



LOCAL
*Botswana Embassy In Kuwait
Celebrate the Country's
55Years of Independence* **3**

LOCAL
*Philippine Embassy
introduces newsite and
location for passport renewal* **6**

LOCAL
*Ban on renewing
visas for
over 60s banned* **7**



www.timeskuwait.com 250 Fils

Northern Gulf Gateway Project a catalyst for growth

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Vision 2035, envisaged by the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, is a strategic plan aimed at transforming Kuwait into a financial, commercial and cultural hub in the region. To realize this vision of a 'New Kuwait' the government launched the National Development plan, which sets the country's long-term development priorities. Developing a sustainable diversified economy, engaging the private sector in infrastructure projects, providing gainful employment opportunities for national youth, and making the country more attractive to investors, are among the pillars and goals of the New Kuwait development plan.

One project that brings together many of these developmental priorities is the Northern Gulf Gateway Project (NGGP), often referred to as the 'Silk City Project'. The ambitious plan envisions mega infrastructural developments in the sparsely



populated northern region of the country bordering Iraq. The plan encompasses developments on Kuwait's largest island, Boubyan, and other nearby islands, as well as the construction of a greenfield mega-city in the largely barren Subiya area to the north of Kuwait Bay.

In a first step to realizing this multi-decade, multi-generational venture, in May 2019, the construction of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al Sabah Causeway, one of the world's longest road bridges was finally completed. The causeway is seen as key to realizing the country's ambitious Vision 2035

and New Kuwait development plan. Named after the former Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al Sabah, it was completed following five years of technical planning, bureaucratic procrastinations and environmental delays at a cost of more than one billion dinars. The 36-kilometer main span across Kuwait Bay now reduces travel time by nearly an hour from Kuwait City to Subiya on the northern shore of Kuwait Bay, and the proposed site for the mega Silk City (Madinat Al-Hareer) project

Silk City, to be built at a projected cost of over KD 30 billion in the first phase, will encompass all new constructions coming up in the area to the north of Kuwait Bay. The project, expected to be completed in phases and over decades will include residential, work and leisure areas, an international airport, an Olympic stadium and an iconic tower soaring over a kilometer high and claiming the title of world's tallest building. But aspirations and plans to develop the northern region are not new, they have been floating around since the 1970s.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

WIN UP TO
\$100,000

TRANSFER ONLINE AND WIN PRIZES!

المزيني
Al Muzaini

MEGA PRIZE
BMW X1 2022

2X WEEKLY 10G GOLD **1X DAILY 100 KD**

FIRST TRANSFER
DOUBLES
YOUR CHANCES!



Parks, open spaces, to convert to investment projects

The cabinet in an extraordinary meeting on 6 October directed the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAFR), in coordination with other relevant state entities, to formulate a plan to open up public parks and vacant spaces located in residential areas for investment.

Announcing the cabinet's decision following the meeting, Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Dr. Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohamad Al-Sabah, said in a statement that the cabinet also ordered the PAAFR to allocate plots of lands for

organizing entertainment activities and events in the agricultural areas of Al-Wafra in the south and Al-Abdali in the north.

The meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, was held at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex. Following the meeting, His Highness the prime minister and his cabinet colleagues toured the recently-inaugurated Tennis Complex.

Officials of the Public Authority for Sports (PAS) and the Tennis complex briefed His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled on the

different facilities and amenities of the complex, which houses 18 tennis courts, two courts with the ability to host spectators and a world-class tennis academy. They also informed the ministers about the other ongoing PAS projects.

For his part, His Highness the Prime Minister expressed admiration of the complex, which would be of a great benefit for national tennis teams and players. He also lauded the effective role played by the private sector to execute the state development projects and improve the performance of the national economy.



Three-day weekend to mark Prophet's birthday

Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced last week that on the occasion of Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) birthday, Thursday, 21 October would be an official holiday. Making the announcement through its official Twitter page, the CSC said that government offices will resume work on Sunday, 24 October.



Accordingly, all public sector employees will enjoy an additional day off before the official two-day weekend on 22 October.

Kuwait reiterates support for resolving conflicts through dialogue

In his address before the 72nd session of the Executive Committee of the Program of the United Nations High Commissioner's Program for Refugees, Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the United Nations (UN) and International Organizations in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim, underlined the need to support political initiatives aimed at addressing the crises of asylum-seekers and refugees worldwide in a bid to turn emergency relief into sustainable development.



Speaking at the UN session, held from 4 to 8 October in Geneva, Ambassador Al-Ghunaim added that political initiatives should be supported by spurring preventive diplomacy. He pointed out that the focus should be on resolving conflicts through political dialogue and mediation efforts, as this was the sole way to attain lasting peace and stability, and moving from the phase of emergency relief to that of sustainable development.

He sounded the alarm that prolonged humanitarian crises, failure to find solutions and in compliance with international human rights law put regional and international security and peace in jeopardy. He stressed that the failure and reluctance of the international community to work together to target better conditions for internally displaced persons and refugees in host countries exacerbated problems.

Emphasizing the enormity of the situation and intricate challenges worldwide, the Kuwaiti diplomat said it was the responsibility of everyone to support the efforts of the

UN refugee agency. He also urged for more concerted and integrated efforts on the part of the global humanitarian community and for stepping up coordination between regional and international agencies as well as non-governmental organizations in order to tackle the circumstances and challenges more effectively and efficiently.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) currently has 20 million refugees worldwide under its mandate, while the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has nearly 5.7 million Palestinian refugees, not to mention 48 million internally displaced persons, and also 4.1 million asylum-seekers.

Restating his country's commitment to backing the efforts of the UN refugee agency and other international humanitarian organizations, Ambassador Al-Ghunaim pointed out Kuwait's total contributions of over USD 327 million to the global fight against the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Indian businessman on WTFL advisory board

Indian-born hotelier, serial entrepreneur and Land Managing Director of Twenty14 Holdings, Adeeb Ahamed, is to join the Global Advisory Board of World Tourism Forum Lucerne (WTFL).

For over ten years, WTFL has been bringing together top-level decision makers from industry, government, academia and finance, and establishing itself as a prestigious global platform for cross-generational collaboration and exchange of new ideas and solutions to benefit tourism today and in the future.

Twenty14 Holdings, the hospitality investment arm of the Abu Dhabi based LuLu Group International, was founded in 2014 to capitalise on growth in the global hospitality industry. The company has already acquired a number of prestigious and iconic properties, including the Great Scotland Yard in London and others across Europe, Middle East and the Indian subcontinent.

Mr. Ahamed is slated to take the stage



at 'Innovation Festival' organized by the WTFL on 15 and 16 November in Andermatt, Switzerland. The event is expected to discuss the tourism industry's current challenges and demonstrate how these can be tackled with forward-thinking solutions.



Join Us in Our New
Telegram Channel

<https://t.me/thetimeskuwait>



The Times Kuwait
@thetimeskuwait

<https://t.me/thetimeskuwait>

For the latest news and updates please subscribe to our Telegram channel.



Credible. Insightful.
Accurate.
The right news, right in time.

Botswana Embassy In Kuwait Celebrates the Country's 55 Years of Independence

'Outpacing Progress through Smart Partnerships'

As we celebrate our country's participation in the Expo 2020 Dubai, on behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana, Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, I wish to congratulate our nation on its 55 years of a great and equally challenging journey of independence.

Having just celebrated our independence on September 30th, we take pride in our achievements as a nation, and we also pay tribute to our friends who have helped us on this development journey. We thank most profoundly, the Kuwait Government and other countries of accreditation in the Gulf for their continued bonds of friendship which have helped us to tell our development story with passion, admiration and pride. This is what we are celebrating! As the Embassy, we are excited at the opportunities that we will realise in our engagements during this magnificent Expo 2020 Dubai spectacle.

Today we celebrate the Expo 2020 Dubai under the theme "outpacing progress through smart partnerships". We believe that the Expo 2020 Dubai and strong bonds of friendship with our development partners presents an opportunity to maximise on strategic partnerships. For us, the Expo presents an opportunity to learn and teach others, to tell our stories, to influence change and to better lives. This is the time to reflect on partnerships that over the years have helped us to outpace progress, such as the Botswana Government and DeBeers partnership, to look at sustainable tourism and beneficiation, seize the



Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi
President of the Republic of Botswana

opportunity to engage technology power houses and digitalise our services. Against this, Botswana reaffirms her commitment to provide investors with a conducive environment to do business.

With regards to our diamonds- our pride, through the development of the Forevermark Retail Store in Botswana, we are now part of a very exclusive worldwide club that has the entire diamond value chain represented in our country. This establishment of a leading global brand, complements the exploration, mining, rough sorting, and rough sales carried out in the country, as well as the cutting, polishing and jewellery manufacturing by Sightholders who

have come to the country on the back of the De Beers Group's successful beneficiation policy.

We are therefore excited and invite the world to invest in Botswana and explore the many opportunities that exist in this value chain. Despite her small population, Botswana offers investors a market access through different bilateral and multilateral agreements to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) with a population of 277 million people, the European Union 512 million people, the United States of America through AGOA which provides access for 625 product lines, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which has a population of 1.2 billion a great opportunity to invest in.

Like the rest of the world, Botswana has been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In containing this, His Excellency the President has set out the Reset Agenda to help the country re-emerge from this pandemic. One of the pillars of our Reset Agenda is the value chain development in various sectors of our economy.

As we celebrate our 55 years, we remember heartily, our friends and partners' enormous support we received that enabled us to vaccinate our people in an endeavour to join the global economies as they rise from the pandemic. To this end, on the 1st of October 2021, Botswana lifted the State of Emergency (SOE) that was introduced in April 2020 to curb the scourge. We are happy to share inform that the lifting of the SOE comes with the opening up of the economy to further intensify our trade and investment facilitation. Notwithstanding this, we continue to exercise all the necessary precautions to ensure

that the re-opening of the economy does not come with complacency. The Expo 2020 Dubai therefore indeed comes at an opportune time when we can safely and confidently say that we are ready to welcome you to Botswana.

Ke a leboga, Shukran, Pula!



Amangwe O. Madisakwana
Charge d'Affaires
Embassy of the Republic of Botswana,
Kuwait



MEW to increase utility fees on water, electricity

Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) is reported to be evaluating a plan to increase tariff on utility prices for all sectors, with the exception of the residential sector, and implementing the plan within the next two years. Revealing this during a media briefing last week, the Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Dr. Mishaan Al-Otaibi, said this review of tariffs was part of the government's economic reform program aimed at enhancing state revenues.

Elaborating on the strategic plans for the 2020 to 2030 period, the minister said that it includes five main goals: Meeting the country's projected demand for water and electricity

in the current decade, digital transformation in working of the ministry, sustainable development, as well as institutional excellence and human development at MEW.

He added that MEW is planning to increase water capacity over the 2020-2030 period by 50 percent and the production of electric power by a further 8,000 megawatts. In this regard the minister highlighted the establishment of renewable energy projects with a capacity of 5,000 megawatts, in coordination with the Kuwait Authority for Public Private Partnership (KAPP). He also revealed that the ministry plans to operate all power plants with natural gas and clean fuels from 2022. This, he said, would help lower the unit cost of production and increase the efficiency of power plants, while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Minister Al-Otaibi also warned that failure to implement electricity production and other projects in a timely manner would result in the country facing a power and water crisis by 2025.

Al-Naeem Economic City to help revive economy

An integrated construction project, Al-Naeem Economic City (NEC), currently on the drawing board of policy planners, could arise in the desert area to the north of the country in Jahra governorate... if all goes well.

The first step in this direction was set in motion last week with the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) and the Public Authority for Industry arriving at an understanding to 'merge' and develop the two parcels of land belonging to each authority. The combined area spanning over 12 million square meters of land would be utilized to develop the Al-Naeem Economic City project.

The cooperation and joint venture between the two state entities could result in the launch of what is described as a "mega project that could attract a large number of local and foreign investors", boost the Vision 2035 of diversifying the economy, encourage private sector participation and provide employment opportunities for local youth. In short, the project could provide a big fillip to reviving the country's economy.

In what is being considered a propitious sign for the project, the two entities are said to have obtained a fatwa from the Fatwa and Legislation Department to keep the NEC outside the framework of the Kuwait Authority for Public-Private Partnership (KAPP).

Earlier all such projects had to be



implemented in partnership with KAPP. One less authority to deal with could mean one less headache for everyone including investors. The ruling would now allow the two authorities to pursue the project on a Build-Operate and Transfer (BOT) model considered more efficient and attractive to investors than the KAPP path.

But first, the mutual understanding reached last week between the two concerned parties needs to be converted to an official 'memorandum of understanding' (MoU) and win the approval of all relevant authorities and committees and the mandatory clearances from all quarters.

Thought “ for the week

One needs to know that he doesn't know it all, that he will make some mistakes and his mistakes can either be millstones of hindrance or stepping stones to success. He needs to know that he can't win by quitting.

— E.J. Bradshaw

Defeating Vitamin D Deficiency

BY OMAR SAJJAD

Sixth-Year medical student in Shanghai Medical College (China), Intern at WHO, Farawaniyah Hospital (Kuwait), and Zhongshan Hospital (China).

Sunlight is a source of abundance, especially in Kuwait, with periods of March-September being a glaring killer. Exposure to sunlight allows us to get the crucial vitamin D but despite it being easily attainable, billions still suffer from vitamin D deficiency and insufficiency. Though it may seem like an insignificant part of the alphabetical list of vitamins, the vitamin D is fundamental for the body to carry out day to day processes.

Contrary to popular belief due to the name, vitamin D is actually a hormone or at least the “activated” form is because of its importance in regulating bodily functions. Normally, when the sunlight hits the skin, the ultraviolet light helps convert a chemical into vitamin D which is stored inactively in the body. When needed, the inactive vitamin D goes through a series of conversions in the liver followed by the kidney to become active in order to be used. Through dietary sources, vitamin D does not need to go through a change with the help of ultraviolet light, it directly goes from liver to kidney to become activated.

If this vitamin is so vital and easily attainable, why are one billion people deficient for it (the reasons listed are in no particular order).



Decreased sun exposure

More than 50% of the vitamin D acquired goes through the sun to skin channel. Spending 30 minutes a day with sufficient skin exposure to the sun, is enough to get the required vitamin D to avoid deficiency. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic era, more people are staying indoors, limiting the time spent outside that would allow sun to bless them with its abundant resource. In Kuwait, during the peak summer times the sunlight is too easily accessible but just due to the pure overwhelming strength of it, people avoid spending time outside.

Even if there is sufficient sunlight exposure, other factors play a part. The latitude of the location being one of the factors, with higher latitude countries such as the UK making their population prone in struggling to achieve the vitamin D levels required. The color of skin also plays a role, with dark-skinned people having a higher concentration of a pigment called melanin. This pigment prevents the ability of synthesis of vitamin D through sunlight. People, especially women, would wear more skin covering that would decrease the available exposure for the sunlight to hit the skin. Theoretically, sunscreen inhibits the penetration of ultraviolet lights, which inevitably should decrease the ability of the body to create the inactive vitamin D, but often people do not put enough sunscreen to block out all the ultraviolet lights.

Dietary intake

Simply put, dietary requirement of vitamin D obtained



through foods and/or supplements are not achieved. Most vitamin D rich sources include fatty fish like salmon, egg yolks, orange juice, and milk. In terms of non-meat/non-animal product foods, mushrooms are the vitamin D rich plant/fungi based foods. So naturally vegetarians and vegans are more prone to be deficient in vitamin D compared to the general population.

Underlying health issue

There can be low vitamin D levels even if there is sufficient sun exposure and dietary consumption. Some diseases such as celiac disease, inflammatory bowel disease, cystic fibrosis all lead to decreased absorption of vitamin D within the intestines.

Obesity causes overall health deterioration, with a higher prevalence of vitamin D deficiency in obese individuals being well-documented. Ironically, weight loss surgeries also are at a higher risk of vitamin D deficiency, due to the nature of the surgery. The reduction of the size of the stomach or intestine decreases area of absorption but also causes the individual to not be able to consume the required amount of foods to reach the sufficient level.

As the process of activation of vitamin D needs to go through the liver and kidney, diseases that impact the function of these two organs inevitably lead to a decreased level of activated and usable vitamin D.

The pesky part about vitamin D deficiency is that for the majority it is asymptomatic or brushed off as another issue. The symptoms it causes in the beginning are quite generalized such as lethargy and fatigue. But gradually as it becomes more severe, other prominent issues start to arise like joint and bone pain, muscle pain, twitching, and it can also contribute to depressive symptoms.

A major area that is often overlooked by the general population is the importance of vitamin D for bone health. Since birth we have been told that calcium is important for strong bones, and though it is true, vitamin D is equally important. Vitamin D helps with absorption of calcium in the intestine, kidneys so even if there is sufficient calcium intake, unless vitamin D is there to stimulate those organs to start absorbing calcium, the bones will get weak. In children, vitamin D deficiency leads to a disease called rickets, while in teenagers and adults it would first cause bone pain then contribute to fragility of bones leading to easy fractures. In women who have hit menopause vitamin D is extremely important, as they have decreased bone density due to drops in hormone estrogen- which helps maintain bone density.

Now the best way to combat the deficiency is to go outside and accept the sunlight and/or with an intake through dietary sources whether those are supplements or foods. Supplements taken orally or through an injection form both are good, but there is a higher level of absorption with the injection.

Of course if the problems still persist, it is best to see a physician to investigate if there is another reason that is either the root of the symptoms or is leading to the decreased vitamin D levels.

Go out, get some sunlight, and renew the energy in your body with vitamin D.

RECIPE

Coconut Burfi



Coconut burfi is a traditional, easy-to-make, sweet popular in many Indian homes during festival seasons. Besides festivals, it is also a sweet delicacy that can be served for tea-parties and as a nice gift to someone on special occasions.

Preparation Time: 20 to 25 minutes

Yield: 20 pieces

Ingredients:

- 3 cups desiccated coconut
- 1 and 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 cup cream
- 1/4 tsp cardamom powder
- 2-3 tsp melted ghee

Preparation:

- Heat a pan, add ghee, coconut, milk and cream
- Stir well until combined and bring the mixture to a boil
- Reduce heat and cook until the milk evaporates, then add the sugar and mix
- Stir constantly until the moisture from melted sugar evaporates
- Add the cardamom powder and remove from heat
- Divide the mixture into two equal parts
- Add a few drops of red food color to one half of the mixture
- Mix well to get a pink color. Set aside.
- Transfer the mixture into a greased tray lined with baking paper
- Spread the pink coconut mixture into the tray
- Use a spatula to spread the mixture in one single layer
- Add the remaining white mixture on top of the pink layer
- Use a spatula to spread the white mixture in a single layer
- Press down with the back of a spoon or spatula
- Sprinkle with crushed pistachio or almonds
- Cut into squares and let rest until completely cool for about 2-3 hours
- Remove pieces from the tray and serve at room temperature.



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

PAM mandated to increase visa fees, restructure labor market

As part of efforts to support the Cabinet's attempts to address labor market imbalances in the private sector, the General-Secretariat of the Cabinet has mandated the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) to review and update the work permit system for expatriates.

The Authority is reported to have been given the go-ahead to increase work permit fees, and review all other fees collected by the authority with a view to raising them during the second and third quarters of 2022. The mandate also empowers PAM to amend the work permit system to eliminate the visa trade phenomena and remove

marginal workers that do not provide added value to the local economy.

The new mandate authorizes PAM to: Adopt a quota system for employing citizens and expatriates in each economic sector or activity; Determine the percentage of expatriate workers to be replaced in the private sector beginning with 5 percent in 2022 and to reach 20 percent by 2025.

The Authority is also tasked with raising the efficiency of the national workforce in the private labor market by training aimed at localizing skills, and attracting young nationals in specialized jobs, as well as design and amend an incentive plan periodically

with the aim of retaining national workforce in the private sector.

In addition, PAM will identify and support the development of sectors such as digital, cyber-security and other innovative technologies deemed necessary in the 21st century marketplace

Another responsibility for PAM will be to conduct a study on the programs and incentive structures needed to attract and settle highly skilled foreign workers, while reviewing and learning from the experiences of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and other developed countries in this regard. The Authority will also develop a marketing



communication plan to inform highly skilled expatriate workforce around the world of the incentives offered by Kuwait so as to attract them to work and settle in the country.

Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh remains 'Wild West' of Kuwait

Despite the best attempts and extensive efforts by the authorities to clamp down on illegal activities and stamp out vices in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area, these nefarious activities continue to prevail and flourish in the locality, considered a den "infested by menial workers and outlaws," as one security source put it.

Various ministries, including Interior, Social Affairs, and Commerce, as well as other state entities such as Kuwait Municipality and the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), have over the years formed several specialized committees to tackle the situation. The committees have engaged in weeks and months of fervent coordinated attempts to clean up the area, only to realize the futility of their efforts.

Most recently, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the authorities formed yet another specialized committee to reduce congested living accommodations that were found to be breeding grounds for rapid spread of infections reported from the area. In the process, the security apparatus also attempted to flush out illegal residents and violators of the law who use the area as a hideout and safe haven.

During a recent inspection tour by a joint committee headed by the PAM, the area was found to be as unhygienic as before with sewage water overflowing from drains and residential flats everywhere. Unlicensed make-shift markets and shops continued to sell expired 'fresh products and produce', and engage in illegal commercial activities. Roadside food vendors were busy cooking unhealthy food in



filthy utensils and insanitary conditions, as they strived to make fast money from 'fast' foods, while keeping an eye out for the law.

The PAM committee with support from security officials managed to nab dozens of workers, nearly all of them residence and labor law violators and absconders. Records show that since the middle of September, when the inspection campaign began, a total of 107 violators of residence and labor laws were arrested — 56 working in the private sector and 34 domestic workers in addition to 17 who are staying illegally in the country.

Perhaps it is time to disband the special committees and tackle the issue from a different perspective. Induct and integrate the illegal expatriates into the legal labor market, and implement plans to rehabilitate and revive the area in a socially just, environmentally sustainable and lasting manner.

Amazon Web Services opens office in Kuwait

Amazon Web Services (AWS) announced last week the opening of its office in Kuwait through the country's Foreign Direct Investment Law promoted by Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA).

The opening on 3 October is part of the ongoing investments AWS is making in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and serves to support the growing number of customers and partners in Kuwait. It will further help organizations of all sizes in Kuwait, including startups, enterprises, and public sector agencies as they transition to AWS.

Millions of active customers are using AWS each month in over 190 countries around the world, including tens of thousands of customers in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). These include government agencies in Kuwait such as the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA), the Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MOCI), as well as some of the country's leading enterprises and fast growing startups.

Through the AWS Training and Certification programs, AWS continues to expand its work with government entities in Kuwait to support the upskilling and retraining of the workforce with the latest cloud computing training curriculum, including its work with the Ministry of Youth and the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT), which provides cloud training programs to various government agencies.



Isabella Groeger-Cechowicz, Vice President, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA), AWS Worldwide Public Sector, said, "We are pleased to continue our investment in the Middle East and North Africa with our latest office opening in Kuwait. The opening brings us even closer to our customers, including a number of Kuwait's government agencies that are adopting cloud technologies to better serve citizens. We look forward to expanding our collaboration on training programs to support the development of cloud skills in Kuwait for both the public and private sectors."

For his part, Director General for KDIPA, Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, said: "We welcome the AWS office opening in Kuwait. The adoption of technologies is an important factor in developing and supporting the country's digital transformation initiatives in line with Kuwait's Vision 2035."

AWS has a growing network of partners in Kuwait who are helping customers in their cloud journeys. The AWS Partner Network (APN) in Kuwait includes Edrak United for Technology, EEMC, Gulfcom, KuwaitNet, Redington, Suhob, Zain Group, and Zak.



HIDE & SEEK

MADE WITH THE WORLD'S
Finest Chocolates



Chocolate Chip Cookies

Sole distributor in Kuwait

Al-Othman & Al-Bisher Trd.Co. W.L.L

P.O. Box: 22984 Safat 13090 Kuwait

Tel: +965 24755074, 24755073

Fax: +965 24760108

Email: obtc_kwt@qualitynet.net

www.obtc_kwt.com



@obtc_kwt

Philippine Embassy introduces new site and location for passport renewal

Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Philippine Vice Consul Josel Mostajo announced the launch of Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) for renewal of Philippine passport in addition to the service presently provided for by the Embassy's consular section. The service additional service facility expects to accommodate passport concerns of 250,000 Overseas Filipino Workers currently employed and residents of Kuwait.

Vice Consul Mostajo in an exclusive interview with The Times explained that VFS has been commissioned by the Philippine's Department of Foreign Affairs to provide appointments for processing of passport renewal to further accommodate the number of passport renewals. However he explained that VFS is restricted to provide solely passport renewal but other concerns and issues such as change of names, status, wrong spelling, and application for children's passport, loss and other related concerns must be addressed in the consular section of the embassy. "Let me reiterate that VFS and Embassy consular section both provide passport renewal but other concerns on passport issues must be raised in the embassy for assistance" explained Vice Consul Mostajo.

The Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs in conjunction with VFS provide more

appointment options for OFWs to choose as to where they can renew their passports. Philippine Embassies and Consulates in the Middle East have also assumed services of VFS to assist and provide convenience to OFWs. "At present VFS accommodates 50 to 60 passports renewal per day as it is on its test period and by this month, we expect up to 200 passport renewals per day" added Vice Consul Mostajo. The Philippine Embassy consular services offer 100 appointments per day including processing of other related documents.



There are different fees or charges on passport renewals between both sites. Additional KD 10 is required when appointment is made with VFS, as more available hours of appointment are provided including courier service to pick up the old passport from home and delivery of the new one in addition to a more spacious area while waiting for the processing of their passport. Vice Consul Mostajo added that the courier service is optional for OFWs and that release of new passports can be availed as to where the renewal was made.

Vice Consul Mostajo urged OFWs to claim their new passport as soon as their names are posted in the social media sites of the Philippine Embassy. A duration of one year has been allowed by DFA for unclaimed passports and that such passports will be returned to the Philippines after a year. "Unclaimed passports will be returned to the Philippines and OFWs

who failed to collect their new passport will have to secure cancellation of passport prior to application and this can cause inconvenience as such process may take a while" explained Vice Consul Mostajo.

Furthermore, he advised all OFWs to check their passports validity and not to wait till last month before they renew. Validity of 18 months is required by Kuwait government

to be able to issue new or renew visas. "Extension of passport can only be availed if renewal of passport has been completed and that extension can only apply for the purpose of visa renewal" added Vice Consul Mostajo.

VFS is located in the mezzanine floor of UTC building in Kuwait City and the new Embassy of the Philippines is located in Villa 15, Masjid Al Aqsa Street Block 1 Salwa.

LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Awesome South Africa 2021' promotion



LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region and regarded as among the most powerful retailers in the world, launched the 'Awesome South Africa 2021' promotion at all its outlets in Kuwait from 6 October.

The week-long festival, which runs to 12 October, was inaugurated by South African Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Manelisi GENGE, at the Al-Qurain outlet of the hypermarket in the presence of top management officials.



The 'Awesome South Africa 2021' promotion that highlights and celebrates the extensive range and multiplicity of high-quality food products from the 'Rainbow Nation', provides shoppers with the opportunity to purchase some of the finest and most popular South African food items at very special prices.

Among the competitively priced products being offered at during the promotion period are more than three dozen popular South African brands, including: All Gold, All Joy, B Well, Bakers, Blue Diamond, Bokomo, Buttanutt,

Cape Delights, Cape Cookies, Cape Foods, CapeHerb&Spice, Carara, Eezy Freezy, Freshpak, Good Hope, Hardwood, Heartland, Honeyfield, House of Coffee, Ih Roastery, Jungle, Koo, Mandela Tea, Montagu, MrsH.S.Ball's, Nicoletta, On The Go, Organic, Rooibos, Popcorn Delight, Pura, Robertsons, Royal Biltong, Rugani, Vital, Westfalia, Willow Creek, Yum Yum, and Zz2, as well as several items under LuLu private-label.

Customers can also sample a variety of food products at the food sampling counters in the hypermarket, and get the taste and flavor of the country's cuisines from the special cuisine counters selling freshly prepared South African dishes and delicacies.

The promotion, held in compliance with all health and safety regulations issued by the concerned authorities, not only features food items at amazing prices, but also provides special offers on a wide selection of products, thereby delivering an even more exciting shopping experience to customers.

Displays and large cutouts of traditional monuments and other magnificent tourism sites and sights of South Africa, placed at all outlets of the hypermarket, spotlight the diversity of tourism attractions in the country and underlines why the promotion is indeed an 'Awesome South Africa 2021' event.

LuLu Hypermarket, which prides itself on importing high-quality food and non-food products from around the world and making them available to shoppers in Kuwait at exceedingly competitive prices, has once again proved itself with the 'Awesome South Africa 2021' promotion.



Camping season to resume under strict monitoring



After being banned during the pandemic period, the decision by the authorities to reopen camping sites from this season is a welcome relief to campers, and to the many service providers that assist the camping process.

The Municipal Council announced last week that it had prepared camping venues for the upcoming camping season, including allocating areas for campers to park their caravans and other vehicles.

Elaborating on the preparations, Deputy Director General of Ahmadi and Hawalli governorates at the Municipal Council Fahad Al-Shtaili stated that the committee tasked with preparing for the camping season had held a meeting to discuss safety regulations for people seeking leisure in the desert, or elsewhere during the season, with a focus on measures aimed at countering the spread of the coronavirus.

The meeting also reviewed the conditions set to issue permits for camping sites and ways for campers to book specific locations through an online system. In addition, the committee formed several teams that will be mandated to close down and remove any illegal campsites located outside the approved areas. The teams would also issue warnings to cattle owners if their animals began encroaching on camping grounds.

Nazaha signs contract for support with global firm

Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) has signed a contract with the UK-based international development organization, Global Partners Governance (GPG) that specializes, among others, in helping understand the political drivers for corruption, and to address these by fostering wider behavioral changes within organizations.

The contract between the two sides, which did not mention a time frame or cost, would see GPG providing support and professional services to Nazaha in connection with a series of recent investigations into alleged corruption and bribery at the highest levels in Kuwait. In particular, the



agreement could help unravel suspicious deals between parties in Kuwait and officials in the European multinational 'Airbus Group' which specializes in the manufacture of passenger planes.

Corruption is a persistent issue worldwide, which restricts economic growth and hinders the equal distribution of its benefits among the populace. Broadly, corruption is any form of abuse of public resources or public power for personal gain, which can be manifested in many different forms, from the payment of bribes to diversion of funds, to preference in allocation of jobs or influential roles.

Ban on renewing visas for over 60s banned

- 'Sixty' decision not applicable to those outside the country
- 4,013 expatriates victims of 60s decision

In its ruling issued on Thursday, 7 October, the Cabinet's Fatwa and Legislation Committee announced that there is no legal basis to ban work permits for expatriates 60 years and over in age who only hold high school diplomas and below, and accordingly cancelled the earlier decision issued to this effect by the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM).

The announcement spread a wave of relief among people in the category and among their family members, as well as with their employers. For more than a year since the law banning anyone aged 60 and over who did not hold a university degree or diploma from renewing their visas, was announced by PAM, people who fell in this category were in a predicament, especially those who had spent a significant portion of their lives in this country and had set up family and social circles here.

The Thursday's ruling roundly criticized PAM authorities and in particular its Director-General Ahmed Al-Mousa for exceeding their mandated authority. The



committee found the Director-General of PAM in breach of his authority, for issuing rules and procedures on work visas, which were not within his purview. The fatwa noted that the decision issued by the Director-General in August 2020 was not legal, as it was issued by someone who is not competent to issue it.

The earlier decision created a lot of public outcry and market instability with several sections of society calling for the decision to be reversed. In particular, the

Minister of Commerce and Industry (MOCI), Dr. Abdullah Al-Salman, who voiced his strong displeasure over the actions taken by the PAM in this regard, and in September end issued a decision curtailing a number of powers of the Director-General of PAM. He also referred the matter to the Cabinet's Fatwa and Legislation Committee, which then issued Thursday's ruling.

Opposition to the decision also came from the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), with its Chairman

Muhammad Jassim Al-Saqer requesting His Highness the Prime Minister to intervene and rescind the law. In his ruling, Announcing the decision on Thursday, the head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department, Counselor Salah Al-Masad, said that the PAM erred in its decision, as it was issued based on an earlier canceled decision, which made it legally untenable.

Those who have been granted temporary visas will now be able to transfer this visa to a permanent one, subject to fees and rules that are yet to be announced. However, the status of the more than 4,000 people in this category who were forced out of the country since the law began to be enforced on 1 January of this year is not covered by the new Fatwa. Legal opinion holds that a distinction needs to be made between those in the country who are 60 and over in age, whose residence can now be renewed whenever the door opens for renewal, and those whose residency has been revoked and are now outside the country.

Violators of residence, labor laws arrested in Mahboula

The General Department of Public Relations and Security Media Department at the Ministry of Interior said, based on the directives of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Lieutenant-General Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf, to intensify security campaigns to arrest violators of the residence and labor laws and outlaws, and in continuation of the campaigns by the public security sector throughout the country, 46 people have been arrested for various reasons including 6 men and one woman who were reported absconding by their sponsors and were staying illegally in the country.

The security sources said the campaign happened in Mahboula under the supervision of the Assistant Undersecretary for Public



Security Affairs Major-General Farraj Al-Zoubi led by Security Director Major-General Saleh Matar, Director-General of the Ahmadi Governorate.

The Interior Ministry emphasized the security and traffic campaigns will be organized in all the six governorates, to arrest outlaws and violators of residence and labor laws.

MEW announces short and medium-term plans

Supplying power to the new airport terminal under construction before the end of the month, and providing electricity to new vital projects coming up in the north of Kuwait, are just some of the plans announced by the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) last week.



Assistant Undersecretary for the Transportation Networks Sector at the Ministry of Electricity and Water Mutlaq Al-Otaibi said in a statement on Thursday that power transformers will begin operating at the Kuwait International Airport, which feeds the upcoming Terminal 2 (T2) Airport, before the end of October, in line with plans and promises made to the Ministry of Public Works and the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation earlier. He added that two more transformers will be supplied and come into operation when the second phase of the terminal construction becomes operational.

The statement went on to note that several important projects currently being implemented by MEW include supplying electricity to vital projects such as the Boubyan Project and the Mubarak Al-Kabeer project in north Kuwait. In the first-quarter of 2023, the ministry expects to begin operations at the main stations in the upcoming Al-Mutla'a residential city. The statement also revealed that the plans of MEW include maintaining power stations supplying electricity to oil installations during summer months and moving maintenance work to residential areas in winter so as to ensure uninterrupted power supply to industries and residences.

مفعل محفل
SINCE 1985
الأشهر الأول المصنع
MUGHAL MAHAL
Bangalore's First Choice

Reward your loved ones a Mughal Mahal Gift card today

For further inquiry
☎ 22425131/2 | ✉ online@mughalmahal.com
www.mughalmahal.com

Central Bank Governor to step down at end of term



Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Dr. Muhammad Al-Hashel, has decided to step down from his post at the end of his current term that ends in February 2022.

Since his appointment in April 2012, Dr. Al-Hashel has been instrumental in raising the profile of the Central Bank through pursuing prudent financial and economic measures that helped steer the banking and financial sector through some of its

most challenging times, and ensured the country's financial stability.

The policies and procedures fostered and implemented by the Central Bank under the leadership of Dr. Al-Hashel, have assisted local banks and financial institutions overcome local, regional and international financial challenges, including during the 2014 crash in oil prices and, most recently, during the financial disruptions caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

International financial institutions, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have on numerous occasions highlighted the prudent policies of the Central Bank, and its effective supervisory role in ensuring the stability of the banking system. Over the years, the Central Bank has been acknowledged regionally and internationally as a reputable and independent organization that is professionally led and managed.



IWG organizes photo exhibit at Italian Embassy



To celebrate the diversity of its members and highlight the uniquely wonderful cultures and traditions from around the world, the International Women's Group (IWG), in cooperation with the Italian Embassy, organized a photo exhibition titled 'The Great Beauty' by Remo Casilli and 'Capturing Al-Kout' by Usman Mohammed Iqbal.

Welcoming the artists, members and guests to the embassy, Italian Ambassador, H.E. Carlo Baldocci, explained that he had decided to open a special area in the Italian Embassy, called 'Spazio Italia-Kuwait' as a unique place dedicated to fostering dialogue between people, promoting projects, activities, and joint initiatives between the two countries. He also stressed that the current exhibition is a perfect example of cultural exchange, and the beginning of more events to follow.

Cristiana Baldocci, wife of the Italian Ambassador and President of IWG welcomed everyone and thanked Sheikha Hanouf Bader Al Muhamad Al Sabah, Honorary President of IWG, for her kind support; she also thanked the IWG board for their help in organizing the event. She went on to introduce the exhibition by saying that it is a photographic dialogue between two cities. Kuwait City and Rome.

"Through this exhibition we will explore exactly what is meant by urban cultural heritage. Something that is inherited, passed down from previous generations. It is a kind of heritage that doesn't consist of money or property, but of culture, values and traditions; that implies a shared bond, our belonging to a community. It represents our history and our identity; our bond to the past, to our present, and the future and above all, love for our cities," said Mrs. Baldocci.

For the first time, the photographer Usman Muhammad Iqbal, born and raised in Kuwait, presented his photographs that reflect facets of the original Kuwaiti heritage, and aspects of the development of the environment and art in the area.

His exceptional technique has already earned him international visibility and the beauty of the images shows the importance of Kuwaiti heritage; the heritage that binds the past to the present and the future of this magnificent country.

Remo Casilli, a successful Roman photographer, who has already exhibited in Italy and abroad, presented the wonderful evening and night images of Rome, the 'Eternal City', illuminated and celebratory.



SPECIAL TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

Counselling for COVID-19 psychological problems



JOBY BABY
REGISTERED NURSE, KOC HOSPITAL

CCOVID-19 pandemic impacted the lives of people everywhere in some form or other. A significant number of people have become affected by psychological problems that range from hyperactivity among children, to depression in adolescents, anxiety in middle-aged, and memory related problems in the elderly.

Proper counselling and remedial measures are important to help people facing psychological problems. However, many people shy away from counselling, considering it as a treatment for mental disorders. But the fact is, counselling is usually given to people who are not having mental illness but are affected by stressful life events. Counselling is an empowerment process that people may need at any time in life.

Relevance of counseling to people in various age groups:

Children are entering their second consecutive academic year without going to school or meeting their teachers or peers in person. Online education has posed definite problems of its own, including learning, memory and behavior issues. Some children have developed behavioral addiction in the form of spending excessive time on digital gadgets. This may lead to aggression, poor learning skills and attention deficiency in quite a large number of children. Counselling for children affected, should be directed at responsible use of digital media, as well as maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Adolescence groups are severely affected by the fact that the most beautiful phase of their life is getting wasted and they are not able to engage in any other productive activities. The restriction of freedom of movement has affected this group more than anyone else.

The counselling for adolescent groups should be directed at enabling them to lead a healthy, productive and positive way of life with full engagement with their academic activities while retaining their social connectivity. Their energy can be utilized in forming self-help groups, or joining voluntary service groups engaged in COVID-19 awareness programs. They can help create video and audio to spread authentic messages and health guidelines on the pandemic. They can also be engaged in the delivery of essential supplies to needy people. This kind of social activism will give them a sense of direction and purpose while helping them remain positive during the pandemic.

Youth and the middle-aged are severely affected by the financial consequences of the pandemic. A large section of youth in the private sector lost their jobs or had to undergo severe pay cuts. People who have taken a loan and invested in business are suffering severe setbacks, and are extremely apprehensive about the future. Middle-aged people are finding it hard to find resources for educating their children, or the treatment of ageing parents, and repayment of monthly instalments. This age group needs immediate social support to help overcome their financial challenges. Counselling can help provide information on facilities available to them in this crisis and specific directions regarding how to overcome financial problems associated with the pandemic.

One of the worst affected by the pandemic is people with lifestyle-induced diseases such as diabetics, cancer, hypertension, heart diseases etc. They are not only at greater risk of developing COVID-19 complications, many of them have been affected by serious depression because of strict restrictions on their mobility. Counselling these people should focus on empowering them to lead a healthy lifestyle with a proper diet and regular exercise. Many people on treatment for long term diseases are finding it difficult to reach hospitals and procure medicines. The service of mental health programs becomes very valuable to such people.

The pandemic has also left the elderly population, people above 60 years of age, with no means to continue their regular outdoor activities including taking walks or meeting with their friends. A large number of elderly people have developed sleep disturbances, anxiety and memory problems as well. Counselling them should be directed at helping them to remain physically and mentally active. Regular exercise in their own homes for thirty minutes per day, proper diet, sleep and hygiene, and being mentally active by learning new technological things would help them to maintain a positive mental state. Interaction with relatives and friends through social media would also help them to remain positive and confident.

In addition, people affected by COVID-19 are petrified of both the physical and psychological impact of the disease. They should refrain from reading and watching information related to the pandemic, other than that from authentic agencies. They can utilize online counselling services also to get relief from stress. At least a third of people affected by COVID-19 are likely to develop severe mental illness within six months following the disease. Counselling for post-COVID-19 mental problems is relevant and very much important. Relaxation exercises, cognitive restructuring to take away negative thought processes, a healthy lifestyle, adequate entertainment are all factors that should be emphasized in the counselling.



Retrospective Exhibition on Legacy of late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

In commemoration of the first-year anniversary of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah, and in honor of his exemplary works through the years, Al Hamra Real Estate Company launched a retrospective exhibition at the Al Hamra Shopping Center.

The exhibition titled 'Tabassar' ('Enlighten') highlights memorable milestones in the life journey of the late Amir and recognizes his positive role as a global 'Humanitarian Leader', and as the 'Dean of Arab Diplomacy', through rare photographs and footage for visitors to explore.

Al Hamra Real Estate in collaboration with prominent local talent, Jassim F. AlNashmi, founder of Manmade Studio, designer, architect and artist, started with the idea for the retrospective exhibition one year ago, soon after the demise of the beloved amir of Kuwait by listening to his final public announcement which starts with the word 'Tabassar' and urges his children of Kuwait to not only observe what is happening in the world today, but also have an outlook on things to come.

The late Amir was an embodiment of 'Tabassar' through his diligent leadership, practices, perseverance and care that in turn fostered national prosperity. The exhibition pays tribute to this legacy and brings to life the significant role that the late Amir played



in Kuwait's development, in accelerating progress in the various sectors, and in shaping the country's social and economic growth that is widely acclaimed and admired across the world today.

The historical timeline from his childhood in 1929 until his demise in the year 2020, vividly depicted through images at the exhibition, traces the career and proud heritage that the late Amir left his country and future generations. The exhibition will be live until the end of 2021.

Al Hamra Real Estate Co. sought the expertise of renowned national talents — Engineer Maha Alessa, an independent researcher and specialized museum educator, who was the curator of the exhibition, and Dr. Abdullah Al-Najdi, Assistant Professor in Modern & Contemporary History at the College of Arts from Kuwait University. Visitors

can browse through a select collection of memoirs and biographies on the late Amir, contributed by notable members of society and authors such as Dr. Abdullah Al-Ghunaim, Abdullah Bishara, Abdullah Abbas Buwair, as well as by the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al Hamra Real Estate Company, Sheikh Faisal Ahmad Al Abdullah Al Khalifa Al Sabah, in his comments at the opening of the exhibition said the event was a rewarding moment for Al Hamra Real Estate Company as it allows us "to honor and mark the footsteps of our late Amir who paved the way for a future that all generations can be proud of. This exhibition stands as a reminder of the powerful impact he had on the world around us and how his ambitions for a better Kuwait profoundly transformed the nation for many segments of society." Sheikh Faisal Ahmad extended his

heartfelt appreciation to those who contributed to the success of the exhibition, dedicated their resources and efforts, and shared in our vision to build an experience that celebrates the name and legacy of our late Amir. "I would also like to thank and acknowledge the efforts of Al Diwan Al Amiri, Dar Salwa, prominent Kuwaiti sculptor, Sami Mohammed, Kuwait Oil Company, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Al Jarida, Al Qabas, Al Anba, Al Rai and KUNA."

Inviting everyone to visit the exhibition and enjoy the tribute to the late Amir, the chairman of Al Hamra Real Estate Company noted that the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was "an extraordinary man and iconic ruler, and, through his outstanding contributions and inspirational leadership, forged exceptional diplomatic ties, peace and brought aid to the region and the world."

Kalyan Jewellers adds to Indian business capital's glitter with two new showrooms in Mumbai

Kalyan Jewellers, one of the most trusted and leading jewellery companies, recently launched two new showrooms in Mumbai, India. These showrooms, located at Matunga East and High Street Phoenix in Lower Parel, were inaugurated by the brand's regional ambassadors, Pooja Sawant, Kinjal Rajpriya and Kalyani Priyadarshan. These showrooms brought Kalyan Jewellers' footprint in Mumbai, the financial capital of India, to 7 showrooms.

At the launch, Kalyan Jewellers' regional brand ambassador, Kalyani Priyadarshan said, "Kalyan Jewellers is among the most iconic jewellery brands and it is an honour to be representing a company that has been spearheading transparency and ethical business practices in the jewellery industry. Being part of a brand campaign alongside India's Lady Superstar Manju Warrier, and now launching 2 new showrooms in Mumbai with my fellow regional ambassadors, Pooja Sawant and Kinjal Rajpriya, the journey has been a truly enriching one for me. I have been a big admirer of the brand's hyperlocal jewellery collections, especially the



wedding jewellery collection, Muhurat and temple jewellery collection, Nimah, which are widely popular across -all regions. I am ecstatic to be part of my first showroom launch for the brand and look forward to being a part of the brand's journey as it grows from strength to strength globally."

Talking about the new showroom, Mr. TS. Kalyanaraman, Chairman and Managing Director, Kalyan Jewellers said, "We are extremely delighted to launch two new showrooms in Mumbai, India. Over the years, we have built a significant presence across key markets in the state and opening our eleventh showroom in Maharashtra reiterates our commitment to this

market. We aim to offer a best-in-class buying experience, while ensuring the safety and health of our patrons and the community at large by providing a hygienic and personalized shopping environment."

As part of the launch offer, customers at these showrooms will be able to maximise the value of their purchases with offers that includes up to 25% cashback on VA or making charges of gold jewellery with VA starting as low as Rs 199/- per gram. On diamond jewellery as well as on precious and uncut stone jewellery, a 25% cashback & a 20% cashback on stone charges is also applicable. Cashbacks can be availed in the form of instantly



redeemable vouchers, and these offers are valid until 30th November, 2021. Customers can also opt for the Gold Rate Protection plan, by paying 10% advance on their intended purchase value.

As part of Kalyan Jewellers' 'We Care' COVID-19 guidelines, the company has instituted the highest level of safety and precautionary measures across all showrooms to safeguard the health and safety of both customers and staff alike. The company has also appointed a 'Safety Measure Officer' to make certain that safety protocol guidelines are strictly followed.

Kalyan Jewellers will offer its patrons Muhurat, the bridal jewellery line

curated from across India along with exclusive sections featuring Kalyan's popular house brands such as Tejasvi (Polki jewellery), Mudhra (handcrafted antique jewellery), Nimah (Temple jewellery) and Glo (dancing diamonds). Other sections at the showroom include Ziah (Solitaire-like diamond jewellery), Anokhi (uncut diamonds), Apoorva (diamonds for special occasions), Antara (wedding diamonds), Hera (daily wear diamonds) and Rang (precious stones jewellery). Kalyan Jewellers will draw from its portfolio of over one lakh contemporary and traditional designs and will offer selections for everyday as well as bridal wear and festive occasions.

MoH credited with successful handling of COVID-19 emergency

Continuous positive epidemiological indicators over the past month have reassured health authorities that a 'return to normalcy' could be imminent. After successfully overcoming what has definitely been the most challenging period in its entire history, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has earned every right to take the credit for leading a successful response to the COVID-19 health crisis in Kuwait.

The professionalism and compassion displayed by the medical personnel throughout the pandemic — often putting their lives on the line to serve and save the lives of their patients — not only deserves praise and gratitude but their selfless acts need to be recorded and archived for posterity.

Similarly, the determination and persistence of medical authorities to adhere and comply with international health protocols recommended to contain and control epidemics, need to be applauded. Despite strong opposition to curfews and lockdown from the public and various influential quarters, the insistence of medical leadership on persevering with the restrictions, are in hindsight being

acknowledged as the right moves to make under the circumstances.

Though widely criticized in the beginning, the successful vaccination campaign is also a feather in the medical cap of MoH. The foresight to place orders for vaccines early on with manufacturers and to ensure their rollout in an orderly and structured manner, is probably the clearest manifestation of the competence and capabilities of the leadership and cadres of MoH. Throughout the tiring times the support of the government, along with other state entities and machinery, to the MoH in its fight against the pandemic cannot be ignored or under appreciated.

In recent months, as the country began a gradual easing of restriction and graduated reopening of business activities, the MoH along with other concerned authorities once again proved their capability to respond to emergencies efficiently and professionally. Five major challenges in the road to recovery were successfully overcome by the ministry and other relevant entities.

The first and most challenging event according to health authorities was the reopening of the airport, when thousands



of passengers began arriving from select countries. Testing, evaluating, monitoring the arrivals became a non-stop activity that often challenged both available resources and the medical personnel involved. However, the tiring and stressful early experience prepared the MoH to handle the increased flow of passengers witnessed in recent weeks following the increase in passengers to 10,000 per day and their arrival from many more countries, in addition to the return of citizens from summer vacations.

The second challenge followed the gradual and step-wise resumption of commercial activities as the country rolled back restrictions and people began

engaging in normal work. The third challenge was dealing with the congestion and potential spread of infections in Husseinia councils during the month of Muharram. The fourth challenge overcome by the health authorities is represented by the rollout and success of the vaccination campaign, with more than 80 percent of the population having received one dose of the vaccine and more than 75 percent receiving both doses.

The fifth challenge was during the return of students to their classrooms in-person at the start of the academic season this month. However, even before this, the authorities had to confront the prospect of medical emergencies when students in twelfth grade attended paper exams in classrooms in June. The authorities are now reported to be holding their fingers crossed in their evaluation of the return to in-person classes, as the most accurate evaluation will become clear only at the end of this month, with the passage of about four weeks since the start of the school year.

Let us all take a moment to thank and laud the MoH and its noble white army cadres for a work done very well.

Northern Gulf Gateway Project a catalyst for growth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

That it took nearly half a century for the plan to be revived and prioritized is perhaps most indicative of the glacial pace of progress that has become a shameful hallmark of the country.

Nevertheless, in large measure to the efforts of late Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the then first Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister, the plan was dusted off and presented in 2018 as an "economic catalyst to revive the country's growth and to build a new geopolitical era". The plan forecast an addition of nearly KD70 billion to the economy, creating 400,000 knowledge-based job opportunities for national youth, attracting over three million visitors annually and thereby providing opportunities for tourism, hospitality and leisure sectors, and pulling in around KD50 billion in foreign direct investments to the project in its initial phase.

More details of the NGGP plan were sketched out at the high-profile Kuwait Investment Forum held in March 2018, where it was revealed that the initiative envisions public and private sector investment, aims to establish a world class economic, social and cultural hub at the tip of the Arabian Gulf, and by linking to the continent-spanning Chinese Belt Road Initiative, Kuwait would have connectivity to an area extending from the Far East to Europe and beyond. The forum heard various luminaries pay glowing tributes to Kuwait's ambitious vision and its enormous prospects. It was presented as the "next big opportunity as an investment haven with resources, land and a central location".

Project presentations included development of a world-class airport, an economic zone with various industries, a financial hub with a stock exchange, and different zones such as an educational hub, a centre for smart industry and future technologies, and a leisure zone that would incorporate high-end medical facilities.

Anchoring the entire area and its developments would be the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port located on Boubyan Island with its two dozen berths and ability to handle over 8 million TEU of cargo annually. At an estimated cost of KD2 billion, the port is projected as a major route for regional shipping and transit services, linking the sea to the mainland and beyond through a network of highways and railways.

However, the unexpected arrival of global pandemic in 2020, which resulted in a worldwide economic downturn and subsequent low oil price scenario, put a dampener on the developments in NGGP. A liquidity crunch, increasing budget deficits and other setbacks also downshifted priority for the project, which led to claims the entire project was being shelved. In October 2020, Kuwait Port

Authority (KPA) had to deny a statement attributed to its Director-General, which suggested the mega-port project was being suspended. The Authority claimed that its Director-General Sheikh Yusef Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah was misquoted by the media and what he meant was that only 'a constructional aspect of the project was being suspended'.

Clarification on the port notwithstanding, the entire project suffered a major blow with the demise in December 2020 of its main proponent, Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah. Luckily for all stakeholders, enthusiasm for the project has apparently not waned. Last week, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah assigned Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development Shaya Al-Shaya to review seven projects, including those related to NGGP that are aimed at transforming Kuwait into a financial and commercial hub as part of the country's Vision 2035. The projects under reappraisal included the proposal for the reconstruction and investment of Failaka Island, a proposal for the reconstruction and investment on Boubyan Island, and a proposal to rehabilitate the Subhiya area for housing and investment projects as part of the Silk City project.

In a further sign of continued interest in NGGP, in late September, the Council of Ministers led by His Highness the Prime Minister also toured the northern area and visited the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port construction site located on Boubyan Island. He was apprised of progress on work at the port and on recent developments related to the NGGP by the Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Telecommunications and Information Technology, Dr. Rana Al-Faris. The Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port is seen as key to invigorating developments on Boubyan Island and the surrounding area, as well as to reposition the country as a major hub on the regional and international logistics, tourism and commercial domains due to its strategic location, its unique environment, and its huge benefit to the economy.

The prime minister and the accompanying cabinet members also discussed in depth other ongoing infrastructure projects related to NGGP, including tourism and entertainment facilities being developed on the two artificial islands, Bay Island North and Bay Island South, along the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway.

In addition, the ministers reviewed overall development of Failaka and Boubyan islands and progress on the Silk City projects. During the visit, the prime minister and his cabinet colleagues expressed appreciation for the steps being made towards moving the New Kuwait plan forward and realizing the country's strategic Vision 2035.

Initial contract for building the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, as well as dredging and shoring the surrounding environs, was announced in 2011, before the project got embroiled in political and economic turmoil that stalled work on the project. Plans for the port were revived in recent years, with the first phase finally being awarded in November 2019. Though work progress once again slowed and stalled during the pandemic period, in April 2021 it was announced that work on four berths had been completed. The Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port development is not only the anchor to development of the region, it is in particular crucial to the overall masterplan for development of the 850-square kilometer Boubyan Island, the largest in Kuwait's coastal chain of nine islands.

The Boubyan Island project will include residential and industrial developments and a new multi-lane bridge linking it to the mainland in place of the current one. As part of the island's overall development, and keeping in mind the environmental aspects of the region, which is almost entirely soft muddy flats inhabited by its own unique fauna and flora, half of the area will also be reserved as a nature park. However, reconciling the country's development needs with environmental concerns will prove challenging for conscientious planners in this pristine area.

When completed the NGGP would completely transform the northern region, including the country's well known islands of Failaka and Boubyan, as well as some of the lesser known smaller islands, giving the mega project the alternative title of the Five Islands project. No matter what name the project goes under — Northern Gulf Gateway Project, Silk City Project or Five Islands Project — there is no doubt that the mega endeavor is a brilliant work in conceptualizing and visualizing. However, despite the vividness in its presentation, the project remains largely skimpy when it comes to detail, especially on the funding needed to raise the project from the barren desert land.

In July 2018, while it was being initially presented to the public there was talk of a figure of around KD25 billion in estimated cost for the first phase of the NGGP, the bulk of it reportedly coming from the private sector. By all estimates this figure will have swelled by now, and is expected to burgeon even further before the first of the planned 700,000 residents begin moving in. With oil, the main revenue for the state, subject to global vagaries, and legislative hurdles to borrowing on international debt markets, a depleted state treasury and recurring budget deficits, it is not clear where funding for NGGP would come from.

The Chinese are reportedly knocking at the gates with bags of investment funds and interest in financing and managing the Mubarak Al-Kabeer

Port for a fee, and for a share in the management of the economic zone. Kuwait is understandably lured by the prospect of this easy money, but the country would be wise to heed the ancient adage, purportedly coined by Trojans, about 'Greeks bearing Gifts'.

Besides funding, development of NGGP is also likely to face political and social opposition to the project. For one, lawmakers who have a precedent and penchant for opposing any project promoted by the government, have already voiced their objection, and already returned the NGGP project when it was submitted to parliament earlier in 2018. Back then the lawmakers found objection to the clause in the development agenda related to the area having its own administrative, legal and financial independence, deemed necessary to make it attractive to international investments. Many lawmakers feared that without their constant and vigilant scrutiny, the area could soon become 'a state within a state', where vice would flow and flourish.

Public opinion is also mixed on the NGGP. When asked about Silk City, a political activist and social media warrior remarked that people would be happy with improvements to the existing capital, starting with its roads. He added, "When they can make streets that don't dissolve in the rain, then we can talk about economic visions." Entrenched business interests have also voiced their concerns about the project and its potential to draw an influx of foreign investors who will eat into their business and profits. Some even believe the project to be a white elephant that will waste resources that could be better utilized elsewhere. One business executive remarked, "I am for it, but the plans and processes must be transparent, and the benefits to citizens from investing KD150 billion in the desert should be apparent."

However, proponents of NGGP say the project is key to diversifying the economy and weaning it away from oil exports, for developing the private sector and for providing employment to youth. Giving a different perspective on legislative and public opposition to reforms and development plans in general, Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Dr. Mohammad al-Hashel, told a banking roundtable in March 2019, "There is increasing resistance toward reforms in Kuwait. It is a case of a sick body that is not willing to take the medicine. But without addressing our structural imbalances, we cannot make much progress."

No matter what opponents and proponents of NGGP say, changing economic, social and environmental pressures will soon make it imperative for Kuwait to find a way to bypass the hurdles that prevent its need to change and move forward, if it is to move forward at all.

Global mobility rises as restrictions ease

BY HERMOINE MACURA-NOBLE
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES KUWAIT



As the UAE opens its doors to the world for the start of Expo 2020, the world's ultimate real-time tool on global mobility, the Passport Index, has revealed a 14.8 per cent increase in the World Openness Score at the start of Q4, since the beginning of the year.

Commenting on the latest rankings, Armand Arton, President of Arton Capital, the creators of the Passport Index, said: "To start Q4 with a 14.8 per cent increase in global mobility shows that the world is thankfully opening up once more, and on an encouragingly positive trajectory."

While up nine percent on the last quarter, the average global mobility score, across all 199 states measured by the index, is 89; based on a total of visa-free or visa-on-arrival access provided.

The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect travel and mobility and it is testament to the many countries around the world that have managed to take a lead in seeing the world opening once more. In July 2021, Bloomberg's Covid tracking data reported that the UAE was the most vaccinated country, in the world, with over 73.8 per cent of the population vaccinated.

Based on a mobility score that totals the number of visa-free or visa-on-arrival countries a passport currently grants the holder, the Passport Index also notes Covid-related restrictions that are changing by the day. This allows travelers and governments to have the most up to date information on global mobility – in real time.

While European passports continue to lead in the global rankings, Australia, and South Korea (MS 144) both improved their mobility score going into Q4, moving into joint second place, along with Germany and Spain. The UK, Canada, the US, (MS 142/joint 5th) and Singapore (MS 141/6th) were the only other non-European passports in the Passport Index's top 10.

"In addition to pandemic-related restrictions, geo-political events of the last three months have also seen the extraordinary circumstances create travel, mobility, and migration issues to and from Afghanistan – although the Afghan passport, prior to recent events, was already ranked lowest on the mobility score. While clearly a difficult time for many concerned, times of crisis can often put the issue of global mobility firmly into the spotlight," Arton added.

The Passport Index is more than just a simple ranking tool; unlike other indicators on global mobility, the Passport Index's data can reflect the temporary and often disruptive geo-political or pandemic-related travel restrictions – in real time.

In addition, the index's ability to offer insights across several socio-political influencers means that many foreign ministries around the world are already using the platform to analyze and compare their policies with others.

In the GCC, the UAE was the biggest climber, across Q3 2021, moving up four places to the number one spot. Over the last quarter, other GCC nations remain in similar rankings: Bahrain down seven places to 52nd (MS 80), Kuwait down eight to 50th (MS 85), Oman down seven to 56 (MS 75), Qatar down

seven to 47 (MS 91), and Saudi Arabia down five in 55th place (MS 76).

With many COVID-19 travel restrictions still in play across the African continent, movement, and mobility scores here are either stagnant or have dropped several places since the start of the year and in Q3. At the turn of Q4 2021, the only improved mobility score since the start of the year is not on the continental mainland – The Seychelles (MS 111) in 29th position – the same ranking held at the beginning of the last quarter.

The Passport Index is the ultimate, interactive passport ranking tool in the world. Invented and empowered by Arton Capital, it is the only real-time global ranking of the world's passports, updated as frequently as new visa waivers and changes are implemented. Since its inception, Passport Index has become the leading global mobility intelligence platform, celebrated across the world.



New Visa Systems in the GCC Aim to Boost the Path to COVID-19 Recovery

BY HERMOINE MACURA-NOBLE
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

Several GCC countries have introduced new immigration measures to help attract skilled foreign workers, according to a report by the Oxford Business Group.

One of the major players is the UAE, which is in the process of launching 50 new projects and initiatives to boost diversification efforts.

The first initiative is the green visa, which will be open to highly skilled professionals, as well as investors, entrepreneurs and students. The second is a freelancer's visa, offered for the first time in the UAE.



The new visa options aim to address an issue that was highlighted by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Foreign workers are a cornerstone of the UAE economy, making up around 90% of its total population. However, visas have traditionally been pegged to a specific work contract, giving workers a grace period of only 30 days once that contract had expired or been cancelled. This meant that nearly 10% of the population left the country during the height of the pandemic, an exodus which had a significant impact on the broader economy.

By contrast, the green visa allows workers to stay in the country for up to 180 days after

losing or leaving a job, giving them time to find another one. Additionally, green visa holders will be able to sponsor their parents and other family members to come and join them.

Meanwhile, the freelancer's visa is intended to attract younger workers who are more accustomed to flexible, non-traditional approaches to work – approaches that the previous visa regime did not offer.

At the end of 2020 Abu Dhabi launched its own renewable, two-year Freelancer Licence, available to citizens, residents and non-residents alike. This licence is aimed at skilled individuals who have lost their job, but want to stay in the UAE.

Other GCC countries have also taken steps to

recently introduced a Temporary Work Visit Visa, while its immigration sponsorship system has been modified; among other expat-friendly changes, foreign workers will now be able to move between employers in the private sector.

In Oman a similar change came into effect in January this year, while in May Oman's Ministry of Labour announced that foreign workers may now enter the country on a visitor visa and later convert it into a work visa.

Oman has also announced a new visa, called the Investment Residency Programme. This will provide five and 10 year renewable residency visas to foreign investors who contribute to key sectors such as tourism, real estate, education, health, and information and technology.

Other GCC countries have taken an opposite approach, curtailing the flexibility of their respective immigration regimes in order to increase employment opportunities for nationals.

In Kuwait, foreign nationals over the age of 60 who do not hold a university degree may no longer renew their residency permits, while an expat's family members – as well as the foreign wives of Kuwaiti nationals, among others – have seen the length of their renewable residency permits reduced from two years to just one.

This variety of approaches reflects differing visions as to the best way to maintain a balance between creating employment opportunities for nationals and bringing in the best foreign talent.

Economies across the region are stepping up diversification efforts, with the Covid-19 pandemic being only the most recent global crisis to underline the dangers of an over-reliance on hydrocarbons.

Diversification requires a rapid upskilling of local workers, as well as the development of local innovation ecosystems. In parallel, however, foreign expertise is needed in a range of sectors to ensure optimised growth.

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

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Second Chance for Global Development



Rebeca Grynspan

A former vice president of Costa Rica, is Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Second chances are not common in this world, but one is arriving now. The scope and scale of government support for businesses and workers during the COVID-19 crisis of the last 18 months have swept aside entrenched policy dogmas. This has generated political momentum across advanced and developing economies to change the balance of power between the state and the market, and thereby foster a new consensus for achieving more equitable and sustainable growth. By building on this impetus, we can avoid repeating the policy mistakes of recent decades.

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested governments' responsiveness and the resilience of economic systems everywhere, and changed social behavior and personal habits in previously unthinkable ways. There has also been cause for genuine hope amid the suffering. The dedication of essential workers has been inspiring, while the global scientific community has harnessed the power of collaborative research and public money to develop safe, effective COVID-19 vaccines at breakneck speed.

A global economic recovery began in the second half of 2020, as countries found less draconian ways to manage the pandemic's health risks and launched vaccination programs. Global growth is expected to reach 5.3 percent this year, the highest rate in almost a half-century. But the outlook beyond 2021 is uncertain, given disparities in countries' financial resources, the prospect of new coronavirus variants, and highly uneven vaccination rates.

If we are not careful, these challenges — like governments' misguided embrace of fiscal austerity after the 2008 global financial crisis — could slow the momentum for meaningful change. Moreover, the pandemic has revealed how unprepared even the wealthiest countries are for unexpected shocks — a fact underscored by extreme weather events this year — and how divided the global economy has become.

A return to the pre-pandemic policy paradigm, which delivered the weakest decade of global growth since 1945, would be a disaster. This is especially true for developing countries, where the economic damage caused by COVID-19 has exceeded that resulting from the global financial crisis a decade ago, in some cases by a considerable margin.

The new US administration's wide-ranging economic initiatives, if complemented by similar actions in other



developed countries, could restore the global economy to a sounder footing. Moreover, US backing for the recent \$650 billion allocation of International Monetary Fund special drawing rights (SDRs), as well as for a global minimum corporate tax rate and a waiver of COVID-19 vaccine-related intellectual-property rights, suggests a possible renewal of multilateralism. The global economy's existing asymmetries, and the interlocking economic and environmental crises these have caused, should top the multilateral agenda.

Progress will depend on improved policy coordination among major economies

But we can build on what has already been achieved. Recent G20 initiatives on developing-country debt can spur more far-ranging efforts to tackle this growing issue through robust multilateral institutions.

Similarly, high-income countries' donation or on-lending of unused SDRs, including a larger chunk of the recent \$650 billion allocation, could help fund developing countries' efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite recent setbacks, UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently emphasized that "we have the knowledge,

That implies creating more jobs that guarantee a secure future for working people and their families. It means not only expanding fiscal space but also ensuring that the taxes people pay result in adequate public services and social protection.

Besides responsible sovereign borrowing, policymakers should ensure that the debts people acquire to put a roof over their heads or send their children to school are not a lifelong burden. Lastly, governments must not only price carbon appropriately but also preserve the natural environment for future generations.

Forty years ago, the UN Conference on Trade and Development's first Trade and Development Report called for a new paradigm "to take explicit account of the fact that issues concerning the management of the world economy, on the one hand, and long-term development objectives on the other, are intermingled." Instead, policymakers have since placed far too much faith in market forces to make that connection.

This approach has failed. Worse, the corrosion of public services, state capture by special interests, and deregulation of labor markets over the last four decades have taken their toll on citizens' trust in their political representatives.

Today, building back better hinges on the emergence of a new policy paradigm — this time, to help guide a just transition to a decarbonized world. The crucial question is whether governments will adopt the necessary measures together. If they act separately, this crisis will prove to be merely another missed opportunity.

“ But what is missing today is a bold, human-centered narrative that abandons outdated free-market tropes and instead connects shared global policy challenges to improvements in the everyday lives of people. ”

as they push to maintain the recovery's momentum, build resilience against future shocks, and address the increasingly urgent climate crisis. But better coordination will not be enough to build back better. Above all, developing countries need renewed international support. Many of them face a spiraling public-health crisis owing to the pandemic, even as they struggle with an increasing debt burden and face the prospect of a lost decade of economic growth.

So far, international efforts to alleviate health and financial stresses in the Global South risk being too little too late.

the science, the technology, and the resources" to get the SDGs back on track. "What we need is unity of purpose, effective leadership from all sectors, and urgent, ambitious action."

The US Marshall Plan that enabled Europe to rebuild after World War II has rightly been evoked as a blueprint for such efforts. But what is missing today is a bold, human-centered narrative that abandons outdated free-market tropes and instead connects shared global policy challenges to improvements in the everyday lives of people, whether they live in Bogotá, Berlin, Bamako, Busan, or Boston.



Education in an Age of Displacement



Gordon Brown and Allan Goodman

Gordon Brown, a former prime minister of the United Kingdom, is United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education and Chair of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity.

Allan Goodman is President of the Institute of International Education.



The ongoing flood of refugees from Afghanistan — now some 2.6 million strong — is sadly no isolated tragedy. Indeed, if all of today's 82.4 million refugees and forcibly displaced persons were gathered into a single state it would be the world's twentieth largest country by population. If current trends continue, and climate change adds substantially to the numbers as the World Bank predicts, the number of refugees and displaced persons by mid-century could exceed the population of Brazil, and nearly that of Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and France combined. With sea levels rising, some forecasters suggest that the world's displaced population, already the largest recorded in human history, could exceed one billion.

Long before we heard anything about a novel coronavirus, the rising number of refugees was being driven by the pathogens of war and ethnic and religious hatred, and by our collective inability to feel others' pain. Refugee 'camps' have become permanent cities, but most refugees are dispersed in hovels, huts, and rented accommodation, where they have been living for almost 20 years on average, with no end in sight.

Tragically, among the millions suffering from this disruption is a lost generation of young people with little access to education and employment. Think of the talent that would be lost, the ability squandered, and the potential untapped if a country's entire youth population was denied these opportunities.

Among today's displaced youth are potential leaders — the future Albert Einsteins, Jessye Normans, J.K. Rowlings, and Tim Berners-Lees — with the capabilities and drive to make the world a more prosperous and less dangerous place. But what chance

is there for a young person trapped in a besieged town in Syria or Afghanistan to show their genius? Or for a child in the midst of the conflict in Yemen, Chad, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, or Libya, or in the South Sudanese refugee camps on the Ugandan border?

The refugee problem is now so widespread that even in wealthy Europe, thousands of young people in the Moria camp in Greece — until it burned down in 2020 — were receiving no formal education. Two summers ago, three adolescents in Moria, aged 12, 13, and 14, reached such levels of despair that they attempted suicide.

Yes, hope dies when a refugee boat capsizes, a food convoy cannot reach hungry

life-changing educational opportunities to young people currently living without the advantages of more stable, supportive environments.

For school-age refugee children and youth, new hope dawned in 2016 with the launch of Education Cannot Wait, a United Nations global fund. Since its inception, the initiative has not only reached an estimated 4.6 million children trapped in some of the world's worst humanitarian crises, but it has also acted as the catalyst for aid agencies to help millions more.

For university-age students, the Institute of International Education's online Platform for Education in Emergencies Response offers pathways to continue formal and

the equivalent of the Fulbright, Churchill, or Marshall programs, which have found and developed individual talent for decades.

Such scholarship programs do much more than that. The Harkness Fellowships have built a collaborative international network of health-policy researchers and practitioners. The Kennedy Scholarships spur closer transatlantic relations between future leaders. The Schwarzman Scholars are forging a network that will foster stronger ties between China and the rest of the world. The Mandela Rhodes Scholarship is equipping young Africans to become visionary leaders who will transform the continent and advance equality, freedom, and human rights. Extending hope and opportunity to young people at risk of being left behind is a powerful way to advance these values, foster peace and stability, and bring about a transformative and durable solution to the refugee crisis.

We know that we can find young potential leaders among the most disadvantaged group of all — the displaced — and give them access to advanced education. An innovative, competitive program would provide refugee and displaced students with fellowships for two full years of graduate study, in any field, within the country where they have found refuge or anywhere in the world. If this initiative can attract the funding it needs to be successful, it will take its place alongside other respected, enduring, and high-impact scholarship programs, and, like them, over time it will take thousands of young people from where they are to what they can become.

“ Hope dies when a young person cannot prepare for the future or even dream of a different life. This happens when they are denied the education that all young people need to rise from who they are to what they can become. ”

people, and a hospital has no doctors to treat patients with COVID-19. But hope also dies when a young person cannot prepare for the future and is unable even to dream of a different life. This happens when they are denied the education all young people need to bridge the gap between who they are and what they can become.

There is no single-shot vaccine that will end the exploding refugee crisis. But amid the chaos, efforts are underway to provide

informal higher education. These include the University of the People, a tuition-free online university accredited in 2014 that counts 7,000 refugees among its 106,000 students. The university has promised the United Nations that it will enroll 25,000 refugee students by 2030.

We now need to expand the circle of opportunity by providing a similar opportunity at the graduate level for refugee and displaced students. That means building

THE TIMES
KUWAIT'S PREMIER WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE

To receive your
FREE Pdf copy every week
directly to your inbox,
send an email to
subscribethetimes@gmail.com

For latest News Updates please visit
www.timeskuwait.com

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

The Bitcoin Fountainhead



Daron Acemoglu

Professor of Economics at MIT, is co-author (with James A. Robinson) of *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* and *The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty*.

With the price of Bitcoin reaching new highs, and El Salvador and Cuba deciding to accept it as legal tender, cryptocurrencies are here to stay. What implications will this have for money and politics?

Money depends on trust. It is accepted in exchange for goods and services only because people can confidently assume that others will accept it in the future. This is as true for the US dollar as it is for gold. To argue that cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin are merely a confidence game — or a speculative bubble, as many economists have emphasized — is to ignore their popularity.

And yet, cryptocurrencies lack the stable institutional foundations needed to bolster the public's trust in them. Trust thus ebbs and flows, making them fragile and volatile, as Bitcoin's wild gyrations have amply demonstrated.

Moreover, with Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies that rely on 'proof-of-work' mechanisms, transactions must be continuously verified and logged in a decentralized ledger (in this instance based on blockchain). This requires millions of computers to operate continuously to update and verify transactions — work that is incentivized by the opportunity to be rewarded with newly minted Bitcoin.

The energy consumed in these 'mining' operations now exceeds that of a medium-sized country like Malaysia or Sweden. Now that the world has awoken to the dangers of climate change (and to the paltriness of our response to it so far), this massive waste should make Bitcoin highly unattractive.

And yet, despite its volatility, fragility, and massive carbon footprint, five factors have conspired to make Bitcoin an attractive proposition to many people: its political narrative; the criminal activities it enables; the seigniorage it distributes; the techno-optimism of the current age; and the desire to get rich quick at a time when few other economic opportunities beckon. Let us consider each in turn, going in reverse order.

We live in an era of dwindling economic prospects. Even workers with a college degree can no longer count on securing a stable job with good and rising pay. When economic opportunities are so scarce, get-rich-quick schemes become especially



alluring. Not surprisingly, there is now an entire industry dedicated to telling people that they, too, can strike gold by investing in Bitcoin. Money has been pouring into the cryptocurrency because millions of people in the United States and around the world think they can realize significant returns from it.

The narrative of massive returns for amateur and retail investors from a cryptocurrency is in keeping with our technology-obsessed age. We are constantly being told that technological ingenuity is creating a brighter future. And on the surface, there is no denying that Bitcoin is a marvel of technological

innovation. It took genuine creativity and mastery to create such an intricate decentralized system, capable of functioning without any oversight or government enforcement.

“ In its early days, demand for Bitcoin was boosted by dark-web sites such as Silk Road, which enabled all sorts of illicit transactions. To this day, criminal activities account for almost half of Bitcoin transactions, by some estimates. ”

innovation. It took genuine creativity and mastery to create such an intricate decentralized system, capable of functioning without any oversight or government enforcement.

Seigniorage, or the additional purchasing power conferred (typically to governments) by control of the money supply, is another factor in Bitcoin's appeal. When the US government puts new currency into circulation, it can use it to purchase services or pay its debt. The prospect of gaining seigniorage is very

attractive, and probably helps to explain why there are now more than 1,600 listed cryptocurrencies. In the case of Bitcoin, the absence of a centralized authority means that seigniorage is distributed, thus providing an incentive for mining efforts (which are now being conducted by more than a million people around the world).

A dedicated source of demand can help a new currency establish a reliable footing. For cryptocurrencies in general, and for Bitcoin in particular, this anchor is planted firmly in the criminal world. In its early days, demand for Bitcoin was boosted by dark-web sites such as Silk Road, which enabled

all sorts of illicit transactions. To this day, criminal activities account for almost half of Bitcoin transactions, by some estimates.

Each of these four factors has boosted Bitcoin artificially. Obviously, our society's economic ills will not be solved by people making money from Bitcoin. Nor has the prevailing techno-optimist mood been borne out in the real world. And whatever benefits there are from distributing seigniorage via mining, they are more than offset by the massive waste of energy.

That leaves the political argument for

Bitcoin. Will it liberate us from undue state power over the economy? Not really.

True, the US Federal Reserve sometimes acts in mysterious ways, and the Wall Street bailout during the 2008 financial crisis was rightly seen as an inside job that benefited banks and bankers at the expense of ordinary people. The desire to reduce politicians and policymakers' excessive power is thus understandable.

But Bitcoin is not the answer. It appeals to a puerile libertarian ideology in which a lone genius battles an overweening state to liberate individual excellence. Indeed, the real-world person — or persons — who designed Bitcoin and wrote its inspiring manifesto under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto is even more deserving of the "visionary" label than the fictional John Galt (the hero of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*).

Yet the vision itself is pure fantasy. The risk of Western governments producing runaway inflation or undermining the international monetary system is vanishingly small. The real existential threat today lies in political polarization, the unraveling of democracy, and democratic political systems' inability to keep economic elites and authoritarian politicians in check.

A new currency will not solve these problems. What is needed are measures to ensure that politicians, bureaucrats, and Silicon Valley and Wall Street tycoons act responsibly. This requires democratic participation and active civic engagement. Gimmicks like Bitcoin are a distraction from the real work that must be done.

THE TIMES KUWAIT

PREMIER WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE

Follow us on **twitter**

@thetimesq8

For latest News Updates please visit www.timeskuwait.com

Toxic pollution correlated to climate change

Anthropogenic pollution, the term denoting all pollution directly caused by human activity, causes serious negative impact on ecologies around the world. The pollution caused could be toxic or non-toxic to direct human health.

Toxic pollution, which directly damages human health includes contaminated water, soil or air that is harmful or poisonous. Industrial wastes like toxic heavy metals from mining or chemicals from factories, sewage and fine particulate matter (PM2.5) are instances of toxic pollution. Toxic pollutants can poison drinking water, the fish in rivers and ponds, food grown on contaminated farmland, as well as playgrounds, homes, and the very air we breathe.

Toxic pollution, such as fine particulate matter, is also a major health issue. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), fine particulate matter has been linked to many serious health problems, primarily respiratory and cardiovascular conditions. The EPA also notes that fine particulate matter can damage rivers, lakes, coastal waters, soil, and forests. Though toxic pollution has been identified as the largest cause of death in the world, it remains one of the most underreported and underfunded global problems.

The term 'toxic' is used to differentiate it from 'non-toxic' pollution that comes from increased levels of carbon dioxide or other air pollutants that lead to an increase in greenhouse gases responsible for global warming and climate change, but nevertheless does not have a direct impact on human health.

Over the past few centuries, humans have released more greenhouse gasses, such as carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere, increasing the earth's temperature and contributing to climate change. A wide range of studies have shown that climate change poses a significant indirect threat to human health, and many scientists believe that some of the negative ecological and human health effects of climate change are irreversible. They are concerned that tipping points, which may soon be crossed, will cause 'self-reinforcing feedbacks' that limit our ability to respond effectively.

Self-reinforcing is a process that occurs in a feedback loop which exacerbates the effects of the initial disturbance. It could be represented as: A produces more of B, which in turn leads to production of more A. In global warming, the self-reinforcing feedback would eventually curtail humanity's ability to collectively respond to the climate crisis.

Now researchers at the University of Notre Dame in the United States have found a strong correlation between toxic pollution, which directly damages human health, and nontoxic pollution, which contributes



to global heating and climate change. Researchers have shown that toxic and nontoxic pollution are not separate issues, as they can reinforce one another. The study could help planners to determine what appropriate responses are needed to mitigate the health effects of toxic and non-toxic pollution.

The study also revealed a strong correlation between the location of toxic pollution exposure and the location of climate change vulnerability. Determining this correlation is again important as it assists the international community in identifying countries that could be most effectively supported to respond to both toxic and nontoxic pollution.

To determine the correlation between the location of toxic pollution exposure and climate vulnerability, the researchers at Notre Dame analyzed data from multiple sources that included data available on 176 countries. The analysis revealed a 'strong correlation' between a country's vulnerability to climate change and its population's exposure to toxic pollution and resulting fatalities. In other words, the study showed that deaths resulting from toxic pollution are highest where the distribution of toxic pollution is greatest and, critically, also where the impacts of climate change pose the greatest risk.

This finding confirms the researchers' earlier hypothesis and is backed up by previous research that has shown that the negative effects of climate change and exposure to toxic pollution disproportionately affect the world's poorest countries.

The researchers' findings enabled them to determine which countries are most at risk of toxic pollution and climate change-related harm.

In order to make their results more useful for policy- and decision-makers, the researchers created what they call 'Target' — a measure that combines a country's climate impacts risk, toxic pollution risk and its potential readiness to mitigate these risks. Based on these criteria, the top 10 countries they recommend concentrating on are Singapore, Rwanda, China, India, Solomon Islands, Bhutan, Botswana, Georgia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand. At the other end they listed five countries — Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, Jordan, Central African Republic and Venezuela — where applying

remedial measures would produce less returns, due to several serious governance issues that currently stand in the way of effectively addressing pollution.

The study also highlights global inequalities in consumption and the production of pollution. With the top one-third of countries at risk of toxic pollution and climate impacts representing more than two-thirds of the world's population, the study also underlines both the magnitude

of the problem and the unequal distribution of environmental risk.

Given that a large portion of the world's population lives in countries at higher toxic pollution and climate impacts risk, understanding where and how to target in-pollution risk mitigation is critical to maximizing reductions of potential human harm, concluded the researchers in their report.

While reducing toxic pollution tends to be more of a domestic/national policy program, reducing many aspects of climate vulnerability requires international coordination, such as the Paris climate accords. Sadly, there is no functional international agreement governing toxic pollution despite the fact that it is the single largest environmental hazard to human health today.

The bottom line is that the human community needs to substantially

reduce our consumption — the primary driver of toxic and nontoxic emissions — and redistribute consumption more efficiently and effectively, as there are substantial gaps in current usage patterns

Historically, high income countries have had the highest per capita greenhouse gas emission rates and are the driving force behind much of the consumption of goods produced in low income countries that contribute to toxic pollution production. But the people most responsible for pollution tend to be less exposed and at risk, mimicking many issues of inequality that exist today.

Recognizing this inverse relationship between responsibility and risk is nothing new, but hopefully, the moral and ethical implications of it are at least made a little more apparent and salient by our work, said the research team.

THE TIMES

KUWAIT'S PREMIER WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE



More Insight



Just the right amount of news

THE WHOLE WEEK IN ONE MAGAZINE



Send an email to

subscribethetimes@gmail.com

to receive your free copy every week directly to your inbox

For latest News Updates please visit

www.timeskuwait.com



Join the Conversation



@timeskuwait



@thetimesq8



@thetimeskuwait



@thetimeskuwait