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Learning to live together in harmony



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

The world marks International Day of Living Together in Peace on 16 May of each year. Here, in Kuwait, this would be an opportune occasion to examine how the country fares in bringing together the

multiple racial, ethnic, religious communities that constitute the enriching and colorful fabric of this nation. On an individual level, this Day provides an opportunity for all of us to reflect on how we individually, and as groups within the larger community, have contributed to or impeded through our words, actions and attitudes in helping develop a social environment where everyone can live together in peace and harmony.

Living together in peace is all about accepting and appreciating the differences in others; of recognizing, respecting and celebrating the diverse perspectives, cultures and values that together enrich our experiences and contribute to the development of humanity. The Day promotes peace, tolerance, inclusion, understanding and solidarity, and urges people to live and act together, united despite our differences and diversity, so as to help build a world of peace, solidarity and harmony for today and tomorrow.

For nations, the concept of living together in harmony involves promoting understanding between neighboring states, and between different cultures through processes of discourse, reconciliation and resolving conflicts peacefully.

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An 18-year legacy that shaped UAE history

Remembering late UAE President Khalifa

By Hermoine Macura-Noble
Special to the Times Kuwait

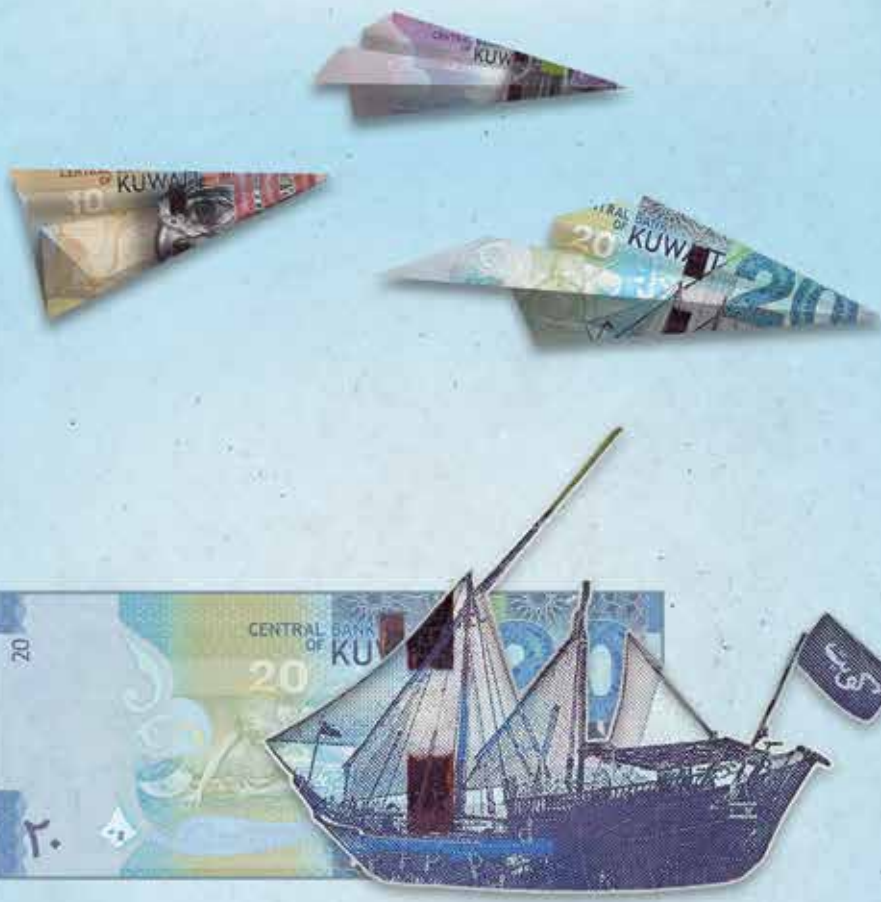
On Friday, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) commenced its official mourning across the country as the late President Sheikh Khalifa

bin Zayed Al Nahyan was laid to rest in the capital. Often described as a kind and gracious leader, the late Sheikh Khalifa will be remembered for his love and commitment to his country and people.

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Municipality to rebuild gutted portion of Mubarakia Market

A committee formed to study reconstruction of the portion of Mubarakia Market that was recently gutted by fire has reportedly assigned the reconstruction project to the Kuwait Municipality.

The decision was taken at a recent meeting held by the committee, which comprised personnel from the Ministries of Finance, Justice, and Commerce, the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), and the Kuwait Municipality. During the meeting, the Ministry of Finance gave its vision for the Mubarakia area and called for an economic study to look into raising investments for the reconstruction project. The ministry said it was seeking investments for a Build-Operate-and Transfer (BOT) system that would enable the recovery of investments in the reconstruction project, and noting that the annual rental value of the affected area of around 5,000 square meters was around KD3.6 million.

Finance Ministry officials also requested the Kuwait Municipality and the Ministry of Justice to identify the private property affected by the development, and proposed

that the 1964 Expropriation Law for the Public Benefit be applied in the event that the owners of private property refused to adopt the principle of development.

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice, Omar Al-Sharqawi, stated that the ministry has coordinated with the Kuwait Municipality to look through available data registered in the real estate properties list to identify the owners and ascertain their ownership of the property through their commercial licenses. In this regard, the Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Muhammad Al-Enezi, said that coordination has been made with the PACI to extract the automated numbers of the shops affected by the Mubarakia fire, so that they can obtain their commercial licenses.

For his part, the PACI Director-General Musaad Al-Asousi, stated that the authority had on request from the Kuwait Municipality provided them with the automated numbers of the damaged shops complete with the sketch indicating their locations in the Mubarakia area. In addition the committee was also provided with this data on a flash memory chip. With regard to the future vision for the

development of the Mubarakia area, he also suggested that checkpoints be set up in the area to supervise the violating shops in the Mubarakia area and close down those shops in the event of non-response from the owners.

Al-Asousi also indicated that there were previous discussions with the Ministry of Justice and the Kuwait Municipality to approve the automatic number in all documents, including with NCCAL. Elaborating on the role of NCCAL in the reconstruction project, the Secretary-General of NCCAL, Dr. Issa Al-Ansari, said the role of NCCAL is linked to all parties, but that its involvement is limited to that of supervision, since, the Council had already stated that it did not own any of the shops that were damaged by the fire.

He also confirmed that the Council is fully prepared to support the rest of the authorities, and provide advice to them in the area of reconstructing the Mubarakia area and preserving its historical identity and distinctive architectural style. In concluding the meeting, the Deputy Director General of the Projects Sector in the Kuwait Municipality, Eng. Nadia Al-Shraideh, presented a preliminary report from the



Kuwait Municipality for the reconstruction of the burned part of the Mubarakia market through the technical office of PACE, and requested more time to make a survey plan and check it before circulating it to the rest of the committee members. She also noted that after receiving the automated numbers from PACI, it was found that there were many fake commercial licenses, and accordingly, the Kuwait Municipality is awaiting the report of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in coordination with the PACI, which will determine the real commercial licenses that were issued and verifying the validity of all information.

Delay in budget approval escalates project costs

Amid the ongoing political turmoil in parliament that led to the resignation of government in early April, and with no signs yet of a new Cabinet being named, approval of the state's annual budget could face delays. Analysts fear that holdups in approving the budget could lead to setbacks in on-time completion of many development projects and an escalation in their costs.

Many projects that are in the implementation phase have already faced inordinate delays over the past two years due to economic and logistics repercussions arising from the COVID-19 global pandemic, as well as consecutive budgets that have been in the red since 2015.

Oil revenues that have been pouring in since the recent surge in international oil prices has meant that the deficits projected in the 2021-22 budget, and in the proposed budget for the ongoing fiscal year, could end up being surpluses. The unexpected windfall in revenues would have been an opportune moment for the government to push through several long-delayed vital infrastructure and development projects.

But with the contentious environment currently prevailing in parliament, it seems highly unlikely that even when a new Cabinet is eventually announced and parliament resumes its sessions, there could be any spurt in implementing major projects that need to be completed urgently.

The delays in executing many of the major projects from the prevailing political instability, could also lead to many of the contractors executing these projects demanding a



reevaluation of their signed contract values. Raw material prices and other contract costs have witnessed a huge escalation since 2020 with the emergence of the COVID-19 crisis, the accompanying supply chain bottlenecks, rising inflation, and the ongoing war in eastern Europe.

Additionally, many contractors associated with these projects who have taken out loans from local banks face the prospect of higher interest rates that could increase their overheads significantly. Other hindrances to completion of development projects on time and to approved costs comes from shortage of labor, with no realistic or practical steps being taken by the authorities to resolve this shortcoming. Moreover, a recent circular from the Finance Ministry to suspend all new appointments in government entities until approval of the annual budget, could lead to delays in appointments of many ministerial staff related to development projects.



Sounds of Italy at JACC

Italian classical music group 'Trio Chagall' made their Kuwait debut, at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC), on 8 May. Among the guests attending the event were ambassadors from European and Arab countries. Hosted by the Embassy of Italy, the event witnessed the young musicians of Trio Chagall led by Lorenzo Nguyen on the piano, Eduardo Grecho on the violin, and Francesco Massimino on the cello, enthralled the audience with their performance.

A total of eight musical numbers highlighting Italian music and culture were performed by the artists. "It was a truly amazing experience, and the band

dazzled the audience this evening with its distinguished musical performance that removed language barriers between different cultures."

It is truly a heartwarming moment when nations are able to bind together and find commonality in shared arts and culture.

The three musicians forming Trio Chagall, who hail from Turin, Italy, started their music endeavors in 2013 and began performing live on stage in mid-2019. The young men whose musical activities began by touring around Italy, have since played at prestigious venues such as The Milan Theater and the Vatican Museum in Rome.

Kuwait removed from IPR violation list

Last week officials from Kuwait and the United States highlighted the importance of Kuwait being removed from the US Watch List on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), noting that it will have a significant impact on attracting foreign investment and boosting Kuwait's economy.

This came during a ceremony held by the US embassy, in the presence of head of

National Library of Kuwait Sheikh Rasha Al-Sabah, to mark the removal of Kuwait from the list of countries in the IPR watch-list published annually by the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

Speaking on the occasion, US Attache for Intellectual Property in the Middle East, Peter Mehravai, said removing Kuwait from the list is a great starting point towards

expanding commercial opportunities for American companies in Kuwait. He pointed out that protecting IPR encourages innovators such as engineers, artists and designers to invest in Kuwait market, as it reassures them that their intellectual rights will not be illegally published or imitated in the country. He added that American and global firms prefer to invest in countries

that guarantee IPR rights.

For his part, Assistant Undersecretary for Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Sector at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Eid Al-Rashidi, said the US decision to lift Kuwait from the IPR watch-list was the result of various measures taken by Kuwait to safeguard IPR in the country.



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Celebrating Europe Day the European way



Staff Report

Every year the European Union (EU) marks Europe Day, considered the National Day of the EU, on 9 May to celebrate peace, solidarity and unity in Europe.

After spending the past two years celebrating Europe Day virtually due to the then prevailing COVID-19 health crisis, the EU Delegation in Kuwait along with the 17 EU countries that have diplomatic missions in the country came together last Monday to celebrate Europe Day 2022 at the Multi-Purpose Hall in Shaheed Park.

In his opening speech at this year's Europe Day celebrations at Shaheed Park, EU Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Cristian Tudor stated: "Your Excellency Ambassador Naser Al-Hain, Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs, Your Excellencies the Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen, and All friends of Europe in Kuwait, I would like to start by welcoming you today to our celebration of Europe Day in Kuwait. Although the EU Delegation in Kuwait opened in July 2019, this is the first time we hold such an event due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I speak today on behalf of the European Union and all its Member States. I am now joined on the stage by all Ambassadors of the 17 EU countries who have diplomatic missions in Kuwait. Without their support, this event would not have been possible.

"On behalf of the European Union,

Shaheed Park. "Europe Day celebrates solidarity and unity in Europe. Today, we mark the anniversary of the historic 'Schuman Declaration' that set out the idea for a new form of political cooperation, which is considered as the beginning of what is now the European Union.

European Union was founded. I am confident that Ukraine will eventually prevail with the will of its people and the support of its friends in the world, including the EU.

"H.E. Oleksandr Balanutsa, the Ukrainian Ambassador to Kuwait, is attending our event tonight and he is

example of EU recognition of our strong partnership is the recent proposal of the European Commission to lift Schengen visa requirements for Kuwaiti nationals. Another example is the first visit of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs H.E. Josep Borrell to Kuwait in March. This was the first visit at such a high level since the establishment of the EU Delegation in Kuwait.

On this occasion, the High Representative had excellent discussions about the prospects to enhance EU-Kuwait cooperation with H.H. the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. We are grateful to H.H. the Crown Prince for his strong support to EU-Kuwait ties.

"We were also delighted earlier this year to welcome the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister H.E. Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah in Brussels.

"We are planning to build on what we have achieved with plans to enhance cooperation at all levels and in all fields while identifying health, food security, education, digital and green transition as priorities.

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I would like to extend my gratitude to the Amiri Diwan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Al-Shaheed Park management and LOYAC who facilitated the organization of such an impressive event in this wonderful Hall at Al-

"Unfortunately, we celebrate Europe Day this year with a war raging on our borders. Ukraine has come under a brutal aggression by Russia, which targets the same values of peace, freedom and democracy on which the

out in public for the first time since the beginning of the Russian aggression. 'Dear Oleksandr, we stand with Ukraine!'

"Kuwaiti-EU relations are going from strength to strength. The latest



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Celebrating Europe Day...

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Regionally, the EU highly appreciates Kuwait's mediation efforts in the region and is ready to continue working closely with Kuwait to develop new forms of cooperation and build a stronger partnership with Gulf countries on many issues including regional security.

"Another important area of the EU-Kuwait relations is to facilitate people-to-people contacts with a special focus on the youth. The EU marks 2022 as the European Year of Youth and in this context, we have invited many young people to this event so they can learn more about Europe and its diverse cultural heritage.

"For the European Union, Kuwait stands out as a close and reliable friend in these times of increasingly unstable and less secure world. I am confident that we will continue to deepen and diversify our cooperation for many years to come." Ambassador Tudor concluded his speech by wishing everyone Happy Europe Day asking all to "Enjoy your evening!"

In a style befitting the occasion, the EU delegation and member states in Kuwait organized the day-long Europe Day celebrations with an Eurovillage at the Park. The village featured information booths from the EU and stalls offering national food specialties, and showcasing the diversity of cultures that form the Union.

Among the food specialties presented at the national booths were candies, cheese and



olive oil at the Spanish stall; an eclectic spread of Italian bread, pizza, olive oil, juices and other food products at the Italian booth, and traditional Czech rohlík bread and sweets at the Czech stall, while the Austrian booth featured traditional Viennese chocolate, and other delectable Austrian sweets, as well as the Viennese Coffee House Culture through speciality Julius Meinl coffee. Another highlight of the occasion was live musical performances by award-winning European and Kuwaiti artists, which underscored the unique relationship between Kuwait and the EU.

Kuwait was the first Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country to sign a Cooperation Arrangement with the European Union. The agreement, which

forms the cornerstone of bilateral relations, led to the first-ever Senior Officials' Meeting between both sides in November 2018 — another first event of its kind among GCC states — and to the opening of the EU Delegation in July 2019. The Cooperation Arrangement has also paved the way for both sides to deepen dialogue and to engage in detailed discussions on various areas such as trade, investment, economy, human rights, security, humanitarian assistance, cooperation and development.

Kuwait and the EU have in the past co-hosted several international donor and relief conferences for Syria, Iraq, and the Rohingya people. In March, 2021 the EU hosted the fifth Brussels Conference

on supporting the future of Syria and the region to advance the peace process and finally put an end to the humanitarian crisis as well as find a sustainable political solution after 10 years of the conflict in Syria.

Europe Day each year commemorates the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950, put forward by Robert Schuman, political thinker, activist and former Prime Minister of France. The Declaration initiated the process of European integration, often described as the longest Peace Project in history, and which eventually led to the formation of the EU in 1993.

The European Union was established as the legal successor to the European Communities (EC) through the Maastricht Treaty concluded in 1992 between the then 12 member states of the European Communities. Over the years, the number of EU members have grown from the six founding states — Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands — to a political and economic grouping of 27 European member states.

Spread across an area of over 4.2 million km² the EU had at the start of 2021 an estimated combined population of about 447 million, that accounts for nearly 6 percent of the total world population, and the third largest population after China and India. The EU is also among the top three economies in the world and in 2021 generated a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of around US\$17 trillion, or around 18 percent of global nominal GDP.





Indian Embassy, IBN organize mango festival

Embassy of India in coordination with the Indian Business Network (IBN) organized a Mango Festival on 12 May.

In his keynote address delivered at the inauguration of the festival, Indian Ambassador H.E. Sibi George first conveyed his greetings on the International Day of Nurses,



and recalled with gratitude the role played by nurses and other medical professions in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

Welcoming the invitees, Ambassador George recalled the various Buyer-Seller Meets and festivals held for promotion of Indian mangoes in Kuwait, as part of the

embassy's 3-T campaign focusing on Trade, Technology and Tourism.

Ambassador also expressed his happiness in exceeding by far the target of ensuring that every Kuwaiti family, as well as Indian and foreigners in Kuwait, enjoy mangoes during the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait, and 75th anniversary of India's independence, which was set last year. He also thanked the Agricultural Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), for their support to the embassy in promoting Indian mangoes in Kuwait.

India is the largest producer of mangoes, producing more than half of the world's mangoes. The country also has the largest number of mango varieties relative to other mango growing regions around the world.

The Mango Festival witnessed enthusiastic response, with people from all walks of life in Kuwait participating virtually as well as physically in the event. For more details about the event, please visit the website and social media handles of the Embassy.

Illegal fundraisers referred to Prosecution



Ministry of Social Affairs and Community Development has taken legal measures against several dozen

people for violating rules and regulations regarding donation collection and disbursement.

The ministry reportedly referred 54 violators to the Public Prosecution for announcing and collecting donations without obtaining licenses during the holy month of Ramadan as well as during the days of Eid Al-Fitr celebration.

An inspection team from the ministry, headed by the Director of the Charity Societies and Associations Department, Abdulaziz Al-Ajmi, conducted 2,633 inspection tours during Ramadan and Eid, during which they discovered several violations of the donation law, including illegal donation gathering activities unauthorized publishing of advertisements beseeching charity. The inspection teams also removed 224 kiosks which were put up for collecting clothes without a license, in addition to monitoring 109 others that are currently being examined.

Kalyan Jewellers India Limited records revenue growth in FY22

Kalyan Jewellers India Limited recorded a consolidated revenue of Rs 10818 crores, the highest revenue in the history of the company so far, despite disruptions to business due to second and third waves of COVID-19 during the year. The consolidated profit after tax (PAT) for FY2022 was Rs 224 crore. The PAT for the last three quarters was Rs 275 crore.

Consolidated revenue for Q4FY22 was Rs 2857 crore as against Rs 3057 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous year. The company recorded Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization

at similar levels to the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

The Middle East region contributed around 15 percent to the overall consolidated revenue of the company. The Middle East operations recorded EBITDA of Rs 33 crores for the quarter compared to Rs 30 crores in the same quarter of the previous year. PAT for the quarter was at Rs 4.3 crores compared to a PAT of Rs 7 crores in the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

The e-commerce division Candere has continued its growth momentum. The revenue for the recently concluded quarter was Rs 39 crore versus Rs 22 crores in Q4-FY21, a growth of 78 percent. The quarter recorded a loss of Rs 2.7 crores versus a profit of Rs 53 lakhs for the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

Presently, the Company's retail footprint is spread across 154 stores in 21 Indian states and 4 countries in the Middle East, with a retail area exceeding 540,000 sq. ft.

Speaking about the performance of the company, Executive Director, Kalyan Jewellers India Limited, Ramesh Kalyanaraman, said, "Q4 started with a very high base and also faced disruptions to showroom operations during the first half of the quarter due to Omicron driven wave. The quarter also saw extreme volatility in gold prices driven by the geo-political situation in Ukraine and its related impact on demand. We ended the quarter with a marginal de-growth but as a team we are very satisfied with the outcome.

"This Akshaya Tritiya (FY2022-23) was excellent with significant traction across all regions including the non-south markets. We witnessed significant growth not just in terms of value but footfalls as well. April and the first week of May have been very encouraging both in India as well as the Middle East and are in line with our plan for the current year," he added.



(EBITDA) of Rs 218 crores during Q4 FY22 compared to Rs 228 crores in the same quarter of the previous year.

Consolidated PAT for the quarter was Rs 72 crores as against a PAT of Rs 74 crores for the same period of the previous financial year. The standalone revenue for the company (India), was Rs 2399 crores, as against Rs 2615 crores in Q4 of the previous financial year.

The India operations recorded EBITDA of Rs 188 crores for the quarter, compared to Rs 194 crores in the same quarter of the previous year. PAT from Indian operations for the quarter was Rs 70 crores compared to a PAT of Rs 66 crores in the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

Total revenue from the Middle East operations during Q4 FY22 was Rs 425 crores,



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An 18-year legacy that shaped UAE history

Remembering late UAE President Khalifa

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"While people are proud of their achievements, we are proud of being the children of Sheikh Zayed, and while people talk of their history, we speak of the history of giving that began with the formation of the UAE," said the late president, epitomizing the nations' approach from the first day it was established to its phase of empowerment, ushering in the birth of a powerful and prosperous nation.

understanding between nations and between faiths, and for the conservation cause."

From 2004 until his passing, the late Sheikh Khalifa whose track record of achievements spans nearly 35 years, helped the country progress from a foundation phase to the empowerment stage it is in today. Under his leadership, the UAE has topped international competitiveness indexes and has become the second-largest economy in the Arab region, despite its small area and population.

its significant role in deepening cooperation ties between GCC states and their peoples and effectively contributed to the sustainable development drives adopted by the region. The late Sheikh Khalifa was keen on following in the UAE founding fathers' footsteps, consolidating bridges of cooperation with all Arab nations across all fronts.

During the past years, as many Arab countries faced significant challenges; the UAE contributed to maintaining Arab security, providing all possible means of support for defending Arab causes. In a statement, the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity said: "Sheikh Khalifa departed after a journey full of giving, during which he planted goodness, compassion and peace for all of humanity following in the footsteps of his wise father, the late founding father of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

During the global health pandemic, the UAE has been unwaveringly standing by Arab nations in addressing the pandemic's repercussions by dispatching medical supplies, food, and other humanitarian aid and services. Under the late Sheikh Khalifa, the UAE forged strategic partnerships with emerging economic powers like China, India, and South Korea, while continuing its ties to powerhouses led by the United States and Russia. It also strengthened cooperation relations with the European Union members, notably France, Britain, Germany, and other influential international powers.

Thanks to his wise policies, the UAE has maintained constructive diplomatic relations with about 200 countries worldwide, with the Emirates now hosting around 110 foreign embassies and 75 consulates on its soil. In the first quarter of 2022, the UAE passport was ranked 15th among the world's top 20 most powerful passports, allowing UAE passport holders to enter 175 destinations around the world visa-free.

Thanks to his leadership, the UAE established partnership ties with various international organizations and institutions and played a prominent role in enabling these entities to carry out their responsibilities, foremost of which is maintaining global security and stability, promoting the language of tolerance and dialogue among peoples, and strengthening the response to emergency humanitarian situations.

On a humanitarian level, the UAE, under the late Sheikh Khalifa, forged ahead by providing foreign aid to various countries around the world to reduce poverty and help governments and societies in need, as well as promoting peace, prosperity, stability, and stimulating economic growth in developing countries. Since its establishment until mid-2021, the UAE has provided more than AED320 billion in foreign aid to about 155 countries across the globe.

On the scientific front, the UAE is the first Arab and Islamic nation to reach the planet Mars and is one among a few countries with significant achievements in the space sector. After assuming power, the late Sheikh Khalifa launched the first strategic plan of the UAE Government to achieve balanced and sustainable development and ensure the wellbeing of UAE residents.

In 2009, he was re-elected as the President of the country, and thanks to his wise leadership, the UAE overcame the financial crises and political issues facing the region due to his active foreign policy, which also enhanced the regional and international



stature of the country.

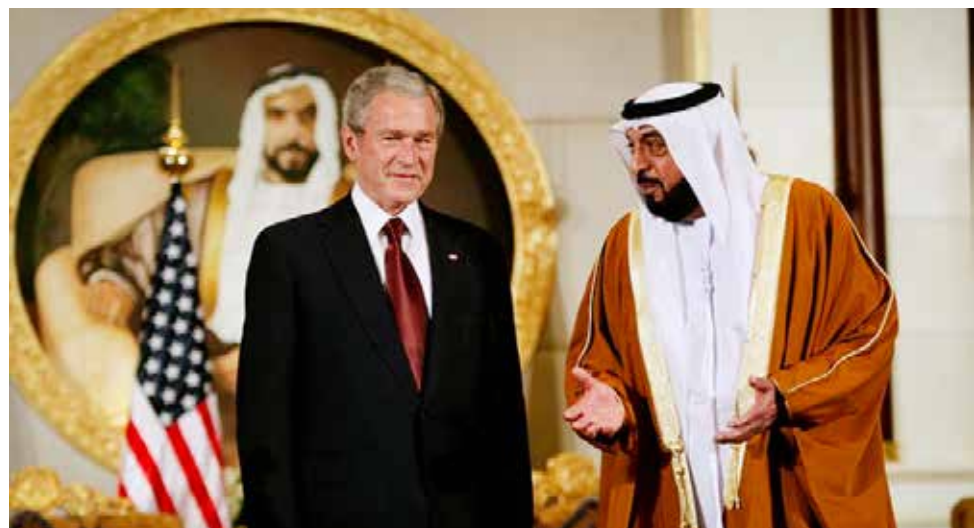
The late Sheikh Khalifa was also passionate about healthcare and ensured most Emirati hospitals were internationally accredited. Today, the UAE has become a leading medical destination, underpinned by the rising number of hospitals, which increased from 16 in 1975 to 169 in 2020. These hospitals are managed by highly qualified medical staff, numbering 8,995 in 2020 in the government sector and 17,136 in the private sector, compared to 792 doctors in 1975.

Under Sheikh Khalifa's wise leadership, the UAE also prioritized health insurance and provided it to citizens for free, and comprehensive medical coverage for all segments of society, especially the elderly and people with disabilities. In 2017, the UAE established the first cancer treatment center utilizing proton technology in the Middle East and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. The Emirates was also one of the first countries to use robotics in the pharmaceutical sector.

The education sector is another area that flourished under the wise leadership of the late President, Sheikh Khalifa. From 2012, education became mandatory for everyone over the age of six until secondary education, which was reinforced by issuing the Children's Rights Law, also known as the Wadeema Law. The UAE's education strategy confirms the establishment of an educational system based on the skills of the 21st century. It aims to provide higher education to compete with the world's best universities.

A humble leader who loved his people and country, the late Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, will be dearly missed and remembered for generations for his unwavering contribution to his beloved country. He will be succeeded by his brother, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who was elected unanimously on Saturday.

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



As the UAE observes a forty-day mourning period, with the flag flown at half-mast, many world leaders and diplomats continue to send their condolences, honoring the late President and his outstanding 18-year reign of the UAE, which began on 4th of November 2004, when Sheikh Khalifa assumed power.

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom said: "He will long be remembered by all who work for regional stability,

The prudent leadership of the late Sheikh Khalifa contributed to advancing the stature of the UAE as a regional cornerstone for achieving security and stability and promoting peaceful coexistence. The late President had a sharp vision for the Arab Gulf as a strategic region whose security and stability are fundamental to the safety and stability of the world.

Under his leadership, the UAE continued

Decision to impose fees on digital transaction withdrawn

Decision by the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), the country's largest commercial lender, to impose a fee of KD1 on every local transfer of money made by customers online, has been withdrawn even before its implementation from 1 June.

The rescinding of the earlier decision by NBK follows intervention by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), which has issued a directive calling on local banks to stop charging any fees from individuals for local electronic transfers of money.

For his part, Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Basil Al-Haroun, said that the collection of fees by banks for local online transfers requires obtaining a written approval from CBK by submitting an application giving justifications for charging the fee and the actual cost. In a letter addressed to the Federation of Banks, the regulatory authority clarified that the request should be accompanied by a



comprehensive study explaining the feasibility and global banking practices in this field, within the framework of a balanced relationship between banks and their customers, and in a way that supports trends towards digital transformation, and urges customers to use electronic channels of transaction.

Al-Haroun pointed out that the previous approvals given by the CBK regarding transfers,

had led to the banking and financial sectors witnessing radical developments towards digital transformation and electronic channels, and changes in the infrastructure contributed to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of transfers, which had impacted the cost of those operations.

In principle, it should be clarified that the one dinar fee that was supposed to be applied does not apply to what is known as 'link' transfers, as well as internal transfers (that is, from a customer's account in the bank to another customer's account in the same bank), in addition to permanent transfer orders that are made in a sustainable manner.

According to unofficial banking data, banks annually carry out about 2.5 million electronic transfers of individuals from one bank to another, including about 750,000 made annually by NBK clients, and the same number for clients of Kuwait Finance House (KFH), and about one million transfers by the remaining banks. Based on NBK and KFH customers constituting 60 percent of the market, this means the one dinar fee would have led to around KD2.5 million in annual revenue for the banks, in addition to the more than KD880 million they recorded as profits in the past year.

Regarding the reasons why banks need to apply the dinar fee, banking policy makers said the fee was needed among others to improve maintenance of the digital systems and develop digital infrastructure further, as well as to support

and enhance cyber-security and develop new payment solutions. But the question that arises from this explanation is, are these services and infrastructure developments not part of the banks' growth plans, and moreover, what then is the KD880 million in profits the banks reaped last year being used for?

PACI simplifies Civil ID renewal process

As part of efforts to simplify and streamline digital services offered to citizens and residents in the country, the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) has made it easier to renew the civil IDs for family members through a new update to the unified government application for electronic services (Sahel).

Announcing this, the official spokesman for the Sahel application, Youssef Kazem explained that it is now possible to use the civil ID renewal service for family members by accessing the services of PACI through the Sahel application in a more rapid and simple way. The head of the family can now renew the civil ID cards of his children, and company sponsors can renew that of their workers directly through the Sahel application.

IWG holds Italian Cultural Event 'The Great Beauty'



The International Women's Group in Kuwait held an Italian Cultural Event on Sunday, 8 May 2022, under the title 'The Great Beauty', in the presence of a number of distinguished guests.

The program was organised in cooperation with the Embassy of Italy and inaugurated by the IWG President, Cristiana Baldocci, spouse of

and life-style as a "constant search of Beauty".

Ms. Baldocci opening was followed by a welcome address by H.E. Carlo Baldocci Ambassador of Italy to Kuwait. The Ambassador expressed his happiness for participating and contributing in the celebration, congratulating the International Women Group for their work. He highlighted that the cultural itinerary presented across Italy is a relevant and distinguished element of the friendship between Italy and Kuwait. He also underlined the role played by Italy as cultural super power. H.E. Carlo Baldocci concluded his speech by thanking the attendees and welcoming their visit to Italy.

The ceremony included a screening of a documentary film highlighting the magnificence of Italy through design, tourism, fashion and food such as: Italian luxury design; fashion shows; touristic jewel to be discovered by International tourism; attractions and Extra Virgin Olive Oil presentation and tasting and much more.

The ceremony then concluded by the "la Notte della Taranta" band playing folkloristic and typical music from the South of Italy.

At the end of the ceremony, raffle prizes were distributed among the guests. As well as door gifts for all participants including special handcraft ceramic pieces from Umbria Region, Extra Virgin Olive samples and "An Italian Food Journey" the book especially published by the Embassy of Italy to Kuwait.

The buffet offered was a triumph of Italian specialties from several Italian Regions with a street food approach including Bruschetta station, Pasta station, Cannoli station, Nutella station and the fabulous Italian Ice-cream.

Sponsors of the event: Kuwait Airways; Acqua dell' Elba, Dr. Vranjes, Eataty, Cioccolatiitaliani and Cipriani.



the Italian Ambassador to the State of Kuwait. She welcomed the attendees thanking Sheikh Hanouf Bader Al Muhamad Al Sabah, Honorary President of the International Women's Group and spouse to H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for her constant support.

Ms Baldocci explained the special meaning of "The Great Beauty". Taken from an Italian Oscar awarded Movie, the title is expressing a common characteristic of the Italian culture

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Thought for the week

“ Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.

- Thomas A. Edison



Dinner Diplomacy

Diplomats from US, Egypt, France, India, Germany, European Union and Spain were recently hosted for a dinner reception at the residence of Managing Editor of The Times Kuwait, Reaven D'Souza. The diplomatic gathering witnessed lively discourse on local and international issues.

Renewable energy projects delayed by bureaucratic hassles

Bureaucratic and documentation delays are reportedly hampering efforts by the authorities concerned with implementing renewable energy projects in the country.

They noted that routine documentary processes that begin with preparing project documents, obtaining approvals of relevant regulatory authorities, floating the tenders, and awarding the contracts, have all faced excessive delays that have led to the cancellation of more than one project, after reaching its final stages.

The authorities point out that Kuwait aspires to produce 15 percent of its total energy requirements from renewable energy sources by 2030. Out of the expected total energy requirement of 30,000MW in 2030, the country planned to realize 4,500MW (15%) through renewable energy projects, but only one percent of this target has been achieved over the past ten years.

Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) — the state entity spearheading public-private partnership projects in the country — in coordination with the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy (MEW), and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), are currently seeking to implement the two phases of the Shaqaya project, with a total of 3,500 megawatts before 2030. However, the authorities involved have so far succeeded only in getting approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders for appointing a project consultant, who will then prepare the project documents, and float them to global investors and local companies, to implement it according to a schedule.

Although its name has been modified to become the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, it



has not yet succeeded in establishing a sector concerned with renewable energy projects, and in establishing any renewable energy projects, despite this form of energy predicted to become the mainstay to meet energy requirements in future in Kuwait and elsewhere in the world.

In the meantime, data from the Ministry of Electricity and Water show that it is working to implement 144 renewable energy generation projects, 5 of which have been implemented with a capacity of 4,552 kilowatts, while 46 projects that are still in the tender stage, will have a capacity of 216,841 kilowatts. In addition, the ministry plans to implement 93 future projects with a capacity of 4,800,170 kilowatts, bringing the total projects to be implemented by the ministry to 5,021,562 kilowatts, or about 502 megawatts in total.

Stakeholders in increasing the country's production capacity of renewable energy projects point to the status of Kuwait compared to some other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, which have made great strides in this field.

development plan of New Kuwait Vision 2035.

In a statement issued at a press briefing on Thursday, Minister Al-Saeed affirmed that the new service aimed to achieve the objectives of sustainable development, and is based on the ministry's keenness to ensure that everyone leads a healthy life. He added that the home-care service will include periodic medical assessments to follow up on patients with chronic conditions, review medicines and treatments, provide oral and dental services, physiotherapy, and nutrition.

He also praised the role of the Central Administration of Primary Health Care for launching the new service, noting that health care centers are the first line of defense of the state's health system.

MoH announces home visits for bed-ridden patients

Ministry of Health (MoH) launched last week a new service aimed at providing medical treatment and care for bed-ridden patients at their homes thereby reducing the need and the hassles involved in transferring them to hospitals for regular examinations.

Announcing the new service, Minister of Health Dr. Khaled Al-Saeed said it was part of integrated multiple health care services planned by the ministry and came within the framework of achieving goals of the

Complaints rise as Manila Express Cargo consignments found unsent

By Ricky Laxa | Staff Writer

Manila Express Cargo, a local cargo company, has been trending viral on social media platforms following the discovery of numerous 'unsent' parcel boxes found lying in an abandoned area. Some of these boxes held markings that they had been picked up by cargo company staff as early as July of last year.

Some of the senders listed on these boxes, who have gone back to the Philippines for good and are being promised delivery shortly, are waiting in vain as their cargo remains abandoned in Kuwait. None of the staff of the cargo company are answering calls, and many of the numbers appear deactivated as are the social media accounts of the company.

Several of the 'unsent' boxes found stacked in an outdoor area and in a small room inside a building in Farwaniya were partly covered and lined up around the premises. Most of the boxes had been collected in early 2021. People with knowledge of the company say that Manila Cargo Express is operating under the license of a local company, which also operates four other smaller cargo groups. These smaller cargo companies are also known to often offer rates lower than that in the market because they do not have to pay security fees or insurances, nor do they have any warehouses to pay rent for, and also have fewer staff. Many of them face problems with brokers, who said they had not been paid for their past services.



Most of those who were victims of Manila Express Cargowere household service workers who saved their three to four months salaries and purchased items and gifts for their families back in the Philippines.

"I sent medicines for a family member, but the cargo has not arrived for months and in the meantime the person for whom the medicines were intended has passed away," stated one of the Filipina household helpers. Most of the victims said that they had enclosed food items in their cargo boxes and were not sure whether the items had expired.

"Many of these smaller cargo companies mostly collect boxes and store them in unsecured areas and fail to send them out immediately. Instead, when complaints arise, they return the cargo boxes but keep the cash paid for the service. "It's definitely a scam, as many of these senders prefer to have their boxes returned to them and forfeit the cash paid," added one household helper.

Employers of different household service workers have also attempted to talk to the company but to no avail. According to some of the household helpers who visited the place in Farwaniya, a staff member was present at the premise to receive their complaints, but informed them that the Filipino couple who were apparently the owners of the company had run off to the Philippines with the cash collections and abandoned the staff.

The same staff also claimed that she was a victim herself as she was never informed of the current situation of the cargo company. Such stories were termed as lies and pretense by the victims, and they said the staff member had been involved in all their transactions and was fully aware of the cargo swindling operations.

On Thursday morning, police were found going over the abandoned boxes as part of their investigation. They also instructed the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) not to remove any of the boxes still lying around.

The Philippine Ambassador H.E. Mohammad Noordin Pendosina Lomondot was alarmed on hearing the report and requested all complainants to come forward to the Embassy and provide details of their cases. The Assistance to Nationals of the Philippine Embassy were also advised to accommodate all complaints of OFWs who are currently in similar situations. The Philippine Embassy said it will provide legal assistance to the victims if needed.

The Times Kuwait made several attempts to call the numbers posted in the receipt but there was no response from the Manila Express Cargo. The Embassy of Indonesia was also contacted to ascertain whether they too had received similar complaints about the same company, as it provides services to that country as well.

Kuwait mourns sad demise of UAE President

Kuwait on Friday expressed its deep sorrow on the passing away of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in a cable of condolence sent on Friday to UAE Vice-President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad bin Rahsed Al-Maktoum, and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of UAE Armed forces Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, their families and the people of the UAE, expressed heartfelt condolences on the demise of President of the UAE Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, saying Arab and Islamic nations lost "a great leader" who dedicated his life for service of his people, defending Arab and Islamic causes.

The State of Kuwait, in grief over the demise of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, "will always remember his honorable positions towards Kuwait's just causes during the Iraqi invasion," said His Highness the Amir.

He prayed to Allah the Almighty to

bestow the UAE people with solace, and commended the development that took place during the reign of the deceased which contributed to the advancement of the nation.

His Highness the Amir announced a 40-day mourning period, with flags flown at half-mast and government departments would be off duty for three days starting today, 13 May.

His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent cables of condolences to Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashed and Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed over the passing away of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent similar cables of condolences.

Earlier on Friday, the UAE Ministry of Presidential Affairs, in a statement broadcast by the official news agency, WAM, said the president died today, declaring that the country would observe official mourning while the UAE national flags would be flown at half mast. The official mourning duration will last for 40 days, during which work at

ministries, local and federal institutions in addition to the private sector would stop, effective Friday.

The United Arab Emirates' late President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, who succeeded founder of UAE Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan on 4 November, 2004, took the country from the phase of foundation to empowerment. During his 18-year reign, Sheikh Khalifa contributed to the improvement of the economy and its ranking international competitiveness indices, and made the country the second largest economy in the Arab region.

Under his wise leadership, the UAE took large strides towards achievements, becoming the first Arab and Islamic country to reach Mars and one among very few to reach space. Shortly after assuming office, Sheikh Khalifa launched his first government strategy aimed at establishing balanced and sustainable development in order to achieve prosperity for citizens.

Sheikh Khalifa, who continued the legacy of his father Sheikh Zayed for security and stability, supervised development of sectors of oil and gas, and manufacturing industries



which helped diversify the economy. The late President also launched housing, road, educational and social projects, in addition to proposing an initiative to develop the legislative authority by allowing elections of half of the Federal National Council.

Sheikh Khalifa, who was re-elected as president in 2009 and continued his contributions to a multi-faceted development, was named Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi in 1969, and became Prime Minister of Abu Dhabi district in July 1971 and was named Deputy Commander of UAE Armed forces in 1976.

Gulf Stock Exchanges hemorrhage over global fears

Gulf stock exchanges that had been bleeding in recent days witnessed a spurt in outflow on Thursday, when they collectively shed over 120 billion dollars taking the total loss over the last week to more than 137 billion dollars. Gulf stocks have followed the footsteps of global markets, led by Wall Street that has been gyrating wildly all week.

The S&P 500 closed Thursday's session down 18 percent approaching bear-market territory. Meanwhile elsewhere, in Europe the pan-European Stoxx 600 was down almost 12 percent year-to-date and the MSCI Asia ex-Japan has shed 18.62 percent since the turn of the year. The hemorrhaging in stock values

came over fears about the worsening outlook for global economic growth, amid fears that the war in Ukraine could drag on, COVID-19 lockdowns in China could further disrupt supply chains, and soaring inflation, as well as strong indications that despite risk of quashing growth, US central banks could hike interest rates aggressively to curb inflation.

US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell reiterated on Thursday his expectation that the central bank will raise interest rates by half a percentage point at each of its next two policy meetings. Tech and growth stocks, which are most vulnerable to sharp rises in interest rates, suffered particularly steep declines last week,



with the tech-heavy Nasdaq 100 down more than 29 percent from its record high last year.

Wall Street made a rebound on Friday led

by a rise in growth stocks, such as Apple Inc, Google-owner Alphabet Inc, Amazon.com and Nvidia Corp all gaining between 2.2 percent and 6.5 percent, while Twitter shares sank after Elon Musk put his deal for the social media company on hold. Growth stocks.

Meanwhile, the biggest loser among Gulf exchanges in Thursday's trading was the Saudi Stock Exchange, which lost US\$80 billion in value, followed by the Abu Dhabi Stock Exchange with losses of \$23.5 billion, and the Dubai Financial Market which shed \$6.6 billion. In Kuwait, the country's Boursa witnessed a decline in all its indicators, losing more than \$5.3 billion.

A traditional Ramadan Iftar for Rotana's Global Sales Office in Kuwait



Rotana, one of the leading hotel management companies in the region with 112 properties across the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe and Turkey, hosted a special Iftar buffet event for its clients and media representatives on Monday 25th of April 2022.

As the guests enjoyed a remarkable evening at one of the most famous restaurants in Kuwait, the Global Sales Office Team took the

opportunity to express their appreciation for the extended support given by all clients and media members.

Commenting on the event, Mohamed Ali, Area Director of Global Sales Office, said: "Ramadan is not only about fasting, it is also the time to share and enjoy your blessings with family and friends, and we are happy to have all our friends here with us to enjoy the spirit of Ramadan."

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Workers rights protected amid oil sector mergers

The planned merger of Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGO) with Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), and that of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) with Kuwait National Petroleum Company, will ensure that the rights of workers are fully protected.

Announcing this, CEO of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah stressed that protecting the legal rights of workers was crucial, especially since the next stage requires concerted and unified efforts from everyone to confront global challenges in the oil industry.

Al-Sabah has reportedly issued directives on the need to review all files, especially the vital ones, in an accurate and realistic manner, and to take into consideration current and future variables and their effects on workers and other stakeholders, before moving to the implementation

stages. Sources knowledgeable on the progress of consolidation and mergers being planned in the oil sector said that while the formation of larger companies from the merger process could lead to realignment of work roles, titles and chances for promotion in some jobs, these adjustments would be affected without in any way infringing on the rights of the workers, and that there would be no retrenchment of workers in the national cadre.

However, the sources added that it was very likely that the mergers could lead to termination of the work contracts of some contractors, and also several changes in the legal status and roles of the oil unions of the merged companies.

In 2020, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), the state-owned parent company for all the subsidiaries involved in oil operations

in Kuwait and abroad, appointed the US-headquartered Strategy& to carry out the study for restructuring through mergers so as to reduce the KPC subsidiaries from the current eight to four, and regroup industry activities under three main sectors — production, exploration and refining.

The Supreme Petroleum Council (SPC) has reportedly given its nod of approval to the restructuring plans that aims to produce many benefits, including cutting effort and decision-making time, saving funds, and preventing duplication in projects and operations.

Kuwait Oil Company and the Kuwait National Petroleum Company are said to have completed the diligence work on the mergers in preparation for moving to the second phase. Among the challenges facing the two companies as they move to the second phase would be confronting



compensation claims filed by contractors whose contracts are expected to be terminated as a result of the mergers. Though the state entities have the legal rights to terminate these contracts, court cases could arise with regard to compensations awarded for prior contract terminations.

Learning to live together in harmony

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In this regard, Kuwait has earned an enviable reputation for its efforts in fostering dialogue and discussion to bring about rapprochement in relations between states, and an end to various conflicts in the region and in the wider Arab world.

The country has also won recognition and admiration on the international stage for its support of humanitarian efforts, and its contributions in providing succor and sustenance to people around the world suffering from natural and man-made calamities. Given these honorable credentials, how is it then, that this same country, appreciated for its promotion of peace and magnanimous activities abroad, is unable or unwilling to replicate the same understanding, empathy and humaneness towards the different people and communities living within its borders?

The racial, ethnic, religious, economic and gender discrimination prevailing in Kuwait on the individual and societal level is quite evident everywhere. This inequity remains the major obstacle that prevents expatriates from fully sharing and reaping the benefits that come from everyone living together in conviviality.

As any expatriate worker, especially those hailing from South Asian and African communities will vouchsafe, discrimination is rampant in most facets of their daily life in Kuwait. Starting from the immigration and customs at the airport when an expatriate first arrives in the country, to the time he leaves voluntarily or involuntarily through administrative deportations, the discrimination they suffer in relation to citizens, and also relative to other Western, Caucasian people is apparent and widespread.

The is outright discrimination between citizens and residents, was also evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, at least during the early phase of the infection and at the time of the vaccination rollout. Citizens were prioritized over residents in treatment and in being administered vaccinations. Later, when the airport opened up, this two-set approach continued, with the freedom to exit and enter the country limited to citizens, and denied to expatriates, even those who were vaccinated and proven to be uninfected with the virus.

Disparity in vaccination was also evident, sometimes with tragic consequences, among frontline workers; with Kuwaiti doctors who were from specializations that were far removed from frontline work, being administered vaccination as a priority, while expatriate nurses and support staff who were in direct contact with infected patients daily were denied the vaccination. Discrimination, or to put it more euphemistically 'differentiation', is especially perceptible when one visits government departments concerned with delivering services to the public. It is blatantly

evident at the various affiliates of the ministry of interior, such as those related to visas and residency, the traffic, or the local police station; it is also perceptible at offices of ministries dealing with electricity and water, communications, and sadly even at the health and justice ministries.

In mid-March, the newly appointed First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nawaf, obliquely pointed to this differentiation that exists in society, during a speech he delivered to senior ministry officials on assuming office. In a reference to the difference in treatment meted out by security personnel to citizens and other sections of society, Sheikh Ahmed stressed on the need to deal with the public, especially expatriates, "with respect, and away from injustice or insult".

He noted that irrespective of whether the person interacting with the police is a citizen, an



American, or an Indian, they should all be treated in the same manner, with dignity and respect. Officers found disrespecting and infringing on the rights of others would have no place in the ministry, "because the one who does not respect the citizen and the resident does not respect his country, and we will also not respect him," warned the minister.

It would be quite pertinent in this regard to suggest that security personnel, and other officials at front-desks in government entities, should be introduced to the cultures and customs of foreigners as part of their regular training. This would enable the officials to gain a better perspective and understanding of the people with whom they interact daily, and to be more accepting and empathic of the 'others' in society.

To clarify on two terms that are often used interchangeably, 'Race', on which racial profiling is often based, is generally related to a person's genetic makeup and linked with physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, or shape of eyes. 'Ethnicity' on the other hand is a broader term that refers to the cultural expression such as those linked to racial, geographic, tribal, religious, linguistic, or other

aspects and backgrounds that individuals share and identify with. Both race and ethnicity are not biological factors but social constructs used to compartmentalize and characterize groups of people, and which often contribute to forming prejudices that define our 'experiences' of others. In Kuwait, discrimination and differentiation of outsiders based on race and ethnicity have existed even before the country's independence in 1961. However, these differences were tolerated or accepted earlier due to the need for outsiders to protect the country's borders, to develop its economy and sustain its prosperity.

In today's rapidly evolving world that is becoming increasingly globalized and diverse, it is evident that toleration alone is no longer enough. We need to understand and appreciate others, and interconnect with people of different cultures in order to build a country and

'who vandalizes, damages, or desecrates a place intended for the performance of religious observances, or who, being aware of the significance of his behavior, commits within such a place an act that detracts from the respect due to the religion concerned shall be liable to specified fine and or imprisonment.

Also, article 1 of the National Unity Law, passed through Legislative Decree No.19 of 2012, prohibits the advocacy or incitement of hatred or contempt for any social group; provocation of sectarian or tribal factionalism; promotion of ideology based on the superiority of any race, group, color, national or ethnic origin, religious confession or lineage; and encouragement of any act of violence to that end...

However, the National Unity Law is rarely enforced in a way that would effectively deter such activities, and many critics of the law say that it is used largely to stifle free speech and imprison detractors of the government. Nevertheless, one wishes that a copy of these enlightening laws would be framed and placed on the walls of police stations and other government buildings in Kuwait.

It needs to be pointed out that achieving harmonious coexistence among communities and ethnic groups from all corners of the world, and with different cultural and religious traditions, is not a problem that is unique to Kuwait; it is a major challenge to countries worldwide. Culture forms a strong part of people's lives; it influences their views, their values, their hopes, their loyalties, and their worries and fears.

Being able to cater to the cultural compulsions of people goes a long way to helping multicultural countries and societies to successfully handle social and economic challenges. On an individual and community level, learning to live and work together in harmony with others involves striving to find consonance despite existing discords and disagreements with others. It calls for not only acknowledging the differences of others, but also celebrating those differences, as well as fortifying our common interests, so as to unite and strengthen the community.

In Kuwait, prevailing inequities in attitudes and actions by sections of the host community to those generalized as 'ajnaabees' or outsiders, leads to segregation of society on multiple levels. This discrimination impedes any meaningful interaction between the different stratas, and hinders attempts to bring together people from all walks of life to work collaboratively and cohesively for the greater good of the country and its future.

Rather than being used to differentiate different segments of society, our differences and diversity should be acknowledged as strengths that enable us to exert collaborative efforts in the service of the nation and all of its people. The sooner we recognize this and internalize it, the better off everyone will be.

community that is resilient and successful, and which can find effective solutions to present and future challenges that confront us.

It is to the credit of Kuwait that the Constitution of the country adopted following the country's independence in 1961 acknowledges the importance of protecting the community's diversity. Article 29 of the country's constitution pertaining to 'Equality, Human Dignity, Personal Liberty' clearly states that 'all people are equal in human dignity and in public rights and duties before the law, without distinction to race, origin, language, or religion'.

Emanating from this founding article and in conformity to its spirit, several relevant laws and decrees have been enacted over the years, including Article 111 of the Kuwaiti Criminal Code (Act No. 16 of 1960), which criminalizes any manifestation of religious bigotry by stipulating that anyone who disseminates views that constitute 'derision, disparagement or defamation of a religion or a religious confession, or attacks the doctrines, observances, rites or teachings thereof' shall face imprisonment and/or fines.

Another one is the Criminal Code (Act No.16 of 1960), article 109 of which states that anyone

Taiwan's COVID-19 containment strategy a success



By Dr. Shih-Chung Chen
Minister of Health and Welfare
Republic of China (Taiwan)



Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 510 million confirmed cases and more than 6.25 million deaths have been reported around the world. As nations continue to battle the pandemic, Taiwan's achievements have been widely recognized. As of 10 May, 2022, about 390,000 confirmed cases and 931 deaths had been reported in Taiwan, which has a population of 23.5 million. And thanks to a joint effort by the government and the people, Taiwan's economic growth rate for 2021 reached 6.45 percent.

Taiwan's National Health Insurance (NHI) system, which was launched in 1995, has played an important role in the fight against the pandemic. The NHI system provides comprehensive and high-quality health services, achieving universal (99.9 percent) coverage. Taiwan's robust healthcare and NHI systems have safeguarded the people and ensured social stability during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the NHI's comprehensive database and other up-to-date information systems have been critical in ensuring the successful application of digital technology for disease prevention. Taiwan's healthcare system was ranked second in the world in 2021 by CEOWorld. In Numbeo's annual survey, Taiwan was ranked first among 95 countries surveyed in the Health Care Index category for 2021.

During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2020, to reduce the risk

of community transmission, the government implemented the Quarantine System for Entry by integrating NHI, immigration, and customs databases to allow for big data analysis. Data was introduced to the Digital Fencing Tracking System, which used the positioning system on mobile phones to monitor the whereabouts of people under home quarantine or isolation. Moreover, to ensure privacy, personal data captured was stored for a maximum of 28 days and then deleted.

To ensure that all residents would enjoy equitable access to medical masks as demand increased, people were required to use their NHI card to purchase masks under the Name-based Mask Distribution System, helping to prevent an imbalance in supply and demand.

To digitize health care services, the NHI Express App was launched. It offers such features as vaccination appointments, personal health data, medical records, COVID-19 vaccination records, and test results. Taiwan joined the EU Digital COVID Certificate program at the end of 2021 and allowed citizens to apply for digital vaccination certificates and test certificates. This program was one of the first global standards developed. It was adopted by many states and

was the first one to be applied for international travel. Taiwan's people can enter 64 countries, including EU member states, with such certificates.

Taiwan has been building health information infrastructure since 2010, such as the electronic medical records (EMR) exchange system. Since May 2021, Taiwan has expanded its telemedicine services in healthcare institutions and included such services into NHI coverage as a means of reducing the risk of cluster infections at such institutions. Using the NHI MediCloud and EMR systems, zero-contact telemedicine allows medical personnel to obtain patients' medical records and offer people in remote areas appropriate and comprehensive services, in turn helping to realize the World Health Organization (WHO) goal of health for all.

With the introduction of rapid antigen test kits, Taiwan has shortened quarantines and reduced control measures, requiring confirmed cases to notify their close contacts to undergo home isolation and using electronic contact notification during the process. As the demand for rapid tests increases, the government has requisitioned a fixed amount and adopted a name-based rationing scheme, distributing tests

to NHI-contracted pharmacies for the public to purchase using their NHI cards.

Taiwan has adopted a triage approach, having milder COVID-19 cases undergo home care and reserving hospital treatment for members of high-risk groups, such as moderate and severe cases and the elderly. During home care, people can access emergency medical consultations through mobile apps. As of the end of April 2022, about 80 percent of the people in Taiwan had received a primary series of the COVID-19 vaccine, while 60 percent had received a booster dose.

Taiwan was able to contain the pandemic while having people lead normal lives and achieving positive economic growth through the precise use of technology, information transparency, strict border controls, and accurate screening and case investigation.

The world today continues to face challenges of the pandemic, vaccine supply, and the post-pandemic recovery. Countries should work together and prepare for possible future pandemics. Taiwan is an indispensable partner in ensuring a successful post-pandemic recovery. To contain the pandemic, Taiwan has continued to cooperate with other countries on the research and development of COVID-19 vaccines and drugs and has donated medical supplies, such as medical masks and medicines, to countries in need. This has demonstrated that Taiwan can help, and Taiwan is helping. The 75th World Health Assembly (WHA) will be held in May. For the past five years, Taiwan has not been invited to participate in the WHA. To ensure that Taiwan is not left behind and there is no coverage gap in global health, Taiwan seeks to participate in the WHA this year in a professional and pragmatic manner, so that it can make contributions as part of the global effort to realize WHO's vision of a seamless global disease prevention network.

We urge WHO and related parties to support Taiwan's inclusion in WHO and allow it to fully participate in WHO meetings, mechanisms, and activities. Taiwan will continue to work with the rest of the world to ensure that all enjoy the fundamental human right to health as stipulated in the WHO Constitution. In the spirit of the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, no one should be left behind.

Toyota sells over 20 million EVs worldwide



Toyota Motor Corporation recently celebrated a remarkable milestone with cumulative sales of electrified vehicles (EV) surpassing more than 20 million units worldwide at the end of February 2022.

Long-recognized as a pioneer in the development of eco-friendly vehicles, Toyota has adopted a multi-faceted approach that emphasizes 'Sustainable and Practical' solutions as part of its strategy to respond flexibly to the global demand for diverse mobility solutions.

"We are thrilled to achieve this significant milestone," said Kei Fujita, Chief Representative,

Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. "This is a testament from our valued customers around the world to the quality, durability, and reliability of our electrified vehicles. We are extremely grateful to each and every one of them for continuously supporting Toyota's drive to achieve carbon neutrality."

The company's sales of electrified vehicles in the Middle East are growing year on year, demonstrating increasing public awareness of the benefits electrified vehicles offer in terms of efficiency, performance, and sustainability.

Toyota currently offers the biggest line-up of electrified vehicles in the region, with a total of six HEV models including the Corolla, Camry, C-HR, Corolla Cross, RAV4, and Highlander. Meanwhile, Lexus continues to set new standards for sustainability in the luxury segment, where customers can choose from the Lexus ES, LC, LS, NX, and RX models.

In December 2021, the company unveiled its BEV strategy, which includes plans to launch 30 models in the passenger and commercial segments by 2030. The ambitious roadmap also targets achieving 3.5 million annual electrified

vehicle sales worldwide before the end of the decade.

This drive to improve and increase the diversity of electrified powertrain options reflects Toyota's commitment to reducing the environmental impacts of manufacturing and driving vehicles across the globe and achieving carbon neutrality throughout its operations. The company has set a series of targets inspired by key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are designed to embed sustainability throughout its entire operations.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Ecosystem Restoration is Good for Your Health



By Anuja Malhotra and Abi Vanak

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Humanity currently faces multiple, interlinked existential crises. The catastrophic consequences of climate change, ecological degradation, and biodiversity loss have cascading knock-on effects on human health and well-being. As the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates, ecosystem damage can contribute significantly to a global public-health emergency. But scientists are also increasingly finding that ecological restoration, by reversing the threats to soil, biodiversity, water, and other ecosystem services, can deliver major health benefits.

There have been many attempts to understand the nexus between ecological degradation and human health. A recent study of over 6,800 ecosystems across six continents provided further evidence that deforestation and extinction of species will make pandemics more likely. Ecosystem damage also leads to water contamination, creating breeding grounds for infectious diseases. Similarly, soil degradation not only reduces agricultural productivity, but also has been linked to disease and increased mortality.

The emergence and spread of zoonotic diseases — infectious diseases transmitted between species from animals to humans or vice versa — like COVID-19 are closely associated with the health of ecosystems. For example, 75 percent of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic, caused by unsustainable use of natural resources, factory farming of animals, and other industrial-scale anthropogenic factors.

Ecosystem decline has also contributed in recent decades to reduced immunological resilience and an increase in allergic conditions in humans. The effects are not limited to physical health, but also include mental-health problems such as an increase in eco-anxiety, or fear of environmental damage due to ongoing ecosystem degradation.

Conversely, restoring natural ecosystems



could provide pathways for reversing some of the effects of climate change and ease the global chronic-disease burden, thus improving human health and well-being. One recent study showed that soil restoration and the reintroduction of native plant species led to a reduction in physical and psychological impacts of certain diseases. In another case, ecological restoration of an urban river in northwest England was linked to psychological benefits for surrounding communities.

There is also evidence that ecological restoration can protect people from extreme

Organization estimates that global spending on health rose continuously between 2000 and 2018, to \$8.3 trillion, or 10 percent of world GDP.

Some prominent international efforts to reap the benefits of ecological restoration to planetary and human health are already underway. The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, running from 2021 to 2030, and the land degradation neutrality program of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification encourage signatory countries to recognize the central importance of ecological restoration. Likewise, the

unifying framework to maximize the synergy of ecological restoration and human health. Policies designed to address one should not exclude the other.

We therefore need to redefine ecological degradation, understand its far-reaching effects on human health, and recognize that these effects cannot be fully addressed without structured, context-specific ecological restoration plans. Achieving this will require institutionalizing and mainstreaming inter-sectoral collaboration between scientists and practitioners from the ecological, medical, and sustainability domains.

Alliances and a sense of ownership among core governance structures of public health and ecosystem restoration will be crucial. In India, for example, a pioneering effort to mainstream cross-disciplinary initiatives is bringing together the government, scientists, and local partners and practitioners with the aim of improving zoonotic-disease control. Such a framework can generate valuable knowledge and insights for similar collaborative initiatives elsewhere.

Ecological restoration is a clear and identifiable way to tackle the global disease burden and improve public health. As the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration commences, policymakers should encourage collective action to spur inclusive, interdisciplinary activities that demonstrate the positive global benefits of restoration for social, physical, and mental health. We owe it to ourselves and to the planet to mitigate at least some of the threats we have created.

“ The economic case for ecological restoration is strong. Rising public-health costs and the significant disease burden, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, strengthen the case further. ”

climate events and related public-health crises. Finally, using alternative cooking fuels such as biogas in improved stoves, thereby reducing the need for fuelwood and helping to prevent forest degradation, has been shown to improve respiratory health and household diets.

The economic case for ecological restoration is strong. Rising public-health costs and the significant disease burden, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic, strengthen the case further. The World Health

#HealthyRecovery initiative, signed by over 4,500 health professionals from 90 countries, urged G20 leaders to fund projects that enable ecological restoration as part of their pandemic stimulus packages.

In recent decades, researchers have developed various models — including the Mandala of Health, the Wheel of Fundamental Human Needs, and, more recently, the One Health approach — to capture the interconnected relationship between humans and nature. The challenge now is to develop a

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Breathing New Life into Medical Oxygen



By Leith Greenslade
Coordinator of the Every Breath Counts Coalition.

COVID-19 has taken at least 18 million lives, and it is anyone's guess how many of those deaths were due to a lack of medical oxygen. Governments do not want to talk about the issue, because that could mean admitting that thousands — or even hundreds of thousands — of their citizens died unnecessarily. But unless health systems take steps to ensure a sufficient supply of oxygen in the future, they will be risking a repeat of the past two years.

While high-income countries are already working to secure their supplies of medical oxygen, many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) will continue to need international support. Deaths from a lack of medical oxygen in these countries preceded the pandemic, because global health and development agencies made no serious effort to help LMIC governments close the gap between need and supply.

That gap is one factor underlying LMICs' stubbornly high newborn and child mortality, adult deaths from infectious and chronic conditions, and deaths from injuries that require surgery. Research published prior to the pandemic found that four out of five children hospitalized with pneumonia in Nigerian hospitals did not receive the oxygen they needed, and that simply putting oxygen into pediatric wards could reduce child deaths by 50 percent.

As Mike Ryan of the World Health Organization puts it, COVID-19 ripped a bandage off an old wound, driving a tenfold increase in the need for oxygen in the space of just weeks in some countries. LMICs now need about 500,000 large oxygen cylinders every day to treat COVID-19 patients, and this is just the tip of the iceberg. For every COVID-19 patient who needs oxygen, there



workforce needed to install, operate, and maintain the equipment.

This funding has helped more than 100 countries, mostly in Africa and Asia. But there are still LMICs struggling to provide oxygen, so the Taskforce has asked for another \$1 billion in 2022. US President Joe Biden's Second Global COVID-19 Summit this week also will emphasize the issue with an appeal to governments, companies, and philanthropies to do more.

The case to make to donors is clear. There is a moral obligation to treat COVID-19 patients and to flatten the pandemic death curve once and for all. Investments in oxygen will serve that goal and also save lives in the future. Not only is oxygen an essential treatment for almost all of the health conditions targeted by the UN Sustainable Development Goals; it is also a critical pillar of effective pandemic preparedness and response (PPR).

As the world pivots to long-term COVID management, oxygen production and distribution systems will need to be embedded in global health infrastructure. International organizations with mandates to improve newborn and child survival, infectious- and chronic-disease management, and PPR all have a stake in access to oxygen. These agencies should formalize their nascent ACT-A oxygen partnership by transforming it into a Global Oxygen Alliance with a mandate extending to 2030 (to align with the SDGs), and with a membership broadened to include international agencies focused on chronic diseases.

There are five components to a successful alliance to close the oxygen access gap. First, LMIC governments and the national institutions responsible for providing medical oxygen need to take the lead. Ideally, they would be guided by politically endorsed national plans for oxygen access, with governments financing the effort as part of their health budgets.

Second, LMIC governments that need external support to finance their national plans should be able to leverage loans and grants from a variety of multilateral, bilateral, and philanthropic sources. The Global Fund should continue to provide grant funding as part of its new PPR objective, and multilateral development banks should provide loans for this purpose as well.

Third, oxygen producers should be given more incentives and opportunities to work in partnership with LMIC governments and global health and development agencies. Memoranda of understanding, non-disclosure agreements, and transparent and competitive tenders for equipment procurement, installation, and maintenance should all be made available, building on the ACT-A COVID-19 Oxygen Emergency

and evaluate progress. To do so, they will need ongoing funding from bilateral development agencies (such as USAID, the European Commission, and others) and philanthropies (such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Skoll Foundation, and others).

Finally, LMIC governments need access to high-quality, timely data on national oxygen needs — such as the annual number of hypoxemic patients and how much oxygen they require — and oxygen capacity in the health system so that they can move quickly to close deficits.

Donors should invest more in national health surveillance and statistical institutions, while using the available data to generate estimates of the hypoxemia burden as part of the Global Burden of Disease. And independent agencies such as the Access to Medicine Foundation should be funded to hold the oxygen industry accountable.

The next six months are critical as we move beyond the acute phase of the pandemic. Ideally, by September, the ACT-A COVID-19 Oxygen Emergency Taskforce will have become a Global Oxygen Alliance, chaired by Unitaid and continuing to meet regularly to coordinate investments, mobilize resources, and monitor the impact of efforts to ensure equitable access to an essential medicine.

“There is a moral obligation to treat COVID-19 patients and to flatten the pandemic death curve once and for all. Investments in oxygen will serve that goal and also save lives in the future.”

are at least five other patients who also need it, including the 7.2 million children with pneumonia who enter LMIC hospitals each year.

The main vehicle for the international response is the ACT-Accelerator (ACT-A) COVID-19 Oxygen Emergency Taskforce, expertly chaired by Unitaid, which has built a system to help LMICs prevent oxygen shortages. To date, the Taskforce has delivered almost \$1 billion, including \$560 million from the Global Fund alone, to LMIC governments and their United Nations and NGO partners. This money has been spent on liquid oxygen, pressure swing absorption oxygen-generating plants, mobile oxygen concentrators, oxygen therapies, and the

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International Community Still needs to Do Big Things



By Kevin Watkins

A former CEO of Save the Children UK, is a visiting professor at the Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa at the London School of Economics.

When US Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau opened the Bretton Woods Conference almost 80 years ago, he reminded delegates that failures of international cooperation had led to the Great Depression, social division, and ultimately war. "Prosperity, like peace, is indivisible," he concluded, "we cannot afford to have it scattered here or there among the fortunate ... Poverty, wherever it exists, is menacing to us all."

That message speaks across the ages. We are again facing global challenges that can be met only through international cooperation. Large swaths of the developing world are being excluded from global prosperity. Extreme poverty is rising. Hard-won gains in health, education, and nutrition are under threat. Already obscene economic inequalities between and within countries are widening. The window of opportunity for averting a climate catastrophe is about to slam shut. And yet multilateral cooperation is paralyzed by complacency, petty rivalries, and inward-looking nationalism.

Consider this year's International Monetary Fund and World Bank Spring Meetings, which offered an opportunity to mobilize the finance needed to prevent wholesale reversals of progress toward the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Instead, Western governments and the G20 arrived with no shared agenda, spent a week swapping platitudes, and left the world with a set of vague and incoherent declarations.

We cannot afford leadership failures on this scale. The IMF and the World Bank, the twin pillars of the Bretton Woods system, should be at the heart of international cooperation in responding to the defining challenges facing our generation, starting with the two-tier recovery

from the economic downturn triggered by COVID-19.

Unlike advanced economies, which have recovered on the back of vast government financing and vaccination programs, many developing economies have suffered deep scarring. Growth has slowed, tax revenues have fallen, and two-thirds of low-income countries are either in or at risk of debt distress. The IMF estimates that the poorest countries will need an additional \$450 billion to return to their pre-pandemic development trajectories.

Budget pressures are limiting governments' capacity to defend human development gains. The pandemic pushed almost 100 million people into extreme poverty. That figure is set to rise as safety nets are cut and Russia's war in Ukraine

bold new approach to development finance that would convert 'billions into trillions'. The architects of the Bretton Woods system created the vehicle to do so in the form of multilateral development banks (MDBs).

Designed to support postwar European reconstruction, the MDB system – the World Bank and its regional counterparts – enshrines a simple but powerful financial model. With small amounts of paid-in capital underpinned by much larger government guarantees ('callable capital'), the MDBs can use their AAA credit ratings to issue bonds at low interest rates and lend to developing countries, effectively mobilizing private finance for public investment. The World Bank, the largest MDB, has only \$19 billion of paid-in capital, and \$278 billion of

operations. Researchers at the Overseas Development Institute estimate that changing this rule could mobilize an additional \$1.3 trillion, with only a marginal change in credit ratings and borrowing costs.

Speaking at the spring meetings, US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen lamented the MDBs' failure to mobilize the trillions needed for pandemic recovery. And yet the Biden administration has failed to overhaul the rules on callable capital.

Other attempts at innovation have run into a bureaucratic brick wall. Gordon Brown, the UN's Special Envoy for Global Education, has proposed a system of modest grants and guarantees that could double MDB financing for education, unlocking \$10 billion. Yet even in the face of an unprecedented education crisis, donors have failed to act.

This is a travesty of the Bretton Woods system. In the misplaced defense of AAA credit ratings, the MDBs are eschewing solutions that would support recovery, prevent devastating reversals in human development, and bring hope to millions of children.

Sadly, it is not just the MDB agenda that is stuck. Nine months after G20 governments pledged to allocate \$100 billion of the IMF's new issuance of special drawing rights (SDRs, the Fund's reserve asset) to poor countries, not a single cent has been transferred. Meanwhile, with debt servicing set to surge by 45% this year – most of it going to commercial creditors and China – vital investments are being crowded out, and the risk of disorderly sovereign defaults is growing. Yet we are no closer to a comprehensive debt-reduction framework than we were a year ago.

As the crisis triggered by COVID-19 has deepened, some commentators have called for a new Bretton Woods system. They have a point. The World Bank and the IMF maintain anachronistic Western-dominated governance systems. But what is missing from the response to today's defining human-development challenges is not financial architecture, but rather the sense of urgency, shared purpose, and common endeavor that defined the original Bretton Woods conference.

“Multilateral finance has multiplier effects that bilateral aid cannot duplicate. Every \$1 invested in the World Bank through paid-in capital mobilizes \$4 in new finance. Yet the MDB system is at best weakly exploited.”

fuels food-price inflation, raising the specter of increased malnutrition, or even famine, in some parts of the world. More than 40 of the poorest countries are spending more on servicing their debts than on public health. Education budgets are being cut even as millions of the world's most disadvantaged children return to classrooms carrying the learning losses inflicted during pandemic-related school closures.

Against this grim backdrop, international cooperation to finance an "SDG recovery" has gained new urgency. The OECD estimates that the already-large pre-pandemic SDG financing gap has increased by \$1.2 trillion. That is without the incremental investments of \$2 trillion annually needed to support renewable-energy investments in developing countries to achieve the 2015 Paris climate agreement's goals.

When governments committed to the SDG agenda seven years ago, they pledged a

callable capital.

Multilateral finance has multiplier effects that bilateral aid cannot duplicate. Every \$1 invested in the World Bank through paid-in capital mobilizes \$4 in new finance. Yet the MDB system is at best weakly exploited. Apart from its soft-loan facility, the International Development Association, the World Bank system played a muted role in supporting developing countries during the pandemic, and the MDBs' financing portfolio for climate interventions in low- and middle-income countries is just \$38 billion – a fraction of what is needed.

While the MDBs (notably the African Development Bank) are undercapitalized, the bigger problem is a deeply entrenched conservatism in financial governance. Major shareholders – the US and European governments – refuse to allow callable-capital guarantees to be integrated into lending



Climate change impacts personal health

In October 2021, a group of over 120 leading global experts on climate, public health, economy, and political science among others, voiced growing concern over the impact of climate change on the livelihood of communities around the world, its direct and indirect effect on mental and physical health, and its contribution to the spread of infectious diseases.

More recently, the 2022 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that extreme weather events caused by human action are surpassing the resilience of some ecological and human systems, sometimes with irreversible effects. The report also emphasizes the impact of climate change on mental and physical health, and the ways in which changes in climate and weather patterns are contributing to the spread of vector-borne communicable diseases.

The latest IPCC report also notes that the world is now 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than in the pre-industrial period (1850–1900), with the past few years registering record temperatures. Previous studies have also reiterated that climate change, particularly extreme heat and extreme weather events, which are predicted to become the norm in coming years, can have a direct negative impact on the human body in many ways.

Research by scientists at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden now show that more and more people are getting hospitalized with hyponatremia — abnormally low sodium levels — due to high outdoor temperatures. The sodium deficiency associated with



hyponatremia generally is usually the result of low intake of salt, high loss of salt, or the excess water in the body. Two plausible explanations given by researchers at Karolinska for heat-related hyponatremia are either salt loss from excessive sweating due to heat, or excessive hydration by drinking more fluids due to a fear of dehydration.

There is also evidence of extreme heat exacerbating neurological disease. One review from August 2021 showed that increasing ambient temperatures was linked to a worsening of symptoms of various neurological conditions, from Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's, to epilepsy and migraine, as well as a higher number of hospitalizations and a higher risk of death related to these conditions.

Other health risks to the body from higher temperatures include that to the digestive system, where exposure to extreme heat have been shown to increase the permeability of digestive barriers, and

consequently increase the susceptibility to infections through the digestive system. In addition, there is growing evidence to prove a link between heat exposure and kidney disease, particularly in outdoor workers toiling under above average temperatures.

Higher temperatures have also been shown to impact the body's immune response to pathogens such as viruses. In a study conducted on mice in 2019, researchers found that mice exposed to high ambient temperatures — of 36 degrees Celsius — had a dampened immune response to the influenza virus. Additionally, changing environmental conditions have been found to increase the transmission of many water-borne, air-borne, food-borne, and vector-borne pathogens, undermining the efforts of medical scientists and public health organizations to mitigate this threat.

Among the diseases whose transmissibility have been shown to increase due to climate change-related factors are

malaria, dengue, Zika, and chikungunya, all of which are caused by arboviruses — a group of viruses spread to people by the bite of infected arthropods (insects) such as mosquitoes and ticks.

Climate change also affects the environment where pathogen-carrying vectors — such as insects, particularly mosquitoes — live, enabling them to spread to new regions. This has been shown by the increase in the number of cases of malaria and other transmissible diseases in Europe and farther around the world.

The report by the experts group mentioned earlier found governments and decision-makers lacking in their efforts to stop climate change and mitigate its negative impacts, especially on health. The report also notes that there are several smaller-scale steps that individuals and healthcare organizations can take to pull their weight in terms of becoming more eco-friendly. On the personal level, this includes living healthier lifestyles by reducing the burden of disease through more physical activity, through healthier, more plant-based diets, through reduced exposure to air pollution and other environmental determinants that damage our health.

On an organizational level, health services could set the tone in terms of how we address the climate crisis, and how we understand its effect on public health.

If we treat climate change as a health issue, and not just as an environmental issue, this would make it more immediate to everybody.

Growth patterns similar for vegetarian and non-veg kids

Research into and data on nutritional outcomes in children following different diet patterns have been rare. In a new study aimed at reducing this shortcoming in available statistics, doctors at the St. Michael's Hospital of Unity in Toronto, Canada have conducted a cohort study of nearly 9,000 children to determine the link between diet, growth and nutrition.

Cohort studies are a type of longitudinal study, where the approach is to follow participants who share a common characteristic, such as age, particular occupation, or demographic similarities, over an extended period of time, in some cases over decades.

Contrary to popular belief, the study found that those who eat a vegetarian diet had similar measures of growth and nutrition compared to children who eat meat. However, the study also found that children with a vegetarian diet had higher odds of being underweight in the weight status, emphasizing the need for special care when planning the diets of vegetarian kids.

Over the past two decades in many places around the world there has been a rising popularity for plant-based diets, and a changing food environment



with more access to plant-based alternatives. In 2019, updates to Canada's Food Guide urged Canadians to embrace plant-based proteins, such as beans and tofu, instead of meat. Until the new study launched by researchers at St. Michael's Hospital, there was little research into the nutritional outcomes of children following vegetarian diets. The study demonstrated that children following vegetarian diets had similar growth and biochemical measures of

nutrition compared to children consuming non-vegetarian diets, but that it led to higher odds of these children being underweight.

For their study, the researchers evaluated 8,907 children aged six months to eight years. The children were all participants of the TARGet Kids! cohort study and data was collected between 2008 and 2019. Participants were categorized by their non-vegetarian or vegetarian status, with vegetarianism being defined as a dietary pattern that excludes meat.

Researchers found children who had a vegetarian diet had similar mean body mass index (BMI), height, iron, vitamin D, and cholesterol levels compared to those who consumed meat. The findings showed evidence that children with a vegetarian diet had almost two-fold higher odds of being underweight, which is defined as below the third percentile for BMI. There was no evidence of an association with overweight or obesity.

Underweight is an indicator of undernutrition, and may be a sign that the quality of the child's diet is not meeting the child's nutritional needs to support normal growth. For children who eat a vegetarian diet, the researchers emphasized access to healthcare providers who can provide growth monitoring, education and guidance to support their growth and nutrition.



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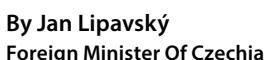
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Fighting the ghosts of neo-colonialism



This year, the celebrations of the victory in World War II are being overshadowed by blood and suffering on the territory of Ukraine and destruction of Ukrainian cities. Ghosts of the new aggressive, neo-colonial war of the empire, hungry for more territory, cast their dark shadows on these days, which are usually connected to celebration of peace. The unprovoked, illegal Russian aggression against its smaller democratic neighbor should make us think about how memory can be violated for the sake of neo-imperial policies.

The traditional Victory Day parade at the Red Square in Moscow has gradually changed its original purpose. It was supposed to be the humble expression of gratitude and remembrance of Soviet heroes of many nations including Russians and Ukrainians, but it evolved into a state organized propagandist showdown and demonstration of power. In the past years, threats usually accompanied the speeches, but this year threats have materialized into a war. The heroism of victims in WWII has been used to make the case for the strong hand of a ruthless authoritarian regime and its expansive dreams of colonial revival.



Czechoslovak's WWII experience with a powerful neighbor (Totalitarian Nazi Germany) who invaded a smaller neighbor under the pretext of 'liberating' the German speaking population was a preface of much greater war — because this 'liberation' was not stopped and did develop further. This lesson-learned should not be forgotten.

Czechoslovakia saw another false ‘liberation’ in 1968, when an invasion army of almost half a million soldiers fulfilled the order from Moscow and killed hopes and promises of freedom of the Prague spring. The following Soviet occupation turned a proud and independent country into a broken Soviet colony from which Europe was kidnapped — as Czech writer Milan Kundera famously reminded the world.

In other parts of the planet, the 60s were luckier and brought about great decolonization movements. Empires were shaken and many nations of different continents were allowed to taste freedom. The former Soviet satellites like Czechoslovakia together with nations kept as part of Russia and later the Soviet empire had to wait another thirty years for the same delight. But with the end of the Cold War they also celebrated their moment of joy. This was how true liberation looked like.

The victory in WWII, together with the decolonization process and the end of the Cold War were the greatest leaps of humanity towards freedom in the 21st century. Its beginning was bringing hopes that 'Munich moments' when a smaller state fell victim to a bigger neighbor and

'Brezhnev doctrines of limited sovereignty' will not be repeated.

Putin's war of choice is stealing peace and lives from millions of Ukrainians but will come to haunt us all. Russian society will be severely hurt as well. Dead bodies of soldiers returning to their mothers and wives in bags write another tragic chapter of the complicated Russian history. The Russian economy will shrink to the levels of the 90s and all the economic growth and prosperity of the last 30 years will be erased. Russia will end as a poor and isolated country. Putin's war is not in Russia's interest.

Weaponizing gas and oil is hurting many economies in Europe and elsewhere. The Russian army targeting infrastructure stocking grain and Russian blockade of ports and other export routes can provoke hunger of millions of citizens in many countries in Africa and the Middle East. Traditional donors from the EU and US will have economies weakened and less capable to perform robust development assistance to poorer/developing countries. They will have to undertake a gigantic reconstruction effort in Ukraine. These resources will be missed elsewhere.

No one in the world was in need of this war but evil cannot prevail. We all should refuse the phantoms of colonial ages, ghosts of neo imperialism, we cannot allow the rules-based international order to be destroyed and replaced by the power-based division of the political map to the spheres of influence. Illegal aggression cannot be tolerated and all peace loving people should unite in sending the anti-war signal. Let us reject the Orwellian analogies where truth is a lie and war is called 'liberation'. Let us support Ukraine and hope that next year the celebrations of the end of WWII will turn back to what it should be — the remembrance of victims and fallen heroes and the promise for peace.



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