



DIPLOMAT
Kuwait discusses global, local issues of concern with US diplomat

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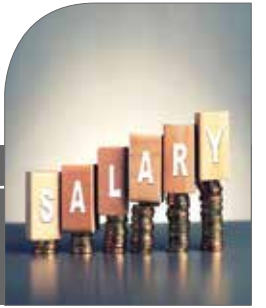
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Salaries in Kuwait fourth highest in Arab world



Food self-sufficiency, a distant dream



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

many uncertainties remain, including high fertilizer prices that can impact future production prospects and farmers' livelihoods."

For policymakers in Kuwait the recent high food price scenario and potential threat to its food supplies should serve as a stark reminder of the country's continued vulnerability to extended periods of food supply disruptions and price hikes. As recent events highlighted, while oil and gas may fuel the global economy, it is food that fuels the human body; having abundant oil to export is no guarantee that it will ensure uninterrupted inflow of food supplies in future.

In the event of a major global calamity, such as one arising from another pandemic or a significant geopolitical or ecological and environmental upheaval that leads to extended periods of food supply disruptions and price increases, countries such as Kuwait that are overwhelmingly reliant on food



imports, could be confronted with a serious threat to their growth and progress.

Government strategy to secure food security over the years has been focused on building larger food storage silos, boosting stocks of imported foods, and diversifying the countries from where it sources

food. While this strategy could mitigate the threat of short-term supply disruptions, it cannot be maintained over extended periods of food shortages. Moreover, this is not a sustainable food security strategy over the long-term and in the face of critical global food shortages.

When confronting internal shortfalls

in production or potential future shortages, countries that normally export food are liable to succumb to internal social and political pressures and ban export of essential food commodities. This was witnessed early this year when some countries imposed restrictions on their food exports, in response to the food supply disruptions brought on by the outbreak of conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Rather than continue building larger and more food silos, and stock up on imported foods, Kuwait needs to rethink its food security strategy. There is an urgent need to focus on decreasing the country's food security vulnerabilities, by reducing reliance on imports and enhancing domestic production and utilization, through developing viable and cost-effective food production schemes, and policies designed to improve food security in the country.

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Expats bashing at pre-election gathering

In the wake of the dissolution of parliament on 2 August, potential candidates hoping to grab a seat in a new parliament, have begun holding informal gatherings with their electorate. Although general elections have been tentatively announced, no formal date for the polling has yet been announced, but this has not detracted prospective candidates from holding informal meetings with their electorates.

In the hope of garnering maximum electoral support they have been making unrealistic promises and illogical pledges to their voters. Among these promises are that if elected they would compel the government to write off the loans accrued by nationals, as well as increase subsidies and other freebies for citizens. In addition, many have, as usual, resorted to expat bashing, blaming foreigners for all of the country's woes, and pledging to ensure that they would rebalance the demographic structure by throwing out the expatriates.

The politicians propound these unfeasible assurances on the assumption that most citizens are unaware that realizing the promises they make would harm the country and its people economically and financially. The suggestion of writing off loans is no longer feasible as the country's finances would not permit such largesse, and the notion that throwing out expats



would solve the country's problems is just as absurd.

If a reminder of the importance of expats to the economy was needed, it was brought home during the pandemic period when qualified and experienced workers were in short supply. To prove the efficiency of

expats one need to look no further than the public sector, where nationals form the bulk of employees and expats account for only around 24 percent of government workers, and productivity of this sector is abysmally low. By contrast, in the private sector, where nationals form less than 4 percent of

employees and foreigners account for the remaining 96 percent, the efficiency and productivity is far higher.

Moreover, most nationals are unwilling, if not incapable of doing many of the jobs currently done by foreigners, especially if it involves outdoor and manual work. So can the government realistically afford to throw out the 1.5 million productive expatriates working in the private sector, and the few remaining in the public sector, and hope to replace them with nationals at the same wages, even given the generous labor support allowances provided by the state to those seeking work in the private sector.

On the other hand, a look at the number of domestic workers in the country is quite pertinent. Most domestic helpers are employed by citizens and their numbers have soared to over 700,000, with domestic workers now constituting nearly half of the number of citizens and accounting for around a quarter of the expats in the country.

The problem in Kuwait is not in the proportion of expatriates in the demographic structure, but rather in how to deal with this problem by providing adequate and appropriate services to both citizens and residents. Electorate needs to be aware of the futility of unrealistic promises being made by potential candidates.

Dhaman Hospitals in Ahmadi, Jahra ready by year end

Kuwait's Dhaman Health Assurance Hospitals Company (Daman), announced that its upcoming hospital projects in Ahmadi and Jahra are expected to be fully equipped and ready for service by the end of 2022, a year later than previously planned due to work disruptions caused by the COVID-19 health crisis.

Dhaman, which is the first healthcare organization in the Middle East under a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model, was established in 2014 as part of the 'New Kuwait 2035' development plan. The company is focused on providing an integrated healthcare system that includes medical insurance programs, as well as building and operating a network of primary healthcare centers and hospitals that cover all areas in Kuwait to provide insured healthcare services to the large expatriate community in the country.

The company said in a statement that it is working relentlessly to complete all work on its two hospitals in Jahra and Ahmadi by the last quarter of 2022. The statement added that work of equipping the hospital is currently underway, and that, in line with Ministry of Health requirements, the hospitals will have the latest equipment, having the highest specifications and technologies available globally.

The statement noted that the delivery and installation of more than 548 medical beds, with all the provisions for comfortable reclining and treating of patients, have been completed. The two hospitals are also geared to offer services of the highest international standards and the best levels of quality keeping in mind the safety of the patient as stipulated by the company's policies and in compliance with the requirements and standards of the

Joint Commission International (JCI), from which Daman has obtained approval.

The sources added that the opening of hospitals in the near future is an important and strategic step that will undoubtedly be followed by other steps in preparation for the launch of more health centers and hospitals in the country. The company's vision and strategy is to build and manage a comprehensive and integrated health system for treating expatriates working in the private sector (Article 18), and will include all medical activities and services, right from insurance of the patient, to treatment, follow-up and health maintenance programs.

The hospitals in Jahra and Ahmadi are also equipped to provide nearly all specialized medical services, including in family medicine, dentistry, pediatrics, surgery, emergency, gynecology and internal medicine, orthopedics, physiotherapy and intensive care with pharmacy, radiology, diagnostic imaging, and laboratory services.

The two hospital buildings spread over a total area of 82,000 square meters have five floors each as well as a basement level. Each hospital contains patient rooms and 330 beds capacity, 14 operating rooms, 21 intensive care units for adults and newborns, laboratories built on an area of 1,700 square meters, the radiology department with an area of 3,076 square meters, the emergency department with an area of 5,289 square meters, which is linked to an air ambulance helipad, and outpatient clinics with an area of 8,340 square meters, in addition to the pharmacy department with an area of 1,739 square meters. Each hospital also has a car parking facility to accommodate more than 550 cars.



Kuwait in forefront of humanitarian and development aid

World Humanitarian Day on 19 August is an occasion to draw focus on aid workers around the world, appreciate their humanitarian work, and the challenges they face on a daily basis. This day also brings together partners from across the humanitarian field to advocate for the survival and dignity of people affected by crises, and the safety and security of aid workers.

Speaking on the occasion of this year's World Humanitarian Day, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Chief of Mission in Kuwait, Mazen AboulHosn, said "Kuwait has always been at the forefront of humanitarian and development aid around the world. The contributions and support we receive from the State of Kuwait are vital and lifesaving, and it allows us to help hundreds of thousands of needy and conflict-affected people in various humanitarian fields."

Pointing out that during the year 2022, Kuwait provided financial aid in support of the organization's programs in Afghanistan and Ukraine, he added "We look forward to more cooperation with all donor countries, including the State of Kuwait, NGOs, and the private sector to reach the largest possible number of needy people."

IOM is one of the largest agencies responding to crisis situations around the world, including conflict, violence, disasters, and

epidemics. The organization is also part of the Humanitarian Coordination System. In 2021, IOM's work in crisis response reached 31.7 million people, including internally displaced persons, refugees, and migrants and host communities, either directly or as part of community-based programs. IOM offices provided livelihood assistance to 802,145 individuals affected by displacement, and implemented transition and recovery projects across 87 countries, reaching over 5.3 million beneficiaries. IOM also implemented cash-based interventions through activities in 119 countries, reaching nearly 1.9 million beneficiaries, with interventions in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen.

The Global Humanitarian Overview indicates that there are 303 million people around the world in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.





Kuwait discusses global, local issues of concern with US diplomat

By Rabi Kallas
Special to The Times Kuwait

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, met last week with visiting United States Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, Michele Jeanne Sisson. During the visit, the two sides discussed a wide range of bilateral and multilateral priorities for the two countries, including combating global food security, advancing global health, addressing human rights and humanitarian needs, peacekeeping and peace-building, and other issues of mutual interest and concern.

During her visit, the assistant secretary of state also met with other state officials, as well as representatives from the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, and the United Nations Representative Office in Kuwait. Amid the flurry of discussions and meetings, the US diplomat found time to accord an exclusive media interview to Arabic daily Al Jarida, covering an extensive range of topics of interest to Kuwait and the United States.

In an earlier interview, when asked what propelled her to join the foreign service, she said: "It sounds very simple, but I still think of what I do today, as primarily building bridges between the United States and the countries in which I am posted, so as to increase mutual understanding and show people what is common and what sets us apart."

This commitment to building bridges between the US and other nations and engaging in mutually beneficial activities apparently holds true for her today, as it did back then. The career diplomat spent the greater part of her brief visit to Kuwait engaging in discussions on a wide range of issues of common interest to both countries, while also highlighting areas where the

two nations could work together to improve their strengths for the benefit of people in Kuwait as well as around the world.

She began the interview by expressing her amazement at the huge change in infrastructure and developments taking place in Kuwait since her last visit over a decade ago. "I was also fortunate to participate in multilateral talks during the US-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue held in Washington in January of this year and I am very happy to be here in person and to have had the opportunity to sit down with His Excellency the Foreign Minister and other foreign ministry officials."

Appointed in 2018 to the highest rank in the US Foreign Service of a Career Ambassador, Ms. Sison is a veteran diplomat who has served in her country's foreign service for over four decades. In December 2021 she was appointed to her current post as Assistant Secretary of State; prior to this she has been assigned as Ambassador to Haiti, and before that as Deputy Representative to the United Nations. The 53-year old Ms. Sison has also served as Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives, Ambassador to Lebanon, and Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates.

Born in Arlington, Virginia in 1959, to Veronica Travers Sison and Pastor Bravo Sison from the Philippines, Ms Sison is the first Filipino-American ambassador from the United States. Following her BA in Political Science from Wellesley College in 1981 and her studies at the London School of Economics, Ms. Sison joined the State Department in 1982.

The US diplomat's visit comes as part of the commitments made by the two countries during the US-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue, which among others called for promoting the stability and security of the region and advancing mutual interests, including defense and cybersecurity cooperation, bilateral trade and investment, combatting health and climate



Ambassador Michele Jeanne Sisson speaks about building bridges to increase mutual understanding between Kuwait and the US

change challenges, facilitating travel, supporting educational and cultural partnerships, and advancing human rights and women's empowerment.

Elaborating on her discussions with Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Al-Sabah and other state officials, Ms. Sison stated: "I had an excellent interview with His Excellency the Foreign Minister, as well as with the Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for International Organizations and the Americas. I also met with officials of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, as well as with the United Nations team in Kuwait. During these talks

we discussed how the United States and Kuwait can work together, not only on a bilateral level but also on how we can cooperate multilaterally within the framework of the United Nations system.

"In this regard, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for the bilateral partnership between Kuwait and the United States, and the partnership that brings us together in multilateral organizations, as well as for the role that the State of Kuwait plays within the framework of the United Nations system. My visit gave me an opportunity to sit down and

listen to the Kuwaiti leadership on its approach to the UN, specifically on issues such as adherence to the UN Charter, upholding the integrity of the UN, and talking about the common ground we share within the rules-based international system.

"We also had very good conversations about ways we can cooperate to combat global food insecurity that affects so many countries around the world right now, and collaborate on global health security, not only with the COVID-19 pandemic but other infectious diseases as well, and of course, we discussed promoting sustainable development and responding to the global climate crisis. The meetings were also about making sure we hear directly from the Kuwaiti leadership about their priorities, and about how we can work together to support the world's most vulnerable people who are affected by food insecurity, global health threats and the climate crisis."

Elaborating on global food security, and in particular about what Kuwait and the US could do to strengthen food security around the world, the Assistant Secretary of State said: "Food security is a big issue these days. The global food crisis was driven by the effects of climate changes such as droughts and floods, and of course the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that caused bottlenecks to supplies and supply chains, which disrupted a lot of production in industry. Now we have conflicts, including Russia's war on Ukraine that have led among others to fertilizer prices doubling since last year. And then of course we need fuel to move food from one place to another, and the price of fuel has also shot up. Thus, all these issues combined contributed to the exacerbation of the food problem, and accelerated the food crisis in sub-Saharan Africa, in South Asia, in the Middle East, and even across the world.

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Travelers face high price for return tickets to Kuwait

Just as the rush of travelers eager to fly out of the country at the start of holiday season led to a sharp increase in prices of air tickets, so too is it now; as travelers head back home at the end of their vacation period, they face the prospect of purchasing return tickets at exorbitant prices. High ticket prices at the start and end of the holiday season has become an annual event, and is proving a gold mine of profit for airlines and travel agencies.

Reports indicate that the cost of return air tickets to Kuwait have increased by five-fold from what they were before. Interestingly, the prices for outbound tickets from Kuwait have now decreased appreciably from what they were at the height of the start of holidays. Outbound tickets to some destinations are now available for as low as KD20.

Travel agencies maintain that this five-fold increase in return fares is only to be expected. They note that this year there was a huge demand for tickets as people headed abroad for vacations, after being cooped up in the country for the past two years due to the COVID-19 health crisis and continued infections



in many places. Accordingly, there is now a big demand for return tickets as people have to return to their jobs and students need to head back to schools.

Industry-watchers say this is an ideal time for those citizens and residents who are not

bound by other issues, such as having school-going children, to plan and go on vacation at a lower cost and enjoy very competitive prices for flights. Travel industry expert and formerly a member of the Federation of Tourism and Travel Offices, Abdul Rahman Al-Kharafi, stated

that the prices of tickets for flights departing from Kuwait are witnessing a significant decline, especially for some destinations such as Alexandria and Assiut in Egypt, which reached a low price of nearly KD20 for departure tickets, while the cost of one-way ticket to Cairo is currently only KD27.

Another travel industry veteran Naji Khader, said that the increasing demand for return tickets comes mainly from European destinations, as well as Turkey and Thailand, as return ticket prices from London to Kuwait has shot up to KD204, and from Istanbul to Kuwait to about KD 226, and KD110 from Baku, Azerbaijan.

Among the destinations from which large number of residents are returning to Kuwait are Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and India which are witnessing an increasing demand, with the prices of return tickets from Jordan to Kuwait ranging between KD150 and KD220, from Cairo and Alexandria ranging between KD140 to more than KD160, and from Beirut KD176. Experts concur that the price of return tickets could fall by over 70 percent by the middle of next month.

MOCI offers clarity on domestic worker hiring prices

Warning against any attempt to tamper with domestic labor recruitment contracts, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) clarified that employers were free to choose whether they directly paid the ticket fare to hire domestic workers or paid



the domestic worker recruitment offices for this service.

This move is reportedly being initiated following complaints by labor recruitment offices that the amount fixed by the ministry for hiring workers from abroad was insufficient to meet their costs, especially given that air-ticket prices fluctuate seasonally.

MoCI had earlier fixed a maximum amount that domestic worker recruitment offices could charge employers. That amount will now take into account whether the employer buys the ticket or entrusts the agency to

do it on his or her behalf.

The new decision aims to establish the contract fee up front, and prevents recruitment offices from manipulating their costs, or raising ticket fares citing seasonal fare increases.

Officials at MoCI also advised employers to pay for the services provided by recruitment offices through Knet instead of paying in cash at the offices. They also noted that complaints can be filed against offices that refuse to abide by the regulation through the ministry's official social media channels.

MoH to improve efficiency, reduce wastage of medicines

Improving efficiency in ordering, storing and maintaining stock levels of medicines can significantly reduce wastage from expired and damaged medications, as well as cut expenses of the ministry. In line with this renewed focus on making the process of procuring and storing medicines more efficacious, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has initiated several new policies and measures.

Among the steps being rolled out by management at public medical warehouses is ensuring that new contracts for procuring medicines should specify that they be delivered in batches spread over the validity period of the contract. Other procurement policies include that suppliers will have to replace expired stocks with items of same quality and quantity, or if those medications are no longer produced, then to credit the ministry with the amount involved.

Additionally, orders for certain medications are to be placed under the 'quantities as needed' clause, which

will ascertain that these medications are supplied only 'on-need' basis and thereby remain fresh stocks, further eliminating wastage of stocks and of public money. In 2018-2019 period this wastage of public funds through expired medications amounted to nearly KD1.8 million.

Another measure to reduce the number of expired medicines to improve stock management in warehouses is by estimating the annual demand of hospitals and health centers and specialized medical departments and ordering accordingly. However, this efficiency in stock management should not come at the expense of maintaining the country's strategic stock of essential medications, and ensuring that there is sufficient stocks to provide coverage for a period of between six months and a year so as to ensure the strategic drug security of the state. When it comes to handling and destroying expired medications, the MoH has in place a dual mechanism which relies on either returning the expired medicines to the supplier and replacing them with the same quantity and quality of drugs, or replacing them with modern, more effective medicines approved by the ministry at the same cost as outlined in the original contract. The second measure is to destroy the expired medicines at the ministry's specialized incinerators without any additional financial costs incurred.

Currently pharmaceutical and medical equipment stocks at MoH warehouses are divided into items that are periodically disbursed to all hospitals and health centers to cater for a six-month period. In addition, certain items form part of a strategic stockpile that would be enough to confront emergencies over a six-month period.



Biden nominates new ambassador to Kuwait

U.S. President Joe Biden announced the nomination of Karen Sasahara as "Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary" to Kuwait. The White House said in a statement that Sasahara is a "career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Minister-Counselor" and has "most recently served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for North Africa." Prior to that she served as Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim of the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan.

Before that, she was Consul General in Jerusalem, Senior Advisor in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, served on the Foreign Service Board of Examiners, Deputy Chief of Mission in Sana'a, Yemen, and Foreign Policy Advisor to the Commanding General of Special Operations Command Central.

Earlier assignments include Baghdad, Beirut, Mexico City, London, Jeddah, and Washington, D.C. Sasahara is the recipient of numerous State Department performance awards, including five Senior Foreign Service Performance Awards. A native of Massachusetts, she holds an M.A. in Near East Studies from the George Washington University, and a B.A. in International Relations from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She speaks Arabic, Spanish, French and Russian.



Salaries in Kuwait fourth highest in Arab world

The six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states ranked among the top six in the Arab world in terms of average monthly salaries, but did not do so well on the global level with the possible exception of the UAE which ranked first in the Arab world and fifth worldwide in average monthly salary index.

Kuwait with a monthly average salary of US\$1855 came in fourth spot in the Arab world and was placed 26th out of the 105 countries evaluated for this year's salary index by the US-based magazine, 'CEO World'.

UAE topped the list among the GCC countries and in the wider Arab world and ranked fifth globally with a monthly average salary of \$3663. The UAE was also the only country from the Arab world in the top ten list of countries with the highest average monthly salaries.

In the second place in the Arab world was

Qatar, which ranked 11th globally, with an average monthly salary of \$3168, followed by Saudi Arabia in third and 25th globally with an average of \$1,889, then Kuwait, followed by Bahrain, which ranked 28th globally with an average of \$1,729, and in sixth place in the Arab world and 30th globally Oman averages \$1,627.

Among countries in the Arab world the lowest average monthly salary was in Egypt with \$220 per month to rank in 100th spot globally. Algeria was one step higher with an average monthly salary of \$250 and with a global rank of 98. Tunisia, which ranked 96th worldwide had an average monthly salary of \$277.

Sri Lanka ranked at the bottom of this year's index of 105 countries with the smallest average monthly salary, while Switzerland came in first spot globally with an average monthly salary of



\$6,141, followed by Singapore with an average of \$4,351, then Australia with an average of

\$4,219. The United States with an average of \$3,722 came in fourth spot.

Kuwait strengthening measures to prevent illegal cash flows

In recent weeks the government has been initiating a slew of measures to legalize cash payment operations, and prove payment sources, in order to achieve a set of goals, including drying up any potential outlets that can be exploited in money laundering operations.

In line with the directives of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al Sabah, the Minister of Commerce and Industry and the Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development Fahd Al-Shariaan has been in the vanguard in introducing new measures that make it mandatory for payments related to certain specified transactions to be made only through traceable mechanisms such as bank transfers, certified checks, or point of sale devices. Among the specified transactions are those related to real estate registrations, transfer of ownership of vehicles and yachts, and sales of durable and valuable goods such as cars, watches, jewelry and other valuables.

Following on the heels of the directive last week banning companies involved in holding exhibitions from making or receiving any payment transaction through cash, Minister Al-Shariaan, issued another decision last week obligating offices, institutions and companies that bring in domestic workers from conducting cash transactions.

The new directions stipulate that all offices, institutions, companies and their branches that are authorized by the Public Authority of Manpower to recruit domestic workers, and have a commercial license for this purpose from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, must not entertain cash transactions when making any contract or any sort of deal.

All payments have to be made only through online payment formats approved by the Central Bank of Kuwait. The rule also underlines that any facility that does not

adhere to the instructions will be punished and referred to the investigation and legal authorities for further action. The decisions, which have become official following its publication in the official Kuwait Gazette, are reportedly intended to stop money laundering and transfer of money for illegal purposes. Also, in line with steps to support efforts to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, the Central Bank announced last May that banks and exchange companies must inform it of any transfer or cash deposit of KD3,000 or more.

These measures are reportedly part of a larger plan launched by the government last year in preparation for the periodic evaluation process of the State of Kuwait by the international Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The FATF evaluates a country on its fulfillment of international obligations and requirements in relation to stopping money laundering and the financing of terrorism. FATF also assesses the capacity of a country's various entities in charge of preventing illegal transfer of monies, and the effectiveness of its legislation and legal and judicial systems in reducing cross-border financial crimes such as money laundering and terrorist financing.

The FAFT is also responsible for setting standards and promoting the effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures to combat money laundering, terrorism financing, and other threats related to the integrity of the international financial system. Kuwait is on the verge of an important stage related to the global outlook towards it, as FATF is expected to issue its report regarding the situation of Kuwait in light of the joint assessments at the end of this year and perhaps next year, taking into account the government measures that have been taken at the national level in preparation for the FATF evaluation.

For its part, the Central Bank of Kuwait, is leading the efforts towards digital transformation through its early provision of an advanced technical infrastructure that contributes to promoting digital transformation and at the same time supports the government's efforts to achieve its vision and plans in this direction.

Thanks to the efforts of the Central Bank and in cooperation with other parties, Kuwait has achieved a qualitative leap in electronic payment systems that helped achieve great progress in monitoring and controlling money transfers and reducing reliance on cash transactions for individuals and companies, which have helped protect the country from money laundering and

terrorism financing crimes.

In this regard it is noteworthy that Kuwait has achieved an exceptional leap in the level of people making payments through various electronic channels and plastic cards compared to cash payments. The percentage

of payment through electronic channels amounted to about 89 percent in the first half of this year compared to about 11 percent for 'cash' payment, placing Kuwait among the highest in the world in transfer of money digitally.



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Kuwait discusses global, local issues of concern with US diplomat



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Although the US and Kuwait cooperate closely to support United Nations agencies that address such issues, such as the World Food Program (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), we still see from the food price index issued by the FAO that food prices are currently 17 percent higher worldwide than they were at this time last year. Although prices are beginning to decline somewhat, this has affected so many people and communities around the world."

Turning to initiatives undertaken by the US to ameliorate the global food crisis, Ms. Sison noted: "As you know, the United States launched a roadmap for global food security during our May presidency of the United Nations Security Council. Out of more than 100 countries, Kuwait was among the first to sign this map, and we really appreciate that. This roadmap is centered around calling on the global community to act and increase humanitarian food assistance. While that's a big part of the map, the plan is also about keeping markets open, about increasing fertilizer production, and investing in the resilience of food systems."

"All of these aspects are ways in which we want to work with the State of Kuwait in order to address this important issue. I know that the leadership and government of Kuwait have resorted to innovative technologies and sustainable agriculture to address local and food issues in Kuwait, and all of this I think can be applied at the international level as well, especially when we look at innovation. Of course, Kuwait has been and continues to be very generous especially with regard to food aid through the World Food Program, and it also promotes the use of technology, encourages fertilizer production, and invests in other sustainable development models in connection with long-term solutions to food security."

Expanding on her discussions with officials of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, Ms. Sison asserted: "We covered humanitarian aid pertaining to local projects in various sectors, such as energy, education, and health that assist underserved communities and vulnerable populations around the world, in addition to the Fund's recent humanitarian projects in Yemen, Lebanon, and Syria, particularly Rohingya refugees."

"The Kuwait Fund and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in November 2020, in partnership with the World Health

Organization to prepare for and prevent future pandemics. The US also supported the summer launch of the World Bank Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response Fund, an intermediary financial fund with more than US\$1 billion in seed funding, to deal with epidemic prevention, preparedness, and response. In cooperation with partner countries, the US had committed US\$450 million to the new fund while calling for more partners to join in the funding."

On the contentious issue of human rights and freedom of expression in Kuwait, especially in light of the latest Human Trafficking Report released by the US State Department, which shows that Kuwait falls short when it comes to battling human trafficking cases, Ms. Sison remarked: "Taking into consideration the wide spectrum of the subject of human rights, Kuwait has shown remarkable efforts to address the issue of the rights of people with disability. I would like to congratulate Rehab Bouresli, who is the first Kuwaiti citizen to become a committee member for the United Nations Rights of Persons with Disabilities for 2023-2026."

"There are many facets of human rights violations covered by the UN, and these were included in the multilateral discussion we have held, as well, dealing with government and stakeholders in Kuwait and overseas to tackle strategies to combat human rights violations." During the US-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue, the two sides also recognized that advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons strengthens the bilateral relationship and advances both nations' national security. The two sides stressed the importance of protecting fundamental freedoms and expanding labor rights, as well as advancing women's rights."

She concluded the interview by observing: "It is very important that we continue to work and cooperate with each other as partners, both bilaterally and multilaterally, in order to address all the challenges that we focused on discussing during my visit, such as food security, health security, the climate crisis, and upholding the integrity of the United Nations system, and adherence to the Charter of the United Nations, which provides for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the protection of human rights. All of these are values shared by Kuwait and the United States. Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to be able to come here in person and attend meetings, discuss and collaborate on ways in which we can help raise the profile of these priorities within the global multilateral system."

RECIPE

MOONGDAL HALWA



Halwa is an arabic word, which means sweet.

This Moong dal halwa recipe is a classic delicacy from North Indian, Rajasthani cuisine.

usually prepared for special occasions such as weddings and religious celebrations.

Highly nutritious as they are low in fat and high in protein.

festivals are in a row, do try this delicious sweet and let me know your feedback.

Total time: 30/35 MIN.

Serving: 6

INGREDIENTES:

- 1 cup Yellow moong dal
- 1 cup Boiled milk
- 1 cup Water
- 3/4 cup Sugar
- 3/4 cup Melted ghee
- 1 tsp. Cardamom powder
- Few saffron thread (soak in 1 tbsp water)
- 2 tbsp. Cashews, badam (chopped)



Chef Chhaya Thakker

DIRECTION:

- Take a pan and add Moongdal and dry roast it for about 10 minutes on slow flame
- until it changes the color a bit.
- Keep mixing without stopping so that all the moong are well roasted and crisp.
- Once roasted, cool in a plate. -powder the mixture little coarse. (Don't make a fine powder.)
- Heat ghee in a pan.
- Add powdered roasted moongdal and keep stirring in medium flame till it becomes golden brown.
- and it's leaves it aroma.
- Add milk + Water and cook till thick. Add sugar, mix well.
- Keep stirring until the mixture forms a thick shiny halwa.
- Add cardamom powder, saffron.
- When the halwa starts to leave the sides of pan, remove and garnish with nuts.
- Thus the tasty Moongdal Halwa is ready to serve hot/warm
- 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

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

Cabinet announces new laws on elections

Council of Ministers at its weekly meeting last week announced a couple of decrees of necessity on amending laws related to general elections. Although a date for the elections is yet to be announced, the two new laws will be applicable in the upcoming elections.

Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Fares said that

the cabinet approved two decrees of necessity amending previous laws on elections. The first law amends law 35/1962 regarding the conducting of elections, enabling voters to now use their ID cards to cast their ballots. The second amendment is to law 42/2006 regarding the zoning of areas, which now enables the addition of new areas to the first, second, fourth and fifth constituencies.

The area to be added to the first

constituency is Anifa, while the new areas that now come under the second constituency are Shuwaikh Industrial Area, Shuwaikh Health Zone, Nahdha, northwest Sulaibikhat and Jaber Al-Ahmad City. There was no change to the third constituency, while the fourth constituency will see the addition of West Abdullah Al-Mubarak, South Abdullah Al-Mubarak, Al-Oyoun, Al-Naeem, Al-Naseem, Al-Qasr, Taima and Al-Waha.



Meanwhile, Abu Fatira, Al-Masayel, Abu Alhasani, Sabah Al-Ahmad City and Al-Khairan will now be added to the fifth constituency.

The decrees will now be forwarded to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for approval.



Alif Perfume Mall opens in LuLu, Al Rai

Alif Perfumes, Kuwait's leading perfume marketer, launched 'Alif Perfume Mall' at LuLu Hypermarket in Al Rai last week. Ambassador of Bhutan to Kuwait H.E. Chitem Tensin, inaugurated the mall in the presence of Lulu International Director Mohammed Harris, and other dignitaries including Abdullah Farhan Al Wanyan, Hamud Ahmed Jija Al Mutairi, Kyrgyzstan Attache Nurma Khammat Kanimkulov, Alif Perfume Mall General Manager Siraj Eranhikkal and Alif Perfume Partners.

Apart from all international brands a full range of Ajmal, Swiss Arabia, Haramain, Rasasi perfumes are available at Alif Perfume Mall, which is spread over a 1,000 square feet area and has a very large collection of reputed international brands.



Visa trade resurfaces on social media

Trade in sale of visas, which had subsided for a while during the pandemic period has once again begun to rear its ugly head. Advertisements on availability of visas to Kuwait for sale, have again started appearing on several social media sites in recent weeks. Reports of the sale of visas for high sums of money and accusations of human trafficking, which have brought ignominy to the nation, is an issue that has challenged the authorities for quite a while now.

Ministry of Interior (Mol) and the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) have separately and jointly issued repeated warnings against this social scourge, and despite the referral of hundreds of those involved in the visa trade to the judiciary, social media platforms are abuzz with new advertisements offering visas for sale and the price range all the way from KD1,500 up to KD2,300 dinars per visa and



depending on various factors.

Additionally, several businesses and other enterprises have complained about the

acute shortage of qualified and experienced craftsmen in the market and called on the relevant authorities to undertake necessary

measures, so that the matter does not deteriorate and spiral down to the situation that existed before the pandemic.

Social media platforms, including WhatsApp and other networking sites, have in recent weeks featured a large number of requests, mainly from Syrians and Sudanese, seeking visas to work in Kuwait. In response to these ads there have been offers for sale of visas, often at fancy prices. For example, a recent visa offer that appeared on one of the social media sites, offered work visas to Syrians at an unbelievable price of KD5,000, probably reflecting the prevailing difficulty of obtaining work visas for Syrians.

Many of these social media advertisements of visas for sale, or transfer of residences, usually emanate from outside the country, including several from Egyptians made through fake accounts inside Kuwait or through Egyptian WhatsApp numbers.

Indian Embassy celebrates Independence Day



Embassy of India celebrated the 76th Independence Day of India on 15 August with the official program starting from 8am at the Embassy premises by the Indian Ambassador H.E. Sibi George paying floral tribute at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi. This was followed by the unfurling of the Tricolor national flag and singing of the national anthem.

On the occasion, the message to the nation by the Hon'ble President of India was read out by the ambassador, who also addressed the large gathering of Indians gathered to celebrate the event. In his address,

Ambassador George thanked the leadership and Government of the friendly State of Kuwait for the continued support in further deepening and strengthening of India-Kuwait bilateral relations and for taking special care of the Indian Community in Kuwait.

He also highlighted efforts of the Embassy to work alongside the Indian community to promote India-Kuwait relations and to address issues of concern to the community, while also reiterating his invitation to the community to join hands with the embassy to celebrate 'Azadi Ka Amrit



Mahotsav'. In his address the ambassador underlined the efforts undertaken by the Embassy on various fronts, including in the promotion of trade, investment, culture and tourism, expansion and deepening of institutional cooperation in different domains, and various measures to strengthen bilateral relations with Kuwait and to ensure the welfare of the Indian Community. The event was live streamed on Mission's social media handles including Facebook and YouTube. Winners of 'AKAM' Quiz winners were also felicitated on this occasion.

Priority visas for students to the UK

Priority Visa (PV) and Super Priority Visa (SPV) services will once again be available for most new UK-bound Study visa route applications from 12 August. Unlike visitor visa applicants, there will be no caps on PV or SPV availability for new study visa applications at the current time.

Announcing this, the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), a division under the British Home Office noted that August is the peak period for student visa applications, and as such, UKVI is encouraging all applicants to apply as early as possible to avoid delays, particularly those applying for Student visas. Students who have previously applied, and have had their biometrics taken at the visa application center will

not be able to add the super priority or priority service to their existing applications. Students applying for a study visa on or after 12 August will have the option to use the priority service for their application. Furthermore, applicants who applied via the standard route can withdraw their existing application and re-apply with the priority service if they wish to.

Standard Visit visas are taking on average seven weeks to process, but some applications may take longer. UKVI also encourages applicants to submit early applications, or to utilize available Priority services as may be appropriate and that any compassionate or high-profile cases are flagged appropriately through the normal channels.

Municipality to terminate all expat staff by late 2023

Minister of Municipality Affairs, Dr. Rana Al-Fares has outlined a three-phase plan for Kuwaitization of jobs in Kuwait Municipality. The first phase is scheduled to begin with the termination of contracts of 33 percent of non-Kuwaitis with a notice period, starting from 1 September of this year, followed by the second phase of ending the services of 33 percent of expatriate staff with their notice period beginning on 1 February, 2023, and the third phase of terminations will begin on 1 July 2023 for the remaining non-Kuwaiti employees.

The minister has reportedly requested the Director General of the Municipality, Eng. Ahmed Al-Manfouhi to provide her with lists of the names of non-Kuwaiti employees within one

week, in preparation for taking the necessary legal measures to terminate their services.

Non-Kuwaiti workers excluded from the minister's decision are:

- Non-Kuwaiti employee of a Kuwaiti mother
- Children of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries
- Undetermined permanent residents, provided that they are registered with the Central Apparatus for Illegal Residents' Status
- Service staff
- 50 percent of funeral services staff

Al-Fares also stressed on the suspension of all procedures for the appointment of non-Kuwaitis, and the suspension of all transfers of non-Kuwaiti workers between departments and sectors.



Taiba Market opens second outlet in Kuwait

Taiba Market, the pioneer in 'proximity retailing' in the country opened their second store in Kuwait Al-Surra area on 17 August, by top management of IFA Food Group in the presence of a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

The new venue, which is located on Street 10 of Block 3 in Surra area, provides easy and convenient access to customers, as it is located in the basement of the Dakakeen building, which has ample car parking space right in front. The new branch is spread across 500 square meters of retail space and displays over 6,000 products under 17 different retail departments.

Since their first retail outlet opened at Sulaibikhat in February of this year, Taiba Market's innovative 'proximity' retail format, which falls midway between that of an 'Express' store and a Supermarket, has grown



in popularity among shoppers. Though initially aimed at the young modern shopper, today this retail format of 'get-in, get-it, get-out' shopping is proving attractive to shoppers of all ages and nationalities.

range of products in a relatively smaller space, not only allows shoppers to find their products easily and quickly, it also avoids the 'check-out' rush witnessed in larger retail outlets.

Interacting with media at the launch of their second store, Taiba Market's Chief Operating Officer, Remesh Anandadas said "We are very proud of this new store format, which allows us to provide shoppers with a wide variety of products that range from ultra-fresh produce to frozen items, and from groceries to essential household items, within a convenient shopping space that makes for a hassle-free shopping experience."

He went on to add, "The popularity of our first store in Sulaibikhat has provided us with the impetus to open this second store here in Surra, and hopefully more branches in all other governorates of Kuwait in the immediate future."

Speaking at the launch of their second store in Kuwait, CEO of Taiba Market, Saleh A-Tunaib said, "Although we initially conceived this concept of retailing to mainly attract the modern customers who are always on the go and looking for easy and quick purchases that simplifies their shopping experience, today this concept has caught on with shoppers from different age groups."

He added, "We are also extremely proud that this innovative store format is proving so successful, as it is entirely homegrown; it was conceived, designed and implemented right here in Kuwait. We would love to see Taiba Market scale very fast in Kuwait."

The store provides more products than a neighborhood or 'Express' store, while being smaller than a super- or hyper-market. The 'proximity' retail format of offering a wide



Mol to introduce rules for delivery vehicle drivers

Last week, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior (Mol) for Traffic and Operations Affairs, Major General Jamal Al-Sayegh, met with several stakeholders in the Ministry of Commerce, Kuwait Municipality, and the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, in order to coordinate and develop a set of mechanisms and requirements for companies offering food delivery services, which will come into effect 1 October.

Announcing this in a statement last Thursday, the General Department of Public Relations and Security Media at the Ministry of Interior, noted that the meeting was based on the directives of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The new directives call for food delivery companies to ensure that:

- Driver of a food vehicle has a health certificate issued by the Health Ministry.

- Delivery vehicles should display a sticker of the company that owns it, through coordination of the Kuwait Municipality.

- Residence permit of drivers must be with the same company they work for.

- Drivers should wear a uniform at all times while driving the company vehicle.

Ministry of Interior urged owners of the delivery companies to abide by the regulations to avoid suspension of license and other legal repercussions.

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Filipino domestic workers learn new baking skills

By Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Seventy Filipino domestic workers received their certificates of participation following their attendance in the 'Domestic Workers Culinary Scholarship Program'. The two-month-long project was sponsored by several groups of foreign recruitment agencies in cooperation with the Philippine Overseas Labor Office under the auspices of the Philippines' Labor Attaché Nasser Mustafa. The project was organized by CEE Network Culinary Arts and Lifestyle Workshops.

Domestic Workers Culinary Scholarship is a project initiated by CEE Network Culinary Arts with the aim of providing knowledge and developing skills of Filipino household workers, in particular in basic baking skills, which could help them upgrade their job status in Kuwait, or start a small business when they consider returning home for good, or find a job placement related to baking. Workshops are held every Sunday from 8am till 12 noon at



the multi-function halls of ChowKing and Jollibee located at the Old Souq in Salmiya.

Masterchef and trainers lead the four hours program adhering to a syllabus designed specifically to cater to the needs of household workers. "We have modified the workshops so it does not need mixers or other related equipment, we provide them with a syllabus that is practical, convenient and definitely less costly. Products delivered after the class have been excellent so far and we hope that sponsors will continue to

share their generosity by providing complimentary ingredients to our participants," stated Chef Marife Torio, Lead Masterchef of the program.

Making of popular breads take the biggest slice of the program, it includes Filipino favorites such as PandeSal, Spanish Bread, Cheese and Ube Bread, Cinnamon Rolls, Pizza Crust, Donuts and more produced from a popular sweet dough, which can create more than twenty different types of breads and pastries. The program is also complemented

with different types of saleable pies. Participants are encouraged to take home their products.

In a brief speech on the occasion, Philippine Labor Attaché Nasser Mustafa, urged the scholars to make full use of what they learned from the class and enhance their skills further. "The knowledge you acquire from this training can help you change your future and income for your families either here or back home, start something small that hopefully will grow to a successful business, explore all your options with this newly

acquired knowledge," stated Labor Attaché Mustafa.

The program has been supported by two groups of foreign recruitment agencies namely: Filipino Association of Secretaries of Employment Agencies in Kuwait (Fil-ASEAK) and the Filipino Client Relations Organization (FILCRO). "As recruitment agencies that deploy domestic workers in Kuwait, we fully support the project in the hope that they will be able to fully utilize the knowledge they learned from the program. We thank CEE Network for spearheading this project," said Mariam Macapudi, owner of the Eitha Marzouq Al Azmi Recruitment Agency and President of Fil-ASEAK. Ingredients used for the classes have been fully sponsored by Jane's Closet and Dadabhai Travels. Graduate scholars expressed their gratitude to POLO, agencies and sponsors for their kind support.

Registration for the next 70 scholars is now on and any interested participant may send a message with their full name and recruitment agency name at 55650296.

Food self-sufficiency, a distant dream

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Indications that the authorities are finally waking up to this realization appeared last week with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) submitting a detailed and comprehensive report on the country's prevailing food security status and measures to enhance this, to the Council of Ministers. The Cabinet promptly responded to the report and set up a Supreme Committee to follow up on the MoCI study and its recommendations. These moves are certainly a welcome change to the previous attitude that oil wealth alone would ensure food supplies forever.

Among others, the MoCI report stressed the need to develop an integrated food and water security strategy based on developing a comprehensive system that enables sustainable food production. The study also recommended several measures that need to be implemented in order to improve the country's food security status. These include prevailing practices of building more silos, diversifying the number and regions from where Kuwait imports foods, and bolstering the country's supply chains by ensuring multiple supply channels.

The report also called for strengthening the national food basket by expanding regional and international agricultural investments, and purchasing agricultural land, livestock and fisheries in countries that are willing to rent or sell such land.

As well as, reconsidering the distribution of agricultural land and support for agricultural holdings, and aiming to achieve self-sufficiency in livestock breeding, poultry and fish farming as well as in fodder production.

Moreover, the report recommended increasing financial support for state food production companies so as to mitigate the repercussions of rising prices on global markets for basic ingredients in food production, with the government bearing the difference in prices through subsidizing these basic commodities to state companies. And, considering that water is the key component in any sustainable agricultural production, the study called for urgently implementing a water resources management system, as well as exploring ways to diversify its water sources by leveraging advanced

technologies and technological applications that enhance local water security.

In response to the MoCI report and in an effort to stay proactive in enhancing food and water security in the country, Kuwait's Cabinet established the 'Supreme National Committee for Strengthening Food and Water Security System'. The committee, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Dr. Mohammad Abdullatif Al-Fares, is tasked with developing an integrated strategy and implementing a roadmap of programs, projects and progress evaluation markers, as well as drafting the necessary laws and decisions to strengthen food and water security in the country.

The higher committee also includes representatives from other relevant authorities including the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Kuwait Investment Authority, and various ministries, as well as from the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research. The committee also has an advisory body that includes experts and specialists from inside and outside the country to prepare and direct technical activities and recommendations regarding food and water security.

Several stakeholders in Kuwait's food industry, including various union leaders, promptly welcomed and commended the cabinet's decision to form the committee. Head of the Kuwaiti Farmers Union, Abdullah Al-Dammak expressed the union's willingness to cooperate with the committee so as to support and enhance food security. He also hoped the committee would increase the union's marketing outlets, especially in new residential areas, and take into consideration the union's plan to support food security by ensuring priority for national produce over imported ones, increasing treated water pumping rates, and providing agricultural supplies to farmers at reduced prices.

For his part, the head of the Kuwaiti Federation of Fishermen, Dhafer Al-Suwayan, lauded the formation of the committee and hoped it would find solutions to the fishing sector's persistent issues, while requesting an increase in support for the fishing activities so that fishermen could

develop the sector and increase the production of local fish and shrimp to meet the needs of the local market.

Chiming in on cue, Chairman of the Federation of Fresh Dairy Producers Abdulhakeem Al-Ahmad said that Kuwaiti dairy farm owners are working side by side with different state entities in order to ensure food security. He noted that while Kuwait's daily dairy consumption was over 1,200 tons, local dairy farms currently produced only around 200 tons. The union was willing and able to increase production with further support from the government for the 50 affiliated farms that have a total of 9,505 milking cows.

Reading this litany of commendations for the committee one could be forgiven for thinking that the formation of a supreme committee was all that was needed to push the country towards food self-sufficiency. And from the underlying theme that appears to run through these welcome remarks by the unions and federations, one would imagine that providing additional subsidies and support for local food producers would result in the country achieving food security.

Here it is worth noting that it is not from a lack of support or subsidies to local food producers that the country has not realized sufficient food production. There have been plenty of these handouts in the past with not much to show for these expenditures; the simple truth is farms in Kuwait are not productive. Most of the local 'farmers' are nothing more than hobbyists who consider their farmland as a place to build a chalet so as to relax and enjoy during weekends. Whatever production on the farmland is realized, and is needed to provide the fig leaf to maintain the farming license, can be attributed to poorly paid foreign laborers.

Recall that recently there were strident voices from the 'farmers' calling on the authorities to provide them with the administrative leeway to turn their farms into entertainment land. Though the authorities initially rejected this preposterous demand, political pressures apparently piled up and the result was that a government, which professed its commitment to improving the country's food security had to acquiesce to the demand. But there have been some 'remarkable' achievements from our farms, as the Director of the Agricultural Plots Department at the Public

Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources, Falah Al-Mutairi, pointed out a couple of months back. Local production of the handful of agricultural crops has reached 65 percent, up from the 40 percent in 2017; agriculture produce is now supplied across Kuwait through a network of 70 cooperative societies, and the number of greenhouses has gone up from 18,000 in 2016 to over 70,000 today.

What was left unsaid in all these statistics was the humongous amount of government subsidies and other handouts that went into this 'remarkable' local production. Over the decades these subsidies and freebies have resulted in only 120 square kilometers of the nearly 1,540 square kilometers of agricultural land available, being planted with agricultural crops, and, out of this limited farmland only a handful of farms remain productive ventures.

A recent study to analyze the various opportunities for developing food security in the country highlighted some of the inherent weaknesses in this attempt at attaining self-sufficiency. The study, sponsored and supported by none other than the government, showed that among the weaknesses that stymie agricultural production in Kuwait are: abuse of agricultural land, low efficiency of water resource utilization in agricultural production, decline in agricultural labor force, and low agricultural productivity and global competence. Weaknesses were observed across the board in agriculture, in fisheries operations, and in local food production and marketing, including dairy, livestock and poultry production.

Farmland or entertainment venues, the fact of the matter is that Kuwait is among the least suitable countries in the world for agricultural production. An arid landscape, scant arable land, negligible annual rainfall, meager groundwater supplies, and poor productivity, all combine to make farming in Kuwait a formidable challenge. The country has gone down this path before; it has provided arable land, delivered expensive treated water to farms, subsidized farming and farmed products to make them competitive in the market. The end result is that agriculture now contributes 0.5 percent of the country's GDP. A rethink on attempts to attain food self-sufficiency is sorely needed.

Taking Back the Ocean, Inc.



Alexander Kozul-Wright

A researcher for the Third World Network.

Earlier this summer, the United Nations convened its Ocean Conference (UNOC) in Lisbon, Portugal. The goal was to 'to propel much needed science-based innovative solutions aimed at starting a new chapter of global ocean action'. The world needs a "sustainably managed ocean," according to the UN's under-secretary-general for legal affairs, Miguel de Serpa Soares, who hailed the conference as an "enormous success." If only.

The ocean's importance cannot be overstated. It is the planet's largest biosphere, hosting up to 80 percent of all life on earth. It generates 50 percent of the oxygen we breathe and absorbs one-quarter of all carbon dioxide emissions, essential for climate and weather regulation. And it is also economically vital, with roughly 120 million people employed in fisheries and related activities, mostly for small-scale enterprises in developing countries.

Yet over the last four decades, the ocean has come under unprecedented pressure, largely owing to the rapid growth of commercial maritime activity. This growth is particularly significant in exclusive economic zones (EEZ), contiguous areas of territorial water that stretch some 230 miles from country coastlines.

The principle of national sovereignty over EEZs was enshrined in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982. In the years that followed, governments sold off vast tracts of ocean territory through state licenses and concessions, effectively handing over management of marine ecosystems to the private sector.

Policymakers apparently reasoned that corporations would have a financial interest in adopting responsible business practices in order to preserve the resources from which they were extracting so much value. Instead, widespread oil and gas exploration, industrial fishing, and frenetic maritime trade have, as UN Special Envoy for the Ocean Peter Thomson recently put it, caused "the ocean's health" to "spiral into decline."

Marine acidification and heating reached record levels last year. Only about 13 percent of the ocean now qualifies as 'marine wilderness' (biologically and ecologically intact seascapes that are mostly free of human disturbance). More than one-third of marine mammals, and nearly one-third of reef-forming corals, are now threatened with extinction.

It was against this backdrop that the UNOC was convened to 'halt the destruction' of ocean ecosystems. But, despite much lofty rhetoric, all that came of it were vague pronouncements: the UN's 193 member states reaffirmed their pledge to bolster maritime governance by (among other things) strengthening data collection and promoting finance for nature-based solutions.

In fact, beyond Colombia's recently announced plans to create four new marine-protected areas, no binding commitments were made. And, tellingly,



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“

It is not hard to see why stakeholder capitalism is so appealing: it gives the impression that we can have our cake and eat it too. But, when it comes to the ocean, the cake is already past its expiration date

”

the deadlock on deep-sea mining was not broken. Whereas many advanced economies, including Japan and South Korea, support the controversial practice, Pacific countries like Palau and Fiji demanded an industry-wide moratorium, citing the lack of environmental data.

The key takeaway from the conference was that the UN remains committed to incremental change, with the private sector firmly in control. This is reflected in an emphasis on 'natural capital' solutions, which involve putting a price on nature in order to save it. The neoliberal policymaking that created today's crisis has undergone an ideological makeover. Where shareholder capitalism failed to ensure self-regulation by private owners, 'stakeholder capitalism' supposedly will succeed, because companies will balance the competing interests of investors, workers, communities, and the environment.

It is not hard to see why stakeholder capitalism is so appealing: it gives the impression that we can have our cake and eat it too. But, when it comes to the ocean, the cake is already past its expiration date. Given current technological constraints, protecting the ocean from further degradation precludes any additional maritime industrialization.

Why does the UN, or anyone, for that matter, believe that private companies will become responsible stewards of the planet? The rapid degradation of marine ecosystems is not exactly new information, yet corporations have only increased their damaging activities. Realistically, stakeholder capitalism will merely defer difficult decisions about profit maximization in a climate-constrained world to future generations.

Now, the world has an opportunity to embrace a more promising approach to protecting the ocean: the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National

Jurisdiction. The meetings, which are resuming in New York this week, are expected to produce a legal framework for governing all marine areas beyond coastal countries' EEZs.

The high seas comprise 64 percent of the ocean's surface area and host the largest reservoirs of biodiversity on Earth. The number of species they support is enormous, with many more expected to be discovered. And they are getting busier, and becoming more threatened, by the day.

Protection of the high seas has long been overseen by a patchwork of international agencies. As a result, just 1.2 percent of this fragile ecosystem is currently safeguarded against exploitative commercial activity.

As Guy Standing, a professorial research associate at the University of London, recently told me, there is little reason to believe that the conference will do much to "roll back the power of oligopolistic corporations" in non-territorial waters. Instead, it will turn out to be just another opportunity for the UN to peddle the narrative that the profit motive, which is largely responsible for destroying the ocean, can spur the necessary action to save it.

As Standing puts it, if we are going to save our oceans, we must reverse their privatization. That means pushing for binding commitments, effective regulation, and reliable enforcement. Above all, it means recognizing that the ocean's true value has no price tag.



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Establishing Ethics for Metaverse



**Josh Entsminger, Mark Esposito,
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Terence Tse, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Nexus FrontierTech, is a professor at Hult International Business School.

The 'metaverse' is not here yet, and when it arrives it will not be a single domain controlled by any one company. Facebook wanted to create that impression when it changed its name to Meta, but its rebranding coincided with major investments by Microsoft and Roblox. All are angling to shape how virtual reality and digital identities will be used to organize more of our daily lives — from work and health care to shopping, gaming, and other forms of entertainment.

The metaverse is not a new concept. The term was coined by sci-fi novelist Neal Stephenson in his 1992 book *Snow Crash*, which depicts a hyper-capitalist dystopia in which humanity has collectively opted into life in virtual environments. So far, the experience has been no less dystopian here in the real world. Most experiments with immersive digital environments have been marred immediately by bullying, harassment, digital sexual assault, and all the other abuses that we have come to associate with platforms that 'move fast and break things'.

None of this should come as a surprise. The ethics of new technologies have always lagged behind the innovations themselves. That is why independent parties should provide governance models sooner rather than later — before self-interested corporations do it with their own profit margins in mind.

The evolution of ethics in artificial intelligence is instructive here. Following a major breakthrough in AI image-recognition in 2012, corporate and government interest in the field exploded, attracting important contributions from ethicists and activists who published (and republished) research into the dangers of training AIs on biased data sets. A new language was developed to incorporate into the design of new AI applications the



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“ Though we can foresee many of the abuses that will occur in immersive digital environments, our experience with social media suggests that we might underestimate the sheer scale they will reach and the effects they will have ”

values that we want to uphold.

Owing to this work, we now know that AI is effectively 'automating inequality', as Virginia Eubanks of the University of Albany, SUNY, puts it, as well as perpetuating racial biases in law enforcement. To call attention to this problem, computer scientist Joy Buolamwini of the MIT Media Lab launched the Algorithmic Justice League in 2016.

This first-wave response aimed a public spotlight at the ethical issues associated with AI. But it was soon eclipsed by a renewed push within the industry for self-regulation. AI developers introduced technical toolkits for conducting internal and third-party evaluations, hoping that this would alleviate public fears. It did not; mainly because most firms pursuing AI development have business models that are in open conflict with the ethical standards that the public wants them to uphold. To take the most common example, Twitter and Facebook will not deploy AI effectively against the full range of abuses on their platforms because doing so would undermine 'engagement' (outrage) and thus profits. Similarly, these

and other tech firms have leveraged value extraction and economies of scale to achieve near-monopolies in their respective markets. They will not now willingly give up the power they have gained. More recently, corporate consultants and various programs have professionalized AI ethics to address the reputational and practical risks of ethical failures. Those working on AI within Big Tech companies would be pressed to consider questions such as whether a function should default to opt-in or opt-out; whether it is appropriate to delegate a task to AI or not; and whether the data being used to train AI applications can be trusted. To that end, many tech corporations established supposedly independent ethics boards. However, the reliability of this form of governance has since been called into question following high-profile ousters of internal researchers who raised concerns about the ethical and social implications of certain AI models.

Establishing a sound ethical foundation for the metaverse requires that we get ahead of industry self-regulation before it becomes the norm. We also must be mindful of how the

metaverse is already diverging from AI. While AI has been largely centered around internal corporate operations, the metaverse is decidedly consumer-centric, which means that it will come with all kinds of behavioral risks that most people will not have considered.

Just as telecom regulation (specifically Section 230 of the US Communications Decency Act of 1996) provided the governance model for social media, regulation of social media will become the default governance model for the metaverse. That should worry us all. Though we can easily foresee many of the abuses that will occur in immersive digital environments, our experience with social media suggests that we might underestimate the sheer scale that they will reach and the knock-on effects they will have.

It would be better to overestimate the risks than to repeat the mistakes of the past 15 years. A wholly digital environment creates the potential for even more exhaustive data collection, including personal biometric data. And since no one really knows exactly how people will respond to these environments, there is a strong case for using regulatory sandboxes before allowing a wider rollout.

Anticipating the metaverse's ethical challenges is still possible; but the clock is ticking. Without effective independent oversight, this new digital domain will almost certainly go rogue, recreating all the abuses and injustices of both AI and social media — and adding more that we have not even foreseen. A Metaverse Justice League may be our best hope.

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Inflation's Emotional Scars



Diane Coyle

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Until this year, inflation in advanced economies like the United States and the United Kingdom had been so low for so long that one needed to be well into middle age to remember what living through the price surges of the late 1970s was like. It was bad. Annual consumer price inflation in the US peaked at 13.5 percent in 1980, while in the UK it hit 24.2 percent in 1975 and, after a dip, rose again to 18 percent in 1980.

But the headline numbers do not reveal the toll that high inflation takes. Nor does a reasoned economic assessment of its costs, including the distortions that arise when surging prices interact with the tax system, the erosion of households' savings, or the effect of the resulting uncertainty on investment and growth.

Economists point out that increases in the inflation rate have a redistributive effect because they harm savers but benefit borrowers by reducing their debt burden in real terms. But that is cold comfort to people with large mortgages who now face the highest interest rates — and hence demands on their disposable income — in recent times.

This redistributive effect makes the policy response to inflation unavoidably political. Here, the Bank of England has sounded tone deaf in repeatedly calling for people not to ask for inflation-matching pay rises. UK households' median annual disposable income is about £31,000 (\$37,305) at a time when energy bills are predicted to rise to more than £4,000 per year from January, up from £1,400 in October 2021, and food prices have increased by nearly 10 percent in the past 12 months.

The BOE's fear of a wage-price spiral is rational. But rational economic assessments fail to consider the emotional consequences of high inflation. This is more readily understood in the case of hyperinflation. Germany's experience of it in the 1920s is widely regarded as having contributed to social instability, and to have had an impact on economic policymaking that continues to this day.

But even lesser inflationary episodes like that of the 1970s leave emotional scars. I was a teenager back then, and vividly recall my mother's palpable anxiety about being able to afford the weekly food bill. She had a cupboard where she stored cans or dry goods bought on special offer, a kind of savings account for feeding the family. I have a similar cupboard at home even today, and have also inherited her obsession with turning off lights and keeping the thermostat down. These habits will stand my family in good stead in 2022 and 2023, but they predate the current crisis, reflecting the imprint of my mother's fears.

Today's inflation is far outside recent experience. People long thought that prices of everyday goods such as clothing, food, appliances, or housewares were more likely to fall than to rise — a feeling perhaps more salient than the price increases for services such as transport and insurance. Today, however, there are reports of increased demand at food banks in both the US and the UK, and greater use of cash as people try to budget more carefully. Never mind what this says about whether the economy is in recession; few emotions are stronger than



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

the fear and anguish a parent feels about not being able to provide their children with food and shelter.

This non-monetary cost of surging inflation follows hard on the heels of the very different but similarly wrenching

while sharply distinguishing between state and economy.

The terms of social consent for business are changing fundamentally, owing to the 2008 global financial crisis, the pandemic, and now the cost-of-living crisis. Most politicians

appear not to have recognized or articulated this yet. But the idea that footloose global profits, bonuses for the high-paid, and share buybacks can continue will soon collide with reality. The only question is what form the transition to the new consensus will take.

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experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. How will an economically harsh winter affect young people who have already spent the best part of two years cut off from their peers by lockdowns and had their education disrupted? A deeply anxious generation is being molded before our eyes.

Recognizing the emotional costs of today's inflation leads to two conclusions. One is that the political response is more challenging, and more important, than getting the economics right. Although economists' advice will certainly be important in trying to limit this inflationary episode, we the economists are the support act. Politicians might sensibly opt for policies (such as budget-busting fiscal assistance to distressed households, or intervention in price-setting) that prevailing economic orthodoxy would rule out.

Economic efficiency is not the top priority in a crisis. That is why cautious economy ministries should now be planning rationing schemes for certain energy and food items in case such measures are needed (as they were for gasoline in the US and the UK in the mid-1970s).

The other conclusion is that this period will likely have important social consequences. Since the end of the mid-1980s, the West has experienced nearly four decades of globalization, underpinned by a political philosophy that emphasized market forces



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A Bold and Realistic Energy Transition



Sultan Al Jaber

Sultan Al Jaber, the United Arab Emirates' Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, is CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, Chairman of Masdar, and the UAE's special envoy for climate change.

Record growth in renewables, representing over 80 percent of all new power-generating capacity last year, is the clearest sign yet that the energy transition is gathering pace. But recent events have shown that unplugging the current energy system before we have built a sufficiently robust alternative puts both economic and climate progress at risk — and calls into question whether we can ensure a just transition that is equitable to all.

A successful energy transition must be built on progress for the economy and the climate together. It must be based on scientific, economic, and engineering facts, appreciate the multiple dilemmas and challenging trade-offs, and accelerate the deployment of practical solutions. And for that, we need an inclusive approach that leverages the experience of all sectors of society and, critically, does not exclude the energy sector.

The world was already facing a profound energy-supply crunch as economies began to bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Russia-Ukraine conflict then made a tight market even tighter and forced countries to reassess their urgent near-term strategic energy needs. So the message for governments should be clear: Policies aimed at divesting from hydrocarbons too soon, without adequate viable alternatives, are self-defeating. They will undermine energy security, erode economic stability, and leave less income available to invest in the energy transition.

What's needed is a realistic new strategy that is practical, pro-growth, and pro-climate. The strategy needs to appreciate the complexity of energy and industrial systems, and that the scale of the transition required is colossal, requiring greater alignment and collaboration on everything from capital allocation to product design, public policy, and behavioral change. This means examining the demand side of the energy system first. Wind and solar power are making great advances, but most energy is used in heavy industry, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and agriculture. These harder-to-abate sectors have the biggest effect on climate and thus require more investment, starting now.

While renewable-energy investment globally exceeded \$365 billion last year, combined investment in energy storage, carbon capture,



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“ The UAE has three of the world's largest single-site solar plants, has invested in renewable projects in over 40 developed and developing countries, and plans to increase its renewables portfolio to 100 gigawatts by 2030

and the hydrogen value chain was only \$12 billion. That is not nearly enough. The energy transition is estimated to need more than \$250 trillion of investment over the next 30 years. Obviously, no single country, much less a single company, can foot this bill.

But financing is not the only issue. Energy transitions take time. While wind and solar accounted for the vast majority of all new power-generating capacity in 2021, they still comprise only 4 percent of today's energy mix. As the world's energy needs grow ever larger, maintaining global energy security will require oil and gas to remain a significant part of the mix for decades to come.

That is why we must do more now to reduce the impact of oil and gas on the climate. Producers, governments, and the private sector must work together to make sure that each new unit of output is less carbon-intensive than the last. That will require supportive fiscal policies through tax

incentives, operational efficiency via technology, greater commitments to reduce methane and flaring, and significantly greater investment in carbon-capture technologies.

These realities are guiding the United Arab Emirates' approach to the energy transition, which involves continuing to meet global needs today while investing in the new energy systems of tomorrow. The UAE has three of the world's largest single-site solar plants, has invested in renewable projects in over 40 developed and developing countries, and plans to increase its renewables portfolio to 100 gigawatts by 2030. We have also invested in nuclear power and are laying the foundations of the hydrogen value chain, which is key to achieving net-zero emissions.

While the UAE remains a reliable supplier of some of the world's least carbon-intensive oil and gas, we will reduce its intensity by a further 25 percent before the end of this decade. And, as the

first country in the Middle East and North Africa to announce a 2050 net-zero strategic initiative, we are decarbonizing our economy sector by sector. We have established the region's first industrial-scale carbon-capture program, and all the electricity consumed by our national oil company now comes from zero-carbon nuclear and solar power.

As this year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) approaches, and as the UAE prepares to host COP28 in 2023, we need to focus on practical solutions that will help solve the trilemma of securing accessible, affordable, and sustainable energy supplies. If the COP process is to make good on the pledges of the Paris agreement, we need an inclusive dialogue on the framework for a realistic energy transition. This dialogue should bring everyone to the table, from governments and civil society to scientists and the private sector. It must include professionals from across the energy sector, because a rational discussion about the practicalities of an energy transition that reduces emissions without impeding economic progress is not possible otherwise.

But let us not wait to start this conversation. If we are going to make good on the pledges of the Paris agreement, we need to deliver results now for the climate and the economy. Our ultimate goal should be to hold back emissions, not progress.



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Medication found to restore insulin production

Researchers investigating whether they can reprogram pancreatic stem cell-like cells into insulin-producing beta-cells for potential diabetes treatment, have found that the genes regulating insulin expression could be reactivated by using a drug previously investigated for treating patients with certain types of cancers. The research findings suggest a possible new treatment option for diabetes patients who rely on daily insulin injections.

According to the World Health Organization, there are around 422 million people with diabetes globally, with some researchers estimating that the figure will reach 700 million by 2045. There are two major types of diabetes: Type 1 diabetes is where the body does not produce the hormone insulin or makes very little of it. This form of diabetes is more common in children and young adults.

Type 2 diabetes is where the body produces insulin but not enough of it, or the body cannot properly utilize the insulin produced. Type 2 is the most common form of diabetes, accounting for nearly 95 percent of all cases, and is often found to begin later in life.

Beta-cells in the pancreas, which typically make up 50-70 percent of the groups of cells in the pancreas referred to as pancreatic islets, are responsible for producing insulin. In both types of diabetes, there is a significant reduction in beta-cells primarily due to autoimmune destruction.

Individuals with Type 1 diabetes, and some people with Type 2 diabetes, must take insulin injections daily to survive. The alternative is whole pancreas or pancreatic islet transplantation, which is limited by the shortage of organ donors and the



associated side effects of drugs used to suppress the body's immune response to the transplanted organ,

Researchers at Monash University in Australia, found that the investigational drug GSK-126, used in treating certain types of cancers, can potentially restore insulin-producing beta-cells in Type 1 diabetes patients. The drugs do this by inhibiting the pancreatic enzyme EZH2, which in turn is responsible for inhibiting the development of insulin-producing beta-cells. The researchers hypothesized that blocking EZH2 activity may restore insulin production.

For their study, the researchers examined the effect of the highly selective EZH2 inhibitor GSK-126 on specific genes related to insulin

production using ex vivo human pancreatic tissues from three donors, two non-diabetic and one Type 1 diabetes donor. When the researchers analyzed the pancreas from the Type 1 diabetes donor, as expected, they noted absolute beta-cell destruction. The genes that regulate beta-cell development and insulin production in these pancreatic cells were 'silenced'.

The researchers then found that by stimulating the pancreatic cells with GSK-126, the hallmark genes responsible for developing pancreatic progenitor cells (stem cell-like cells) into insulin-producing beta-cells, insulin production could be restored.

They observed that GSK-126 also restored expression of the insulin gene in the cells

taken from the Type 1 diabetes donor, despite absolute beta-cell destruction. The study is the first reported example of restored insulin gene transcription and provides strong evidence for beta-cell regeneration.

Additionally, the study found that the restoration of insulin production was 'rapid', in some cases, by as early as two days of drug treatment compared to three to four months with alternate approaches using embryonic stem-cells. A major advantage of this potential diabetes treatment is that it is less vulnerable to the risks associated with organ or islet transplantation.

Commenting on the limitations of their study, the researchers noted that they used cells from a single Type 1 diabetes donor. They said that additional studies were required to determine if the approach is successful in a broader Type 1 diabetes population.

Moreover, autoimmune attacks on insulin-producing beta-cells also present another hurdle to developing a new therapy. In type 1 diabetes (and some cases of type 2 diabetes) there is quite strong (auto)immune reactivity to the islets and insulin-producing beta cells, which will not be avoided by making more of them.

Although this potential new diabetes treatment offers hope to individuals with Type 1 diabetes, it is not ideally targeted to Type 2 diabetes. In the more common Type 2 diabetes, the biggest problem is generally that insulin does not work very well. Moreover, this treatment may not become available for clinical treatment until another 7 to 10 years, which, while normal for most new therapies, is indeed a long wait for those debilitated by diabetes today.

Hunger plus Anger equals 'Hangry'

Does your anger quotient rise in proportion to your hunger? If so, you are not alone. While anecdotal evidence has pointed to a link between hunger and anger for long, it is only recently that scientists have been able to come up with clinical evidence to support an association between the sensation of hunger and negative emotions.

The term 'hangry' to describe the irritability or anger demonstrated due to being hungry, is not a new portmanteau; records show it has been around since the beginning of the 20th century. But it is only in recent years, with the availability of smartphones and other technologies that scientists have been able to capture feelings of hunger and emotional state of people in real-time.

Besides becoming more easily irritable, hunger has also been shown to exert an unconscious influence on other emotions and behaviors. A new study, which examined how hunger and other emotions interact on a day-to-day basis in real-life situations, rather than in a lab environment, found that hunger may indeed be closely tied to feelings of anger, irritability, or low pleasure.

The study, conducted by researchers at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom and at Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences in Austria, recruited 121 adults, of whom 64, ranging in age from 18 to 60 completed the study. Women made up 81.3 percent of the study participants.

The researchers used the experience sampling method (ESM), which prompted participants to complete short surveys semi-randomly five times a day for 21 days. This was



meant to record in-the-moment accounts of hunger experiences and emotional well-being. Participants downloaded an ESM smartphone app to input their data and guarantee anonymity.

The study analysis depended on self-reported ratings of hunger, which prior research indicates is a reliable assessment of hunger. The researchers explained that though no physiological markers of hunger were measured, self-reported hunger is valuable in its own right, especially as hunger ratings are reliable both when made immediately and after several days when tested under similar conditions.

The participants submitted details on age, nationality, current relationship status, weight,

height, and education before completing the surveys. Questions involved current feelings of hunger, irritability, and anger. They also reported their current emotional state and level of alertness. Even after accounting for demographic factors and individual personality traits, the data revealed that hunger can easily morph into 'hangry'.

Hunger was found to correlate with a 56 percent variance in irritability, a 48 percent variance in anger, and 44 percent variance in pleasure among the study's participants. Also, these variances were found to coincide with day-to-day fluctuations in hunger and average hunger levels over the three-week period.

Based on their findings, the scientists

suggested that "the experience of hunger is translated into negative emotions via a range of everyday situational cues and contexts that are perceived negatively". What this means in layman terms is that hunger may not automatically lead to negative emotions, but given that the effect tends to be relatively automatic and unconscious, it may not take much for hungry individuals to experience anger and irritability."

Related research at the University of East Anglia in the UK found that insects can also exhibit 'hangry' tendencies. In their study observing this behavior among fruit flies, the researchers found that hungry male fruit flies display more hostility towards each other. Hungry fruit flies were found to be more likely to aggressively lunge at each other and to swat at each other with their legs, as well as spend more time defending food patches.

The researchers acknowledged several 'limiting factors' in their study on human participants, including being unable to measure potential nuances between irritability and anger, as they used only single-item measures to assess anger, irritability, arousal, and pleasure, separately. They explained that they had also excluded other emotional states to limit the burden on study subjects.

Although the study did not offer methods to reduce negative hunger-related feelings, the researchers suggested that being able to label an emotion can help people to regulate it. For example, by recognizing that we feel angry simply because we are hungry, may reduce the likelihood that our hunger could lead to further negative emotions and behaviors.



Simple tips on preventing hair loss

Special to The Times Kuwait

Hair loss is a significant issue in Gulf countries, where the hot arid climate along with the harsh treated water, and even stress all combine to take a heavy toll on the crown of most people. While hair loss can be unavoidable for some due to genetics, others can combat losing their hair by taking a few simple steps to prevent it.

British pop star Robbie Williams, 48, recently announced he is going through a period of hair loss. Robbie has tried various treatments, including undergoing a hair transplant in 2013. Seven years later, the Take That singer attempted to get another transplant, but the doctors said his hair was too thin for the procedure.

Vera Clinic's Hair Transplant Expert, Gökhan Vayni, explains more about hair thinning and the solutions available. "We all have different types of hair, with some more prone to conditions relating to hair loss than others. While others have thick hair with plenty of regrowth, others like Robbie may discover balding patches visible from thinning hair. Depending on the severity of your hair thinning, further treatment may be needed to help resolve any patches of hair loss or baldness."

Experts say there are several ways to promote hair growth when you are sleeping, such as never sleeping with wet hair — as your hair is at its most vulnerable when it is wet and could be prone to breakage. It is also important not to wash your hair too often as this could encourage hair loss.

Another tip is to sleep on a silk pillowcase, as there will be less friction when your head rubs against the pillow, meaning your hair is less likely to fall out. Another reason to avoid



cotton pillowcases and replace them with silk is that cotton absorbs moisture from your hair, making it more frizzy, dry, and prone to breakage. Silk pillowcases are also better for your skin if you suffer from acne.

Another good idea is to invest in an overnight hair mask or scalp treatment. Scalp treatments will stimulate healthy hair cell growth and strengthen weak hair follicles, and overnight hair masks will give your hair the moisture and nourishment it needs to hydrate.

Also, be mindful not to tie your hair up when sleeping. High ponytails and buns can damage your hair, whether sleeping or awake, and while moving around during the day. Keep your hair down when you are asleep so nothing can tug it or pull it out of the follicles on your scalp.



It is also essential to sleep with smooth hair if you do not want it falling out, so have a brush handy next to your bed and remove any knots or tangles before you relax on your pillow.

Losing hair can be stressful, and if you cannot seem to combat it by lowering your stress levels, eating a balanced diet, or sorting out your vitamin deficiencies, you might need to take further action.

When it comes to women, it can be challenging to work out exactly how much hair you are losing. There is probably something wrong with those who lose hair when their hair is not wet, and they gradually see bald patches or a receding hairline.

Experts say the leading causes of hair loss are age and genetics, particularly in men,

but some women experience this too. You can also lose hair from medication and using products that contain chemicals.

"Male pattern baldness is mainly caused by genetics, so it is impossible to prevent it completely. Some men's hair follicles either have a particular sensitivity to a sub-type of testosterone, DHT, a naturally occurring androgen (a male hormone) in all men, or they produce too much of it, damaging the hair follicles over time," explains Vayni.

Many people lose hair due to a lack of vitamins in their diet, which can lead to certain deficiencies. An iron deficiency is one of the most common when losing hair, and you can get this checked out at the doctor and improve your iron levels with supplements.

Other deficiencies like Vitamin D, zinc and many others can cause hair loss, so ensure you eat a balanced diet. It can also help to keep your hormone levels balanced. Exercise, mindfulness breathing, and medication can all help lower your stress levels naturally. Either way, there is always a solution, says Vayni, adding, "If you are experiencing high levels of hair loss, leaving patches of your scalp with fragile hair, treatment is available that can help to reverse this....a FUE hair transplant may be the ideal solution to resolve your hair thinning if you have tried other methods and it appears hair follicles are not growing back."

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