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New government, a new beginning



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

A flurry of political activities marked the start of August. The month began with a decree by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah bestowing the title of 'His Highness' on prime minister designate, (Retd. Gen) Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Later during the day, His Highness the Amir also announced another decree approving the formation of a new cabinet headed by His Highness the Prime Minister. The 12-member cabinet, comprising ministers from the previous cabinet as well as several new faces, then took the oath-of-office before His Highness the Amir.

On 2 August, which incidentally marked the somber anniversary of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi troops in 1990, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah issued a decree dissolving the

National Assembly. The decree, which came on the heels of the announcement of a new cabinet, was promulgated by His Highness the Crown Prince based on the constitutional powers conferred on him through the Amiri decree of 15 November, 2021.

Also, on 2 August, the newly formed cabinet, in its inaugural meeting held at the Seif Palace and chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister, thanked and expressed its gratitude to His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince for the trust bestowed on them to carry out their duties. In a statement issued following the cabinet meeting, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Al-Fares stated that the premier in his address to the cabinet had underlined the need to implement the judicious directives given to them by His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince.

Among others, the directives had called on the cabinet to redouble its



efforts so as to speed up development, fulfill people's expectations, respect the constitution and solve the challenges faced by citizens. It urged the cabinet to do its utmost to address the serious challenges that the nation faced, and offer high-quality services to the public, while wiping out corruption in all its forms, so as to push forward the country's development process and safeguard its stability.

Additionally, on the 32nd anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the cabinet renewed its gratitude to the friendly countries who contributed to liberating the country and restoring its international legitimacy, sovereignty, freedom, and dignity. The cabinet also called on the Kuwaiti people, on this painful anniversary, "to preserve the security and stability of the homeland, to unite and boost cooperation

in serving the country under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Serving the interests of the people and country through unity and cooperation between the executive and legislative wings of government, also formed the crux of a statement issued by His Highness the Crown Prince following the dissolution of the National Assembly. The statement noted that the decree to dissolve parliament was necessitated to "rectify the political scene, which has involved a lack of harmony and cooperation between the executive and legislative arms of government, as well as continued differences, conflicts, personal interests and failure to accept others, in addition to practices and behaviors that undermine the national unity."

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MUGHLAI DELICACIES & VALUE PACKS



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MoH insists free healthcare for all no longer feasible

Decision to reserve government hospitals exclusively for citizens is to be delayed until the primary and secondary healthcare facilities planned for expatriates, under Health Assurance Hospitals Company (Dhaman) scheme is completed, hopefully by the end of the year, said the Ministry of Health (MoH).

Under this initiative, Dhaman, which is the largest Public-Private Partnership (PPP) healthcare project in the Middle East, will manage and operate Kuwait's first Health Maintenance Organization (HMO). The HMO plans to provide its services to the nearly 3.2 million expatriates and their dependents through three new secondary healthcare hospitals with a total capacity of 900 beds, and 15 primary healthcare centers located in areas with a heavy expatriate population.

The decision to develop the Dhaman project stems from the fact that it had become no longer feasible for the government to continue providing free healthcare to everyone in Kuwait. Faced with the option of providing quality healthcare to citizens or incur exorbitant costs to provide quality healthcare to everyone in Kuwait, the government understandably opted to take the PPP pathway and privatize healthcare for expatriates.

Setting aside the humanitarian and egalitarian aspects and instead evaluating

the Dhaman project from a solely economic perspective, shows that it is beneficial to the state and to the private healthcare sector. It will benefit the state in that the health ministry will not have to find funds and facilities to provide services to the large expatriate population and can provide high quality healthcare to citizens. For private sector employers and expatriate workers, especially those who cannot afford the expensive private healthcare facilities available in the country, the Dhaman project offers a viable alternative that is cost effective while providing adequate level of healthcare coverage.

According to various statistical sources on population, 51 percent of the total expatriate workforce in Kuwait can only read and write only, that is, they do not hold any educational qualification. This is divided into 722,000 workers, or 47 percent of the total workers in the private sector, and 470,000 workers, or 64 percent of the total workers in the domestic sector. Records also show that there are 44,000 illiterate workers, who cannot read or write in the private sector, and 39,000 such workers in the domestic sector, plus an additional 1,683 workers in the government sector who cannot read or write. Together, around 1.3 million expatriates in the country do not have any academic qualifications or cannot



read and write.

Even if we exclude domestic and government workers and focus only on the approximately 1.5 million non-Kuwaiti workers in the private sector, we find that while 1.2 million workers hold a basic degree or less, they constitute nearly 82 percent of the total number of Kuwaiti citizens.

Left with the choice of deciding to continue providing high quality healthcare services to everyone in Kuwait at exorbitant costs to the state, or using available facilities to provide high quality healthcare solely to citizens, the government chose to go with the second option while also providing

adequate healthcare facilities for expatriates in the form of the Dhaman project.

Critics of this approach may point out that in many developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada and others, there is no differentiation in treatment between citizens and expatriates. However proponents of Dhaman say that what detractors of the project often fail to mention is that in most developed countries every resident, and indirectly every visiting tourist, pays taxes to the state. In Kuwait there are no such equivalent taxes levied on expatriates.

Moreover, in most of the developed countries expatriates form only a small segment of the population relative to citizens. Meanwhile, in Kuwait, expatriates account for over 70 percent of the total population, and hence the comparison between Kuwait and certain developed countries is not correct from an economic point of view. They add that if we are to solve this dilemma in human terms, we can only do so by providing adequate healthcare to low-income immigrants at a level similar to the level of health care they receive in their country or slightly higher, while ensuring that for those with higher incomes, the employer bears the costs of appropriate healthcare, given that the employer benefits from the experience and knowledge of these workers.

DDI holds event showcasing research by students

Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), concluded this year's summer training program for students engaged in various medical specialties, with a day dedicated to displaying posters summarizing the research conducted by the students during their training program.

The annual training program, held each year under supervision of specialists from the institute, was attended this year by the Director-General of the Institute, Dr. Qais Al-Duwairi, along with CMO of the Medical Sector, Dr. Ebaa Al-Ozairi, COO of the Operation Sector, Dr. Faisal Al Refai, in addition to many researchers and doctors of the institute. The event was organized under the supervision of the CSO of the Research Sector Professor Fahad Al-Mulla.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Al-Duwairi stated that he is proud of what the students presented during this training program, adding that it provides practical

opportunities for them to be trained in an integrated and advanced work environment at the institute, specifying that this year has witnessed various research projects and initiatives on diabetes. Dr. Al-Duwairi said that the aim of this training program, which extends over a period of months, is to establish and provide the participating students with the necessary skills and practical knowledge in the research and scientific aspects, and to help them enhance their research capabilities.

He noted that this year the students were enrolled in various projects to explore, develop and refine their scientific abilities, under the guidance of senior members of the scientific team at the Institute, and with the support of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), which was the main force behind the establishment of DDI in 2006.

Kuwait's Al-Ghais appointed new OPEC chief

On Monday, 1 August, Kuwait's Haitham Al-Ghais took over the mantle of Secretary-General of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), following the end of tenure of his late predecessor Mohammad Barkindo of Nigeria.

Speaking to the media on news of his appointment, Al-Ghais thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the trust and support given to him as Kuwait's nominee for the position.

Al-Ghais, who was elected by acclamation as OPEC chief for a three-year term, which starts on 1 August, is the first Kuwaiti to hold the position. He pointed out that selecting him unanimously by the 13 member countries of OPEC reflects Kuwait's position among OPEC members, in addition to the continuous efforts made by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, and Minister of State for Council Affairs Dr. Muhammad Al-Fares.

Al Ghais has extensive experience in the field of global oil markets and the oil industry in Kuwait and overseas extending over 30 years. He also has wide exposure and participation in many international oil conferences and forums. He assumed the position of Kuwait's OPEC Governor (2017-

2021) and chaired the joint technical committee between the organization and countries outside it. The technical committee is responsible for monitoring production quotas and studying the conditions of oil markets according to the production reduction agreement signed between the countries contributing to the

(OPEC+) agreement.

He also headed the OPEC Internal Audit Committee, where he contributed to the streamlining of audit operations in the organization. In addition, he served on the board of governors, and in various committees, special works and in enhancing cooperation with countries outside OPEC.

He was appointed deputy director of international marketing at the state-owned Kuwait Petroleum Corp. after stepping down as Kuwait's OPEC governor in June 2021. Also, prior to his participation and contributions in OPEC, he was included in the global marketing sector of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation in various sales departments, and headed the regional offices of the corporation in Beijing and London, and was the Director of the Research Department of the Petroleum Corporation and Deputy Managing Director of Global Marketing.





Inspiring girls, Empowering women

By Reaven D'Souza
Managing Editor

Kuwait's first woman diplomat from Africa, the Ambassador of Sierra Leone H.E. Haja Ishata Thomas, has come a long way from her early years as a school teacher. Having overcome many challenges in her life, the ambassador is now well-positioned to serve as a role model and inspiration to the many young women in Kuwait and Sierra Leone who may yearn to choose diplomacy as a career.

In an exclusive interview with The Times Kuwait Managing Editor, Ambassador Thomas speaks about some of the most challenging odds that she had to overcome to reach where she is today. While highlighting the strong and continuously growing bilateral relations between Sierra Leone and Kuwait, the ambassador also expressed her admiration for the many achievements that women in Kuwait have chalked over the years.

Ambassador Thomas began the interview by telling us a little about herself, how she came to choose diplomacy as a career, and some of the role models that encouraged her to pursue diplomacy. This interesting insight gains even more relevance in light of the fact that she hails from a country that, much like Kuwait, is considered male dominated and paternalistic.

"My experience as a teacher, lecturer and an administrator, broadened my horizon and shaped my career, especially in becoming a diplomat. The call to serve my nation in building the capacity of the current and future leaders through teaching, has been the driving force in my profession. My ability to manage people coupled with the determination to achieve results despite the odds, and the confidence reposed in me by the President of Sierra Leone, His Excellency Julius Maada Bio to represent my country, has been the hallmark of this great journey — diplomacy.

"Growing up, I admired Haja Alarie Cole, a fellow Sierra Leonean, who like myself was a teacher, an administrator and a Muslim woman. She diligently served her country for many years as ambassador of Sierra Leone to

the Islamic Republic of Iran, and held several other diplomatic posts in my country's government.

"Being one of the very few girls fortunate enough to attend school and complete university education, I served as a role model for many parents to send their girl-child to school and allow them to achieve their God-given potential. As a teacher and mentor, I earned the respect of my community and was able to inspire, counsel and advocate for the enrollment and retention of girls in school.

"During my four decades of service, I became a beacon of hope for many girls, specifically in providing counseling and mentorship, which contributed immensely in changing the negative perception held by many parents to girl-child education in my province. I have also instituted and maintained discipline in the exercise of my duties in public and private life, and these attributes served as building blocks and enhanced my capabilities in representing my country diplomatically."

On a personal note the ambassador revealed some of the attributes she valued most in herself: "Modesty, respectability and humility have been the guiding principles of my work as a diplomat. Meeting with dignitaries in Kuwait, and other high-profile personalities outside Kuwait, especially in advancing my country's foreign policies, rebranding its image and wooing development and investment opportunities are also very self-gratifying.

Turning to some of the unique challenges associated with being a woman diplomat, and specifically elaborating on her experience in Kuwait, Sierra Leone's top envoy said: "The field of diplomacy has its many advantages and disadvantages; experiencing and coming to terms with a blend of the two has added value to my work as a diplomat. In addition, the cordial relationship I enjoy with ambassador colleagues gives me a good sense of direction. The challenges are there, but the advantages give one the highest assurance to continue. Moreover, my profession as a teacher prepared me to be result-oriented. I therefore pursue my job with diligence and



Ambassador of Sierra Leone H.E. Haja Ishata Thomas

determination to produce positive results.

"Being the first African woman Ambassador in the State of Kuwait was initially challenging. Before, attending Kuwaiti Diwanias posed a huge challenge for me because it was a platform exclusively dominated by men. As a woman, you feel the sense of not belonging. Today, Diwanias have become all-encompassing; accepting and welcoming diverse cultures, opening the space for women and enabling information sharing.

"Kuwait is a magnificent country with great zest to achieve more. The country has made great progress in building a robust economy and an enviable foreign relation over the years. My experience in the State of Kuwait has been breathtaking, in that I have been able to settle down conveniently and comfortably. I have also been exposed to the Kuwaiti culture, and as a Muslim, Kuwait has

become a home away from home for me."

Speaking on what she hoped to achieve over the coming years in her professional and personal life, Ambassador Thomas indicated: "Girls' empowerment is still a herculean task to overcome in my country. After completing my tour of duty, I will continue to strengthen my personal foundation, Badaia Women's Association, with a view to inspire girls and young women in the fulfillment of their dreams. I believe that the girl-child has huge untapped potentials locked in the shackles of patriarchy. My objective will therefore be focused on producing more female diplomats, ministers and leaders in all capacities."

Turning to the important role of women in Kuwait society, the ambassador said that the role Kuwaiti women play in shaping the development of the state has been quite fascinating. She added,

"Unlike other countries in the Gulf Region, the State of Kuwait has made it possible for women to play an active and a productive role in the social, economic and political well-being of the country. I am impressed with the way women have been empowered and encouraged to take leadership responsibilities; I have had lots of engagements with women organizations, and Sierra Leone has benefited greatly from these engagements in the form of charitable projects championed by Kuwaiti women, including through Madam Narjis AlShatti. The level of education and sophistication that Kuwaiti women have should serve as a symbol of hope to women in other countries."

The envoy concluded the interview by highlighting her country's contribution to developing its human resources, especially that of the girl-child: "Sierra Leone's Free Quality Education project is a catalyst for Human Capital development in my country, and this also plays an integral role in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. President Julius Maada Bio's vision is to have a society that can rely on its human capital, a paradigm shift from the 'old school' way of thinking that emphasized the country's mineral resources. In this new vision, girl-child education forms the bedrock. Girls are now encouraged to learn and those who are in the sciences are given scholarships for university studies.

"In our days, the story was quite the opposite; girls were discouraged from going to school; they were always told that their duty was tied to early marriage and to manage the home, and boys were the only ones fortunate to go to school. In the end, girls, whose hopes were let adrift, ended up becoming housewives instead of taking part in development activities. My case was exceptionally different, in that, my father, who was a Muslim scholar at that time, created the enabling environment for me to learn.

"Just like Singapore, which took upon itself to invest in its human capital, the emphasis on developing human resources has enabled Sierra Leone to take an unprecedented leap to success."

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New leadership, new opportunity for reforms, development in Kuwait

Kuwait has an opportunity for reform and development under its new leadership, said Former US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker. The former diplomat made this remark during a meeting in the US capital with Founder and CEO of Reconnaissance Research Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri.

Al-Anjeri, who is currently visiting Washington DC, is scheduled to hold discussions with a number of prominent US think-tank and research institute officials, as well as hold meetings with several US officials and diplomats.

"Kuwait is entering a new phase with His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Sabah serving as the country's new prime minister, and with new parliamentary elections to be held in the coming period," said Mr. Schenker.

He hoped that in parallel with the appointment of Jasim Albudaiwi as the new Kuwaiti ambassador in Washington, the Biden Administration would soon announce a nominee to replace Alina Romanowski as ambassador to Kuwait.

The former US official noted that such changes would open the door for more progress in the bilateral relationship. The Kuwaiti people, he said, "want genuine reform and anti-corruption measures implemented that would improve governance and a challenged economy". He went on to add, "Kuwait has enormous human capital, a small population, and significant resources that should, if harnessed effectively, enable



the state to make coherent, tangible and impactful changes."

At the level of US-Kuwait bilateral relations, Mr. Schenker voiced hope that the relationship would become stronger and deeper over time. He noted that during his tenure as Assistant Secretary, despite the longstanding ties between the countries, he was one of the few senior Administration officials to visit Kuwait. He suggested that more high-level and routine exchanges would be helpful.

For his part, Al-Anjeri hailed Mr. Schenker

as having played a vital role in the region through the posts he had held. He noted that the former diplomat is now director of the Program on Arab Politics at the Washington Institute, adding that he has deep insights and analyses regarding the regional and international situations, based on his experience and knowledge about the region.

Al-Anjeri continued: "The meeting with Mr. Schenker lasted for two hours, and it is an extension of previous meetings between us. The former US official expounded his vision



about the regional developments at political, developmental and economic levels." "He is a permanent friend of Reconnaissance Research, and I'm working towards identifying further potential for cooperation and exchange of visions with American figures who wield influence in the US decision-making process in the Middle East," said Al-Anjeri.

David Schenker is the Taube Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute and director of the Program on Arab Politics. Confirmed by the Senate on 5 June, 2019, he served as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs through January 2021. In that capacity, he was the principal Middle East advisor to the US Secretary of State and the senior official overseeing the conduct of US policy and diplomacy in the region.

Shrimp season starts with prices sky high



The end of the five-month ban on fishing for shrimps in Kuwait's regional waters led to the first catch of local shrimps reaching the market last week. But customers heading to fish markets seeking shrimps were dismayed at the low availability and high prices being charged.

According to fishing industry sources, the total catch on the first day of shrimp season did not exceed 100 baskets and as such a basket of mixed shrimp, weighing on average 20kg was being sold for around KD65. At the same time, a kilo of jumbo shrimp was being retailed for around KD5, while the medium and small sized shrimps were being sold for KD3.5 per kilo.

Fishermen stressed the low catch was due to the lack of government incentives for the fishing industry and the shortage of fishermen available to go out fishing. Moreover, the fishermen pointed out that the catchment area opened up so far is limited to the special economic zone, and the larger regional waters will be opened for shrimp fishing only in September.

However, irrespective of a larger shrimping area opening up in September, the fishermen voiced concern that prevailing

higher temperatures in local waters could lead to a fall in total catch relative to last year, and prices would most likely remain high, at least over the near term. They also noted that customer demand for seafood products is generally very weak in summer, as most citizens and expats travel abroad, and demand could return only after summer.

Meanwhile, one customer visiting the fish market lamented the high prices being charged despite Kuwait having access to an extensive sea frontage. He added, "We should be having the cheapest prices compared to other countries in the region, instead we end up paying the highest prices because fishermen and their union are raising prices based on unfounded pretexts". He blamed the government for its poor monitoring of the situation and noted there was no justification for the high prices being charged, as most of the shrimp caught now was coming from the economic zone bordering Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, where the Saudis were cultivating shrimps. These Saudi shrimps were being passed off as Kuwaiti shrimps and accordingly being charged higher prices. He added, last year the initial catch from the same area was being sold for KD1.5 per kilo.

Kuwait's subsidized foods sold in Iraqi shops

Following confirmed reports that food items sold at highly subsidized rates to citizens in Kuwait are ending up on shelves in the Iraqi market, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has asked the General Administration of Customs to tighten controls and take deterrent measures to stop the smuggling of subsidized materials abroad.

These reports take on added significance in light of the government's attempts to ensure food security, given the potential impact of ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine on global

grain supplies and disruptions to food supply chains. On a related note, the Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company in a letter to the Ministry of Commerce said the company's distributor in Iraq had reported instances of subsidized items from Kuwait Flour Mills being sold in large quantities in the Iraqi market.

The flour mills company indicated that what is happening will have negative repercussions that could affect the country's strategic stock, which requires intensifying efforts to stop these negative practices.

KOC postpones projects due to budget approval delays

Two major oil projects for the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) have reportedly been postponed as the necessary budgets for these projects have not been approved so far.

According to MEED magazine, which focuses on major projects in the region, the two KOC projects, which include the construction of new Gathering Centers and another one to expand existing wastewater remediation and sewage disposal plants, are estimated to cost around KD450 million in total.

The project for the Gathering Center was supposed to be launched in October or November of this year, but due to the delay in approving the project budget so far, the tendering may witness further

delays. The second project, which involves the expansion of two sewage disposal plants in KOC facilities, is estimated to cost around KD200 million.

The first station sewage project is located about 20 km south of downtown Kuwait City, and the second project is located about 40 km south of the capital. It is worth noting that the disposal of waste water associated with oil production has been a source of concern to the Kuwait Oil Company for at least two decades.

The Burgan oil field, which is the second largest oil field in the world, has witnessed successive increases in the water content of the oil produced, as most of the water produced is disposed of in dedicated injection wells.

Coordination among oil producers vital to supplies

At the end of their 31st meeting held on 3 August, the 13 members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) along with their 10 allies in non-OPEC oil-exporting countries, together referred to as the OPEC+ coalition, agreed to boost oil production by 100,000 barrels per day starting from September. This increase, along with the 648,000 barrels per day hike in production agreed by the coalition previously for August, are key to stabilizing global oil prices and matching supply to demand, said the coalition, following their meeting, which was held via video conference.

The conferees said that the sharp decline in oil industry investments had decreased the global surplus oil production capacity in all sectors of the industry, including production, and refining. OPEC+ members expressed concerns over the lack of investments in the excavation and production sectors in the oil industry, and noted that this could affect market supplies and demands in 2023.

Ministers at the meeting were given an initial briefing on the commercial petroleum reserves in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which at around 2.7 million barrels last June, marked a decrease of 163,000 barrels from the same

period last year.

For its part, the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) of OPEC+, which is responsible for supervising and ensuring member states are in compliance to production cuts set by the coalition, confirmed in its report to the meeting that member states of the coalition have committed to 130 percent of the OPEC+ production cut agreements since May of 2020. The surplus production cuts came about mainly through additional voluntary cuts taken on Saudi Arabia, and from production shortfalls in some oil exporting nations.

A communique released at the end of the meeting said the coalition members agreed to hold their 32nd meeting on 5 September. The communique also noted that the EU's ban on Russia's energy supplies had led to increasing fears of oil supply shortages in the global market, but the timely and judicious decision to increase production by OPEC+ has helped stabilize prices and was a reflection of the coalition's keenness to maintain a stable and balanced oil market.

Kuwait was represented at the 31st meeting of OPEC+, and the 43rd meeting of the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC), by Deputy Prime Minister, Oil Minister



and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Faris. Addressing the gathering through the videoconference link, Minister Dr. Al-Faris underscored the need for cooperation and coordination among all producers to face any challenges or impacts on the supply of oil markets.

In a press statement issued following the meeting, the oil minister noted that OPEC+ is poised to enter a new phase of cooperation to effectively manage the oil markets and play a greater role during the upcoming period. He also expressed his sincere condolences over the death of the former Secretary-General of OPEC, Mohammad Barkindo, praising the late Secretary-General for his efforts over the past years in leading the organization and in bringing about closer unity of views

among member states.

He congratulated the newly appointed Kuwaiti Secretary General of OPEC, Haitham Al-Ghais, who assumed his duties on 1 August, and wished him all success in the upcoming period in supporting and encouraging cooperation among member states, as well as unifying efforts to create more stability in the oil markets. He also commended the role of OPEC+ in contributing to the stability of markets and the security of supply effectively, stressing that OPEC+ is a major element in the market that must be preserved for the benefit of all

Al-Faris also reiterated Kuwait's full commitment to the agreed production quotas, and commended OPEC+ decision to increase supplies in September by 100,000 barrels per day, as a positive indication of the coalition's support to the global oil market. The total increase in production will also benefit Kuwait, which is now expected to have its total production quota hiked to 2.82 million barrels per day. Kuwait's delegation to the two meetings included the country's OPEC Governor Mohammad Al-Shatti and the National Representative of Kuwait to OPEC Sheikh Abdullah Sabah Salem Hamoud Al-Sabah.

Government seeks to fill top posts at KPC

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) is reportedly facing a management-level crisis from delays in appointing executives to fill many top-level posts in the corporation that have been lying vacant for months, if not more.

As one observer commented, the corridors of C-suites at KPC are lined with doors holding name plates showing 'Acting' appended to the titles of most executives. Many of these posts are said to be lying vacant for months due to political pressures being brought



to bear on the government in the choice of candidates. The authorities have attempted to cover up the political pressures responsible for the delay in appointments, and rationalize the holdups by implying that there was a lack of appropriately qualified personnel to fill the posts. Meanwhile, acting chiefs, and

many other 'heads' whose tenures have been extended multiple times, still continue to make decisions at the helm.

Last week, the board of directors of KPC once again resorted to an extension to fill yet another vacancy, and approved the extension of contract of the Executive Vice President of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company's (KIPIC) Al-Zour Refinery, Khaled Al-Awadi for a further six months.

The sources attributed the decision to extend the contract of Al-Awadi to the suspension of appointments, promotions, transfer and state delegations, pointing out that Al-Awadi is responsible for the file of Al-Zour refinery worth billions, and which has entered its final stages pending operation

over the next few months.

For its part, KPC maintains that it has completed sifting through the files of qualified senior oil officials and prepared lists that it has submitted to the government for approval, and hoping that decisions with regard to the pending promotions, appointments and rotations, would now be finalized with a new government in place since last week.

Meanwhile, CEO of KPC, Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Sabah, has reportedly been looking into the files of prospective appointees and following up on their performances with the aim of revamping top level posts in the corporation in a bid to infuse it with 'young blood'.

Sahel app wins public traction as users, services increase

The unified government electronic services application, Sahel, which has over 655,000 active users and has been providing 246 e-government services to citizens and residents in the country, since its inception ten months ago, is edging close to its new milestone of registering 2.5 million transactions successfully completed.

Revealing these figures, the official spokesperson for Sahel, Youssef Kazem, added that the top five e-government services that users had purveyed during

July, were the 'Civil ID Renewal' service provided by the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) that came in with the most number of service requests, followed by the 'Certificate Inquiry' service from the Civil Service Commission. The top two were followed by three services offered by the Ministry of Interior: Downloading the conditions and registration forms for Sa'ad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences, Driver's license services, and Police clearance certificate (PCC) services.



Forbes Middle East publishes list of top GCC exchange houses going digital



In a major acknowledgment of the GCC region's move towards digitization of financial services, Forbes Middle East today unveiled its list of 'Top 5 GCC Exchange Houses Going Digital'.

The list shines the spotlight on remittance companies in the GCC region that have been driving digitization of their services, in line with the efforts of their respective nations.

UAE based LuLu Exchange and Al Ansari Exchange, Kuwait based Al Mulla Exchange, Qatar based Alfardan Exchange, and Oman based Purshottam Kanji Exchange are the top five companies in this list.

These companies are well established institutions, having provided high quality services to both retail consumers and businesses over several years. They have been in news recently for their aggressive digital push and digital infrastructure investments. Between them, these companies serve millions of customers in GCC, and have invested heavily in building state-of-the-art digital infrastructure to drive their next stage of growth.

The companies were evaluated by Forbes on the number of app downloads, number of users and annual volume of digitally conducted transactions.

Thought “ for the week

Faith is the bird that feels the
light and sings when the dawn is
still dark

— Rabindranath Tagore

Losing Extra Water Weight

Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



Water retention is a common disorder that troubles many people.

I have been working with a lot of obese people; some of them are really obese and others are less so. I have also seen people losing up to 4 kg in just a week, and this loss in weight comes about mainly from loss of water from the body.

So water can actually make up a lot of your excess body weight.

Usually my clients get to perform a body composition test that indicates the water, fat and muscle mass of the person and its relative percentages.

So If the body water mass or percentage is very high compared to the normal range, that means a fast weight loss will be seen during the first week of the diet.

People who do not lose a lot during the first week usually do not suffer from water retention.

Fat needs time to be lost, that is why in the coming weeks we cannot lose as much weight as we do during the first week. That is the whole point!

How to get rid of this extra water weight?

Drink enough water:

If you are not drinking enough water, your body will hold on more water than it actually needs.

Two glasses of water before each meal are a must, especially before breakfast when you wake up. Decrease your sodium intake:

Salt has no calories but it retains water in the body. For example, after a heavy sushi dinner, do you not feel thirsty and bloated? This is due to the high sodium content in seafood and from the soya sauce used to flavor them. In that case, ask for the low-sodium soy sauce and do not check your weight the next morning after your sushi consumption.

Do not add extra salt to your meals, go for the Pink

Himalayan Salt.

Decrease your processed and fried carbohydrates: Fried carbohydrates contain more sodium than other foods. Choosing brown bread, baked potato, steamed rice and pasta in addition to whole grains will help a lot. Both processed carbohydrates and sodium are molecules that attract water. So when you have them in your bloodstream, water will stick around them.

Organize your meals: Eating three healthy meals also helps in flushing the water out of your body, with the emphasis being on vegetables and fruits that are low in sodium and very high in water.

Do not forget that water retention is the main cause of cellulite development, so you do not need this extra water, nor the cellulite.

Last but not least, a quick tip that will help a lot: Boil some water with a few parsley leaves in it, and have a cup of that mix first thing in the morning and last thing at night, and see its results.

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Mira is a go-to source for nutrition and wellness and has joined The Times Kuwait team in a new weekly column discussing nutrition and answering queries. You can send in your questions to infotimeskuwait@gmail.com

RECIPE

TINY PIZZA BITES



These little bites are perfect for parties and fun for weeknights! These little two-bite pizzas were easy to make and a total hit. It is an ideal guilt-free snack recipe for any kitty party or celebration feast as it can be served in small portions. It can be customized with different toppings for a variety of textures and tastes!

Total time: 1 hour 30 min

Serving: 12 pizza

INGREDIENTES:

*FOR PIZZA DOUGH :

- 2 cups all purpose flour
- 1 tsp instant dry yeast
- Warm water
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 2 Tbsp. Oil
- Extra flour for dusting and extra oil for greasing the baking tray

*FOR PIZZA SAUCE:

- 1/2 cup tomato sauce
- 2 tbsp. Tomato ketchup
- 1/2 tsp. Chilly flakes
- 1 tsp .mix herbs

*FOR PIZZA TOPPINGS:

- Pizza sauce
- Grated Mozzarella cheese
- Your choice of veggies like chopped onion, Capsicum, olives, tomatoes, sweetcorn, jalapeno
- Chilli flakes, mixed herbs

*TO MAKE PIZZA SAUCE:

- in a small bowl take tomato sauce
- tomato ketchup, chilli flakes, mixed herbs
- mix well make sure well combined
- instant pizza sauce is ready

*TO MAKE THE DOUGH:

- In a large bowl, mix together the flour, dried yeast, sugar and salt
- Make a well in the middle of the flour mixture and pour in the oil
- Mix the flour with your fingertips and knead the dough with as required luke warm water as soft dough
- sprinkle Flour the work surface and turn out the dough, Knead the dough for 10 minutes until it becomes smooth
- Shape the dough into a ball. Grease the dough with little oil
- place the dough ball in the centre of the bowl
- Cover and rest for 1 hour
- Spread the pizza dough onto a floured surface and cut into circles with a cookie cutter or rim of
- A cup or glass
- Place the dough circles onto the baking tray
- Spread 1-2 teaspoons of pizza sauce onto the dough
- Sprinkle with 1-2 tablespoons of mozzarella cheese
- Add your toppings of choice
- Bake for 8-10 minutes, until the cheese melted and is golden brown
- Let cool for a few minutes before to serve



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

New premier clamps down on 'wasta' visits

The new premier His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nawaf Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has reportedly asked ministers to take a different approach in their interactions with visitors to their office, which is based on transparency and objectivity, and not to entertain transactions that are not in line with the rule of the law and not to succumb

to wasta (illegal recommendations) or parliamentary interventions.

The prime minister is said to have given clear directives to the ministers not to receive in their offices representatives of the dissolved parliament or candidates who will be contesting the upcoming elections, and not to allow interference in their work and

the work of service departments that fall under their purview. Premier Al-Nawaf has also directed the ministers to issue a circular to senior officials in their ministries to compile a list of competent people who are eligible for promotions and to shun wasta in this area since the ministries in the past were accused of parachute employment.



KD15 retroactive increase in wages of cleaners to cost the Treasury KD6 million

The total cost of covering an increase in the salary of one worker by 15 dinars retroactively for 5 cleaning contracts signed by the Ministry of Education will cost the State Treasury about 6 million dinars.

This happened when the Central Agency for Public Tenders approved a request for an increase of 15 dinars on the wage of one worker from the beginning of April 2019 until May 1, 2022, amounting to 960.93 thousand dinars for the contract No. 85 of the tender for the implementation and supply of cleaning and services work in the Capital Education District.

It also agreed to an increase in the wage of the same value and at a cost of up to 1.77 million dinars for a contract in Al-Ahmadi Educational Zone from June 1, 2017 to May 1, 2022. In the Hawally educational district and in

the Jahra district, the cost of the increase was about 1.166 million dinars from June 1, 2017 to March 1, 2022, while in the Mubarak Al-Kabeer district, the cost of the increase from the period from June 1, 2017 to March 1, 2022 amounted to about 933.9 thousand dinars.



Govt to build new entertainment facility at the current Entertainment City site

Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulwahab Al-Rasheed said the government has shown a tendency to build an entertainment facility at the current Entertainment City site.

Al-Rasheed told a local Arabic daily that the Municipality that with reference to the Cabinet's decision to allocate the entertainment city project to state property department, the concerned authority will provide all financial,

economic and technical studies for the development of the entertainment city project, in addition to cadastral plans and any studies related to the space. This is in addition to the land uses (commercial, investment, or any other use).

Al-Rasheed stated that these requests will help enable the technical team assigned by the Minister of Finance to work on developing recommendations and the best ways to establish an entertainment facility in the area

Phishing, online fraud on the rise in Kuwait

Latest online data security analysis reveals that online fraud and attacks involving data loss threats, including phishing and social engineering fraud in Kuwait witnessed a massive increase in the second-quarter of 2022, estimated at 115 percent higher than that witnessed in the first quarter of this year. A report by Kaspersky Security Solutions shows that 784,043 phishing attacks were discovered as occurring in Kuwait in the second quarter of 2022.

Phishing is one of the effective attack methods, given its wide scope, as cybercriminals increase their chances of success in searching for login data of users to various types of accounts, by sending massive waves of emails disguised under the names of official organizations and brands.

Criminals employ a variety of tricks to bypass email bans and lure as many users as possible to their fraudulent sites. Scammers commonly resort to HTML attachments that contain hidden code, which allows them to use scripts and

other malicious content to make it harder to detect, and often send phishing pages as attachments instead of links.

The principles of social engineering, sometimes called 'human hacking' fraud, are used in many ways and for different purposes, all of which aim to entrap reckless or unwary users by luring them to fake sites and tricking them into entering their personal information, which often includes data registration, access to financial accounts, such as bank account passwords or payment card details, as well as login data to social media accounts, which opens the way for many malicious operations, such as money theft and penetration of institutional networks.

At the height of the summer holiday season in Kuwait, many scammers try to entrap travelers searching online for the best and most affordable travel destinations, suitable accommodation and the cheapest flights. Kaspersky researchers have observed an increase in phishing activity under the guise of airline and hotel reservations, with 4,311 attempts by users to open these sites in the first half of 2022 in the Middle East, Turkey and Africa. Mikhail Sitnik, a security expert at Kaspersky, said that planning an enjoyable vacation "is not easy," noting that travelers may spend weeks or even months searching for flight reservations and suitable accommodation. He added that fraudsters take advantage of this to attract the attention of users who are tired of searching for suitable deals, and target them with booking and rental services.



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Municipality to enforce laws against misuse of basements

Basements in investment buildings found in violation of rental laws and fire-security regulations will be promptly shut down and the owners as well as tenants of such basement will be subject to the full weight of the law.

Delivering this warning in a statement to the media, the Director-General of Kuwait Municipality, Eng Ahmed Al-Manfouhi said that in cooperation with the Public Fire Force Directorate, a number of violating basements in the Salmiya area, have been ordered to immediately close down their activity.

Municipality officials working in specialized control teams were given strict instructions on the necessity of adhering to the application of laws, regulations and law, especially those related to maintaining safety, said Al-Manfouhi. He added that people's lives are more important than the violating storage that takes place in some investment buildings whose basements designated car parks have been converted into warehouses.

Al-Manfouhi added that the municipality and the public fire force noticed the presence of large numbers of investment real estate owners who rented their basements for



commercial activities in violation of the building law as well as the requirements of firefighting, especially turning them into warehouses where flammable and dangerous materials are stored, saying so far,

the 22 real estate owners have been ordered to vacate the tenants in these warehouses immediately and made to sign a pledge not to rent them in future, as well as return them to their previous status as car parks inline

with building regulation stipulations.

Eng Al-Manfouhi revealed that 184 violating sites have been monitored so far, and there are six teams currently working to clear the violating basements in the investment areas, and "we will take legal and administrative measures against these violators." He explained that there are more measures that will be taken in cooperation between the municipality and the fire brigade against those who do not respond to the warning.

Al-Manfouhi stressed that this campaign will continue until the basements of the violating investment areas are cleared, "and therefore we will not exempt anyone and will not tolerate violation of the law and we will implement the directives of His Highness the Prime Minister "to go down to the street, inspect the conditions on the ground and facilitate procedures."

Al-Manfouhi revealed that the next stage will be to remove infringements and abuses in the remote areas, and "we will resort to cooperating with the Ministry of Interior and the Environment Public Authority, in order to implement strict penalties for transgressors and according to the regulations of each party."

New government, a new beginning

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The statement by His Highness the Crown Prince added, "As such, it has become imperative to resort to the people who represent the destiny, extension, survival and existence of the country, so that they could rectify the path in a way that serves their supreme interests." Kuwait's Constitution mandates that, in the event of a dissolution of parliament, new elections should be held for a new Assembly within a period not exceeding two months from the date of dissolution. In light of this constitutional statute, the next general elections are now expected to take place by October.

In their comments on the evolving political environment in the country, several lawmakers from the dissolved parliament, while agreeing that the interests of the country and its people were tantamount, also said this would require a complete rethink on the part of the executive. For his part, former MP Ahmad Al-Azemi described the current period as "a decisive phase in the history of Kuwait", and added that achieving stability in Kuwait requires a new government that avoids the mistakes of the past.

Speaking in the same vein, former lawmaker Khaled Al-Otaibi said the next prime minister will inherit major challenges to reform what the previous government has damaged, while his colleague in the dissolved parliament, Abdullah Al-Turaiji, described the political events in Kuwait as "unprecedented", saying they will impact the form and functioning of the next cabinet. Also adding his voice to the discussion, former liberal MP Saleh Al-Mulla warned that the main thing for the new cabinet was to abandon the old-style of appointing ministers.

To recap on the events that led to the formation of a new government, it is worth noting that the former Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, who had been in power since December 2019, submitted his government's resignation in early April of this year after 26 opposition MPs — two more than the quorum needed — declared

their intention to support a non-cooperation motion filed against the premier by opposition MPs, following a parliamentary grilling over alleged government mismanagement.

The premier's resignation had then been accepted by His Highness the Amir, who then asked Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled to continue as a care-taker prime minister until a new premier was named. Last month, His Highness the Amir in a speech, given on his behalf by His Highness the Crown Prince, said he had decided to dissolve the National Assembly, a key demand by the opposition, and call for fresh polls "within months".

The opposition in parliament had welcomed the Amir's speech delivered by the Crown Prince, and urged the leadership to appoint a new prime minister to introduce fundamental changes, and to reform the way the government had been operating. With the opposition's suggestions on dissolving parliament and a new premier having now been met, it remains to be seen whether political reconciliation and cooperation between the executive and legislative arms of government will come to pass in the weeks and months ahead.

Unlike most other countries in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bloc, Kuwait has an elected parliament, to which citizens elect representatives through a general election process that is largely deemed to be open, free and fair. The country's constitution also grants its parliamentarians more leeway than other states, by providing lawmakers with complete oversight on government workings, the right to question ministers on perceived shortcomings, and even vote ministers out of office by passing a 'no-confidence' motion against them in parliament.

However, the powers and privileges granted to parliament and parliamentarians have resulted in Kuwait being beset by a state of political paralysis arising from consistent confrontation between an appointed government and an elected parliament. Parliamentary obstructions have also prevented the government from implementing many of its policies and enacting much-needed economic and

administrative reforms.

Also, in sharp contrast to most other GCC that are more nimble and dynamic in adapting to challenges, and seizing economic and social opportunities that help catalyze their growth and development, Kuwait's progress has remained stymied by the contentious relations between the executive and legislative arms of government.

But Kuwait can no longer afford to continue with this status quo in political relations between the two arms of government in parliament. The current windfall in revenues from higher oil prices presents the country with a small window of opportunity to introduce and implement the policies and structural reforms considered crucial to ensure sustained growth of the country.

Missing out on this opportunity could entail far-reaching consequences that could impact the country's long-term sustainable growth and the future of generations ahead. The current economic honeymoon being enjoyed by the country could just as easily become ephemeral, if evolving geo-political events in the region and internationally derails the current high oil price scenario.

Nonetheless, the current rise in global oil prices and increases in Kuwait's daily oil production figures, have appreciably brightened the economic prospects of the country. The revenue windfall from oil remaining well over US\$100 per barrel also allows the government more room to maneuver, replenish the depleted General Reserve Fund, which serves as the state treasury, and recoup some of the losses sustained over the years of recurring budget deficits.

According to an economic report by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), GDP in Kuwait is now expected to grow by 7 percent in 2022, compared to the anemic 2.5 percent growth registered in 2021. The ICAEW report adds that the oil sector, which accounts for more than half of the country's GDP and is the major driving force of the economy, is expected to register a growth of 11.8 percent on an annual

basis. This growth is based largely on prevailing higher oil prices, and the expected increase in oil production to 2.8 million barrels per day from September, following an agreement by OPEC and its allies among non-OPEC countries to increase oil output by 100,000 barrels per day from next month.

The report also notes that the non-oil sector, which has underperformed in recent years, is now projected to grow by 4.7 percent this year, on the back of higher consumer spending and strong real estate sales. The ICAEW report concludes that Kuwait's financial situation will be far brighter in 2022 than a year earlier, as oil is projected to remain above the \$100 mark for the rest of the year based on the ongoing conflict in eastern Europe that will likely continue through the upcoming winter and well into 2023. Current high prices could also very well result in Kuwait's current budget, which is based on a conservative break-even estimate at \$65 per barrel, registering its first surplus in years.

However, the brightened economy is no solace to the political plight that continues to prevail in the country. With the date for a second general election in less than two years expected to be announced shortly, vote-weary citizens are beginning to question the real reasons underlying Kuwait's continued political weaknesses, and the country's inability to introduce effective economic diversification, provide opportunities for gainful employment to youth, and promote sustainable growth and development.

Many people are, if only belatedly, starting to realize that the current social economic and political paralysis engulfing the country cannot be attributed solely to personal shortcomings of individual leaders or ministers in the cabinet, but lie deeper in more entrenched structural deficiencies and institutional dysfunctions. While there has been no dearth of suggested solutions to these deep-rooted malaises, the fact remains that implementing the remedies requires the kind of decisive actions that have so far been missing. The question being asked now is whether this time around things would be any different?

Fresh and frozen chicken in stock, no price hike



The Assistant Undersecretary for Cooperation Affairs, Hiyam Al-Khudair, after a tour of the Cooperative Society, assured the public that various brands of fresh and frozen chicken are still available in the market and companies that imposed restrictions on the supplies of the product have been referred to competent officials to receive appropriate measures.

Al-Khudair also confirmed there are "no major violations" on the pricing of the commodity, stating that the inspections by the food security support team, in the presence of inspectors from the Ministry of Commerce, revealed a solid availability of the poultry product after regaining the expected inventory of the item, which dwindled down in the previous months. She added that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Community Development, the Ministry

of Commerce and relevant officials shall conduct routine inspections on Kuwait's food storage.

"The management of the technical staff of trade and industry inspectors is carrying out their tasks in following up on prices in cooperative societies and markets provided by the Ministry of Commerce through the system, and following them up on the ground," Faisal Al-Ansari, the director of the technical staff for supervising goods and setting prices at the Ministry of Commerce told a local Arabic paper during a tour of the facilities.

Al-Ansari also said the Council of Ministers, together with relevant authorities, are hands on with regulating the strategic stockpiling of goods, reassuring consumers of adequate food supplies and price stability while conducting regular tours of sales outlets.

Kuwait eyes increase in fees of school facilities



The increase in the rental value of governmental buildings utilized by the private sector is the focus of a new committee formed by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, Dr. Ali Al-Yaqoub, under the leadership of Assistant Undersecretary for Financial Affairs Youssef Al-Najjar, and by department directors of each ministry sector as members. The committee is keen on determining the investment value of school playgrounds and canteens, including regulating new fees to be submitted to the supervisory authorities.

The committee is scheduled to hold a meeting to set the new fees for usage

of school facilities and submit the report within three months. The discussion will also include how the rental value of schools is based on the number of classrooms in each building, according to a local paper.

In addition, the source noted that each year, various NGOs and private entities request the Ministry of Education to use school playgrounds during evenings for specific functions, and school canteens submit investment proposals, as though these requests were authorized by the Kuwait Flour Mills Company or managed by small-scale organizers, cooperative societies, or feeding programs.

Gender-Equal Education Is About More Than Access



M. Niaz Asadullah

Professor of Development Economics at Monash University Malaysia, is Head of the Southeast Asia cluster of the Global Labor Organization

Ensuring inclusive, equitable, high-quality education for all is a major pillar of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Three decades ago, fewer girls were in school than boys. Among those girls who were fortunate enough to be enrolled, the majority dropped out early. In many parts of the developing world, social norms and poverty combined to limit girls' educational and social opportunities. However, improvements over the past 25 years in girls' enrollment in primary and secondary education have been dramatic, significantly reducing educational gender disparities.

While girls still face extreme exclusion in Sub-Saharan African countries such as Ivory Coast, Guinea, and Togo, the gender enrollment gap has been closed or even reversed (with boys lagging girls) in developing Asia, often owing to government partnerships with religious and other private schools.

For example, during the 2000-2015 campaign for the Millennium Development Goals (the precursors to the SDGs), Islamic madrasas helped close the gender gap by widening school choice in Indonesia and Bangladesh. In Muslim-majority communities, religious and educational norms often conflict, with parents who want to educate their daughters facing opposition from local religious authorities. But madrasas reconcile these differences by educating unmarried girls without violating community norms, and they are often the only schools available in remote villages without public schools and where for-profit private institutions will not go.

By collaborating with co-ed faith-based schools to close their primary-education gender gaps, Bangladesh and Indonesia offer valuable lessons for others in the region, not least Afghanistan and Pakistan, where single-sex educational formats have reinforced segregation at the expense of girls. But faith-based providers also can create new challenges and introduce difficult trade-offs. Some madrasas' educational practices can cancel out whatever benefits they provide in terms of educational access. Because their textbooks, curricula, and classroom settings are not always gender-inclusive, the schooling that they offer to girls can end up reinforcing traditional gender roles.

For example, my research for UNESCO finds that female students and teachers in Malaysian state-supported madrasas systematically express a preference for more traditional, gender-unequal norms, raising concerns about the society-wide implications of the type of education these institutions provide. One solution is to pursue greater gender parity in staffing, since madrasas that recruit female teachers tend to instill less gender-unequal attitudes and practices. The problem, of course, is that the conservative madrasas that are most likely to reinforce patriarchal norms also are the most likely to shun female teachers.

Given this mixed record, UNESCO has used the 20th anniversary of its Global Education Monitoring Report to consider what role faith-based schools should play in achieving gender equality by the SDGs' 2030 target date.

Governments have tools to minimize faith-based schooling's potential negative effects on gender equality, such as by ensuring that all madrasas are registered and follow the same curricula and gender-bias training processes as public schools. But that is easier said than done. Much depends on whether government institutions have the capacity to enforce standards and mediate between competing interest groups.

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All are welcome at the Climate Club



Avram Alpert and Dennis J. Snower

Avram Alpert is a fellow at The New Institute and lecturer at Princeton University. Dennis J. Snower, a professorial research fellow at the Institute for New Economic Thinking and a senior research fellow at the Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford

By the end of 2022, the G7 aims to launch an 'open, cooperative international Climate Club' to foster coordinated action to achieve the Paris climate agreement's maximum-warming target of 1.5° Celsius without leaving anyone at a competitive disadvantage. Though we have been hearing calls for international climate action for decades, there is good reason to think that this time will be different.

The Climate Club is the brainchild of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, whose proposal is based on four premises. First, international climate action needs to be broad-based and consistent, with all club members aiming for the same objectives. Second, countries should be allowed to pursue these common objectives in their own ways, as long as everyone abides by 'a uniform measurement of CO2 content of products and materials'. Third, developing countries should receive support to achieve the common objective. And, lastly, having to compete against cheaper, more carbon-intensive methods should not put 'climate policy pioneers' at a disadvantage in the global marketplace.

This proposal might sound like a rehash of past policies, but it fundamentally shifts the focus in policy design. Historically, we have viewed climate policy in only two dimensions: the climate and the economy. This has led to a focus on ideas like global carbon pricing, which makes a lot of sense in strictly economic terms. Polluters emit excessive amounts of CO2 into the atmosphere because the costs are imposed on society. The solution therefore is to ensure that polluters pay.

The problem is that citizens often oppose such policies, especially if there is no mechanism to compensate those who are disadvantaged by the higher costs (such as low-income households that cannot afford basic goods at environmentally friendly prices, or those working in carbon-intensive sectors). Moreover, the costs associated with carbon pricing are not just economic but also social. Even if the proceeds from a carbon tax are spent on the poor and the displaced, fossil fuel-reliant communities may collapse, and some people may feel as though they are no longer shaping their own futures.

These were some of the lessons of the 2018-19 French gilets jaunes (yellow vest) protests, which erupted in response to a modest increase in the tax on diesel fuel. And a similar problem has long plagued the global climate-policy debate. Low- and middle-income countries resent being asked by rich, industrialized countries — the biggest emitters historically — to pay more for the energy they need for development. To acknowledge these potential ramifications is to move from an abstract two-dimensional world to a three-dimensional one that is closer to the reality we inhabit.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

“Traditional carbon pricing, for example, has often failed the solidarity test, by creating winners and losers (both economically and socially), as well as the agency test, by ignoring people's voices in the process”

While the two-dimensional world of economic models can be measured in terms of GDP and carbon prices, the real world requires different metrics to account for the full meaning of any policy. To that end, one of us (Snower) and Katharina Lima de Miranda have proposed a metric with the acronym SAGE: solidarity, agency, gain, environment. Here, solidarity refers to the extent of social inclusion and cohesion, agency refers to people's ability to shape their own lives, and gain and environment refer to traditional measures of economic output and environmental sustainability, respectively. A solidarity score increases when there is more social trust, generosity, and so forth, and an agency score increases when people report greater confidence in their ability to achieve worthwhile goals. By broadening the scope beyond GDP growth, SAGE allows us to recouple the links between economic policies and social well-being. As a new way to discuss and evaluate climate policies, the SAGE model can help us understand why some past climate policies have not worked. Traditional carbon pricing, for example, has often failed the solidarity test, by creating winners and losers (both economically and socially), as well as the agency test, by ignoring people's voices in the process.

One of the 'gilets jaunes' grievances, for example, was that the unaffordability of French urban life forced many laborers to live outside the cities, where limited public transit options forced them to drive to work. The protesters felt a lack of solidarity and agency (because they had little choice in where they lived or how they got around).

Only by accounting for people's social needs (alongside economic and environmental needs) will we be able to advance viable policy reforms. That brings us back to the G7's proposed club model. If correctly implemented, it can accommodate social factors alongside economic and environmental factors, succeeding where similar past efforts have failed.

According to Scholz, the Climate Club will promote "cooperation between

countries that want to press ahead with the social and economic transformation needed to tackle climate change." The result, in practice, would be a partnership in which participants commit to ambitious, well-defined climate goals as well as to the specific domestic measures that are required to reach those goals. Scholz's team acknowledges that wealthy countries that have emitted the most carbon historically are in a different position than others. They refer to "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" — one of the core principles of the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Climate Club thus appreciates the different demands that a common set of goals places on different countries, and that this calls for "intensive cooperation on industrial transformation and capacity-building."

By encouraging countries to shape their climate policies in accordance with their socioeconomic realities, the Climate Club is well positioned to avoid some of the problems that led to the 'gilets jaunes'. But to succeed, it must be maximally ambitious (aiming for the 1.5°C target), maximally inclusive, and maximally permissive in the policy pathways that it opens up. It is this flexibility that will help developed and developing countries work together, listen to one another's perspectives, and learn from it. If it works, the club could create a worldwide ripple effect, offering much-needed hope that the fight against climate change can be won.

Reasons Financial Markets Are So Complacent



Anatole Kaletsky

Chief Economist and Co-Chairman of Gavekal Dragonomics, is the author of *Capitalism 4.0: The Birth of a New Economy in the Aftermath of Crisis*.

Do you believe in fairy tales? If so, you could probably earn good money nowadays as a financial trader or gain power and prestige as a central banker. While annual inflation in the United States, the eurozone, and the United Kingdom has soared to 40-year highs and will probably hit double digits after the summer, financial markets and central banks seem confident that the war against surging prices will be over by Christmas and that interest rates will start falling by next spring. If this happens, the world economy will soon return to the financially perfect conditions of the Goldilocks fairy tale that has entranced investors for the past decade: neither too hot nor too cold, and always just right for profits.

Investors' optimism can be seen in the trillions of dollars stacked recently on three closely related market bets. Money markets are now predicting that US interest rates will peak at below 3.5 percent in January 2023 and then decline starting from next April to around 2.5 percent in early 2024. Bond markets are priced for US inflation to collapse from 9.1 percent today to just 2.8 percent in December 2023. And equity markets assume that the economic slowdown that causes this unprecedented disinflation will be mild enough for US corporate profits to increase by 9 percent in 2023 from this year's record levels.

Central bankers are more nervous than investors, but they are reassured by their economic models, which are still based on updated versions of the 'rational expectations hypothesis' that failed so miserably in the 2008 global financial crisis. These models assume that expectations of low inflation are the key to maintaining price stability. Central bankers therefore see 'well-anchored' inflation expectations as evidence that their policies are working.

When central bankers and markets follow each other, both are likely to be led astray. But this only partly explains financial markets' willingness to bet against warnings by eminent commentators such as Larry Summers, Mohamed El-Erian, Jim O'Neill, and Nouriel Roubini of a return to 1970s-style stagflation.

I have just spent three months traveling around the world to discuss with hundreds of professional investors why I also have shifted to an unequivocally bearish outlook, after a decade of Panglossian optimism about financial markets' prospects. These discussions have convinced me that today's investor confidence rests on four fallacies, or at least cognitive biases.



The first cognitive bias is to downplay and defy geopolitics — a view summed up by Nathan Rothschild's legendary instruction in the Napoleonic Wars to "buy on the sound of cannons." Professional investors take pride in trading against panicky retail investors who sell their assets because of wars.

This contrarian approach has often proved right, though with one glaring exception. The October 1973 war between Israel and

commodity supply reduction. That implies an increase in US interest rates to 5 percent, 6 percent, or 7 percent instead of the 3.4 percent peak that investors and central banks now assume. Yet, investors' Pavlovian reflex is to downplay this geopolitical upheaval and focus instead on small adjustments in US monetary policy.

This stance reflects a second cognitive bias, summarized in the investment adage 'the trend is your friend', which implies that changes

obvious — except to financial traders subject to a third cognitive bias: 'Don't fight the Fed'. This favorite market saying asserts that once the US central bank gets serious about achieving an objective, such as an inflation target, investors should always assume that it will get its way.

This makes sense when the Fed is genuinely prepared to do whatever it takes to meet its goals, for example by clearly pursuing low inflation regardless of the effect on unemployment, stock markets, and debt-servicing costs. But today's Fed is so focused on 'well-anchored' inflation expectations that it is quite relaxed about 'backward-looking' data that continue to show prices rising much faster than most businesses and workers have ever seen.

That leads to a final bias: Most people find it difficult to imagine events that have never happened in their lifetimes. For many investors and policymakers, stubbornly high inflation falls into this category. Market wisdom expresses this bias with the adage that 'there are no new eras'.

But new eras do happen, as the world learned painfully in 1973. And today's interaction of Russia and COVID-19 with monetary and fiscal expansion has created unprecedented conditions which guarantee that the period ahead will be very different from the past 40 years.

The question is whether the new era now dawning will be dominated, for the first time in a generation, by persistently rapid price growth; or whether, for the first time in history, we will painlessly overcome an inflationary crisis with negative real interest rates and without the collateral damage of a major recession. Markets and central banks confidently expect a new, carefree epoch. If they are right, we can all live happily ever after.

“ Squeezing Russia, one of the world's largest producers of energy and many other commodities, out of global markets has triggered a supply shock that is at least as serious as the 1973-74 Arab oil embargo and will last for years ”

a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria permanently transformed the world economy in ways that ruined a generation of overconfident investors. They downplayed events that are eerily reminiscent of today: an energy shock, a surge in inflation after a long period of monetary and fiscal expansion, and bewilderment among policymakers who simultaneously faced high inflation and rising unemployment.

Squeezing Russia, one of the world's largest producers of energy and many other commodities, out of global markets has triggered a supply shock that is at least as serious as the 1973-74 Arab oil embargo and will last for years. Restoring price stability will therefore now require a long-term demand constraint tough enough to match the

in market-moving economic indicators such as inflation, unemployment, or interest rates are more important than their levels. Many investors accordingly believe that monetary conditions have become very tight because central banks have raised interest rates in increments of 0.75 percentage points instead of the usual 0.25 percentage points, despite the fact that rates are still much lower than in any previous tightening cycle.

Similarly, investors seem unperturbed by inflation rising above 9 percent because they expect it to fall to 'only' 7 percent by December. But businesses and workers in the real economy will still see prices rising at their fastest rate in decades, which is bound to drive corporate pricing strategies and pay negotiations for 2023. Such a conclusion seems



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Top Five Global Wellness Retreats in 2022

By Hermoine Macura-Noble
Special to The Times Kuwait

Holiday's are all about healing in 2022. Here are the top five wellness retreats in the world that offer a great escape and time and treatments to restore and revitalize your body, mind and spirit.

Anantara Iko Mauritius Resort, Villas & Spa, Mauritius: With exquisite natural scenery, miles of jaw-dropping coastline, and unrivaled experiences, the island is the destination of choice for discerning guests seeking a combination of luxurious adventure and holistic wellness. One of the newest properties on the island, Anantara Iko Mauritius Resort Villas & Spas, features the introduction of daily activities focused on wellness.

Guests can enjoy activities such as nearby guided forest walks, local cultural tours, snorkeling in the Blue Bay Marine Park, plus a selection of wellness therapies ranging from yoga, meditation, tai chi, and stretching to de-stress and unwind in purely natural surroundings amplified by nature.

For those looking for a tailor-made program incorporating a spa, the new three, five, and seven-day packages are included. Our favorite? The 90-minute Anantara Signature Massage, which combines indigenous ingredients such as locally sourced salt scrubs and essential oils infused with flora and fauna native to the island.

Mindfulness and meditation at Mystique, Greece: Perched on the Caldera cliffs of Oia, Mystique has partnered with OPO wellness and technology studio to create an immersive meditation program for its guests to experience, that will have exclusive access to the customized sessions while they relax in the Greek haven, surrounded by the deep blue waters of the Aegean Sea.

OPO's meditation program will allow guests to connect with the captivating surroundings that Mystique provides. The 'Today' meditation program balances the physical, mental and emotional state of mind, split into 4 sessions; Morning Rise, Daytime Chill, Evening Reflections, and Night Sky. These sessions aim to revive a wellness spirit within each guest; they are supported by neutrally enhancing soundscapes, breath work methods, and eyes-open techniques, maintaining the principles of barefoot luxury on which the hotel was founded since it first opened in 2007.

Mystique is surrounded by an extraordinary natural landscape, creating the perfect location for practicing and cultivating stillness through the artform of meditation. Upon arrival, guests will become fully immersed in the laid-

back Santorini lifestyle, and during their stay, Mystique will offer guests the opportunity to take a tranquil stroll through the cobbled streets of Oia to capture the beautiful sunrise on the island.

The Bodrum Edition Spa, Turkey: Conveniently located by the hotel's picture-perfect infinity pool and beach club, The Bodrum EDITION Spa offers an array of healing treatments and beauty services in a soothing, tranquil environment. Guests are invited to take advantage of the eight luxurious treatment rooms, a Turkish Hamman, sauna, salon, and Vitality Lounge.

The Turkish Hammam is the spa's epicenter, encapsulating tradition and minimalism, offering the guests the perfect place to relax in the steam bath. Schedule a therapy bath, manicure, foot bath, or hair and scalp treatment for total relaxation. Massage sessions are also offered in the treatment rooms and private suites or in a stunning outdoor cabana that boasts unrivaled views of the Aegean Sea.

Guests traveling to The Bodrum EDITION can also experience daily Cihangir yoga classes, a yoga practice created to physicalize the dynamic spirit of Istanbul alongside the healing power of mindfulness. Located in Tilkicik bay at the western point of the Bodrum peninsula, the spa is the boutique hotel's main feature, which features 108 rooms and is also minutes from Bodrum Castle and Bodrum Amphitheater.

Velaa Private Island's Spa, Maldives: The ultra-luxurious Maldivian island resort, Velaa Private Island's Spa, is known to be the pioneer of some of the most luxurious and innovative treatments in the world. In a world of expertise and excellence where cutting-edge technology meets traditional art, the spa is home to

Maldives's only snow room facility. The snow room, coupled with the Sauna and Steam room, promotes positive health benefits that aid with detoxification, stimulating the skin with hot and cold therapies. It also helps clear out impurities and toxins built up over time. The relaxation cloud is another hi-tech spa feature that allows guests to reach a complete state of bliss.



The spa treatment list features a variety of experiences, including ayurvedic massages and a variety of anti-aging treatments using products from KOTOSHINA, an organic skincare brand from Kyoto, Japan, made from organically farmed green tea and pure spring water from France. One of Velaa Spa's signature treatments is the ultra-luxurious Caviar Facial using green caviar and stem cells to rejuvenate and pamper the skin. The 90-minute facial is perfect for skin in need of a regenerative boost. An intense dose

of green caviar combined with antioxidant-rich gold trace elements is applied, while ultrasound waves penetrate on a cellular level to repair and rejuvenate the skin. This luxurious facial will leave your complexion shimmering with renewed vitality and improved elasticity.

RAKxa, Bangkok, Thailand: An urban wellness retreat in the city's green heart, RAKxa focuses on preventative healthcare using an integrated approach to wellness aimed at helping you to truly know yourself. The wellness retreat seamlessly combines the best of modern and traditional healing with treatments covering all dimensions of the self: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. One of the best treatments on offer is the "Your DNA" program which aims to decode a person's genetic health risks and begin medical guidance and treatments. The 3 to 14-day program consists of consultation by experts, fitness assessments, well-balanced meals, holistic cures, and leisure activities. Other alternative therapies that yield outstanding results include traditional Chinese medicine, Thai medicine, and Ayurveda. Combining technology and tradition, RAKxa is peacefully isolated from the city yet still conveniently connected to both Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang International Airports, which are about one hour away.

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Velaa Spa - Snow Room



SPA CLOUD

One Small Step for Manchin, One Giant Leap for Mankind



Antara Haldar

Associate Professor of Empirical Legal Studies at the University of Cambridge

On a celebratory night in late 2016, the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower were lit up in green to remind the world to implement the Paris climate agreement. Yet in recent years, climate legislation in the United States has been stuck at a red light, most recently because Joe Manchin, a conservative-leaning Democratic US Senator from West Virginia, single-handedly made a hostage of America's commitment to the Paris agreement's decarbonization targets.

But now, after previously striking a lethal blow to US President Joe Biden's \$2 trillion Build Back Better Act — the most ambitious climate legislation in US history — Manchin has come around in support of a modest substitute bill that will include hundreds of billions in federal funding to support the clean-energy transition. At a time when extreme weather events are ravaging many parts of the world, the compromise package comes as a big relief. But it is also somewhat disappointing for a beleaguered Democratic Party that is still reeling from the Supreme Court's reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, and for an American electorate that is increasingly anxious about climate change.

Efforts to establish a global climate-policy governance regime have taken a long, zigzagging path, passing through 26 annual conferences of parties" (COPs). The process got off to a promising start, in 1988, with the creation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's premier climate-science entity. And that was soon followed by the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, where 178 countries adopted the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

But the UNFCCC imposed no binding requirements, and at the 1997 Kyoto Conference, the first attempt to mandate specific emissions reductions (for developed countries) in global climate talks hit a roadblock. After the US Senate refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, declaring it "dead on arrival," there would be almost no progress for almost two decades.

By the time that 196 parties to the UNFCCC approved the Paris accord, in late 2015, the world had already crossed the 1° Celsius warming threshold. Nonetheless, with its central goal of limiting global warming to well below 2°C, and preferably to 1.5°C, the Paris agreement marked a decisive, epochal shift in climate regulation. Having been adopted (though not ratified) by



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

“As a dynamic, hybrid, and flexible legal framework, the Paris agreement embodies state-of-the-art contract-making. It is light on enforcement, heavy on consensus, and mediated by participation, interaction, and regular monitoring

every country on the planet, it is the first truly global pact on the issue.

All Paris signatories are expected to submit their own decarbonization pathways — known as Nationally Determined Contributions — and then to revisit and increase their targets every five years. In the spirit of setting a common destination while allowing each party to chart its own course, the agreement relies more on carrots (international approval) than on sticks (there are no fees, sanctions, or formal system of arbitration for noncompliance).

As a uniquely dynamic, hybrid, and flexible legal framework, the Paris agreement embodies state-of-the-art contract-making. It is light on enforcement, heavy on consensus, and mediated by participation, interaction, and regular monitoring. In addition to being a breakthrough for climate policy, the accord offers a masterclass in institution building, drawing its moral force from a broad-based global movement of activists, NGOs, students, Indigenous groups, and many others.

Although the accord is technically a legally

binding treaty (at least procedurally), it relies on the goodwill of individual actors (in this case nation-states), which makes it a landmark in international law. True, there is no scientific litmus test to determine definitively whether something counts as a legal system". Rather, the best definition we have is the one given by the English legal theorist H.L.A. Hart, who argued, in *The Concept of Law*, that a legal system is the union of primary and secondary rules — 'meaning rules' and 'rules about rules'.

Hence, one way to determine if the Paris agreement marks the start of an effective global climate-policy governance system is to see if its rules about 'rules' are percolating down to the 'rules' set by nation-states through domestic legislation. So far, the European Union, Canada, South Korea, Japan, South Africa, and the United Kingdom have all updated existing laws or enacted new ones to uphold their commitments under the Paris agreement. And all have embraced the emerging gold standard of compliance: a 2050 net-zero emissions target.

Moreover, individual members of the European

Economic Area (such as Iceland) have also chosen to incorporate Paris targets into national law, even though they are not legally bound by the EU's commitments. And even China, the world's biggest emitter in absolute terms, has committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.

International law rests on the notion of *opinio juris*, which refers to the sense of something being binding. For many around the world, the Paris agreement has indeed instilled this sense of obligation. But not so in the US, where the Republican Party and one Democrat with disproportionate power have been able to threaten the emerging global climate-policy regime. The US is one of the world leaders in per capita emissions, so its cooperation is necessary to achieve the Paris agreement's goals. Good-faith US participation also is important for global morale. When then-President Donald Trump withdrew the US from the agreement in 2017, the move was felt around the world. America's climate credibility has been at low ebb ever since. Although Biden has reversed Trump's decision and committed to reducing the country's emissions by 50-52 percent (from 2005 levels) by 2030, his climate ambitions have been hampered by both Congress and the Supreme Court.

If the US cannot back up its climate rhetoric with substantive domestic achievements, its participation in global negotiations is likely to be met with allegations of hypocrisy and 'green colonialism'. Why should developing countries forego fossil fuels when advanced economies are still consuming them with abandon?



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Preventing opioid usage among youngsters

Drug usage and abuse among youngsters in Kuwait is rising and has become a cause of serious concern for the government, as well as for parents, school authorities, medical personnel, social activists, and law enforcement agencies. Youngsters represent the future of the country, society and their own families, as such their physical and mental health and wellbeing are of utmost importance to everyone concerned.

Drug usage is deleterious to the mental development of youngsters, as their brains are still growing and developing in a process that extends well into their mid-20s. Taking drugs when young can interfere with the developmental processes taking place in the brain, especially in the prefrontal cortex, the area located to the fore of the brain that is responsible for cognitive control functions, such as thinking, reasoning and decision-making. Drug usage at this early stage in life can impair among others, social and family interactions, academic performance, and decision-making abilities that could lead them to engage in risky activities, such as having unsafe sex or driving recklessly.

Taking drugs when young has also been shown to contribute to the development of adult health problems, including heart disease, high blood pressure and sleep disorders. The earlier young drug users can be weaned off drugs, the easier it is to rid them of this behavior and prevent them sliding into becoming drug addicts as adults.

The drugs that are most commonly used by young people in Kuwait have been found to be tobacco, cannabis and alcohol, the last two of which are incidentally banned in the country. More recently, there have been reports of youngsters turning to the use of other more potent recreational drugs — a generic term used to describe legal and illegal drugs that are used without medical supervision, such as analgesics used to treat pain, depressants, stimulants, and



hallucinogens.

Medical practitioners and sociologists point to a variety of reasons that lead youngsters to using drugs. These include:

To fit in: Young people may begin using drugs under peer pressure, as they are eager to be accepted by friends or peers who are into drugs.

To feel good: Using drugs could lead to the individual feeling 'good' or 'high' which is an intoxicating feeling of pleasure.

To feel better: Youngsters who suffer from depression, anxiety, stress-related disorders, or physical pain, may seek relief from drugs.

To do better in academics or sports: Young people who are under pressure to excel or improve their performance in studies or sports may resort to drugs that are stimulants to studying or anabolic steroids that improve athletic performance.

To experiment: Young people are at an age

when they are curious to know more and eager to try out new experiences, especially those which they and their peers consider exciting and audacious.

Just as there are varied reasons for youngsters turning to drugs, so too are there multiple factors that may increase a young person's risk for drug use, including stressful early life experiences, such child abuse or other forms of trauma; lack of monitoring and proper supervision by parents and school authorities; joining groups of peers, or friends who are indulging in drugs.

According to the US National Institute on Drug Abuse there are several explicit signs that parents and teachers could monitor in order to identify whether a youngster has a drug problem.

Young people involved in drug usage usually show a lack of interest in many of the things they liked to do earlier; they have personal or family

relationship problems; starting to spend more time on their own; appearing tired or sad more often; eating erratically, either eating too much or too little than usual; not engaging in proper hygiene, such as taking showers or brushing teeth regularly; exhibiting rapid mood swings, going from being reticent in speech to garrulous, or from being lethargic or lazy to active and energetic; changing friends often; having problems at school in academics, or in their social interactions with classmates and others; displaying memory lapses, poor concentration, lack of coordination, slurred speech and other visible signs.

The good news is that drug use in young people can be prevented, especially if the habit is discovered early. In addition to the medical support and care provided by the ministries of health and of social affairs to drug victims, there are also several prevention programs launched by the authorities that involve families, schools, communities, and the media, which have been found to be effective in preventing or reducing drug use and addiction among youngsters. These programs include education and outreach to help people understand the risks of drug use.

On a family level, you can help prevent your child from turning to drugs by engaging in meaningful communication and spending quality time with your children that help to promote cooperation and reduce parent-child conflicts. Boost the child's confidence and self-esteem by providing encouragement and feedback, as well as genuine praise when they do anything well. Teaching children problem-solving skills; setting limits to teach them self-control and responsibility; becoming aware of who their friends are and what they do during off school hours; providing safe boundaries within which they interact with others, and most importantly set an example by your own behavior, and showing them that you love and care them and will be there for them.

Unplug and let your mind wander

In the modern digital world, it is very easy to 'kill time' during free time. Most people these days spend any short break they get during the day to pour through their favorite social media sites on their smartphones or tablets. They rarely, if ever, sit down quietly and let your mind wander thinking of anything under the sun. Many people consider thinking to be boring, and moreover, thinking involves mental effort whereas clicking their way through social media platforms requires none.

However, new research shows that thinking may be more enjoyable and beneficial than what people have come to believe. Letting your mind wander has been found to enhance creativity and problem-solving, and as a bonus, taking time to 'unplug' from your 'smart' devices can also help you relax and rest as well.

"People tend to think that 'just thinking' or 'just waiting' is boring, but our studies now show that many people actually enjoy being alone with their thoughts much more than they had expected. Distraction-free downtime may be more pleasurable than people may believe," said one of the researchers behind the new study.

To arrive at their conclusions, the research team did six experiments that included a total of 259 people. The study participants were university students from Japan and the United Kingdom. There were varying numbers of



people who took part in each experiment.

In the first of these experiments, the researchers compared how much people enjoyed their time just sitting and thinking for 20 minutes, with how much they believed they would enjoy it before participating in the study. They were not allowed to have any distractions, like reading, walking around, or checking their

smartphone. Afterward, they were asked to rate their enjoyment of the session.

The other experiments were similar in nature but with variations. For example, in one experiment, the study participants were asked to sit in an empty conference room, while in another, they were seated in a dark, tented area where they could not see anything around

them. The amount of time they were asked to sit and think also varied.

In another experiment, one group predicted how much they would enjoy thinking while another predicted how much they would enjoy checking the news. Although the group engaged in thinking estimated they would not enjoy it as much, the two groups ended up enjoying their respective activities just about equally.

With each experiment, the overall conclusion remained the same; people enjoyed thinking more than they predicted that they would. However, a caveat to the study findings is that people did not rate thinking as being extremely enjoyable. It was simply more enjoyable than they thought it would be. It appears that all thinking is not necessarily enjoyable. For example, some people may be more prone to negative thinking when they are free from outside distractions.

The researchers also admitted that their work needed to be replicated among other populations, since their study participants were all college students in Japan and the UK. Nevertheless, they recommended that in today's world where people face multiple challenges, stresses and responsibilities on a daily basis, they need to find time to unplug and relax so as to recharge their internal batteries and to be productive again.



Higher US Interest Rates unlikely to trigger an Asian Financial Crisis



Hoe Ee Khor and Kimi Xu Jiang

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SINGAPORE – Hawkish shifts in the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy have often led to heightened financial and economic stress in emerging economies. In the early 1990s, the Fed raised interest rates preemptively to curb inflation, precipitating the 1994 Mexican "tequila" crisis. In 2013, the Fed signaled its intention to tighten monetary policy, resulting in the major emerging-markets sell-off known as the "taper tantrum."

Given the region's history, one might expect that policymakers in the ASEAN+3 countries – the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, together with China (including Hong Kong), Japan, and South Korea – would be particularly anxious about the Fed's increasing hawkishness. Indeed, the Fed's recent efforts to curb high and persistent inflation have prompted fears of a regional financial crisis, similar to the Asian financial

crisis of 1997.

But the Fed's actions will not have as much impact on the region as they did in the late 1990s. Today, the ASEAN+3 economies are stronger and more durable, making a 1997-style financial meltdown improbable.

The 1997 crisis was mainly caused by a combination of macroeconomic imbalances and sharp capital-flow reversals, triggered by speculative attacks on the Thai baht and other regional currencies. East Asian economies had enjoyed a period of rapid growth before the crisis – funded by surging capital inflows and excessive foreign lending – but without sound regulation and policy. Most Asian currencies were still pegged to the US dollar, bank regulatory frameworks were simpler, and capital buffers were low.

Painful structural reforms have helped ASEAN+3 economies rebuild balance sheets, strengthen economic fundamentals, and establish robust regulatory frameworks. The region's policymakers, more skillful in navigating uncertainties and managing shocks, have assembled a formidable, multi-layered \$8.8 trillion financial safety net. In addition to their foreign reserves – \$7 trillion in total – the ASEAN+3 economies can now rely on multilateral swap arrangements like the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization agreement, and the International Monetary Fund.

Most of the emerging ASEAN+3 economies have run current-account surpluses in recent years. In contrast, crisis-hit economies ran persistent current-account deficits and relied on external funding in the years before the 1997

financial crisis. The ASEAN-4 (Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand) have run current-account surpluses for most of the past two decades – except for Indonesia, which ran a small current-account deficit over the same period.

Moreover, banks in the region are much sounder and more resilient. They are generally well-capitalized and have sufficient liquidity buffers since adopting the Basel regulations after the 2008 global financial crisis. As a result, banks were generally on a sound financial footing going into the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing them to dip into their regulatory and countercyclical capital buffers when necessary.

Furthermore, the size of the local-currency bond market in the ASEAN+3 region has increased to 123% of GDP this year, compared to 74% of GDP in 2000. With the ability to borrow in local currency, debts are no longer as exposed to currency mismatch as they were during the Asian financial crisis.

Likewise, capital flows have not been surging into the region in recent years as they did in the run-up to the last two financial crises. In ASEAN-4 markets, net capital outflows have been relatively mild so far, and capital inflows consist mainly of relatively stable direct investments. In South Korea, portfolio inflows increased during the pandemic as investors saw Korean bonds as relatively safe assets.

Lastly, East Asia's economies – especially the crisis-affected ASEAN-4 economies and South Korea – no longer operate tightly

pegged exchange-rate regimes, allowing their currencies to fluctuate and adjust to market forces as a buffer against shocks. The few economies that still peg their currencies to the US dollar or a currency basket have managed to fend off speculative attacks through strong foreign-exchange buffers and prudent fiscal policies.

Admittedly, there could be pockets of weakness across the region. The COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet, and each economy's recovery trajectory will depend on its ability to adapt and seize new opportunities. US monetary tightening could adversely and unevenly affect financial markets in ASEAN+3 countries, and these developments might trigger portfolio outflows similar to the taper tantrum of 2013. In recent months, investors sold stocks in South Korea and the Philippines and reduced their positions in Indonesian and Malaysian bonds. So far, however, these outflows have been relatively insignificant and do not threaten financial stability.

China's expected economic rebound will also contribute to the region's recovery, as it did after the 1997 and 2008 crises. China's economy is forecast to bottom out and regain momentum during the second half of 2022, with full-year growth expected to come in at around 4.8%, despite significant downside risks.

Rising US interest rates will probably lead to some capital outflows and higher borrowing costs for the ASEAN+3 economies. But a full-blown 1997-style financial crisis remains unlikely. The region has moved on.

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