoming environment that also offers more capacity. This is one small example of how we continue to improve our business and ability to serve customers even when the times are more challenging."

## Electricity consumption soars in line with temperature



Record temperatures in recent days have led to a surge in use of air-conditioning and consequently in electricity consumption. Assistant Undersecretary for the Electricity Transmission Networks Sector and Monitoring and Control Centers at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Mutlaq Al-Otaibi, reiterated this hike in electricity consumption, while urging consumers to rationalize the consumption of electricity.

Noting that the electric consumption index reached around 14,950 megawatts last Friday, he said that while the ministry has sufficient electric power, this does not mean that people can consume electricity in excessive amounts. He suggested that one way to reduce consumption of electricity from the use of air-conditioning units was to replace old units with new models utilizing inverter technology.

He stated that if 500 consumers replaced the old air-conditioning units with the new ones, 6 to 3 kilowatts of energy could be saved, and in total could result in saving about 1,500 megawatts, which is equivalent to the production of a complete power plant.

According to Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, a weather observer at the Meteorological Department, temperatures on Friday touched 53.5 degrees Celsius in the shade in some areas of the country. The temperatures could be much higher in the open deserts and other areas, said the weather-man while indicating that 'normal' temperatures of 48 to 49 degrees Celsius for this time of the year could be expected to return by Sunday.



## MoH approved COVID-19 medication set to arrive

Large quantities of the drug Sotrovimab are expected to arrive in the country next week to mild to moderate cases of COVID-19, following approval and completion of contracting procedures by the Ministry of Health (MoH).

The medication will be distributed upon arrival to hospitals specialized in treating corona to start implementing the treatment protocol for this drug, said medical sources.

Sotrovimab is a monoclonal antibody drugs and is used to treat mild to moderate cases of COVID-19 in adults and children (12 years and over and weighing at least 40 kilograms), as well as those who are at risk of COVID-19 such

as people who reach 65 years of age or older, or who suffer from certain medical conditions. However, the drug is not used on COVID-19 patients who are receiving hospital treatment or who need oxygen therapy.

The sources indicated that the clinical studies of Sotrovimab have shown its effectiveness, as the drug reduced the cases of hospitalization or death by 85 percent. Kuwait is the second country to license this drug globally, stressing the keenness of the MoH to provide the best and latest approved treatments for COVID-19 patients and make them available in Kuwait as soon as possible after the approval of the regulatory authorities.

## IWA Organizes Women Empowerment Seminar on Financial Literacy and Legal Guidance



In the first of its series of IWA Empowers Women, the Indian Women's Association Kuwait (IWA) hosted an online seminar on 26 June. Streamed live on Facebook, the topic of the seminar 'Financial Literacy and Legal Guidance', seen as the need of the hour, was helmed by two speakers, Roopa Venkatkrishnan and Jasmin Kohina.

Roopa Venkatkrishnan, Director Sapiant Wealth Advisors and Stock Brokers, a leading mutual fund distributor in Mumbai, is known for her simple but unique approach to relationship management and portfolio construct.

Roopa's presentation on 'Why do Women need Financial Planning?' took audiences through the basics of financial planning, citing that although financial awareness was not seen as a woman's forte, for centuries

it was the women running homes, and budgeting for monthly expenses. She said that the time has come for women to elevate and educate themselves towards financial management.

Jasmin Kohina, a solicitor by profession is General Counsel at NBK Capital, the investment arm of the National Bank of Kuwait. Her talk on 'Succession Planning and Inheritance' underlined the importance of creating and executing a will, and keeping an updated checklist handy. Succession planning was also touched upon, and a wealth of information on basic legal guidance on the will.

The seminar was organized in collaboration with Gulf Bank and supported by the Landmark Group, and well received by the audience. You can catch it at @IWAKwt on Facebook.



## Demographic balancing leaves one in three apartments empty

Latest statistics on the real estate sector in the country by the Public Institution for Civil Information (PACI) reveals that of the show the total number of apartments in all governorates is about 346,752 total apartments in all governorates, 105,897 remain vacant as of the end of December 2020, which translates to around one in three apartments in the country being empty.

According to the statistics, Hawalli Governorate topped the list of vacant apartments with 40,514 of the total 142,951 apartments in the governorate left vacant. This was followed by the Ahmadi governorate with a total of 89,000 apartments of which around 20,000 are vacant, and in third spot was Farwaniya governorate with a total of 82,293 apartments, of which 18,990 are vacant. In fourth place was Capital governorate with a total of 15,303 apartments of which 4,755 were vacant apartments.

In the penultimate position, is Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate with 9,287 apartments, of which 6,404 are empty, and finally, Jahra Governorate, with a total of 7,763 apartments, including 1,517 empty.

The increase in the number of vacant apartments in Kuwait is closely linked to the government policy of achieving a demographic balance in the population structure through Kuwaitization of public and private sector jobs and discouraging the issuance of new visas

to foreigners that began a few years ago. The situation worsened with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that led to the departure of hundreds of families from Kuwait, which severely impacted the real estate sector.

Many residential property owners have reduced rents by 15 and 25 percent in some areas in a bid to retain tenants and attract new ones, especially since most of the owners have to meet their loan repayment obligations to the banks. In his remarks on the dire circumstances facing the real estate sector, Secretary of the Kuwaiti Real Estate Union, Qais Al-Ghanim, said that the increase in the number of vacant apartments is "an expected outcome and results from the state's implementation of the policy of adjusting the demographic structure."

He explained the coming years will see more vacant apartments, especially since most of the expatriate workers who live with their families will leave for their home countries for vacation and most of them will return without their families and this will not only negatively reflect on the real estate market, but also on all other markets, including the foodstuffs, clothes and cars.

He added that while it was difficult to determine the rate of decline in housing rents, what can be mentioned is that the real estate market will continue to witness further decline in the coming years with the continuation of the policy of adjusting the demographic structure.



## A sensitive issue that needs sensitivity

BY SAREHA SHAH  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES KUWAIT



For centuries women around the world have suffered at the hands of men and been treated unfairly in society. Every country, no matter how much progressive or regressive they are, have in the past usually treated women as secondary to men.

They had no say in the politics, economy, or education of the country. They were confined to doing house work and were considered unfit for any role outside their house. They had no right to vote, no freedom to move freely, and no right to pursue higher education. In some countries, women were also not even considered worthy to participate in religion and religious rites.

Women were killed for giving birth to female children, with female infanticide and feticide deeply upsetting the gender ratio in many countries of the world. Physical violence outside and domestic violence within homes is rampant in almost all countries of the world. Women generally being the weaker gender in terms of physical strength is often taken advantage of.

The systematic oppression of women made their position weak in the society not only physically but also psychologically. The atrocities and subjugation to which women were subjected over the centuries led to women in some parts of the world accepting their inferior status as the norm, and when women in certain parts of the world started raising voices against gender subjugation and equal rights they faced some of the strongest opposition from women.

The steps taken by governments, civil society organizations, and people around the world to improve the social, economic, political conditions of women, and to put them in the position of power and decision-making equal to men is often termed women empowerment.

Things have no doubt improved in the last few decades, with women these days enjoying a lot more freedom and rights than before. They have proved their mettle in all fields be it medicine, politics, aviation, space, education, scientific discoveries, even religion. But a lot more remains to be done even now.

The first and foremost tool for women's empowerment is education. Women should be educated. Education helps in a better understanding of world affairs. Education helps in awareness of rights among women. Educated women not only help themselves but also help other women to become

empowered. Second tool is awareness. Making women aware of the unjust treatment that they have been subjected to is an important task. Making them aware of their political, educational, economic, legal rights helps in changing their mindset.

Also, women should be economically independent. Their financial independence helps them to survive free from men in society. If a woman is financially independent she can break free from shackles of subjugation and ill-treatment from men in society and can face the world more confidently.

But financial independence for women can be achieved only when there are ample opportunities for them in terms of work. That is why women reservation in education, politics, workplaces and elsewhere remains very important.

There should be laws made to ensure reservations are implemented and to protect women from any kind of mistreatment in workplaces, as well as at home or in public places.

Though a lot has been done for the upliftment of women and things are much better than what they were in the past, there remains still more to be done in order to put men and women on an equal footing. Though women can work in any field now, there is still a significant difference in wages between the two genders.

Women are invariably paid less for the same work that a man does. This has to change. Also, although there are many women in politics today, still the percentage of women's representation in parliaments worldwide is appreciably small. Women's representation in space, in technology, and in research is even less.

We as a society have to encourage more and more women to undertake jobs in these fields. Though a lot of laws have been made for the security of women in the past few decades, their implementation has often been slow. Cases of rape, harassment, violence against women often goes unreported or falls short of evidence. This too has to change.

While the above empowerment measures are necessary and should be promoted, it is equally important to ensure greater sensitivity on this issue, among both genders, especially from men. Support from family members and the wider society is needed to ensure greater women's empowerment. This is a very deep and sensitive matter, and it requires cooperation across both genders for its successful implementation.

We all have to remember, women are an inseparable part of our societies. They give birth to us, they feed, clothe and take care of us as children. Women are also the first teachers of children. If Women remain oppressed and denied dignity and respect, our success and advancement as a human race will remain incomplete.

# Kuwait's financial position 'very strong', minister says

**K**uwait's financial position is "very strong" and propped up by the "Future Generations" reserve fund, the country's finance minister said on Thursday, pointing out that the fund has seen exponential growth as of late.

The fund has achieved a 33-percent increase in revenue, eclipsing the performances of similar sovereign funds around the world, Khalifa Hamada, who doubles as Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs, said in a statement, adding that growth should remain steady for as long as 20 years.

The growth in the "Future Generations" fund's revenue in the last five years even surpassed oil revenues in the same period, the minister added, attributing the fund's "historic growth" to the "competence and professionalism" of those overseeing it.

The state treasury's liquid assets were "completely exhausted" last summer as a result of "mounting expenditure," he said, listing a raft of liquidity measures worth USD 23 billion the country had taken to keep financial stability intact.

He pinpointed "rising oil prices" as a factor that helped provide adequate



treasury liquidity, however, "scarcity" in liquidity remains a challenge, the minister

highlighted, citing a four-year plan the government has put in place to set in motion a spate of financial and economic reforms.

On Kuwait's credit rating, he said the country's ranking remains "solid" thanks to the backup provided by the "Future Generations" fund, but more reforms are needed to boost treasury liquidity in the long run, the minister stressed.

"Financial reforms have now become a dire necessity," he said, which behooves executive and legislative authorities alike to work closer together to bring this goal to fruition.

## Parliament adjourns amid political instability

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Speaker Al-Ghanim ordered Abdullah Al-Salem Hall emptied of all visitors, so as to discuss the government's request to consider the state's financial situation in a secret session. The Parliament's 16th legislative term was then adjourned with a statement by the Secretary-General of the National Assembly, Adel Al-Loughani, who read Decree No. 139 of 2021 to adjourn the session.

**Kuwait, the only Constitutional Monarchy in the region, has an elected parliament and an appointed government. While 50 parliamentarians are elected for a four-year term through universal suffrage and secret ballot among eligible Kuwaiti voters, the Prime Minister is appointed by His Highness the Amir. The premier then draws up a Cabinet or Council of Ministers, which is limited by the Constitution to a maximum of one-third the strength of the National Assembly, or 16 members currently.**

Members of the Cabinet are also permitted by the Constitution to sit in parliament as deputies, and have the same rights as elected MPs. The only two exceptions to this rule are that they cannot participate in the works of committees, and they are not allowed to vote when an interpellation leads to a no-confidence vote against one of the cabinet members. This constitutional restriction is one reason why the government is reluctant to enter into a face-off with the opposition in parliament.

Given the prevailing contentious nature of relations between the executive and legislative branches, the government is aware that opposition MPs have the numbers to force any minister out of office through a no-confidence motion, or to table a non-cooperation resolution against the Prime Minister with His Highness the Amir. A non-cooperation move against the prime minister would lead to the premier tendering the resignation of the Cabinet to His Highness the Amir.

In this context, His Highness the Amir could then ask the prime minister to form a new cabinet, or choose another prime minister to form a new Council of Ministers. The Amir could also choose to annul parliament and call for fresh elections within two months as mandated by the Constitution, or dissolve the assembly unconstitutionally and defray elections while appointing a cabinet to run the country.

Since the first legislative term began in January 1963, Kuwait has hobbled along a democratic parliamentary path that has so far seen eight constitutional dissolutions and a couple of unconstitutional ones. Kuwait has witnessed five consecutive dissolutions since the 10th legislative term in 2003, until the 15th legislative term broke this chain of dissolutions by completing its full four-year term from 2016 to 2020.

The 16th legislative term that began on 15 December 2020, the first since His Highness the

Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was sworn in as the Amir of Kuwait, got off to a wobbling start with the Cabinet tendering its resignation in less than a month of its formation. The current cabinet formed on 2 March of this year is the 38th in the history of Kuwait. Following resignation of the 37th Cabinet, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah decided to reassign Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as Prime Minister on 24 January and tasked him with forming a new cabinet.

The latest parliamentary elections held on 5 December, 2020 resulted in the Islamist opposition bloc in the National Assembly gaining in strength at the expense of liberals and pro-government candidates. The results signalled an entrenchment of the conservative trend that has been gaining traction in recent legislatures. A parliament in recent years. The return of seven former leading opposition MPs after several years of remaining away from politics, as well as the entry of two ex-ministers, Badr Nasser Al-Humaidi and Shuaib Shabbab Al-Muwaizri, in



opposition garb, portended to the bleak future that awaited executive-legislative relations in the 16th legislature.

In election promises to their constituencies, many new MPs had promised to raise several highly contentious issues during the 16th legislative-term, including a resolution to the long-festering topic of Bedouins; reforming the electoral system, which since 2012 has allowed voters to pick only one candidate, in place of the earlier four; and revamping the process of electing the National Assembly Speaker, among other issues.

Accordingly, a day after the opening session of the new legislative term several lawmakers submitted proposals to discuss a variety of political issues. Clarifying their parliamentary priorities, one opposition figure said, "While we intend proposing other important laws that range from demographic imbalance to education, we started off with submitting political proposals to amend laws so as to set the stage, so that it makes it easier for us to pass legislation regarding more technical issues."

The idea that political discussions and interpellations in parliament are designed to

pave the way for lawmakers to make it easier to pass more urgent laws at a later date, is as lopsided as priorities can get. Meanwhile, the government is said to be contemplating passing urgent bills, including the public debt law, through Amiri decrees during the interim period that parliament is not in session. The National Assembly Speaker hinted to this possibility during his statement on Tuesday adjourning parliament.

Refuting media reports on the government introducing decrees that could "harm the interests of citizens" such as taxes, he pointed out that any decree issued must be presented in parliament within 15 days from the date of its issuance for approval by lawmakers. Nevertheless, the Speaker was quick to add that, "adoption of any law after adjournment of a parliament session is a different matter".

He pointed out that Article 71 of the Constitution states: "Where incidents requiring urgent action occur between sessions of the National Assembly or during its dissolution the

deficits and low oil revenues.

The FGF, which invests the state revenues in assets and ventures mainly abroad, serves as a financial buffer for a period in the future when Kuwait could run out of oil. While the chances of Kuwait's oil reserves running dry are a possibility in the distant future, a more increasing likelihood is for the world opting to replace carbon-emitting hydrocarbon fuels for cleaner renewable resources to meet its energy needs.

**In his speech complimenting management of FGF, the finance minister did not elaborate on why the KIA, which manages both funds, exhibited "competence and professionalism" in managing one fund but not in the other. Several media reports have hinted at disagreement between the government and KIA board on how best to manage the funds, including on request by the finance ministry to dip into the FGF to help tide over budgetary deficits and the present liquidity crunch in the GRF.**

Reports indicate that the KIA has been in a limbo for the last several months due to the government's reticence to renew the tenure terms of KIA board members that expired a couple of months ago. The government has yet to announce a new term for the Board of Directors as political differences spill over into a disagreement over the make-up of the nine-member board.

In the meantime, the GRF is said to have dwindled to as low as KD1.63 billion by the end of March 2021. Though it has grown since then on the back of rising oil prices in international markets, net assets of the GRF have witnessed significant declines over the past several years as a result of the decline in oil prices and the need to fund the government's recurring budget deficits. The net withdrawals from the GRF is estimated to have been around KD41 billion from fiscal year 2015-2016 until 31 December, 2020.

Despite highlighting the performance of FGF, the finance minister did admit that liquid assets of GRF were "completely exhausted" last summer as a result of "mounting expenditure". He added that a raft of liquidity measures worth US\$23 billion had been taken since then to keep financial stability intact. He also acknowledged that "rising oil prices" in recent months had helped provide the treasury with adequate liquidity in the near-term.

Nevertheless, he warned that the "crunch" in liquidity remains a challenge, and noted that the government had put in place a four-year plan to set in motion a spate of financial and economic reforms aimed at boosting the treasury's liquidity in the long run. He added, "Financial reforms have now become a dire necessity for the country, and this demands that both the executive and legislative authorities work closer together to bring this goal to fruition." We heard a similar wishful thinking before from the finance minister's predecessor. But, with those involved apparently not listening, this too will likely be just that, wishful thinking.

# KIMS signs MoU with Nice University on training health professionals

Kuwait healthcare professionals will now be able to undergo cutting-edge medical training programs following the signing last week of a Memorandum of Understanding (mOU) between Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization (KIMS) and Nice University Hospital in France.

The MoU, which establishes a framework for training programs that will run until mid-2026, was signed by the General Secretary of KIMS, Dr. Fawaz AlRefaee, and Chief Executive Officer of Nice University Hospital, Charles Guépratte. The signing ceremony was witnessed by high-level officials, including the Minister of Health Sheikh Dr. Basil Hammoud Al-Sabah, the Ambassador of France to the State of Kuwait, H.E. Anne-Claire Legendre, and the General Manager for Greater Gulf of Sanofi, Jean Paul Scheuer.

The training programs, which are renowned for its specialization especially in complicated surgeries, diabetes management, and gastroenterology, will be held in Kuwait with the support of French pharmaceutical giant Sanofi, and will leverage on the knowledge, expertise



and experience of Nice University Hospital. They will include short-term training sessions, fellowship training programs, master classes and workshops.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Guépratte said: "We have a long-standing relationship with KIMS, and over the years, we have seen an increase in the number of healthcare professionals trained at our hospital. We are a pioneer in medical training, and we are proud of these programs that truly reflect excellence and innovation in the provision of healthcare services. We thank again the

Ministry of Health in Kuwait and KIMS for giving us the opportunity to participate with them in extending our knowledge and expertise so as to promote excellence of healthcare in Kuwait."

For his part, Dr. Basil Al-Sabah said: "This MoU will lead to more training opportunities for Kuwaiti doctors in French hospitals, an increase in the number of study places, postgraduate medical studies, cooperation and exchange of experiences in the fields of research, training and joint scientific programs

that will improve understanding and cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the French Republic".

In her address, Ambassador Legendre said: "This MoU provides for specialized training of Kuwaiti doctors in France and opens new promising areas of collaboration. The healthcare sector is a priority for the cooperation between France and Kuwait, and we are determined to support the Kuwaiti authorities in their efforts to build stronger at home medical capacities."

## Consultant sought for renewable energy projects

Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP), the government-entity charged with promoting and implementing public-private partnership (PPP) projects in the country, is seeking to assign a consultant-house to study and promote enterprises for producing electricity from renewable energy sources.

The newly appointed Director of KAPP, Fadhila Al-Hassan, said during a media interview last week that the Authority is coordinating with the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), to select and assign the consultant for this purpose.

KAPP was established in 2014, in line with the government's ambitious PPP policy to diversify the economy away from its over-dependence on oil, and encourage greater participation of the private sector in the economic growth and development of the country.

The Authority serves as the main body for promotion and implementation of PPP projects through collaboration between the public and private sectors to develop quality infrastructure and services in Kuwait. KAPP is currently involved in initiating several high-impact projects in the power, water, education, health, transportation, communications, real estate, waste water and solid waste management sectors.

Speaking during the meeting, Al-Hassan said that currently two main ongoing renewable energy projects in the country are the third phase of Al-Shagaya renewable energy project and the Al-Dabdaba power station. Both projects are part of the larger Al-Shagaya Renewable Energy Park, located about 165km to the west of Kuwait City, close to the country's border with Saudi Arabia.

She added that the Authority is looking to assign a single consultant for both projects. The selected consultancy house will be tasked to prepare studies and documents and promote the enterprises according to Law 39/2010 and its amendments. This law regulates the establishment of Kuwaiti Joint Stock Companies to build and maintain electric power and water desalination stations in Kuwait.

The third phase of the Al-Shagaya project includes a solar Photovoltaic (PV) plant, a Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) plant, and a



wind power plant that are together projected to produce over 2,000MW of power from renewable sources.

The Dabdaba Solar plant project within the Energy Park, which is an initiative of Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), aims to produce 1,500MW of energy from solar power to meet 15 percent of the oil sector's demand for energy by 2030. However, this project was scrapped by a Cabinet decision in July 2020, in the wake of a slowdown in economic situation following the global pandemic.

On the occasion of her recent appointment as director of KAPP, Al-Hassan indicated that she would shoulder responsibilities that warrant a successful team capable of serving public interests. Elaborating on the First Phase of the Al-Zour North Integrated Water and Power Production project, she said that the project which is a PPP project was completed successfully and has been transferred to the shareholding company.

Al-Hassan added that this project was the first of its kind to be launched, according to Law-39, 2010, and its amendments, and it was the first one to be set up through public subscription. This project, which earned international awards, had become operational within a record short time, and is now contributing to 10 percent of the power needs of the national grid and to 20 percent of water consumed in the country. She further affirmed that the success of this project attests to the capabilities of local companies and is an example of the potential for further joint ventures to be launched in the country.

## Global rich grow richer in 2020, in Kuwait their numbers fall



According to World Wealth Report 2021, the number of millionaires around the world crossed the 20 million milestone during the year 2020, with the number of people with a net worth of US\$1 million or more increasing by 6.3 percent to 20.8 million people, during the year when the COVID-19 crisis was devastating the world.

Published by Capgemini, the Paris-headquartered information technology and consulting firm, the World Wealth Report (WWR) 2021 also showed that the size of High-Net-Worth-Individuals (HNWIs) in the Middle-East increased by 6.8 percent during the 'Year of the COVID'.

The special 25th anniversary edition of Capgemini's WWR further noted that total wealth owned by the world's millionaires and billionaires grew by 7.6 percent to reach a total value of \$80 trillion. Much of the gain came from increased stock market valuations. In the Middle-East, the wealth of HNWIs increased by 10.7 percent to reach \$3.2 trillion.

Amid the rich breaking open champagne bottles to celebrate their success while the rest of the world was suffering economic catastrophe, some of the HMWIs in Kuwait were counting their losses. The report

showed that in this country the number of millionaires declined by 2,000 from 207,000 in 2019 to 205,000 in 2020.

Though it still remained second among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states in terms of number of millionaires, after losing its top spot in the region to Saudi Arabia last year, Kuwait also dropped in its global ranking to 18th spot in the list of countries with the most wealthy people.

Among the top 25 markets in terms of the number of HNWIs, only Kuwait, Brazil and the United Kingdom recorded a decline in the number of HNWIs, while all the other markets experienced a growth in numbers from the figures in 2019.

The countries with the largest number of rich people in 2020 were the United States, Japan, Germany and China. Together these four countries accounted for 63 percent of the world's millionaires.

The report revealed that stocks constituted the bulk of the investment of wealthy people in the Middle East at 22.6 percent, while the second most attractive asset class was cash and cash equivalents (21.3%), then real estate (19.9%), followed by fixed income (19.3%), then alternative investments (16.9%).

# Moon of Kuwait satellite launched into orbit

**M**oon of Kuwait', or QMR-KWT as the satellite is known officially, was blasted off into space last week onboard the SpaceX Falcon 9 from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in the United States.

Revealing the launch of Kuwait's first satellite into orbit, Bassam Al-Feeli, the founder and general manager of Orbital Space, the company that developed QMR-KWT said: "This is a 1U CubeSat and will be Kuwait's first Satellite. Our goal is to make space accessible to all, and as a startup, we are excited to work with other startups to meet our mutual objectives.

"Once in space, QMR-KWT will be the outcome of efforts from all young companies including Orbital Space, EnduroSat, D-Orbit, and even SpaceX, which is less than 20 years old company", he added.

"QMR-KWT's functional testing has been completed at EnduroSat facilities and it has been integrated with ION Satellite Carrier, D-Orbit's orbital transportation vehicle,



as part of the plan to put it in orbit," Al-Feeli noted. The Falcon 9 mission dubbed Transporter-2 rideshare mission will carry several dozens of satellites from the surface of the earth to outer space at around 500 km above sea level in a sun synchronous orbit.

Meanwhile, according to Director of Educational Programs at Orbital Space, Nada Al-Shammari, QMR KWT is an educational space mission and is already inspiring and

empowering students to become the future professionals in the space sector. She added that the main education mission of QMR KWT is 'Code in Space'.

Code in Space is an opportunity for students to develop and test new software solutions by writing software code to be uploaded and executed on the satellite's onboard computer, for the first time ever. "We have been receiving proposals from students around the world and we invite students from everywhere to challenge themselves and connect with this unique opportunity," said Al-Shammari.

QMR-KWT mission control and ground station will be located at Dubai Digital Park, Dubai Silicon Oasis as part of the collaboration agreement between Orbital Space and the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) under the umbrella of MBRSC Space Ventures for startups.

Established in August 2018, Orbital Space is the first company in the Arab World to provide access to space through CubeSat



technology. The company offers services to design, build, test and operate CubeSats to students and amateurs, to help them gain the know-how to build a satellite, and also support them if they want to do a space-related experiment.

## Healthcare system under strain from new cases



**H**ealth system in the country is witnessing an unprecedented case of a severe outbreak that is straining its resources said, Head of the advisory committee to confront the Corona pandemic, Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah. He urged everyone to bear the responsibility of adhering to the state's health and preventive directives and the initiative for vaccination, stressing the importance

of support for our medical cadres during their confrontation with the epidemiological situation.

He noted that the outbreak of the Delta variant of the virus has exceeded the Alpha strain globally, regionally, and locally. Dr. Al-Jarallah added that the Delta wave targeted the unvaccinated, and that the epidemiological situation depends on strict adherence to health requirements and vaccination.

Meanwhile, a member of the Vaccination Committee at the Ministry of Health, Dr. Khaled Al-Saeed said that the speed of vaccination has noticeably increased in recent weeks. He noted that the daily vaccination rate exceeded 1 percent of the eligible population with over 47,000 people vaccinated in a day last week. He also clarified that the vaccination is now available to pregnant and lactating women, stressing the importance of encouraging them to register and receive the vaccine. Studies have proven the safety and effectiveness of vaccination for this segment.

In recent weeks, a record number of people are being admitted to the intensive care units (ICU) with a total of 296 patients now admitted in ICUs. The intensive care consultant at the Amiri Hospital, Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Faris, revealed that the cases of admission to the intensive care wards are mostly among young, unvaccinated people in the age groups between 20 to 50 years.

Last Wednesday, the spokesman for the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health, Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad confirmed that the number of people receiving medical care in intensive care departments reached 296, while the total number of confirmed cases still receiving medical care reached 18,596. He added that the number of swabs that were conducted during the same period amounted to 14,887, bringing the total of tests to 2,976,536, noting that the percentage of infections for the total number of swabs stood at 12.33 percent.

He renewed the call to continue to take preventive measures, avoid contact with others, and ensure physical distancing, recommending visiting the accounts of the Ministry of Health and the official authorities in the country to review the instructions and recommendations and everything that would contribute to containing the spread of the virus.

## ABCK-AmCham Kuwait holds panel discussion on IT security



**A**BCK-AmCham Kuwait held a 'Data Loss Protection (DLP), Cybersecurity, and Best Practices in Kuwait' panel discussion, with the support of the Communication & Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) and the US-Kuwait Business Council.

The panelists for this discussion included Chief of Market Regulations & Competition at CITRA, Mohammad Altura, Deputy Counselor for Economic Affairs at the US Embassy in Kuwait, Vivek Joshi, EMEA CISO at Fortinet, Alain Sanchez, National Technology Officer at Microsoft, Majd Abbar, Technical Solutions Architect at CISCO, Ayed Al Qartah, and Enterprise Risk Management Manager at Zain, Faisal M. AlAli. The discussion was moderated by Cybersecurity Policy & Certified Information System Security Professional (CISSP), Dana Winner.

In his opening statement, ABCK- AmCham Kuwait's Chairman, Frank Belonus welcomed the panelists and moderator and gave a special thanks to CITRA, the US Embassy of Kuwait, and the US-Kuwait Business Council for their support. He then introduced Dana Winner as the moderator for this discussion.

Winner introduced the topic by talking about the statistics on data breaches between August 2019, and April 2020, as the average cost of data breaches was estimated at US\$4 million in the United States. Healthcare data breaches on their own cost more than \$7 million per

breach, making Cyber-attacks a major costly issue. She stated that the purpose of the panel discussion was to create a better understanding of the subject of DLP, how it is related to cybersecurity, and details on how to better respond to threats and strengthen our protection against vulnerabilities, especially in Kuwait.

During the discussion the panelists discussed various aspects of DLP, cybersecurity and best practices to avoid vulnerabilities. Speakers pointed out that while the government is responsible for building awareness and ensuring an understanding of the risks that cyber-attacks pose to nations, every data breach begins with an individual and therefore the responsibility falls on both the collective and the individual. They advised people to be wary of different types of attacks as they evolve, for example, phishing attacks combined with social engineering are often used to compromise systems, and that it was important for companies to have the right tools and awareness to fight off cyber-threats and protect crucial assets.

Winner closed the discussion by offering the audience the support of AmCham Kuwait, in order to support data protection in Kuwait. She thanked the panel for their crucial input, and added that the meeting was recorded and could be found on AmCham Kuwait's YouTube channel.



# An innings cut short, Rasheed Kidwai's new book looks on Madhavrao Scindia

SAHRIZVI  
THE TIMES KUWAIT BUREAU, NEW DELHI

My proximity to late Congress Party leader Madhavrao Scindia began with my stint as Political editor and then as Editor of Delhi Mid-Day. Over the years we would talk on phone or meet very often.

Madhavrao Scindia was an avid reader of Mid-Day and perhaps this brought me closer to him as well. For me, he was the best source of information on Congress inner politics and he trusted me to the core.

Our relation continued even when he was out of Congress and contested as an independent in the 1996 Lok Sabha polls. He won the election with a huge margin and we had a headline ready, 'Maharajah turns the table on Rao'.

When we met in Delhi over dinner, he took me to a corner of his Safdarjung Road residence in New Delhi and requested, "Please don't refer to me as Maharajah in the paper", I said, "Done".

One day he called me in his office, reacting to a story on the Congress that I did, "How do you read my mind so well," he asked.

"Sir, I know that you always do everything which is right and also think in that direction: It is that easy." He conveyed his praise, and so did I.

Once an Alliance Air plane crashed early in the morning in Patna in July 2000, he knew of our newspaper deadline. His secretary Khanna called me and connected me to him. Madhavrao Scindia was now donning his role as former Civil Aviation minister and gave his reaction to the crash.

His timing was so accurate that even before the government could react, Scindia had made news.

My association with Scindia was well known and when his plane crashed and news came in several journalists were among those killed, many called me and my wife at home to ensure I was not in the plane.

It was through my effort and that of Hindustan Times owner Shobhna Bhartiya that he took Rupinder Singh as his political advisor. Rupinder was tragically among those who perished in the crash.

He was media friendly but he drew compartments and that reflected in his style of functioning. Rasheed Kidwai, a gifted political reporter, was among those who had his ears...

[Edited excerpts from *The House of Scindias: A Saga of Power, Politics and Intrigue*, by Rasheed Kidwai]

Rasheed Kidwai was not only a source of information for me, but everyday he had lots of stories and gossip to tell. Many times, he would assist me when there used to be a story drought.

A brilliant political writer, Rasheed's first book on Sonia Gandhi was a runaway bestseller and even Hollywood planned a movie but technical issues came in between.

I totally agree with Rasheed's observation that, "Madhavrao Scindia, like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Pranab Mukherjee, was probably one of the best prime ministers that India never had. His rise was cruelly cut short by fate – at the same time as when the Congress was on the trail of a comeback.

An indication emerged in that direction when Sonia Gandhi made Madhavrao Scindia as Deputy Leader of Lok Sabha, a year before his death.

Writes Rasheed in this book, "Scindia died in a tragic plane crash on 30 September 2001, just eight months after the death of his mother, Vijaya Raje Scindia. But while the ailing Rajmata was in her eighties and had the satisfaction of seeing her party, the BJP, firmly on the seat of power, Madhavrao was just fifty-six, in the prime of his political life.

Less than three years later, in 2004, a Congress-led coalition would come to power at the Centre and remain at the helm for the next ten years. Madhavrao would have been Sonia Gandhi's first choice as

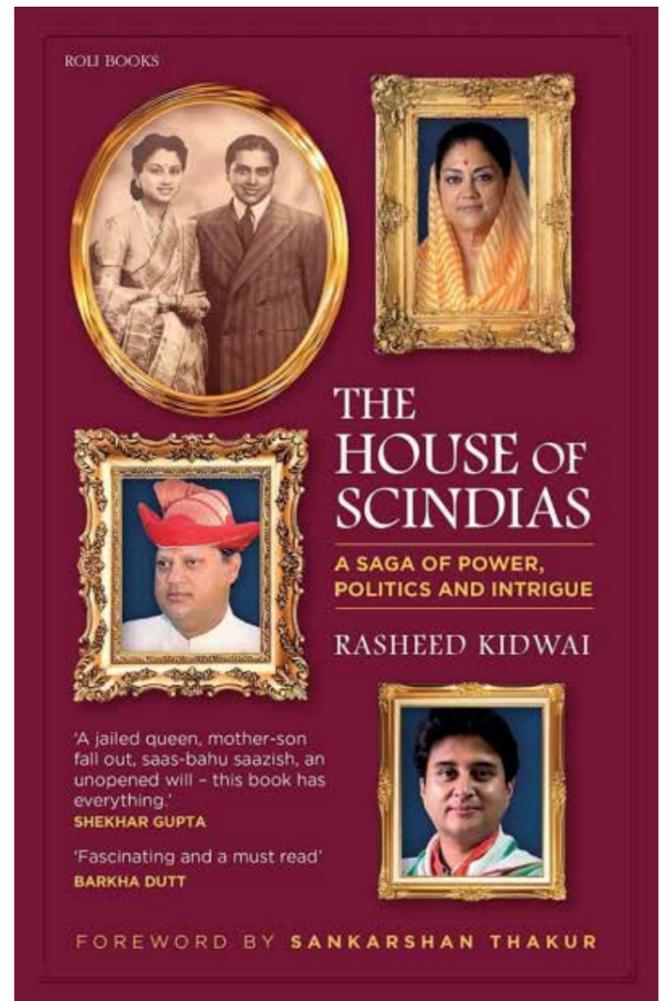
prime minister in the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government instead of Dr Manmohan Singh.

While that will always remain in the realm of conjecture, there is little doubt that within the Congress Madhavrao was much more popular as a leader than Manmohan Singh, who is by nature a reticent man. A measure of Madhavrao's popularity can be estimated from the fact that he would win every Congress Working Committee election he contested by a huge margin, without even being part of the 'informal panel' that would be formed as a quid pro quo to garner votes from delegates.

He also shared a unique understanding with Sonia Gandhi. In private conversations, Madhavrao was perhaps alone in a league of Congress leaders addressing politician Sonia on a first name basis. He would however, address her as 'Sonia ji' in the presence of others and at formal party forums. Sonia used to address him as Madhav and often invited him for a cup of tea or coffee at a rather short notice too. They had known each other from the time of her arrival in India and her marriage to Rajiv Gandhi in 1968.

Madhavrao was aware of the Italian-born party president's inner conflict on opting for the 'big chair' of the country's prime ministership whenever such a situation may come to pass. It was not that Sonia had discussed this hypothetical scenario with him, but political events in 1999 had given Madhavrao an insight into the matter.

This was the same period when ties strengthened between Madhavrao and Sonia Gandhi, already wary of Rao, and looking for a political role. Madhavrao went



out of the way to help Sonia continue as the head of the India Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), the country's premier and wealthiest cultural institution. It was Madhavrao's machinations that Sonia was made life trustee of the IGNCA.

Rasheed's present book is a beautiful historical journey of the Scindias, their growth, the palace intrigues and essentially what made Scindias so different from many of the former princely state rulers. A must read, it gives a vivid description of the transformation of India from being a grouping of princely states to the present democratic fabric.

The flame of Scindia family is now in the hands of his able son Jyotiraditya Scindia who is presently carving a new legacy with the BJP.

[The book by Rasheed Kidwai, *The House of Scindias: A Saga of Power, Politics and Intrigue*, is published by Roli Books and is available online.]

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Preserving Women's Bodily Autonomy



**NATALIA KANEM**  
Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund.

**B**y the age of 24, Maya Bohara had borne four children, and she and her husband decided that their family was large enough. For nine years thereafter, despite living in a poor region of Nepal, she could rely on a local health clinic for injectable contraceptives.

But then came COVID-19, which disrupted medical supply chains and health budgets around the world. By June 2020, Maya's clinic was out of the contraceptive she had been using; and by February 2021, her fifth child was born. Although the Boharas' new baby is deeply loved, a vulnerable family has now been put in an even more precarious position.

They are hardly alone. For women around the world, one of the most serious costs of the pandemic — beyond the direct toll in lives and livelihoods — has been loss of reproductive choice. These are lifetime costs that might be borne even by generations to come.

This April, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN sexual and reproductive health agency, published *My Body Is My Own*, a groundbreaking edition of our annual State of World Population report. In it, we trace the link between sexual and reproductive health and bodily autonomy, a principle that is absolutely fundamental to women's self-determination and empowerment. Only when women have control over their bodies can they benefit from rights and opportunities in all other areas of their lives, whether that means going to school, caring for their family, starting a business, or leading a country.

By the same token, any loss of bodily autonomy quickly multiplies. According to recent estimates by UNFPA and Avenir Health, an estimated 12 million women in 115 low- and middle-income countries faced disruptions in family-planning services during the first year of the pandemic, leading to around 1.4 million unintended pregnancies. Such outcomes — a cause of increased maternal deaths and unsafe abortions — are one of the starkest



manifestations of lost bodily autonomy.

If there is one bright spot in these figures, it is that the most severe disruptions to family planning occurred early in the pandemic and were for the most part short-lived. For its part, UNFPA stepped in to provide contraceptives and other reproductive-health supplies to countries in need.

At the same time, many health systems have come up with creative measures to ensure sustained access. In Uganda, the SafeBoda ride-hailing app now delivers

confinement does not lead to gaps in contraceptive use.

Globally, the percentage of countries reporting pandemic-related disruptions to family-planning and contraception services has fallen from 66% in 2020 to 44% in 2021. Concerted efforts by health officials, governments, and donors have greatly mitigated a catastrophe for women. In some cases, solutions were implemented so quickly that women did not even know that their sexual and reproductive health and rights were at risk.

**“ An estimated 12 million women in 115 low- and middle-income countries faced disruptions in family-planning services during the first year of the pandemic, leading to around 1.4 million unintended pregnancies.. ”**

contraceptives to users' doorsteps. In Eswatini, UN agencies launched an initiative to inform tens of thousands of women about family-planning services through SMS alerts. In northern Brazil, family-planning counseling is conducted through telemedicine, and contraceptives can be delivered by community health agents on bicycle. In rural Nepal, family-planning counselors travel for hours to provide free services to women in remote quarantine centers, ensuring that their

In a way, that is as it should be. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development established a common agenda for sexual and reproductive health. And at a summit in Nairobi 25 years later, governments, businesses, youth and women's activists, philanthropies, and others made bold commitments to end family-planning shortfalls, preventable maternal deaths, and gender-based violence and other harmful practices against women and girls.

This international support has enabled UNFPA to operate sexual- and reproductive-health programs in more than 150 countries. Since 2008, medicines and contraceptives delivered through our Supplies Partnership have saved countless lives and prevented almost 90 million unintended pregnancies. Moreover, this work has helped to instill an awareness of sexual and reproductive health as a fundamental human right, which is an important reason why these services were quickly restored after the initial shock of the pandemic.

But we cannot be complacent. These gains are fragile, and funding continues to be threatened by the pandemic's economic fallout. Many countries have altered their spending and service priorities; some of the UNFPA's own programs have been affected by major spending cuts in the United Kingdom, one of the organization's oldest and strongest partners.

Under these conditions, we must fight even harder to ensure that sexual and reproductive health remains a top priority. Failing that, it is not just individual women who will suffer. Entire countries will experience increased levels of socioeconomic vulnerability and inequality, making it even harder to recover from the current crisis, let alone build resilience against future natural disasters, pandemics, and climate change.

To reduce the risk to sexual and reproductive health, a top priority should be to scale up investments in these services by making them an integral part of national recovery plans. In countries with limited fiscal space, the international community must lend more support through debt relief so that governments do not have to divert funds from health care to pay off creditors.

A second priority is to ensure that services actually reach all women and girls. This requires overcoming complex barriers related to location, education, age, and other factors that can impede access to care. Services must be made available across the lifespan, from adolescence to old age, covering everything from comprehensive sexuality education to routine cancer screenings.

COVID-19 has taken so much from so many. We cannot allow it to take even more by denying women sexual and reproductive health. All women have the right to live in safety, with easy access to the medicines that they need to make empowered, autonomous decisions about their own bodies and their lives.



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Pandemic, a threat to female leadership



## MICHELE BARRY AND GEETA RAO GUPTA

Michele Barry, Founder of WomenLift Health, is Chair of the Consortium of Universities for Global Health and a professor of medicine and tropical diseases at Stanford University.

Geeta Rao Gupta, Global Advisory Board Chair of WomenLift Health, is a senior fellow at the United Nations Foundation.

One in four. That is the proportion of American women who are considering downshifting their careers or leaving the workforce due to the impact of COVID-19. In just one year, the pandemic has driven more than two million women in the United States out of the workplace, resulting in the largest male-female unemployment gap in two decades.

Working mothers, more than 40 percent of whom are their family's primary breadwinner, have been especially hit hard. Many simply are unable to balance their careers with overwhelming increases in household responsibilities at home. This mirrors similar trends globally — across all regions, women lost jobs at a greater rate than men in 2020, as they took on an average of 30 more hours of childcare per week.

COVID-19 is causing women to leave the workforce in droves just when we urgently need to elevate more of them into leadership positions across sectors, including in our own field of global health. Without women's expertise, leadership talents, and unique perspectives, the road to recovery could be far longer, and we risk being underprepared for the next health crisis, particularly given the pandemic's clear gendered effects.

And having women in leadership positions has been shown to result in more policies that improve people's quality of life and reflect the priorities of families and marginalized communities — the very groups disproportionately affected by this pandemic. In global health, women's voices are crucial to driving intentional, holistic action on important challenges that too



often are missed when the vast majority of decision-makers are men.

When women are not at the table, the consequences are serious. This pandemic has led to increases in domestic violence and suspensions or delays in sexual and reproductive health services, often leaving unprepared governments struggling to respond. For too long, we lacked sex-disaggregated data, including on how

of COVID-19, we have an opportunity to embrace new and better ways of working so that parents do not have to choose between their careers and their family responsibilities — and so that women can thrive and lead. In global health, like in other fields, this starts with acknowledging and breaking down barriers and urging those in positions of power to embrace the necessary changes in policies, allocation of

resources, and cultural norms. For starters, we must make our workplaces more family-friendly through measures such as flexible schedules, subsidized childcare, and family leave. We must also dismantle the sexist biases that hold back women in their careers, including false, negative assumptions about mothers that have adverse implications in hiring and promotion decisions. Furthermore, we need to recognize that pandemic-related challenges have not affected all women equally. In the US, like in many other countries, women who already face additional hurdles — whether because they are black, Hispanic, or unpartnered mothers — have shouldered an even heavier load. We must advocate for policies that can correct this imbalance. In particular, such policies should include universal childcare, which helps address inequalities faced by marginalized women.

Women should not have to sacrifice their health, work, or leadership potential in the pursuit of the mythical 'work-life balance'. The best leadership we can muster by drawing from all humankind, and not just 50 percent of it, is needed to improve health outcomes and the well-being of people around the world.

Millions of women have already left the workforce during this pandemic, and many more are thinking of doing so. If we do not act now to reverse this trend, the gap may become insurmountable. We cannot afford to lose the very people who will help lead us out of this health emergency and future ones, too.

“ As we rebuild from the devastation of COVID-19, we have an opportunity to embrace new and better ways of working so that women do not have to choose between their careers and their family responsibilities ”

both COVID-19 infection and vaccination affect pregnant women, simply because researchers do not routinely investigate these questions. We will continue to struggle with these and other issues unless women are better represented in decision-making.

But as we rebuild from the devastation

resources, and cultural norms.

For starters, we must make our workplaces more family-friendly through measures such as flexible schedules, subsidized childcare, and family leave. We must also dismantle the sexist biases that hold back women in their careers, including false, negative assumptions about

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Transforming Education After the Pandemic



**JULIA GILLARD**

*A former prime minister of Australia, is Chair of the Board of Directors of the Global Partnership for Education.*

As many countries cautiously reopen classrooms, schools remain crucial barometers of our progress toward ending the COVID-19 crisis. We need to keep children healthy while protecting their right to an education, but the pandemic has hit the most vulnerable children hardest and exposed the worsening inequality of learning opportunities. We must now heed these harsh lessons and transform education systems to make them more equitable, effective, and resilient.

School closures have been one of the many measures that governments have adopted to contain a virus that so far has claimed 3.4 million lives. At their peak, over 1.6 billion children were cut off from education — half of them in low- and lower middle-income countries.

Although we cannot yet fully grasp the long-term implications of this lost learning for the hundreds of millions who are still missing out on school, it clearly will have a life-changing impact on the most vulnerable children, especially girls. An estimated 20 million girls may never set foot in a classroom again because they have been sent to work to help provide for their families. As many as 13 million could be forced into early marriage and thus forego their education altogether. For millions of others, school closures have increased their risk of teenage pregnancy or of becoming victims of domestic violence.

Given this grim reality, each school reopening is a victory that can potentially change children's lives permanently for the better. But rather than simply return to pre-crisis approaches to learning, we must transform education systems entirely. We cannot go back to a status quo of unequal opportunities and poor learning outcomes, in which a quarter-billion children were already out of school and over half of all ten-year-olds in lower-income countries lacked basic reading skills.

Together, we must deliver a global recovery built on a foundation of education systems that deliver quality learning to all children, no matter where they live, how prosperous or poor their families might be, or who they are. And we need to begin by ensuring that children can return safely to schools that offer a clean environment with effective ventilation, sufficient toilets, and other basic amenities.



Countries can also use distance-learning tools to reach children outside the classroom, opening up new possibilities to educate those who were previously cut off from formal education. School closures due to COVID-19 have only hastened the need for alternative delivery methods so that every child can continue to learn.

Even before the pandemic, organizations like the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) were helping to enable learning beyond the traditional classroom. In Afghanistan, for example, advanced learning centers and more accessible and equitable community-based education have proven

radio learning during the current crisis, with GPE support enabling children to benefit from education programs that were broadcast while schools were shut.

Initiatives like these can be woven into education systems to make them more inclusive, so that they deliver learning at the scale needed to address past inequities. That in turn can help to bridge the education gaps left not only by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also by conflicts, poverty, natural disasters, or the effects of climate change.

By channeling support through partner-country governments to national education systems, the GPE has so far helped to get

marginalized children in lower-income countries, particularly girls and children with disabilities.

In the wake of the pandemic, governments also must find the funds to shock-proof their education systems for the future. That means not only developing and integrating distance-learning options, but also ensuring that schools have proper sanitary facilities and are teaching basic hygiene. Teachers need training in new methods, and we need to ensure that children who rely on their school for at least one meal a day do not go hungry during a crisis.

To achieve all of this, we must immediately help governments in lower-income countries to ensure that their education budgets are protected from any belt-tightening resulting from the pandemic's economic fallout. Domestic resources account for the vast majority of education funding, but international support can play a bigger role to help insulate and expand existing resources. That will allow governments to start reshaping learning even before their countries' economic rebounds are underway.

This year, the GPE is asking governments to pledge at least \$5 billion toward transforming education for children in 90 countries and territories where schools are not only essential for learning but also critical to children's welfare and security. Safe, inclusive, and quality education can be a springboard for recovery from the pandemic, and a buffer against the next crisis.

“ Together, we must deliver a global recovery built on a foundation of education systems that deliver quality learning to all children, no matter where they live, how prosperous or poor their families might be, or who they are. ”

successful. These options give children in remote areas, especially girls, who have often been excluded from education altogether, a chance to learn.

In Pakistan's Balochistan and Sindh provinces, we have seen how technology, including smartphone applications like WhatsApp, can support teachers in serving children in less accessible areas. And Sierra Leone, drawing on its experience during the 2014-16 Ebola outbreak, has emphasized

160 million more children into school, more than half of them girls. Moreover, GPE funds attract other donor contributions to multiply the organization's financial support, in line with national education priorities.

This approach is fundamental to catalyzing necessary change and delivering it at the scale demanded by today's education emergency. To date, 97 percent of GPE-backed education-sector plans include strategies to reach the most

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# Cosmetics improve looks at risk to your health



**N**ext time, before you prep your face, apply a primer, lay on the foundation, add glow to your skin and allure to your eyes and lips, you should spare a moment to think of what goes into all those products that help make a more dazzling image of you. Chances are you will be shocked, as were researchers who conducted a study to examine ingredients that go into common cosmetic products.

Asbestos, formaldehyde, and lead are just some of the toxic chemicals commonly used in our personal care products. A new study conducted by researchers at the University of Notre Dame in the United States found that nearly half of cosmetic products tested in a study contain potentially harmful toxic fluorinated chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). These chemicals are usually added to cosmetics so as to increase a product's durability, spreadability, and wear.

The study, which looked at more than 200 products in the United States and Canada from 2016 to 2020, found that the highest levels of these chemicals were in everyday personal care products, including lipstick, mascara, and foundation. Alarmingly, around 88 percent of products tested lacked information about these ingredients on their product labels.

Scientists are still learning about the impact PFAS exposure may have on human health, but preliminary evidence has linked PFAS some of which have been linked to cancer, reproductive harm, immune system damage and other serious health problems. PFAS exposure to cancer, reproductive harm, and damage to the immune system. A bill in the US House of Representatives (Congress) seeks to ban the use of this type of toxic, fluorinated chemicals in cosmetic products.

The researchers tested a total of 231 products purchased from retailers in the United States and Canada and found these forever chemicals in 48 percent of the products. Two-thirds of liquid lipsticks, two-thirds of foundations, and three-fourths of waterproof mascaras contained high levels of fluorine, one of these chemicals.

In addition, another in-depth look of 29 products found that 28 of the products in which PFAS were identified did not disclose the chemicals on their product labels. In many countries, including the United States, cosmetics and personal care products are not strictly regulated so as to ensure that they are free of toxic chemicals. Though the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates cosmetic products, the agency does not evaluate or approve the ingredients for safety. Moreover, even though the FDA technically requires cosmetic companies to disclose all ingredients used in their products, many loopholes in the law have allowed companies to not disclose all of the ingredients included on the product labels.

PFAS are a large and pervasive family of man-made fluorinated chemicals commonly used in nonstick cookware, cell phones, furniture, and commercial aircraft. They are also frequently used to increase the durability and consistency of cosmetics products like lotions, lipsticks, nail polish, foundation, eye shadow, and mascara. PFAS are also used in many other products that people commonly use. In fact, a 2015 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that nearly 97 percent of Americans contain PFAS in their blood.

PFAS are commonly referred to as 'forever chemicals' because they do not break down in the environment, and they also tend to accumulate in the body when used repeatedly. In addition, because personal care products are often applied to the eyes and lips — near the tear ducts and mucous membranes — they can be readily absorbed into the bloodstream.

Scientists are still learning about the health effects, but growing evidence suggests that PFAS may pose serious risks to our health. PFAS have in the past been linked to birth defects, liver and thyroid disease, hormone disruption, and a range of other serious health problems — including cancer. A review from the CDC found that high exposure to PFAS is associated with cancer, liver damage, reduced fertility, and a greater risk of asthma and thyroid disease.

While research is still ongoing to determine the full harmful effects of these chemicals, there are a few steps you can take to protect yourself.

Check out the labels on the cosmetics, skin care, and personal hygiene products you routinely use, and toss out any that contain the words 'PTFE' or 'perfluoro' in the list of ingredients.

## Stopping hic... hiccups the scientific way

**M**any people could relate to the situation of finding themselves caught in a bout of hiccups in the midst of a party or other social gathering. They would probably have given anything to end their agonizing embarrassment and stop the hiccup.

Now researchers from the University of Texas in the United States believe they have finally found a scientific solution to the hiccup plight. In a recent publication, the researchers have coined a term to describe their science-based hiccup intervention; they call it the 'forced inspiratory suction and swallow tool' or FISST.

According to the renowned Mayo Clinic in the US, Hiccups are involuntary contractions of the diaphragm — the muscle that separates your chest from your abdomen and plays an important role in breathing. Each contraction is followed by a sudden closure of your vocal cords, which produces the characteristic 'hic' sound.

While hiccups are annoying and occasionally embarrassing for some people, it could seriously impair and impact the quality of life for some others, including many patients with brain and stroke injury, and cancer patients. The new FISST technique involves a rigid



drinking tube with an inlet valve that requires forceful suction to draw water from a cup into the mouth. The suction and swallow simultaneously stimulate two nerves, the phrenic and vagus nerves, that then help relieve the hiccups.

Forceful suction induces the diaphragm, which is a sheaf of muscle that inflates the lungs during breathing, to contract. The suction and swallow also prompt the epiglottis, a flap that covers the windpipe during swallowing, to close. This ends the hiccup spasms.

The team behind the hiccup tech claim that FISST which was tested on 249 users stopped hiccups in nearly 92 percent of cases. In terms of satisfaction, 226 of 249 participants (90.8%) said affirmatively that they found the tool easy to use. On a different measure, subjective effectiveness, 183 of 203 participants (90.1%) indicated that FISST was effective when they used it. A majority of the 249 users also found FISST to be superior to other home remedies for hiccup such as breathing into a paper bag.

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# Carlo Ancelotti at Real Madrid

## Big task ahead

Next week the new era of Carlo Ancelotti at Real Madrid begins.

BY LILIANE TANNOURY  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES KUWAIT



Carlo Ancelotti arrives at Real Madrid in a bet as unexpected as it is strange from Florentino Perez. Unexpected because Florentino fired him in 2015, still with a year of contract ahead of him, due to his "soft hand", his complacency with

the locker room and accusation of him "having the team little worked".

Although with a good image in the club, he now comes with the big task of revitalizing a group in which he will have to carry out a generational cleanup. This responsibility, for which at the end Florentino thought he was the ideal man, comes due to the very close and respectful relationship he has with part of the team.

Carletto, Ancelotti's nickname, had a contract with Everton until 2024, but when he learned of Real Madrid's interest, he did not hesitate.

Florentino Perez's decision is to give a second chance to the manager who made history in the Lisbon final against Atlético de Madrid and won the Tenth (La Decima). Carletto is the strategy that most convinces

the president of Real Madrid not to oppose the departure of Zinedine Zidane, or to fret over the refusals of other coaches to join.

Ancelotti was not Florentino's first choice. Not even the second or the third. He tried Massimiliano Allegri, Mauricio Pochettino and also Antonio Conte, but for one reason or another he could not reach an agreement with any of them.

With Ancelotti he now bets on the known, for a manager with experience and a friendly hand that, as shown in the past, seems to be the best way to manage the club locker room.

Florentino needs the next season to be successful in order not to lose strength in his fight for the implementation of the European Super League (ESL). He knows better than anyone that his strength in this fight is directly proportional to his sporting success. A weak Real Madrid will not have the strength in international instances to implement an ESL in its original or eventually adjusted version.

In any case, the tendency is for the return of Carlo Ancelotti to have positive effects on an unbalanced squad, which has lost its identity and suffers from the physical and technical fall of very important names in the third-championship, followed by the Champions League with Zinedine Zidane from 2016 to 2018.

The task will not be easy.

It is possible that the Italian coach will have to take advantage of the younger ones and give up some more experienced athletes in a medium-term job. There



are many players at the end of their professional cycle, young ones are not exploding and new signings are giving a level that was not contemplated even in the worst scenario.

Carlo Ancelotti will have to rebuild the team. Tactically, things will not go very far. In his previous spell at the club, Ancelotti played with a 4-2-3-1, which turned into a 4-4-2 whenever necessary. There are players now that allow him to use this same system, although it will undoubtedly require more ball possession, something the team did not have with Zidane.

Even so, and within the task of revitalization and generational cleansing, it is very likely that James Rodriguez with whom Carlo Ancelotti has a special relationship and has coached him at the Bernabéu, Bayern and Everton will return to the club and he will also do everything to resurrect Gareth Bale.

Despite struggling with a lack of revenue due to the pandemic, which the club

estimates in losses of 500 million euros, Florentino is doing everything he can to make up for Ancelotti with a big signing. The priority is a striker and the chosen ones are Mbappé and Halaand.

Carletto returns with his calm and conciliatory smile, where almost everyone remembers him with affection and respect, but his chances of success now are not the same as six years ago, at least immediately.

*Liliane Tannoury is a prominent sports senior TV producer and presenter at Al Arabiya TV in Dubai. She has covered most of the sports tournaments and events around the world. Liliane has conducted numerous exclusive sports interviews all over the world for Al Arabiya, including Cristiano Ronaldo, Jose Mourinho, Zlatan Ibrahimović, Gareth Bale, Antoine Griezmann, João Felix and many others. She also often invited, as a guest, to Sports Tonight Show at Dubai Eye Radio station and chronicler in the THENATIONAL newspaper from UAE among others.*



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