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# Industrial zones vital to economic growth



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Supporting the growth and development of industries in the non-oil sector is vital to Kuwait's economy on multiple fronts. It buttresses the national development plans based on 'Vision 2035 New Kuwait'; it promotes economic diversification that aims to wean the country away from its overreliance on hydrocarbon revenues; it develops alternate sources of revenue for the treasury; increases involvement of private sector in the economy; and encourages entrepreneurship and motivates national youth to seek gainful employment opportunities in the private sector.

Given the important role that non-hydrocarbon industries play in achieving all of the above developmental criterions, it is only axiomatic to expect the government would assign top priority to envisaging and implementing a robust industrial

policy, and providing adequate support and infrastructure for the development of industrial zones in the country. Unfortunately, so far, the concerned authorities remain reluctant to accord the industrial sector the priority that it deserves.

One result of this remission is that Kuwait continues to suffer from its two main structural imbalances that have hindered economic growth and progress over the decades — over reliance on revenues from oil production, and dominance of the public sector. Figures from the 2021-2022 general budget show that oil constituted over 84 percent of the state's total revenues, while non-oil revenues amounted to only around 16 percent, and the economy continues to be dominated by the public sector.

Over the years a slew of policies aimed at developing and restructuring the industrial sector have been attempted, but most of these initiatives were haphazard, uncoordinated and reactionary. In Kuwait, calls



for diversifying the economy and developing a strong industrial base usually echo only in response to periods when there is a fall in international oil prices, and subsequent lower oil revenues and sluggish economic growth. Once oil prices head to higher levels, diversification and industrialization are shelved and gather dust until the next economic crisis appears.

Some of the challenges to developing a vibrant industrial sector in the country include chaotic and incoherent industrial policies that discourage investments; the inability to establish integrated and environmentally-neutral industrial zones; unwieldy bureaucratic procedures; absence of policies to grant new industrial lands, facilities and incentives to industrialists and investors in the sector.

In January 1997, in a bid to provide a more coherent, cohesive and integrated industrial policy designed to address problems identified as obstacles to developing the non-oil industrial sector, including developing new industrial areas, the government established the Public Authority for Industry (PAI) as an autonomous entity under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The authority was tasked with developing, promoting and supervising industrial activity in Kuwait, by encouraging local industries, protecting and expanding the industrial production base to include strategic goods required for national and nutritional security, as well as to diversify national income sources. Over the quarter-century since its establishment, the PAI has set up a handful of industrial zones, most of which have been heavily focused on chemical industries that have back linkages to the country's megalithic oil industry.

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## Indian naval vessel on goodwill visit to Kuwait



Indian naval ship INS Teg arrived at the Shuwaikh Port last week on a goodwill visit that was hailed by Kuwait Navy Force Commander Commodore Hazaa Al-Alati as an extension of the close relations between the two countries. He also revealed that the Kuwait Navy plans to attend exercises, hosted by their Indian counterpart early next year, as part of a naval exercise arrangement between the two countries that has been going on since 1995.

During a speech he delivered on the

occasion of the Indian frigate's visit to Shuwaikh Port, Commodore Al-Alati further noted, "Our forefathers launched trade routes with India in the olden days using their wooden ships, and Kuwait had adopted the Indian rupee as its official currency until 1961."

Speaking on the occasion, Indian Ambassador H.E. Sibi George, said the vessel would contribute to maintaining maritime security in the region and the Gulf of Aden. He also highlighted India's keenness to boost

maritime cooperation with its partners to ensure the security of trade and shipping routes in the Indian Ocean region.

Adding that the two countries share warm relations across many spectrums, the ambassador hailed Kuwait as a major bilateral partner who has contributed to the mutual growth of both countries. "Our mutual cooperation saw a further expansion at the height of the COVID pandemic after India dispatched a team of professional health

workers to Kuwait, which in turn was the largest international provider of vaccines and oxygen to the South Asian republic.

The 125m long, 4,000 ton guided missile Teg frigate, carries a complement of 180 naval crew including 28 officers, uses stealth technologies and a special hull design to ensure a reduced radar cross section to evade detection, and is equipped with the Indian developed BrahMos anti-ship and land-attack missiles.

## MoH to regulate medical rep visits at health facilities

Ministry of Health (MoH) is reported to be studying new procedures to monitor and regulate the visits by representatives of pharmaceutical and cosmetics companies to local health facilities. This comes in the wake of the ministry monitoring and observing several negative impacts from such visits on the overall welfare of patients, through disruption to workflow at these facilities as well as interrupting the duty schedule of doctors.

The procedures under consideration by MoH are said to include prohibiting pharmaceutical representatives from visiting the facilities during official working hours, controlling the number of visits by representatives of each company, and requiring prior appointment from the administration of the local health facilities. The proposed regulations would grant company representatives access to medical personnel before or after working hours at the facility, and in a manner that does not complicate or disrupt the checkup schedules of patients.

Other regulations under consideration include setting a day on which the head of the department along with other doctors will meet with the representatives after official working hours, and after obtaining prior approvals from the health facilities management. The main aim of the new procedures is to avoid the potential negative ramifications from interactions between doctors and company representatives, including influencing the medical prescriptions given by doctors.

The planned regulations take on added significance in light of recent reports in international media about pharmaceutical companies offering among others gifts in-kind to doctors or providing them with 'services' such as leisure trips under the guise of scientific conferences and seminars. A new study by sociologists at Rennes University Hospital in France, found that physicians who receive gifts from pharmaceutical manufacturers tend to prescribe more expensive and lower quality medicines than their colleagues

## Shop and win 24 golden balls in 24 carats At Joyalukkas 'Summer of Joy' promotion

Joyalukkas, the world's favorite jeweler announcing the launch of the 'Summer of Joy' promotion, Mr. John Paul Alukkas, Managing Director – international Operations said that all Joyalukkas customers, who spend at least KD50 will get a raffle coupon which will give them a chance to win up to 24 golden balls in 24 carats. This promotional offer is valid until 11th September, 2022. There is also a special collection of exquisite jewellery in all the showrooms to make the "Summer of Joy" promotion all the more glittering.

"Summer is the time when lots of expatriates travel and during this time we see many of our regular customers buying gold and diamond jeweler for their personal use as well as to give as gifts to their loved ones, back home. I would

like to reiterate the fact that gold is not only one of the best gifts for your loved ones but also the best investment option at the moment that will give decent returns in the long run," he added.







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# Peru and Kuwait, two friendly nations aiming for success

H E Tomás Berrocal, Counselor at the Peruvian Foreign Service and acting Head of Mission of the Embassy of Peru in Kuwait.

By Reaven D'Souza  
Managing Editor

H.E. Tomas Berrocal, the acting head of the Peruvian Embassy in Kuwait is a soft spoken and exceptionally polite diplomat who is focussed on his priorities. In a wide ranging interview Mr. Berrocal spoke about various topics related to bilateral relations, strengthening existing ties, and cooperation and coordination on the international stage between Kuwait and Peru.

Counselor Berrocal began by noting that his interest in international relations led him to study diplomacy at the Peruvian Diplomatic Academy, and learn Law at Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. "I started my work here in Kuwait in March 2021, and I am very pleased to work in this very beautiful country, which has welcomed my family and me in the best possible ways. I would like to highlight that the Kuwaiti authorities have always been very kind with me, and with my beloved ones. In particular, the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait have always been available for any coordination or contact that has been necessary to facilitate my tasks for the benefit of the Peruvian - Kuwaiti relationship.

Pointing out that on 28 July of this year Peru will be commemorating 201 years since its independence in 1821, the envoy noted, "Last year, we celebrated the Bicentennial of our Independence, and the birth of the Republic of Peru as a sovereign State. Peru aims to create prosperity, progress, and welfare for its people; in fact, the human person, its protection and respect for individual dignity are the supreme goals of the Peruvian State, and society.

"Peru is also a multicultural and multi-ethnic country that promotes its national interests in the world arena. We are open to the world and the future. Our history has not been easy: we have faced challenges, good and tough times during our life as an independent state. However, it has been the joint efforts of all Peruvians and friends of Peru which has made my country succeed in reaching the aforementioned objectives.

"On the occasion of the 201st anniversary of the Independence of Peru, I would like to avail of this opportunity to convey my warmest

have worked together in the United Nations Organization, in the Security Council. We wish to continue working jointly to reach many achievements together, for Peru and Kuwait are friendly nations that share many common interests. The two countries seek to ensure a better future for our citizens, and to work for the sake of our future generations.

"It is our profound wish to further strengthen these relations between the two countries in all fields, in particular, in the areas of cultural interchanges, investment, trade, touristic promotion, and bilateral

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"We, the Peruvian people, warmly welcome all those interested in visiting Peru. Come and visit our country, enjoy the best of Peru."

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congratulation to all Peruvians residing in Kuwait, and to our friends from Kuwait, and other nations."

Elaborating on bilateral relations between Perú and Kuwait, Mr. Berrocal said, "The Government of Peru has a true interest in strengthening and further broadening its friendly bilateral relations with Kuwait, through cooperation, investment, touristic promotion and trade. The friendly relations between the two countries are deep and date back in time. The Embassy of Peru in Kuwait was established in 2011, with H.E. Amador Velásquez being the first Head of the Peruvian diplomatic mission. Our countries, Peru and Kuwait, enjoy prestigious international positions, and they are both friendly nations aimed at success at all levels.

"For instance, both countries

cooperation. I am sure that our countries will have a bright future and we can work together for a better future for our nations and peoples."

Turning to trade ties between Peru and Kuwait, the envoy remarked, "Bilateral trade relations are very important. There are plenty of products that can be exported from Peru to Kuwait. For instance, we have the alpaca fiber, which is considered one of the finest in the world. We also have the pima cotton fiber which is very good, very useful for manufacturing pieces of clothing. The Embassy of Peru expects to introduce alpaca, and pima cotton in Kuwait, due to its remarkable qualities

"Peru is also very efficient in fisheries. We can export processed fish, as well as canned or frozen meat.



We also have quinoa, a super cereal, which is very nutritious in terms of protein content and very healthy. It is also rich in vitamins and minerals, and has scientifically proven anti-diabetic properties, which we presented a couple of years ago in Kuwait, with cooperation of the Dasman Diabetes Institute.

"Peru is also a world-class producer of potatoes, and citrus fruits such as oranges, lemon, tangerines, and grapefruit. In addition, we also export asparagus, avocados, blueberries, coffee, grapes, mangoes, pineapples, and cacao. In this sense, we have interesting offers for Kuwait, in particular regarding the food security situation, which has been recently raised by the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres.

"We are also very important producers of silver and gold. We were

the third largest producer of silver in the world in 2021. Besides, during the last decade, Peru has always occupied a place among the top-10 producers of gold in the world. We export gold not only as a raw material, but also as processed jewelry. Our jewelry is very beautiful, with traditional and modern designs, and we are available and eager to export it anywhere in the world.

"In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to express my personal availability to hold meetings with all the Kuwaiti entrepreneurs who would be interested in importing Peruvian products to Kuwait. It is through trade and investment that we will be able to build a better future for our peoples, creating working positions and opportunities."

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# Sponsorship system a blight on Kuwait's reputation

The US State Department's report on human trafficking for the year 2022 has placed Kuwait on the Orange list. In its report on downgrading Kuwait's standing, the State Department pointed out that the government "does not fully meet the minimum standards necessary to eliminate human trafficking", but the report added that the government is making great efforts to do so.

While the report identified three levels of countries based on the extent to which they meet the standards in combating the phenomenon of human trafficking, Kuwait was included in the watch list of the second level (orange), which includes countries whose governments do not fully meet the minimum standards and are making great efforts to achieve this, but they do not take concrete measures.

Responding to the latest report, head of the National Office for Human Rights, Ambassador Jassem Al-Mubarak, said he was not surprised by this decline given Kuwait's continued support for the sponsorship system in hiring expatriates to work in the country. He described the sponsorship system as similar to slavery, servitude and forced labor.

In a statement to the media, Al-Mubarak



added that he had repeatedly raised the issue of sponsorship and the need to abolish this system, with the relevant authorities as it harms the reputation of Kuwait. He explained that some unscrupulous sponsors bring workers in exchange for money, with the price for recruiting some nationalities reaching more than KD2,000 per person.

He asked, "Do they think that the world does not see what is happening in Kuwait?" He reiterated the "necessity of abolishing the sponsorship system, and putting an end to what is happening in the recruitment offices of domestic workers." He added,

"The world sees advertisements posted on websites where servants are offered for sale, and this is slavery, although the decision has been issued by the Council of Ministers to ban such advertisements."

He stated that "the sponsorship system and other related reasons are the cause for the country's downgraded classification by the US State Department and other international Human Rights organizations."

He pointed out that "the situation is currently bad, but if the sponsorship system is abolished and the residence is made free and a greater role is given to the Public Authority for Manpower, so that only trained and qualified workers based on the labor market demand are brought in, we will have an ideal market and this will also lead to alleviating demand on the state's subsidies and infrastructure facilities."

He stressed that "everyone knows that

there are mafias that recruit workers for a fee, and throw them on the street to work, which then increases pressure on state facilities, and this was revealed during the pandemic period. Also, what happened to the labor cities project that was supposed to guarantee the humanity of these workers?"

On the progress of Kuwait's classification during the period of the "Corona" pandemic and its decline at the present time, Al-Mubarak said that "what was done during the pandemic period was a reaction, and when the pandemic ended, we went back to where we were because our policy is a policy of reactions." He added, "Before looking at the report of the US State Department or others, we must reform ourselves, because the cause is not mystical, as it lies within each of us in Kuwait."

## Umm Al-Hayman a hotbed of pollution

The Court of Cassation, in a strongly worded verdict issued last week, said that the Umm Al-Hayman area was not suitable for housing as it had become a "hotbed of pollution". Following the verdict, many citizens living in the area said they planned to file new cases against the relevant government authorities seeking compensation for the damages they have sustained over the years, as well as to demand that they be given alternative housing in other areas.

Located in close proximity to Shuaiba Industrial Area, Umm Al-Hayman residents have been plagued by industrial pollutants in the air, emanating from the numerous factories located in the area.

The Voluntary Environmental Committee formed by people of the area said in a statement following the ruling by the Court of Cassation, that this ruling was among a series of rulings obtained by the residents against environmental encroachments and violations committed by some factories. The committee pointed out that despite these rulings over the years, the concerned government entities did nothing, and the people of the area continued to be exposed to harmful emissions and health hazards, but the relevant government agencies did nothing.

They added that with the new ruling from the Court of Cassation, the government will hopefully be forced to act immediately to stop environmental violations by the

factories, or face contempt of court charges. The committee members noted that previous reports prepared by government agencies had found 37 factories to be in violation of environmental laws with regard to pollution, and yet no action was taken to close down these factories. They stressed that the move to close the violating factories will have a major role in solving the problem of harmful emissions by more than 90 percent in the Umm Al-Hayman area.

A scientific study issued by the Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research and carried out for a period of 6 months on the Umm Al-Hayman area had also revealed the danger of emissions emitted by violating factories and their harm to the population.

A member of the Environmental Committee, Mansour Al-Marri, stated that the problem continues and gets worse due to the continued distribution of industrial lands in Shuaiba Industrial, even though a decision by the Council of Ministers forbids distributing any more lands in this area.

Doctors and specialists in environmental studies confirmed that the government did not consider the studies they had conducted before the establishment of the Ali Sabah Al-Salem (formerly Umm Al-Hayman) suburb area. These studies had warned of the dangers of industrial pollutants resulting from activities near the area, especially those located in Al-Zour, Shuaiba and Mina Abdullah.



## PAI requests land for development of storage area



Public Authority for Industry (PAI) has submitted a letter to the Council of Ministers requesting that it be given the full authority to develop an area in Mina Abdullah, with participation of the private sector, for building warehouses to store food and medicine.

The letter, signed by the PAI Director-General Abdul Karim Taqi, underlined the authority's vision to enhance and develop the food security system in the country, and stressed on the need to seek the assistance of private sector specialists in organizing logistic work and facilitating business activity.

Al-Taqi noted that, in light of the demand for specialized food and pharmaceutical storage, the authority had drawn up a study to develop such a site in the Kabd area with a total space of 937 million square meters. However, objections by the Environment Public Authority had prevented the development of that site.

The Council of Ministers had then issued a decision asking the Municipality to allocate a separate site in Shadadiya, adjoining the Shadadiya Industrial City, to PAI. The Cabinet had added that the site area should be commensurate with the state's need to address food and drug security. In its correspondence, the authority had suggested the site adjacent to the Shadadiya Industrial City would be ideal as it had ready availability of energy sources, and the food storage activities were compatible with the food industries sector in the nearby Industrial City, as well as the site's easy access to road, and the proposed rail, transport systems. However, the letter noted that to date the site has not been allocated to PAI, and the authority has not received any information in this regard

from the Municipality.

He added that an alternative site proposed by PAI was in the Mina Abdullah area, which had several advantages, including that it was originally intended for storage purposes, and is located on the main road axes, as well as being in close proximity to Shuaiba Port, which would allow the site to become a strategic logistic area.

However, a major barrier to this site is that PAI could not develop the needed infrastructure, as the area was not under its subordination. This prompted PAI to address the relevant state authorities to develop the infrastructure and provide basic services to the area. But again, there has been no adequate response from the concerned state authorities in this regard.

The latest letter to the Council of Ministers requests that the concerned state authorities be assigned to implement the development of infrastructure and basic services to the Mina Abdullah area, which would then enable the allocating of vacant plots for the establishment of warehouses suitable for food and drug storage in accordance with international standards. An alternative suggestion made by PAI in its letter was for Council of Ministers to subordinate the Mina Abdullah area to the Public Authority for Industry, which would then give the authority the right to fully develop the site, through involvement of the private sector, and provide more than one million square meters suitable for food and drug storage, which would meet the country's need to ensure food and drug security. The private sector participation would also be in line with the country's development plan that aims to stimulate the private sector to lead the development of the country.



# KIA London Office sued by former employee

Kuwait Investment Authority's (KIA) office in the United Kingdom has been sued in the Labor Court of Appeal in London by one of its former managers. The disgruntled British ex-employee, had filed a lawsuit against KIA alleging that he had been arbitrarily dismissed from his job.

For its part, the KIA Office had filed a countersuit accusing the employee of squandering the office's budget by exaggerating the salaries and bonuses of some senior employees, while he was performing the duties of the acting CEO.

The Labor Court of Appeal in London had earlier issued an order obligating KIA to hand over "sensitive" documents and correspondence related to a lawsuit. The KIA Office then lost an appeal it filed citing sovereign immunity from having to hand over the files related to the case. The London court had issued its decision on the grounds that it had no evidence that the British government recognized the KIA office in London as being part of the Kuwaiti

diplomatic mission.

The UK Foreign Office has now intervened in support of the KIA office, and submitted an official letter addressed to the Court, stating that 20 senior officials of the KIA Office have diplomatic immunity, and therefore it is not permissible for them to appear before the court or be obligated to hand over documents.

In what is seen as a possible related development, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulwahab Al-Rasheed, in his capacity as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Investment Authority, issued a decision terminating the contract of the CEO of the Kuwait Investment Office in London, Saleh Al-Ateeqi.

The Minister of Finance is also reported to have formed a fact-finding committee earlier to look into the observations made about the Kuwait Investment Office in London, and the committee's report is being awaited.



## Sri Lanka reduces price for recruiting domestic workers

Following complaints from many Kuwaitis that the price charged by Sri Lanka for recruiting domestic workers was exorbitant, the Embassy of Sri Lanka has stated that as a result of discussion with all concerned stakeholders it has been agreed to lower the price of recruiting a domestic worker from the previous price of KD475 per person to an amount between KD240 to KD245.

Announcing this, Sri Lankan Ambassador H.E. Othman Jowhar noted that the reduction in price was applicable only to individual sponsors directly recruiting

the worker, and not for contracts signed through approved labor recruitment offices, for whom the price would be KD890 as fixed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The ambassador also stated that the stipulated fees would be received at the embassy only through cash payments, as the embassy does not use the K-net payment system. He added that about 30,000 labor contracts from his country were completed at the embassy over the past six months.

## Government entities hinder RTI laws

Many government ministries and other public sector undertakings are not adhering to Law No. 12 of 2020 on providing citizens with the Right To Information (RTI) for citizens. regarding the right to access information. The law, which was enacted to promote integrity and combat corruption in public entities, aims to provide citizens with access to information as part of transparent governance. The focus of this law is to promote the freedom of information circulation and the right to access such information, it also enhances the principles of transparency and integrity in administrative and economic transactions, so as to enhance confidence in decisions issued by government entities.

Highlighting the failure by government institutions to implement the necessary mechanism to provide RTI, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Transparency Society, Majid Mufrej Al-Mutairi, said that the society had received many reports of government agencies disrupting provisions of this law under false pretexts, and explicitly violating Article (3) of the law requiring an administrative

decision to appoint a competent employee to receive requests for access to information and give this person full powers to carry out this role to the fullest.

Al-Mutairi added that during the months of October and November 2021, the society had launched an awareness campaign to train people on the application of the law, and held 40 training courses for most of the government agencies and companies addressed by the law.

Al-Mutairi also stressed on the need to assign a special court to consider cases filed by citizens and residents to enable them to exercise their legal and constitutional rights, to take retribution against defaulting parties, and to apply punitive penalties on the defaulters in accordance with the law to protect the name of Kuwait in front of the international community.

He concluded by emphasizing that these procedures are one of the international standards for measuring the extent of Kuwait's commitment to implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption, based on which Kuwait's score in international indicators are measured.



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# Peru and Kuwait, two friendly nations aiming for success

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Expanding on tourism, which is another area where Peru has been a magnet for international travelers, the envoy pointed out that following the end of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Peru had once again started welcoming tourists. He added, "Since the start of 2021, my country restarted receiving tourists again, and thereafter many travelers from all over the world, including Kuwaiti citizens, have visited different tourist landmarks of Peru."

"The Peruvian Government has been working decisively for guaranteeing health security, through a very important vaccination campaign, and by establishing sanitary measures for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the country."

Between 2021 and 2022, we received many visa applications here at the Embassy of Peru, and we are working the best we can to provide Kuwaiti citizens and all the friends of the Republic of Peru all the necessary facilities for visiting our country. You are all welcome, and we would like you to enjoy the best of Peru.

"Due to foreign investment during the last years, Peru has an excellent hotel infrastructure. And there are many activities that can be practiced in my country, such as visiting historical places, discovering the ancient Peruvian civilization, mountain-climbing, surfing, safari trips, and a very long etcetera of interesting things that one can do in Peru."

"Anybody who travels to Peru should visit the landmarks of the Ancient Peruvian civilization, such as the city of Cuzco, and Machu Picchu. It would also be advisable to enjoy a time in Lima, the capital of the country, as well as book tours for visiting our beach resorts located in the northern coast of Peru. I would also strongly recommend visiting the Peruvian Amazon, the Andean cities, and the southern provinces of Peru."

"There are a lot of very interesting tourist attractions in Peru, including the Qhapaq Ñan (Inca road system), Choquequirao, the Nazca Lines, the Colca Canyon, Puno and Lake Titicaca, Kuelap, Gocta and other places. In these places, the beautiful nature, the ancient Peruvian civilization and pure energy combine in a very impressive way."

While detailing on the tourism venues of Peru, Mr. Berrocal also noted that Peru has a long and

illustrious Arabic culture and tradition. "Peru is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society, and our culture has been definitely enriched by the traditions that came from all over the world. Our society is originally a beautiful mix of native and Hispanic traditions. But along our history, we have received migrants from Europe, South-Eastern Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Arab world, which have importantly contributed to our heritage. In this sense, Perú has an active and very important community of Arab descent, with the majority of its members speaking Arabic."

"The Muslim community in Peru enjoys complete freedom to practice their religious rituals. Moreover, there are mosques in many locations of Peru, where Muslims perform their rituals freely and continuously, celebrate their holidays, as Ramadan, or the Eid Al-Adha, and preserve their traditions. We fully respect the freedoms of religion and culture, and profoundly appreciate the cultural traditions that have contributed to our national identity, as a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country."

In concluding the interview, Counselor Berrocal added, "We, the Peruvian people, warmly welcome all those interested in visiting Peru. Come and visit our country, enjoy the best of Peru. Our country is a mixture of the coast, mountains and forests, which makes Peru an attractive touristic destination. We also offer plenty of opportunities for trade, investment and development."

"On the occasion of the 201st anniversary of the Independence of Peru, we renew our deep commitment for promoting and broadening the bilateral relations with the friendly State of Kuwait. We wish progress and success to Kuwait, under its wise leadership. Kuwait's wealth is not solely on account of its oil, it also has highly talented youngsters who guarantee a brilliant future for the country."

Taking the opportunity of this interview, I would also like to congratulate the State of Kuwait, the Leadership, the Government and the Kuwaiti people on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, which was recently celebrated."

I also thank The Times Kuwait, for this interesting interview which has given us the opportunity to bring Peru and Kuwait closer, because we can work together, with renewed efforts, aiming at success and progress for our peoples."



## RECIPE

### Savory Chickpea Rolls



Chickpea rolls are a popular vegetarian snack from Gujarat in western India.

Known locally as Gujarati Khandvi or Paturi, it is a village-style rolled snack that is healthy and gluten-free. If you are a vegan then you can use veganised yogurt to make it a vegan recipe. Serve Khandvi either hot, cold, or at room temperature with your favorite chutney and masala chai.

**Total time:** 20 minutes

**Serving:** 500g

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup chickpea flour (Besan)
- 1 tbsp all purpose flour
- 1 cup yogurt
- 2 cup water
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 inch grated ginger
- 1-2 finely chopped green chillies
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp oil
- 1/4 tsp turmeric powder

#### For the tempering:

- 2 tbsp oil
- 2 tsp mustard seeds
- 2 tsp sesame seeds
- 2-3 chilly slices
- 10-12 curry leaves

#### For garnish:

- 2 tbsp fresh grated coconut
- 2 tbsp chopped coriander leaves

#### Direction:

- Combine besan, yogurt, ginger-chili mixture, salt and turmeric powder with water
- Take a sieve and strain the besan mixture so that it becomes lumps free batter and discard the chopped chili and grated ginger
- Place the besan mixture in a microwave safe bowl and microwave uncovered for 3 minutes. Remove from microwave, stir mixture and microwave again for 2 minutes uncovered. Stir the mixture again and microwave for a further minute.
- Meanwhile, lightly grease the clean kitchen counter with oil, or use the back of a plate or aluminum foil
- Remove mixture from microwave and give it a stir
- Take a small round of the batter and spread it out on your greased surface or plate and let it cool for a few minutes
- Check to see if you can roll it like a cylinder. If yes, the mixture is ready
- If not, microwave it for another minute and repeat the test
- Once your mixture is ready, spread it quickly on the greased surface
- This step needs to be done quickly to avoid the besan mixture getting cold
- After 5 minutes, cut one inch strips and roll it like a cylinder. Keep aside on a platter.

#### To make tempering:

- Heat the oil and add mustard seeds. Once they crackle, add in the sesame seeds, green chillies and curry leaves and cook for a minute
- Turn off the gas and pour this tempering over the rolled Khandvi
- Garnish with some chopped coriander and grated coconut
- Serve with your favorite chutney or enjoy it as is.



Chef Chhaya Thakker

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



# More availability could mitigate demand for domestic helpers

Persisting demand for domestic helpers among households in Kuwait, amid a shortage in availability of workers due to only a handful of countries willing to send domestic workers to Kuwait, has led to employers having to pay high prices to domestic labor recruitment offices to hire workers.

Domestic workers account for around 13 percent of the total population in the country, and the annual expenditure on this category of workers, based on the average monthly salary of KD100, is over KD736 million.

Female domestic workers constitute over half of the total family sector workers, and Kuwait used to hire them from around 15 Asian and African countries. However, at present, the number of countries that have signed contracts and send domestic workers to Kuwait are just three — the Philippines, India and Benin.

Recent reports issued by the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) showed an increase in the number of female domestic workers during the first quarter of this year by 7,587 new workers. The Philippines accounted for the highest proportion of these new workers at 63 percent, followed by India and Benin.

PAM reports also reveal that the volume of complaints received during the first half of the year reached an average of 450 complaints per month, most of them from citizens



against recruitment agencies or companies. According to the statistics issued by PAM, the authority's Department of Domestic Labor recorded more than 1,700 complaints during the first six months of this year, the highest percentage of which was from employers against recruitment offices, followed by workers' complaints against employers.

The complaints registered with the administration center on the non-compliance of offices or companies in

returning the money related to contracts when the worker refuses to continue working at the employer's house and wants to return to his/her country during the six month trial-period. PAM also referred 71 complaints to the judiciary against workers who left work during this period. In addition, the authority was able to resolve 1,104 complaints amicably between the conflicting parties.

Based on the limited recruitment in the

recent period, in contrast to the high volume of requests by citizens and residents for women domestic helpers, domestic worker recruitment offices are said to be awaiting the implementation of an agreement with Ethiopia to begin hiring workers from that country. According to Bassam Al-Shammari, a specialist in domestic labor affairs and owner of one of the recruitment companies, Ethiopian workers are expected to have a good opportunity to work in Kuwait, in light of the increase in the volume of orders. He indicated that the price for Ethiopian workers could be lower than the Philippine contracts, but the choice is up to the employer and their requirements.

He pointed out that the high volume of complaints registered with the PAM by the domestic labor sector must be faced with more measures that enhance the rights of offices and employers, especially what is related to the right to re-employment, because allowing this matter will contribute to confronting the black market.

In a similar statement, President of the Federation of Domestic Labor Offices, Khaled Al-Dakhan, stressed the importance of opening new markets to hire domestic workers, and expediting the resolution of the requirements for bringing in Ethiopian workers, to create competition in light of the large number of requests.

## MoI to accept PC certificates online



Media reports indicate that the Ministry of Interior (MoI) is to begin accepting Police Clearance Certificates (PCC) from abroad through its digital portal in the immediate future.

Once the system is implemented, people arriving with a new work or family visa will need to have to submit their PCC certificates to the Kuwait embassy in their respective countries to verify the authenticity of the signatures and validity of the certificates. The embassy will then forward approved certificates to the MoI online portal set up for this purpose, for ratification and to make sure that there are no criminal records on the person in Kuwait, especially if he/she was a former resident in Kuwait.

The process is expected to start with India, with coordination in this regard having been made between the MoI and the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Kuwait and the relevant Indian authorities.

The new initiative is said to be introduced through the relentless efforts of Director General of Residency Affairs, Brigadier Hamad Al-Tawala, his assistant, Brigadier Ali Al-Adwani, the director of the central administration, Colonel Musaed Al-Ajmi, the head of the conferences department, Colonel Issa Al-Ziyadi, directors of departments in the governorates, their assistants of the Ministry of Interior and other parties in this regard.

## Sunday 31st July declared public holiday

The Civil Service Bureau announced that work will be suspended in all ministries, government agencies, public bodies and institutions on Sunday, 31 of this month, considering it a day of rest, and that Saturday 30th of this month is an official holiday on the occasion of the Hijri New Year.

Normal work will resume on Monday, August 1 and agencies and bodies of a special nature of work will determine their holidays by the competent authorities in their affairs, taking into account the public interest.



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# Indian Embassy launches familiarization program for Indian Students

The Embassy of India, Kuwait launched the 'Embassy Familiarization Visit Program' for Indian students in Kuwait on July 19, 2022 as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav-Celebrating 75 Years of India's Independence with a focus on imbibing the Spirit of India's Civilizational Ethos among the Indian students in Kuwait.

Ambassador of India to Kuwait H.E. Shri Sibi George in his remarks spoke about the importance of the 75th anniversary of India's independence and connecting the Indian youth in Kuwait with their mother land's glorious

history, freedom struggle and achievements. Ambassador highlighted that Embassy of India is a Home Away from Home for all Indians in Kuwait especially the Indian students who are forebearers of India's interests in Kuwait and are the connecting bridge between India & Kuwait.

During the event, a specially prepared video documentary was shown focusing on the working of the Embassy of India including functions of various wings – Political, Commercial, Labour and Consular Wings and others, giving an overview of the services

provided by Embassy in Kuwait. It also provided glimpses of the architectural beauty of the iconic sandstone building of Embassy of India, Kuwait. Indian Students got to know about the roles, responsibilities and duties of the Officers and Staff of the Embassy of India in Kuwait.

4A presentation- 'Introduction to Indian Civil Services' was made by Young Indian Diplomats during the event, followed by an interactive Question/Answer session with students. Participants were shown around the Embassy including Ambassador's Office and the India House to bring to them the day to day

working of the Embassy.

Indian students along with their parents also visited Indian Naval Ship-INS TEG as part of the Embassy Familiarization Visit and interacted with the Officers of the Indian Navy. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation of over 300 students (from different Indian Schools in Kuwait), parents and teachers.

Embassy invites all the Indian students to be a part of this initiative. The date for the next visit to the Embassy will be announced shortly. Keep following Embassy's social media pages to know about the latest updates.

# City Centre hosts FCCI Delegation from India



## Business Delegation visits City Centre Shuwaikh

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry, on their delegation's recent visit to Kuwait, visited City Centre in Manara Mall, Shuwaikh as part of their Kuwait tour. The delegation met with Kuwaiti-owned City Centre's top management, including key members from the Commercial and Operations team, in an effort to explore and

strengthen commercial ties between Kuwait and India.

The delegation was led by Mr. Amitabh Ranjan, Second Secretary of the Indian Embassy, and the visit included discussions on topics such as FMCG, Private Labelling, Garments sector, with the relevant Commercial Team members.

This is the first major delegation from

India visiting Kuwait in the last two years and City Centre was a vital stop on their tour, due to its deep-rooted ties with Indian trade & commerce across different sectors. City Centre has a history of catering to and supporting the Indian community in Kuwait, as well as Indian commerce by way of carrying a large range of Indian products across its 23-year history, since its establishment in 1999.

Speaking on this, Ajay Goel, Chief Operating Officer of City Centre said, "We welcome this fruitful visit from the Indian business delegation. It was a great opportunity to discuss important issues paving the way forward, strengthening the ties between City Centre and Indian commerce, and thus benefiting the Indian community of Kuwait."



# Media outlets warned against publishing fake news

Ministry of Information has warned all media outlets that legal actions will be initiated against any media that publishes misleading or false stories that may cause political instability in the country.

Expanding on the warning, official spokesperson for the ministry, Anwar

Murad noted that the notification follows the publication in some media outlets of false and misleading news on the expected formation of the next government. She added that the ministry will have "no hesitation in implementing the law with all firmness and severity against violators in

publishing the news" and reminded that recently, 62 media outlets were referred to the Public Prosecution for violations related to the electronic media law.

The ministry called on everyone publishing news in print or online media to investigate accuracy of the news they were publishing

and to adhere to professional standards and controls regulating media work, and to obtain information from reliable sources. The ministry reiterated that it will monitor any media violations and take legal measures against those found publishing news items that destabilize the country.

## Launch of Toyota LITE ACE set to redefine the Middle East's compact commercial vehicle segment

Further building on its commitment to creating mobility for all and providing greater peace of mind for customers, Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons and Toyota has revealed the new LITE ACE in Kuwait. Pairing ample capacity and easy loading with fuel economy, the highly practical vehicle is set to redefine the region's compact commercial vehicle segment.

The launch event was attended by Bader Faisal Al Sayer Toyota Marketing Manager, Savio Alvares Deputy General at Toyota 'AL OSTOUL' Fleet Sales, distinguished fleet customers, members from Toyota Sales team, in the presence of representatives from the press and media.

According to Bader Faisal Al Sayer Toyota Marketing Manager at AlSayer "This all-new commercial vehicle will be a great step forward in Toyota's fleet solutions "ALOSTOUL" and also ideal for fleet customers for multi usage such as cargo and delivery operations. We all know that the delivery and e-commerce sector has grown exponentially especially during the past three years. Therefore, the launch of the all-new LITE ACE comes at an appropriate time for companies in this sector. We are convinced that it is the best investment for our valued customers."

The launch underlines Toyota's focus on introducing vehicles that are not only equipped with a host of functional features, but also meet the growing demands of the brand's discerning consumers. The new Toyota LITE ACE caters to a wide range of customers, including fleet businesses in need of compact commercial vehicles and last-mile delivery service providers in the region's flourishing e-commerce market. With a 770-kg payload, 3.4 m<sup>3</sup> of load space, and sliding doors on both sides, the vehicle offers outstanding loading capacity and comfort with practical and reliable performance.

Masaharu Tezeni, Chief Engineer of the new vehicle, said: "The new Toyota LITE ACE is on its way. Its reliability is highly valued by loyal customers in regions where it has already been introduced. We are confident businesses across the Middle East will also embrace the new vehicle's many advantages. With features such as the powerful, economic engine and the suspension that provides a balance between increased stability when loaded and outstanding ride comfort, the new Toyota LITE ACE represents a complete solution for the safe,



seamless, and cost-effective transportation of cargo."

Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, said: "We are delighted to launch the new Toyota LITE ACE in the region, which brings new levels of practicality, reliability, and efficiency to the compact commercial segment. Designed for those looking for ample loading capacity and passenger comfort, the Toyota LITE ACE offers a high degree of utility and greater peace of mind for drivers and businesses. I would like to thank our loyal customers in the region for their constant support and inspiration, which continue to motivate us to create 'ever-better' cars." Savio Alvares Deputy General Manager Toyota Fleet Sales at AlSayer said "Our Commercial line up is growing and from today we are going to cater to a new segment of small cargo van with the launch of new member in the Toyota family - all new Toyota LITE ACE. In 2019 we established with Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) team - to focus on the requirement of small and medium industries, compliment needs of the large segment."

"In addition to this, we are helping customers with service packs, insurances, and other value-added products to offer you total peace of mind ownership experience and making the purchase cycle as convenient as possible. Furthermore, moving away from conventional ways of delivering new vans to the customers, now we even undertake fixing refrigerator units, modification of racks, painting, and any customization requirement" added Savio.

The new Toyota LITE ACE has been designed to maximize loading capacity in a compact, easy-to-maneuver vehicle, while providing a comfortable driver and passenger experience. The front pillars are angled to create extra head clearance and more comfortable driving space, while the body features short overhangs that offer an outstanding field of vision at both the front and sides of the vehicle. Low steps just 425 mm in height enable smoother cabin entry, with a roomy foot area. Moreover, the placement of the gear shift lever next to the steering wheel also facilitates easy access to the front passenger seat. The vehicle's large LED rear combination lamps enhance visibility for vehicles traveling behind in poor weather conditions, such as rain and fog, contributing to a safer driving experience.

The cockpit is designed to provide enhanced

operability and visibility, creating greater convenience and peace of mind for the driver. Switches are located where they can be easily seen and reached from the driving position, while ample storage spaces are provided in various locations that prioritize usability. The comfortable seat positions offer a wide field of view for stress-free driving, with reclining and sliding seats helping reduce driver tiredness. The electric power steering also comes as standard to alleviate the driving burden. Additional features include manual air conditioning, power door locks and windows, a wireless door lock remote control, door grips and assist grips, and a DC12V/120W accessory socket.

With a low floor height of 620 mm and a spacious rear door entrance, the Toyota LITE ACE makes it easy to load and unload cargo from the hold. The vehicle also features large, 815-mm sliding doors on both sides, enabling users to load and unload cargo even in tight spaces. The square-shaped space is designed to allow the cargo to be loaded right to the corners. With a maximum length of 2,075 mm and a height and width of 1,305 and 1,495 mm, respectively, the cargo hold is capable of carrying cardboard boxes, tall objects, furniture, and other large cargo. Delivering a dynamic driving experience, the new Toyota LITE ACE comes with a 1.5-ltr four-cylinder engine that generates a maximum output of 97 hp and 134 nm of torque. It incorporates Dual VVT-i (Variable Valve Timing-intelligent) technology, which continuously optimizes intake and exhaust valve timing in response to driving conditions for exceptional performance.

## MOI to receive PCC reports electronically



All police clearance certificates for new arrivals from now on will be online, in a step to do away with paperwork and ensure the criminal records of new residents who enter the country for work or join a family are done 'online'.

A local Arabic daily has learned the authorities will start India during the coming period, followed by arrivals from all other countries in September, saying that coordination has been made between the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs in Kuwait and the Indian authorities so that the person from India extracts his/her police clearance certificate in his/her home country and submits it to the Kuwaiti embassy, which

in turn will verify the authenticity of the signatures and send the data electronically to the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior for ratification making sure that there is no criminal record about the person in Kuwait, especially if he/she was a former resident in the country.

The sources told the daily great efforts have been exerted Director General of Residency Affairs, Brigadier Hamad Al-Tawala, his assistant, Brigadier Ali Al-Adwani, the director of the central administration, Colonel Musaed Al-Ajmi, the head of the conferences department, Colonel Issa Al-Ziyadi, directors of departments in the governorates, their assistants of the Ministry of Interior and other parties in this regard.





# UN-Habitat teams with IICO to rehabilitate housing in Gaza

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) have signed an agreement to join forces to improve the living conditions of families in the Gaza Strip, Palestine, through the rehabilitation of damaged housing units in the area.

The agreement between UN-Habitat and IICO was signed during a hybrid press conference held in Kuwait in the presence of Dr. Erfan Ali, UN-Habitat Regional Representative for the Arab States, Bader Al Sumait, General manager of IICO, Zeyad Elshakra, Head of UN-Habitat Palestine Country Office and Ameera Alhassan, Head of UN-Habitat Kuwait Country Office.

In cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Public Works and Housing the project aims to support the rehabilitation of housing units and support local economic development. The project targets Gaza and the North Gaza governorates, where more than one million people reside, many of them suffering from deteriorated living conditions. During the implementation of the project, vocational training and work opportunities will also be provided to residents.

Speaking on the occasion, Ameera Alhassan stated that the ongoing partnership between UN-Habitat and IICO reflects mutual trust that has translated into more development and humanitarian projects. The State of Kuwait proves that it was and still is a humanitarian center



that gives unconditional aid wherever needed, supported by the leadership, the government and the people of Kuwait.

During the period between 10 and 21 May 2021, more than 113,000 people fled their homes in Gaza due to escalations in Palestine. The main objective of the project is to rehabilitate a portion of the housing units in the Gaza Strip that were damaged during the May 2021 conflict.

Since 2003, UN-Habitat has been supporting the State of Palestine through supporting neighborhood planning in Gaza and participatory spatial planning interventions, including public spaces, to better guide reconstruction efforts.

## Industrial zones vital to economic growth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Unfortunately, these earlier industrial zones set up by PAI were developed without much foresight or thought being given to space needed for new industries or expansion plans of existing industries. The zones were also not designed with the infrastructure that would withstand increased future demands, and without taking into consideration the environmental damages that could arise from emissions by chemical and other industries in the zone. In particular, PAI did not foresee the potential for future urban residential expansions into these areas, and residents being impacted by the toxic emissions from industries in the zone.

The result of this muddled development plan is that many existing industrial zones are currently congested, lack space for industries to expand, and have crumbling infrastructure and utilities that have not kept up with increased demand. Also, in many places, development of urban residential areas in the vicinity of these industrial zones have led to complaints from residents of toxic environmental pollution, and demands to have some of the most polluting industries in these zones to be either shut down or relocated to distant non-residential areas.

In a bid to find an acceptable solution to all stakeholders in the industrial zone, as well as meet environmental concerns, the authorities decided to construct new industrial zones away from civilian residential areas, to house new industries and to relocate most of the existing industries. Work on setting up the first of several such new industrial zones got underway in 2013 with the groundbreaking for the Al-Shadadiya Industrial Zone (SIZ). Nearly a decade since that high-profile groundbreaking ceremony, basic infrastructure work for the zone still remains a work in progress. Repeated work delays have been the only predictable aspect of this project since its launch.

Located around 25km to the south-west of Kuwait City, the 5 square kilometer SIZ was planned to be the largest industrial zone in the country, with separate sectors for chemical, food

and mixed-use industries, when completed. It was projected to provide the state with adequate area to meet the increasing demand for industrial zone land, and have sufficient space for future expansions. The project aimed to attract a large number of industries with the promise of cutting-edge infrastructure based on latest technological developments, separate industrial waste and sewage water treatment plants, as well as facilities to recoup and recycle industrial waste. At least, these were the plans on paper when the SIZ was first envisaged nearly ten years ago.

A timeline of the project for infrastructure development shows that the initial contractual schedule for the project was approved in September 2013, with the project completion date set for July 2016. In April 2014, the main contractor requested an extension, and a new completion date was fixed for March 2017. Ahead of its completion in March 2017, the contractor requested a further extension till September 2018, and then a third delay until June 2019. Despite the three extensions given for reasons that the contractor claimed were exogenous to its initial agreement, the project still remained uncompleted. The PAI was then compelled to end the contract and reissue a new contract to complete the remaining infrastructure work. PAI recently awarded the project for completing the design, implementation, and maintenance of infrastructure works to a new contractor for a total value of around KD97 million, and with the project completion date now slated for early 2024.

Investigations by relevant authorities into the failure of the main contractor to complete the project on time, even after repeated extensions, revealed a range of poor performances by the contractor, including lack of sufficient manpower and qualified technical personnel to carry out the project. Other shortcomings identified included, inability of the contractor to achieve planned production rates, to coordinate works, or abide by the planned work sequence, as well as shortage of material resources needed to complete the project, and most importantly, the lack of financial liquidity.

The question that arises from these findings is that if so many shortfalls have now been discovered on the part of the main contractor, what were the supervisory entities, including PAI and other project management consultants, doing over the past decade? No matter how you dice the blame, the end result is that the country and people suffered. Among those who sustained significant direct losses due to the delay in completion of the project are the small and medium enterprises that had hoped to take possession and begin development of their businesses nearly four years ago. Many of these young industrial entrepreneurs had taken up the promise by the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises to allocate 10 percent of the land in the industrial zones to them, and had accordingly borrowed heavily to fund the purchase or lease the industrial land. Al-Shadadiya Industrial Zone is perhaps emblematic of the flaws that continue to plague industrial development in the country, as well as a pointer to the inordinate delays and slow pace of construction projects that have mired development of industries in Kuwait.

A related research study that analyzed the causes of delays in government construction projects in Kuwait revealed that main delays could be attributed to poor project management, lack of appropriate supervision by the client and project management consultants appointed for the purpose. Another study conducted in 2019 attributed project delays to management conflicts, poor project management, lack of effective communication, and ineffective utilization of resources. Even if we accept that project delays are a global phenomena and that most countries are besieged by cost and time overruns on major constructions, we still would have to admit that when it comes to implementation of projects and tardiness in delivery, Kuwait is in a class of its own.

According to a World Bank report, implementation phases of infrastructure projects in Kuwait are hobbled by cost overruns in 20 percent of cases and time delays in 110 percent of cases. One reason for this project development

weakness is that Kuwait continues to follow the traditional project-flow of first assigning a designer for a project and then selecting a contractor based on the lowest bid submitted to the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT).

Numerous studies and empirical evidence suggests that pre-qualification procedures for contractors and sub-contractors, involving a process of lowest price bidding and tendering, is one of the significant factors in causing project delays in Kuwait. The issues related to low-cost tendering have add-on effects that impact the final outcome and in the quality and performance of the project when it is eventually completed.

The debacle usually begins with selecting contractors based on the lowest bid, without considering whether the contractor has the necessary experience, ability, or financial capability to undertake the project. To realize a profit from the project, the contractor then resorts to cost-cutting measures, including using lower quality, and reduced quantity, of construction material; employing fewer workers and overworking them; and hiring technical personnel who are not sufficiently qualified or experienced in the needs specific to the project.

Suggestions to overcome these shortcomings include introducing pre-qualification criteria that selects contractors and subcontractors based on their experience and history in completing projects, their financial muscle to undertake a project based on its size, time limit of the project, and quality of work required. Another suggestion to reduce shortcomings in project implementation include periodical evaluation of the contractors carried out by experienced pre-qualification committees formed by CAPT, or co-opted from the construction industry in Kuwait. In addition, relevant government ministries should undertake regular monitoring and assessing of progress at various implementation stages of the project.

Irrespective of whether these suggestions are accepted, or are currently being implemented, there is no denying that the success of a robust industrial sector is critical to Kuwait's economy going forward.



# Unique Honeymoon Hotspots

By Hermoine Macura-Noble  
Special to The Times Kuwait

Due to the pandemic, you had to delay your wedding and honeymoon or even cancel both. However, with flights and destinations opening up, it is time to tick off that unique honeymoon destination on your bucket list. Here are our top five from across the globe.

The Ice Hotel, Sweden: Every year when the pristine water of the Torne River slows down its flow and freezes into ice, the Ice Hotel opens its doors to hundreds of visitors looking for a unique winter escape. Today the Ice Hotel is a Swedish landmark for travelers from across the globe, looking to combine sleeping 'on ice' with various winter activities and adventures, including husky sledding, ice sculpting, snowmobiling, reindeer sleigh rides, guided Northern Lights photography, and sauna rituals. Conceived by Yngve Bergqvist, the Ice Hotel also offers a small igloo that allows visitors to stay in the village of Jukkasjärvi during the winter months, enjoying new activities such as snowshoeing.



Photo Credit: Rebecca Lundh

Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi, UAE: With a modern Arabic style infused with stunning sunsets and sea views, the Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri in the UAE's capital, features luxurious rooms and suites with balconies, all furnished to the highest standards. The complex also includes six spectacular villas, each consisting of private pools and four bedrooms. Located between the Al Maqta and Mussafah bridges leading into Abu Dhabi, the hotel sits along a one-kilometer stretch of picturesque beachfront.

The hotel's highlights include the shopping district, which can be reached via the walkways or traditional abras which transport guests along the waterways of the hotel. Honeymooners will also love the treatment suites of the CHI Spa, which are among the most spacious in the world, offering each guest their own changing, shower, and toilet



Under Canvas, Montana

areas, in addition to heat treatment, bathing, and relaxation spaces. The spa is built around traditional Chinese philosophy, where the chi is the universal life force that governs well-being and personal vitality. For people to maintain good health, it is believed that chi must flow freely within the body, otherwise, disease and illness follow. According to the CHI spa philosophy, movement is a key element in releasing these forces, along with body massage, stretching and hydrotherapy to assist the body's natural renewal process.

Under Canvas, Montana, US: The ultimate glamping vacation, Under Canvas, creates an immersive escape that connects travel and nature and encourages being outside together. Each luxury campsite comprises safari-inspired canvas lodging tents, furnished with plush mattresses, luxe linens, and a wood-burning stove. Guests can fall asleep under the stars, wake up to the sounds of nature and enjoy a day of endless activities amongst incredible views of America's most iconic national parks and monuments. Perfect for those who love the outdoors — return back to your luxury campsite after a day of unparalleled adventures, including white water rafting in Yellowstone, llama trekking through Glacier, fly fishing in the Great Smoky Mountains, and so much more. Finish your exciting days with gourmet food as you unwind by the romantic campfire in style.

Avani+ Mai Khao Phuket Resort, Thailand: Located 15 minutes from the airport, Avani+ Mai Khao Phuket Resort offers honeymooners sunny, tropical pool villas with pizzazz. Guests can relax by the resort pool or hide away in a love nest for two, so fully equipped, you never have to emerge. With its iconic limestone karsts and caves just waiting to be explored, honeymooners can pack a picnic and snorkel kit and prepare for a lover's adventure. Guests can enjoy the extensive facilities, with access to Anantara Mai Khao Phuket Villas and Turtle Village, charter a speedboat, or join one of the



Giraffe Manor

many cruises across the beautiful Phang Nga Bay. Adventure lovers will be glad to know that the best winds for kitesurfing are on the hotel's side of the island, and dive sites like the Similans are to the west, easily reached by dayboat.

Giraffe Manor, Nairobi, Kenya: As one of the most popular hotels in Africa, Giraffe Manor does not disappoint. The iconic boutique hotel is set in the leafy Nairobi suburb of Langata and is home to a charming herd of resident giraffes who frequently pop their heads into the hotel to welcome visitors. Featuring twelve individually decorated rooms, offering first-class comfort and the feeling of staying in an elegant family home. The charming herd of resident Rothschild's giraffes roam the surrounding sanctuary and give guests unique, once-in-a-lifetime encounters over breakfast and afternoon tea when they can be fed by hand. The retreat at Giraffe Manor, found

on the same property, gives guests access to a stunning pool and wellness facilities. Guests can also add a safari as Wilson Airport, where many tourists fly in and out on safari, is close by. Nearby places also worth a visit are the David Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage, Karen Blixen Museum, and Nairobi National Park, along with the many restaurants and shops in Nairobi's fancy suburbs of Langata and Karen.

Hermoine Macura-Noble



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, here.



Shangri-La Hotel



# Energy crisis set to deepen



**Daniel Yergin**

Vice Chairman of S&P Global, he is the author of *The New Map: Energy, Climate, and the Clash of Nations* and *The Prize*, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize. He received the James R. Schlesinger Medal for Energy Security from US Department of Energy.

Is today's energy crisis as serious as similar previous ones, particularly the 1970s oil shocks? That question is being asked around the world, with consumers hit by high prices, businesses worried about energy supplies, political leaders and central bankers struggling with inflation, and countries confronting balance-of-payments pressures.

So, yes, this energy crisis is as serious, if not potentially worse. In the 1970s, only oil was involved, whereas this crisis encompasses natural gas, coal, and even the nuclear-fuel cycle. In addition to stoking inflation, today's crisis is transforming a previously global market into one that is fragmented and more vulnerable to disruption, crimping economic growth. And, together with the geopolitical crisis arising from the war in Ukraine, it is further deepening the world's great-power rivalries.

Today's energy crisis did not begin with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but rather last year when energy demand surged as the world emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic. That is when China ran short of coal and prices shot up. The global market for liquefied natural gas (LNG) then tightened, with prices skyrocketing, and oil prices rose as well.

Normally, with rising energy prices, a country like Russia would have increased its natural-gas sales to its main customer, Europe, above the minimum contracted volumes. Instead, it stuck to its contracts, even though it could have produced considerably more. At the time, it appeared that Russia was trying to force prices up. But, instead, the Kremlin may well have been preparing for war.

Because Europe depended on Russia for 35-40 percent of its oil and natural gas, Putin assumed that the Europeans would protest the invasion but ultimately stand aside. Fixated on his self-appointed mission of restoring what he views as Russia's historic empire, he did not anticipate how they would respond to an unprovoked war next door.

Looking ahead, five factors could make today's energy crisis even worse. First, Putin has opened a second front in the conflict by cutting back on the contracted volumes of natural gas that Russia supplies to Europe. The goal is to prevent Europeans from storing enough supplies for next winter, and to drive prices higher, creating economic hardship and political discord. In his speech in June at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Putin made his reasoning clear: "Social and economic problems worsening in Europe" will



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

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Some four million barrels per day of refining capacity have been shut down worldwide, due to the pandemic, new regulations, and challenging economics. Add other potential man-made or natural calamities, and the situation could worsen

”

"split their societies" and "inevitably lead to populism ... and a change of the elites in the short term."

As it is, Germany is now anticipating gas rationing, and its economic affairs minister, Robert Habeck, warns of a "Lehman-style contagion" (referring to the 2008 financial crisis) if Europe cannot manage today's energy-induced economic disruptions.

Second, a new or revived nuclear deal with Iran is unlikely. Thus, sanctions on the country will not be lifted, and that means Iranian oil will not be flowing into world markets anytime soon.

Third, although Saudi Arabia may step up its oil production to help 'stabilize' oil markets in connection with US President Joe Biden's recent visit, no gusher is likely to follow, because there does not appear to be a large amount of extra oil in Saudi Arabia (or in the United Arab Emirates) that can be produced on short notice. Meanwhile, many oil-exporting countries cannot even return to their previous levels of production, due to lack of investment and maintenance since the pandemic.

Fourth, China's demand for oil has been significantly reduced by its 'zero-COVID' lockdowns, which have sharply curtailed

economic activity. But if it lifts many restrictions, a big increase in oil consumption and demand will follow.

Lastly, however tight the market for crude oil, there is even more tightness in the refining sector that produces the gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel that people actually use. This sector has developed into a complex, highly interconnected worldwide system. Russia was refining products that it was shipping to Europe, while Europe was sending gasoline that it did not need to the US East Coast, and so forth.

In some places, the system is going all out, with US refineries already operating at about 95 percent capacity. But the system overall still cannot keep up with demand. Russian refineries are functioning only partly, depriving Europe of oil products; and not enough European gasoline is reaching North America. Chinese refineries are operating at less than 70 percent capacity. Some four million barrels per day of refining capacity have been shut down worldwide, owing to the pandemic, new regulations, and challenging economics. Add in the risk of accidents, poor policy decisions, and a hurricane knocking out refineries on the US Gulf Coast, and the

situation could get even worse.

That said, a few countries could still boost production. Canada — the world's fourth-largest oil producer, after the US, Saudi Arabia, and Russia — could provide extra barrels in collaboration with its major market, the US. And US shale oil production is back in gear and could add 800,000 to one million barrels per day of new production this year — far more additional production than the rest of the world combined.

Other factors that could mitigate the crisis include price changes and how consumers respond. In May, US gasoline demand was 7 percent less than in May 2019, before the pandemic. Some of that, however, may be the result of more people working from home.

An economic slowdown could also dampen prices. S&P's latest global purchasing managers' index points to a weakening of economic growth, with US manufacturing activity 'slipping into a decline ... to a degree only exceeded twice' — at the height of the pandemic lockdown and during the 2008 financial crisis. Likewise, European growth has slowed sharply to a 16-month low. Such slowdowns could reduce demand and lower energy prices. But, of course, they also will strain the Western alliance and popular unity.

The next six months will be critical, testing whether Europe can maneuver its way through the coming winter. In what Habeck called a "bitter" but "necessary" decision, Europe will need to burn more coal. In the difficult months ahead, there will need to be more informed collaboration between the government and the industry that manages the energy flows on which modern economies depend.

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# An Effective Pandemic Response Must Be Truly Global



Mariana Mazzucato and Jayati Ghosh

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“The FIF will work only if all countries, starting with the G20, are brought in, and all countries do their share to detect, contain, and confront outbreaks with the full kit of diagnostic, treatment, and prevention tools”

departure from the current approach, which treats PPR as a favor that rich countries do for poorer countries. Nothing could be further from the truth. Recall that it was South Africa's novel approach to low-cost, high-impact genomic sequencing that helped the world detect and understand the new Omicron variant last November — a tremendous global public service. But about one-third of all countries currently do not have the resources and capacity to do any genomic sequencing, with huge gaps across Africa and Latin America in particular.

These are also regions where vaccine hoarding by the Global North has meant that COVID-19 continues to circulate among largely unvaccinated populations and mutates at rates that have left public health officials and pharmaceutical companies struggling to keep up. The FIF will work only if all countries, starting with the G20, are brought in, and all countries do their share to detect, contain, and confront outbreaks with the full kit of diagnostic, treatment, and prevention tools.

The inclusion of the WHO in the FIF is a central piece of the governance structure. Hardwiring it into the FIF's design should include having the WHO chair the technical advisory group that will assess and weigh the evidence and data required to inform priorities. The WHO is not only the leading hub of scientific expertise and coordination for global health; it also represents 194 countries, providing essential legitimacy.

While the FIF is meant to augment existing donor and national PPR investment in public health, there are already signs that its fundraising could cannibalize the resources of well-tested complementary mechanisms like the Global Fund and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. If the FIF ends up undermining resourcing for the rest of the global PPR framework simply to become the shiny new deliverable at this year's G20 summit, it will have done more harm than good for global health security.

The scale of financial need — particularly in low- and middle-income countries confronting a massive debt crisis and soaring inflation — far surpasses what even the most effective FIF will

be able to deliver. As part of its commitments to PPR, the G20 should redouble its efforts to bring China and private creditors to the table to renegotiate mounting debt burdens through its Common Framework, or face the risk of many more Sri Lanka-style debt defaults and growing social and political unrest in the coming months and years.

To ensure the success of the FIF and global PPR efforts more broadly, the G20 must take all measures within its control to provide debt relief and free up fiscal space in low- and middle-income countries. This includes extending the Common Framework and the Debt Service Suspension Initiative, and developing effective ways to ensure private-sector participation; eliminating austerity conditions from International Monetary Fund loans that encourage countries to cut public spending in areas like health; increasing liquidity through additional allocations of special drawing rights (the IMF's reserve asset); and exploring more creative financing mechanisms like the 'debt for health' swaps used by the Global Fund.

The new FIF proposal and broader G20 and World Bank actions on PPR cannot afford to deliver 'health for some' — the wealthiest and most privileged. This is a morally bankrupt and woefully ineffective approach. Now is the time to pivot toward a more promising 'health for all' approach, starting with an inclusively governed FIF and economic interventions that better enable low- and middle-income countries to invest as required in their own health systems.

At their recent meeting in Bali on 15-16 July, G20 finance ministers reaffirmed their commitment to coordinated action to get the COVID-19 pandemic under control and better prepare for the next global health emergency. A central topic was the creation of a new financial intermediary fund (FIF) to address pandemic preparedness and response (PPR), under the trusteeship of the World Bank and with the World Health Organization playing a central technical and coordinating role. The goal is to close some of the annual PPR financing gap of \$10.5 billion and help strengthen capacities that are critical to protecting global health, including genomic sequencing and drug manufacturing.

Over the next month, the G20, World Bank, and the WHO will finalize the FIF design, under heavy external pressure to develop an equitable and inclusive governance structure. The Indonesian G20 Presidency has enabled some preliminary agreements that move in the right direction. For example, there is an emerging consensus that the FIF's governance must include low- and middle-income countries, non-G20 partners, and civil society. Moreover, G20 countries acknowledge that the FIF must build on the existing global health framework for PPR, with a central role for the WHO. This is a positive departure from the World Bank's May 2022 White Paper which proposed a deeply retrograde, insular design whereby (mainly rich country) donors would make all the decisions and consult others (or not) as they chose.

The next step is for the G20 to recognize more explicitly that an effective PPR mechanism, as a global common good, requires a FIF model based on universal contributions (according to capacity) and representation, and universal access to benefits. The world desperately needs a FIF governance structure that can help fill critical gaps quickly and effectively. This requires a decision-making body that is agile, but also widely viewed as legitimate and therefore able to make hard decisions without months of consensus-building diplomacy.

But while all current FIF stakeholders seem to agree on inclusive governance in principle, design discussions are still happening with only the founding donors in the room. Lower-income countries and civil-society representatives remain outside. The G20 should set a deadline: By August 1, 2022, all stakeholders should be fully included in design conversations via a constituency-based model that gives equal weight to all voices, irrespective of their financial contributions. This includes a voting role for civil society — an increasingly important norm in global health governance.

The FIF should mark a long-overdue

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# Necessity of Territorial Integrity



**Carl Bildt**

*A former prime minister and foreign minister of Sweden.*

After World War II, global diplomatic efforts sought to create a new international order that would prevent the world from descending into war, chaos, and anarchy again. A major part of that project was to refine the international legal order by establishing tribunals to prosecute war crimes. Hearings held in Nuremberg and Tokyo established that aggression is the 'supreme international crime' — one for which leaders from Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan were sentenced to death.

The Nuremberg Tribunal's judgment was very clear on this point: "To initiate a war of aggression is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole." Since then, the international order has rested on the territorial integrity of states. To challenge this core principle with a violent act of aggression, is to put the entire world at risk of sinking into disorder, chaos, and war.

In a resolution adopted on 2 March of this year, the United Nations General Assembly condemned Russia for committing precisely this offense. Viewing Russia's 24 February invasion of Ukraine as an act of aggression, the resolution demands that Russia "immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders."

True, Russia is not the first power to commit the crime of aggression — or even the first permanent member of the UN Security Council to do so. The United States has intervened in other countries within its own hemisphere; the Soviet Union invaded Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan during the Cold War; and China sent its forces into Vietnam in 1979. But Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is different, because its express purpose is to subjugate, dismantle, and eventually eliminate Ukraine as a sovereign nation-state. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said so openly and explicitly.

As such, Russia's war is unusual in modern history. One obvious comparison is to Hitler, who aimed to eliminate Poland when he launched his war of aggression in 1939 (forging an agreement with Stalin to partition the country between them). Another is Saddam Hussein's attempt in 1990 to eliminate Kuwait and make it part of Iraq.



But, other than these two cases, I can think of no other close examples in recent history.

In any case, the world did not accept Hitler's effort to eliminate Poland or Saddam's attempt to wipe out Kuwait, and nor should it recognize any other modern attempt to change borders by force. Aggression is still the supreme international

Kazakhstan has already made clear that it will not recognize the DPR and LPR as independent states. And even Russia's satellite regime in neighboring Belarus is certain to balk at recognizing the Donbas statelets.

How China responds is of particular importance. Does Chinese President Xi

China speaks up, the international community has every right to assume its tacit consent to Russian aggression, and to demand more clarity about where it intends to stand on this critical question.

Finally, the African countries that abstained from the 2 March UN resolution (for their own unrelated reasons) should reconsider their position. Whatever their grievances with the West, they have little to gain from an erosion of the principle of territorial integrity or the international norm against aggression.

Today's national borders are not the result of any scientific process or acts of divine intervention. In Europe and in many other parts of the world, borders were drawn in blood through centuries of war and conflict. Sweden and Denmark, for example, fought over their border for centuries before the conflict was grudgingly settled and consigned to the past. In Eastern Europe, wars over borders have generated millions of victims during the past century.

Given this bloody history, there are very good reasons for continuing to treat aggression as the supreme international crime, and territorial integrity as the foundation stone of the international order. The WWII generation was right to establish these principles in Nuremberg and Tokyo. We should be extremely careful not to break from what they started. Down that road lies only ruin

“Today's national borders are not the result of any scientific process or acts of divine intervention. In Europe and in many other parts of the world, borders were drawn in blood through centuries of war and conflict”

crime. Having formally recognized the statelets that it set up in the Donbas region of Ukraine in 2014 — the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DPR and LPR) — Russia clearly intends to absorb these occupied parts of Ukraine, thus continuing its dismemberment of an independent UN member state.

But the only other countries to recognize the Donbas statelets have been North Korea and Syria, and that will likely remain the case, because even countries that are otherwise close to Russia have little interest in following it down this road.

Jinping's "no limits" friendship with Putin mean that China will abandon territorial integrity as one of its core principles? To take that step would powerfully undermine its demand that the rest of the world continue recognizing Taiwan as part of China.

So far, China has avoided any talk of Russian aggression or Ukrainian territorial integrity. But, given that China has long regarded this issue as sacrosanct, it cannot sit on the fence for long. An old Roman legal maxim holds that "silence means consent" (qui tacet consentire videtur). Until



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# Molecular level cure for hair loss

Researchers at the University of California in the United States report that a potential therapeutic treatment for androgenetic alopecia, the most common form of hair loss suffered by both men and women, could soon be available as a result of their in-depth study into the molecular basis of hair growth.

Humans generally shed up to a 100 strands of hair daily as part of the natural body process, and most people hardly notice this loss as it is regularly replaced by new hair growth. Hair loss usually becomes noticeable when new hair growth does not replace the hair that has fallen off. The non-replacement of lost hair can be temporary or permanent, and can occur due to various factors, including hereditary, hormonal changes, medical conditions, medications, stress, excessive hairstyling and others.

Heredity or family history related loss of hair, or androgenic alopecia in medical terms is the most common form of hair loss affecting both genders. In men it typically leads to receding hairline or bald spots, while in women it is noticeable in a thinning of hair on the crown of the scalp, or occasionally as a receding hairline.

Hormonal changes that occur in the body due to pregnancy, childbirth, menopause or thyroid problems, as well as certain medical conditions can lead to temporary or permanent hair loss. Some of the medical conditions are alopecia areata, which is immune system related and causes patchy hair loss on the scalp, beard or eyebrows; other scalp infections such as from ringworms can also lead to patchy hair loss.

Medications and supplements taken



as part of treatment for cancer, arthritis, depression, heart problems, high blood pressure and others could cause side effects that include hair loss. Stress of coping with the vagaries of life, or the use of certain chemical formulations in hairstyling have also been known to result in hair shedding. Though hair loss may not have direct physical effects on your health, the emotional toll can often be significant.

Scientists behind the new study say their work on the genetics underlying hair growth has allowed them to determine the precise mechanism by which dermal papilla cells — specialized signal-making fibroblasts at the bottom of each hair follicle — promote

new growth. At different phases during the hair follicle life cycle, the very same dermal papilla cells can send signals that either keep follicles dormant or trigger new hair growth.

Although the pivotal role of dermal papilla cells in controlling hair growth is well documented, until now, the exact genetic basis of the activating molecules involved in hair growth has been poorly understood. The new study has now identified the exact signaling molecule in the dermal papilla involved in triggering neighboring hair stem cells to start dividing and generating growth of new hair. The activating molecule known as SCUBE3, which is produced normally in the dermal papilla, is critical for efficient

hair growth. In people with androgenetic alopecia, dermal papilla cells malfunction, greatly reducing the normally abundant SCUBE3 activating molecules. To conduct their experiments, the researchers developed a mouse model with hyperactivated dermal papilla cells and excessive hair growth.

Studying the mouse model permitted the researchers to identify SCUBE3 as the previously unknown signaling molecule that can drive excessive hair growth. Subsequent tests validated that SCUBE3 activates hair growth in human follicles. Researchers then microinjected SCUBE3 into mouse skin in which human scalp follicles had been transplanted. This then induced new hair growth in both the dormant human and surrounding mouse follicles.

The experiments provide proof-of-principle data that SCUBE3 or derived molecules can be a promising therapeutic treatment for hair loss. Currently, there are two medications on the market — finasteride and minoxidil — that are approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for androgenetic alopecia. However, both drugs are not universally effective and need to be taken daily to maintain their clinical effect.

The researchers said their test in the human hair transplant model validated the preclinical potential of SCUBE3. The new study could lead to the development of effective hair loss medicines that use the naturally occurring compounds employed by dermal papilla cells to promote hair growth. University of California has now filed a provisional patent application on the use of SCUBE3 and its related molecular compounds for hair growth stimulation.

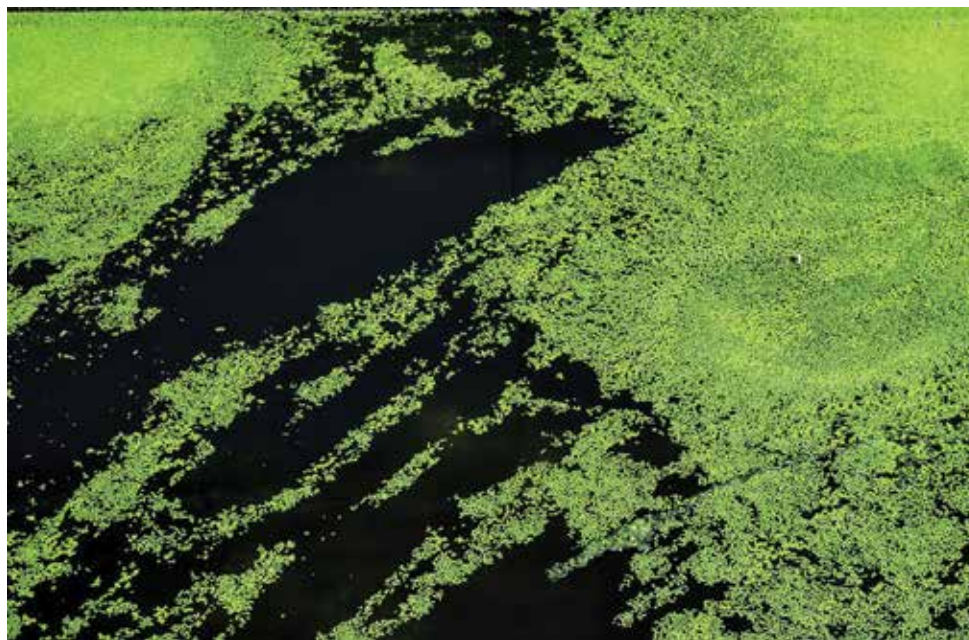
## Algae to help mitigate climate crisis

Algae are a group of predominantly aquatic organisms that resemble plants but are differentiated from true plants in that they lack true roots, stems, leaves, and specialized multicellular reproductive structures characteristic of plants. Despite their structural divergence from true plants, algae are eukaryotes — organisms whose cells contain a nucleus and other membrane-bound organelles — similar to all other animals, plants, fungi, and protists. And, much like other plants, they derive their energy through the process of photosynthesis.

During photosynthesis algae takes in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and water (H<sub>2</sub>O) from their environment and converts light energy into chemical energy. In the process, water is transformed into oxygen and the carbon dioxide into glucose. The oxygen is released back into the environment and energy is stored within the glucose molecules.

Since the algae uses carbon from the CO<sub>2</sub> for their growth they are an especially invaluable asset in mitigating climate change by removing greenhouse gasses from the atmosphere and serving as an important blue carbon sink. The need to use carbon sinks as a means to mitigate climate change has never been greater. Increased human activity since the start of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-18th century has released more carbon into the atmosphere than the Earth's natural carbon sinks on land and water can absorb.

Our continued reliance on fossil fuels for energy means billions of tonnes of carbon are released into the atmosphere every year. The 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change calls for the removal of carbon



from the atmosphere and the lowering of emissions. Climate change refers to shifts in average temperature and weather patterns over time that occur because of an increase in greenhouse gasses in the Earth's atmosphere. The concomitant increase in CO<sub>2</sub> levels is estimated to account for more than half of the warming potential.

Algae and other plants in ocean and coastal ecosystems represent a major climate change solution in that they serve as crucial blue carbon sinks by sequestering CO<sub>2</sub> through capturing and storing organic carbon found in their environment. Though they account for only around one-tenth of the biomass of the entire plant population on Earth, the stupendously productive algae are estimated to produce around half

of the oxygen in the oceans, rivers and lakes around the world.

While rainforests remove and store carbon dioxide in bigger biomass, they release it when the trees die, thus effectively nullifying their role in carbon sequestering and storing. On the other hand, algae and aquatic plants store carbon in their soil and sediment, which can remain for millennia if left undisturbed. Also, algae and other coastal plants sequester and store more carbon per unit of area than terrestrial forests.

The use of technology has also often been touted as a solution for the mitigation and reduction of carbon dioxide concentration in atmospheric air by capturing and storing CO<sub>2</sub> at its source of production. Carbon

capture and storage (CCS) technology has been claimed to capture up to 90 percent of CO<sub>2</sub> released by burning fossil fuels in electricity generation and industrial processes such as cement production. The captured CO<sub>2</sub> is then transported and stored in suitable underground storage reservoirs, including abandoned oil and gas fields, deep saline formations and unmineable coal seams.

But without incentives or punitive measures for such emission reductions, little CCS can be expected from companies and industries. Moreover, the deployment of CCS in the industrial and power generation sectors would allow fossil fuel use to continue without a significant decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at other stages of the CCS process. Additionally, a full CCS chain has yet to be implemented, and many technical, environmental and economic uncertainties continue to remain.

An even better and more cost-effective solution is to increase forest area coverage and cultivation of microalgae that employ photosynthesis to sequester CO<sub>2</sub>. The photosynthetic process carried out by algae and plants has been proven to be by far the most efficient economic and environmentally friendly and sustainable solution to mitigating climate change.

Given this potential of algae to alleviate climate change as well as contribute to bioremediation of coastal pollutants and the habitat of other marine organisms, many scientists and civil society organizations have raised their voice in favor of scaling up the surface area covered by macroalgal-dominated systems, and raising the level of carbon sequestration on a global scale.



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