



مستشفى رويال حياة
ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

DIPLOMAT

Kuwait, a promising
economic partner of
Kyrgyzstan

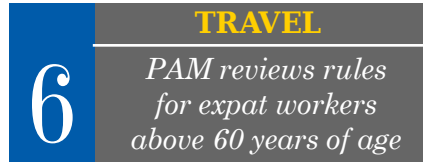
3



LOCAL

Sarod Maestro Ustad
Amjad Ali Khan: Music for
peace in a troubled world

2



TRAVEL

PAM reviews rules
for expat workers
above 60 years of age

6



New government, old challenges



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

On 5 March, more than a month after resignation of the previous government, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah announced an Amiri decree reappointing His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah as prime minister, and tasking him to form a new cabinet.

With the cabinet lineup to the 43rd government in Kuwait's parliamentary history likely to be announced in the next few days, we look at some of the festering issues that have preoccupied the country in the past, and some fresh challenges, for which the new ministers will need to find solutions so as to move the country on its path of progress.

For starters, the new government headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al Nawaf will need to urgently drive and rejuvenate the country's 'New Kuwait' development plan that has of late begun to show signs of sputtering and faltering. The development plan is crucial to realizing



Kuwait's ambitious 'Vision 2035' that aims to transform the nation into a regional financial, commercial and cultural hub over the next decade.

Last week's publication of the quarterly report on the progress of the annual development plan 2022-23, is indicative of

this slowdown in the development plan. The report revealed that the annual plan was confronted by a surprisingly large number of challenges, 665 to be exact, that prevented its timely implementation during the first-quarter of plan period. Most of the challenges (37%) were from administrative constraints,

including delays in licensing procedures, approvals, and in delivery of utility services such as water and electricity to projects.

On the brighter side of things, recent policy statements and initiatives by several ministers and heads of public entities have indeed been encouraging. While they may be removed or shifted in a new cabinet lineup, the remarks and initiatives by the care-taker ministers are indicative of an acknowledgement at the highest level of the criticality and urgency of finding answers to persistent challenges that have hampered the country's development for far too long.

Among the key issues that await the new government is the digital transformation of government services. Adoption of smart digital technologies could innovate public services, drive the economy, and improve quality of life, while increasing operational efficiency and performance of key sectors. Digitalization of government services could also go a long way to ameliorate many of the challenges underlined in last week's critical report on the annual development plan.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



WANT TO WIN iPhone 14 PRO MAX?

SEND MONEY WITH AL ANSARI EXCHANGE APP TODAY.



Download and activate your profile
using Kuwait Mobile ID.

Offer valid from 1st March to 31st March 2023.



الأنصاري للصرافة
AL ANSARI EXCHANGE
CO. W.L.L.

www.alansariexchange.com.kw

+965 222 604 33

Sarod Maestro Ustad Amjad Ali Khan

Music for peace in a troubled world

By Reaven D'Souza
Managing Editor

Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, a legend in the field of Indian music and having won all possible accolades and recognitions in a career spanning over 60 years, recently visited Kuwait to perform at a function organized by the Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC). The event was a perfect platform to showcase Indian music to a Kuwaiti audience as part of cultural exchange and soft diplomacy between the two nations.. Ustad Amjad Ali Khan took some of his precious time off to chat with The Times Kuwait Managing Editor Reaven D'Souza, and impressed us with his strong beliefs of world peace through music

“Music has connected the world,” Ustad Amjad Ali stresses while pointing out that “music can never create divisions.” As one of the undisputed masters of the music world, Indian musician Amjad Ali Khan has been performing for over 65 years in cities around the world to packed halls of music lovers.

He has popularized the sarod by reinventing the technique of playing the sarod and has won numerous accolades including a Grammy nomination, the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum and several more. He has also won admiration of audiences around the globe for his mastery of the sarod, a Hindustani classical music instrument, and the innovative ways in which he can stretch the limits of its strings to evoke hauntingly beautiful melodies.

“I have held concerts in Kuwait before, the first was in 1978, then again I was here in 1998 and in 2012 and now in 2023. The interval between performances is clearly too long. In fact, this will be the first time that I will be performing along with my two sons, Amaan and Ayaan, who are the seventh generation of sarod players in our family,” said the maestro.

“Audiences in Kuwait have always been something special for me, their appreciation and empathy for the music being played on stage is inspirational to any musician. When you come to think about it, this is not really surprising. Musical instruments in this area, like the oud, for instance, have a sound quality and timbre that complements the sounds of the sitar, sarod and other Indian classical instruments.”

Recognizing the need to preserve the legacy of classical musicians and their art, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan took it upon himself to set up a classical music museum. “Believing that I have a responsibility to preserve our traditional musical heritage, I have converted our family’s ancestral home at Gwalior into a Museum of Musical Heritage.

Named ‘Sarod Ghar’, this museum displays several Indian classical music instruments used by his forefathers. Many others have also donated instruments belonging to their ancestors to the museum, which has now become a repository for Indian classical music. Acknowledging the legacy of his family in popularizing the sarod, Ustad Khan said, “Twenty years ago, my sons published a book on me titled ‘Abba —

God’s greatest gift to us’. Now, I have also written a book about my father and guru, Ustad Hafiz Ali, titled ‘My Guru and our Fraternity’.

He has performed at venues all over the world, including at Carnegie Hall in New York and the Royal Albert Hall in London, as well as at the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize Concert in 2014 in Oslo, Norway. The UN Day Concert 2018 featured Sarod virtuoso Amjad Ali Khan, accompanied by his sons Amaan Ali Bangash and Ayaan Ali Bangash, and the Refugee Orchestra Project. The concert dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi was themed ‘Traditions of Peace and Non-violence’ in the presence of António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations.

“India’s musical heritage is a blend of many influences and depicts diversity of our culture, reflects our values of mutual understanding, of tolerance and living together in harmony,” said the maestro, who is only the second Indian musician to perform at the annual UN Day Concert, 52 years after Carnatic vocalist M.S. Subbulakshmi’s 1966 appearance.



Peace in the World has always been a priority for Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and this is clearly reflected in all his conversations on the state of world affairs. He expresses deep dismay at war and conflict appealing for everyone to come together and live in harmony.

With his vision of music transcending nations and religions, the sarod virtuoso’s performances always aim to bring peace and non-violence. “Our wealth is music, it is sound without words and there is no manipulation like words,” he points out at the purity of the sound.

Ustad Amjad Ali proudly points out that his twin grandchildren have now begun to perform making them the 8th generation of musicians in the family. Last September the first multi-city concert titled ‘Three Generations, One Nation’ was performed at full houses in Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, and Chennai, and Mumbai. During the event, the trio — the maestro along with his two sons — performed at the concert where they were joined by Ayaan’s twin sons Zohaar and Abeer. It was indeed a proud moment for the Ustad.

Over a life dedicated to music the septuagenarian Ustad Amjad Ali Khan is also known for spreading peace through his music. A noble soul filled with love and affection, his contribution to music makes him an undisputed master of music and peace in today’s troubled world.



مستشفى رويال حياة
ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

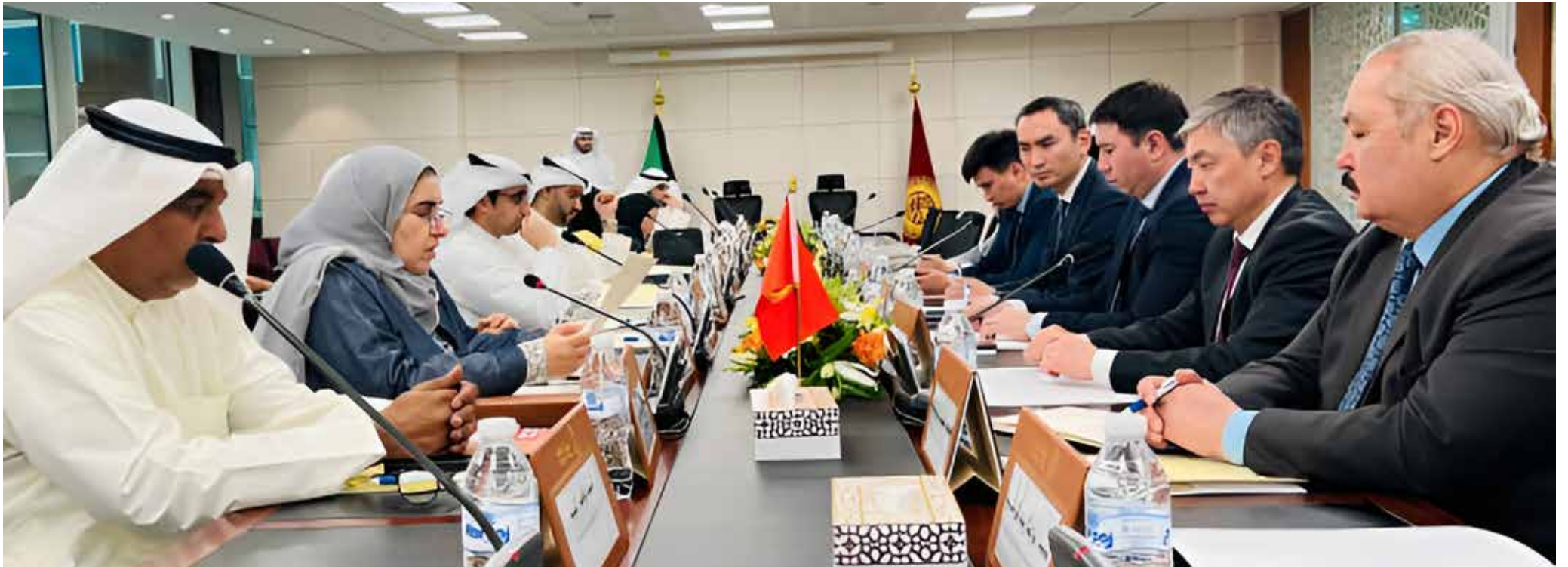
Presents

DIPLOMAT

12 - 18 March 2023 | The Times Kuwait
www.timeskuwait.com

3

Kuwait, a promising economic partner of Kyrgyzstan



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

In an exclusive interview, following the third session of the Kuwait-Kyrgyz Joint Committee for Economic and Technical Cooperation, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan H.E. Azamat Karagulov spoke with The Times Kuwait on a broad range of issues pertaining to bilateral relations between Kyrgyzstan and Kuwait.

The Joint Commission, which was held in Kuwait from 6 to 8 March, led to initiating discussion on many projects that would enhance cooperation between the two countries, said the ambassador at the start of the interview. He explained, "We held fruitful talks on 13 documents related to various topics, especially in the field of halal products and food industry, tourism and media cooperation, and in the agricultural fields. This comes in addition to our efforts to complete discussions regarding several current challenges and ways to overcome them, and to develop a plan of action that meets the aspirations of both friendly countries."

The Kyrgyz side was headed by the Minister of Finance of Kyrgyzstan, Almaz Bakitayev, while Kuwaiti side was headed by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance, Aseel Al-Saad Al-Munifi, along with the

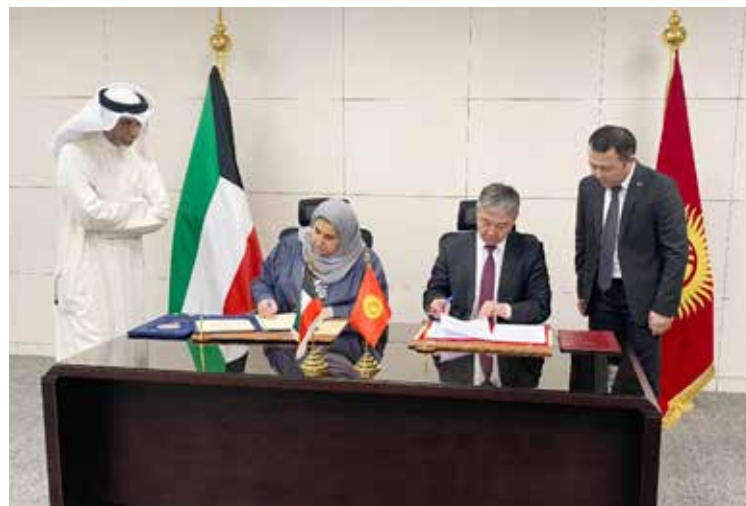
Assistant Undersecretary for Economic Affairs, Talal Al-Namshi, and with the participation of a number of senior officials from various specialized authorities in both countries.

Speaking at the Joint Commission, Minister Bakitayev expressed his view that Kuwait is

Revealing details on the volume of export trade between Kyrgyzstan and Kuwait in 2021, the minister said it amounted to about US\$642,000, which was 1.5 times more than the volume of exports in 2020. But in 2022, the export trade volume soared to nearly 3.4

Republic, and Finance Undersecretary Al-Munifi for the Kuwaiti side. The protocol included cooperation in all areas of common interest between the two countries.'

Also, during the meeting, the executive program for cultural cooperation for the years



today one of the promising economic partners of Kyrgyzstan in the Middle East region. He noted that in the past year, a positive trend was observed in the growth of bilateral trade between the two countries.

million, an increase of 8.4 times that in 2021.

During the meeting, the Protocol of the third session of the joint Kyrgyz-Kuwaiti committee for economic and technical cooperation was signed by Minister Bakitayev for the Kyrgyz

2023-2025 was signed by the Deputy Minister of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic, Chingiz Esengul Uulu, and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance on the Kuwaiti side.



Our Success is a Reflection of your Trust

**BEST PRIVATE HOSPITAL IN KUWAIT
FOR THE 12th YEAR IN A ROW**

ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL



مستشفى رويال حياة

www.royalehayat.com





French Embassy to launch Francophonie Diwaniya

During a press conference held at her residence last week, French Ambassador H.E. Claire Le Flecher disclosed the French Embassy's intention to open a 'Francophonie Diwaniya' in Kuwait, in cooperation with member states of Francophone, and French speakers in Kuwait.

Ambassador Le Flecher added, "We take this opportunity to thank His highness Sheikh Nasser Al Mohammed for his support during these recent years in preparing for the month of Francophone Arabia (CEFREPA), while also thanking the French Institute in Kuwait, and the Department of French Language and Cultures at Kuwait University, who promote the French language and culture."

Pointing out that French language has been taught in Kuwait since 1966, and there are more than 1,400 French teachers in Kuwait and nearly 35,000 students, she noted that French is the third most spoken language in the country. She also disclosed that Kuwait has applied for membership in the International Organization of La Francophonie.



Additionally, an agreement related to the promotion of French language education, was signed by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, during his official visit to Kuwait in 2022 with his Kuwaiti counterpart, Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Sabah was also signed.

During a press briefing held on the occasion, the embassies of the member states of the International Organization of La Francophonie represented in Kuwait

jointly announced the launch of the 'Month of Francophonie for the year 2023' initiative, which will begin on 5 March and culminate on 20 March, the International Day of Francophonie.

The program includes many cultural events such as competitions, organizing concerts, a bazaar and sports events, as well as a Francophone Film Festival that will be prepared by the French Embassy, the French Institute in Kuwait and the embassies of

the member countries of the International Organization of La Francophonie.

The activities of this initiative include a concert on 8 March on the occasion of International Women's Day, which aims to honor many female artists residing in Kuwait. The Francophone Bazaar will be held at Al Shaheed Park on 17 March.

Ambassador Le Flecher concluded by stressing that the Francophonie Month would be a great opportunity to further alleviate the French-Kuwaiti relations.

For his part, the Swiss Deputy Ambassador, Alexandre Guyot stated that Switzerland has become a member of the Francophonie, and added that the role of Geneva, which plays an important role not only for language, but also in the field of digital governance, which was the subject of the Francophonie summit in Djerba in November 2022.

The Tunisian ambassador to the country, H.E. El Hashemi Ajili, referred to the interest of the Tunisian embassy in promoting the Francophonie in Kuwait, praising the efforts of the Francophonie Council.



UAE Exchange Center opens new outlet in Mahboula

UAE Exchange Center, one of the leading remittance and foreign exchange brands in Kuwait, launched its latest branch in Mahboula, Block 2, on 20 February. The new branch was inaugurated by Managing Partner of the company Mohammad Humoud Al Muhareb Al Humoud, along with General Manager, E. Krishna Kumar, and Assistant General Manager Operations, Eric Engineer, in the presence of senior officials of the company, staff, special invitees, customers and media representatives.

UAE Exchange is renowned for its quality of customer service and has over 40 years of experience in foreign exchange and remittance industry. The brand offers customers high quality services supported by latest remittance technologies and processes, including Live and Flash remittances, SWIFT-Wire transfer services, e-wallet transfers, corporate remittance services, mobile application and web-based services, as well as provides access to global remittance sources such as Western Union, Transfast, Instant Cash, I Pay services and other. UAE Exchange has



over 135,000 payout locations in more than 125 countries.

In a statement, the company said it aims to continue providing customer friendly, value added services; fulfill the aspirations of employees; create sustained growth in revenue and profitability; serve the society and flourish in an environment of mutual trust and transparency.

The statement added that the company's customer centric approach has made the brand a favorite of customers across the country.

LuLu Hypermarket organizes free doctor's consultation on Kuwait Doctors Day



LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region conducted a free doctor's consultation for its customers as a part of Kuwait Doctors Day.

The free consultation campaign was held on 4 March at the Dajeej outlet of the hypermarket. The consultation was conducted across several health factors, with doctors specializing in more than seven departments participating in the campaign. The Free consultation was a part of the Hypermarket's CSR resolution that aims to benefit its customers in various aspects.

As visitors to the hypermarket had the opportunity to discuss their health concerns, receive medical advice, and get their vital signs checked. The event was well-received by the community, with hundreds of customers taking advantage of the opportunity to consult with medical professionals.

The Hypermarket extends its gratitude to the Indian Doctor's Forum who supported this cause by providing their highly qualified doctors, who volunteered their time and expertise for the initiative, by provided valuable insights on how customers can maintain a healthy lifestyle and prevent common illnesses. The consultations were given mainly by cardiologists, gynecologists, general

physicians, dermatologists, and infection specialists. LuLu Hypermarket has always been committed to promoting healthy living among its customers and this initiative is just one of the many ways in which the company is working towards realizing this goal.



Embassy of the Netherlands celebrates 'King's Day'



The Netherlands Embassy celebrated 'King's Day' on 8 March under the patronage of the Dutch Ambassador H.E. Lawrence Westhoff, and in the presence of Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for European Affairs, Minister Plenipotentiary Muhammad Yaqoub Hayati, along with several members of the diplomatic corps, special invitees, and media personnel.

In his speech on the occasion, Ambassador Westhoff, highlighted the flourishing relations between the Netherlands and Kuwait and said the two countries share similar views when it comes to promoting

and defending the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of internationally recognized borders. The two countries also adopt a system based on international laws and rules, as they are both two relatively small countries surrounded by large and powerful neighboring countries.

Ambassador Westhoff added that since 1750, Kuwait and the Netherlands have had commercial relations with trade in wool, spices and pearls through the trade routes from Basra in Iraq. "And now, after more than 270 years, the two nations continue to be trading partners," he said.

Pointing out that the year 2024 will



witness the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Netherlands and Kuwait, the Dutch ambassador said that this

historic occasion will be celebrated through activities that will establish the common principles and interests between the two countries, and strengthen their long-term trade relations built on the basis of friendship and mutual trust.

Referring to recent issues such as food security and climate change, the envoy said this requires a new style of partnership. Elaborating on this, he explained, "We and our partners in the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, and Kuwait University, are developing new extensions of such partnerships."



Jazeera Airways marks IWD with all-women flight crew

On the occasion of International Women's Day (IWD) on 8 March, Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost airline, became the first Kuwaiti carrier to fly with an all-female deck and cabin crew. The eight-member crew including the pilot and co-pilot flew Jazeera's A320neo carrying 172 passengers from Kuwait to Riyadh.

The historic flight encourages diversity, gender parity and women's empowerment, and also highlights this year's IWD theme to #EmbraceEquity. This initiative by Jazeera Airways is a significant achievement especially in the airline industry, long considered male oriented.

Board Member of Jazeera Airways, Seham Al Husaini, who was a passenger with the crew, said: "It's been a pleasure to be a part of today's all women flight to Riyadh on International Women's Day. I would like to congratulate the entire crew headed by Capt. Elif Guvaylor and the amazing Jazeera team on the ground. The aviation industry is one of the most exciting places to build a career and break barriers, and I'm hoping to be on many more flights led by women in the air and supported by women on the ground."

Jazeera Airways first took off from Kuwait in 2005 and now flies 19 aircraft to 59 destinations across the Middle East, Central and South Asia, Africa, and Europe.

With an employee base of over 1,200 employees from 68 nationalities, the airline encourages diversity, inclusion and gender parity. The airline is also committed to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) '25 by 2025', an initiative to change the gender balance and have 25 percent female representation within the aviation industry.

Rohit Ramachandran, CEO, Jazeera Airways highlighted: "This year started with us announcing record profits for the year which was followed by the launch of two new destinations and now this momentous flight. I truly appreciate our crew for their service every day. While it is a historic moment for us, for these hard-working women, it is just another day at work. At Jazeera, employees are the backbone of our company and we pride ourselves on being an equal opportunity employer. We believe that by valuing and absorbing diverse perspectives from employees, we can create a stronger, more innovative, and more successful organization."



COSY & LEISURE DINING



SINCE 1985
مغل محل
الاستثمار الأول للوجبة
MUGHAL MAHAL
Bangalore's First Choice



إكرو تیکا
أجواء مميزة وخبالة

Order
WITH US DIRECTLY
أطلب معنا مباشرة
SIGN UP & GET 2000 REWARDS POINTS



USE COUPON CODE
AT15
GET 15% OFF



@exotica_kw

www.mughalmahal.com

Thought for the week

“ We cannot solve problems with the kind of thinking we employed when we came up with them.

— Albert Einstein

Apple cider vinegar and losing fat



Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy

I was sitting with a friend of mine, and she was telling me that she is taking two teaspoons of apple vinegar directly after her meals. She heard that apple vinegar is a fat burner and it accelerates weight loss. Although apple vinegar has never been documented to do anything but add a nice flavor to salad dressings, it has suddenly become a weight loss cure for many people.



Personally, I do not agree with this assessment, because the high acidity of apple cider vinegar can be harmful for the stomach.

Apple cider vinegar is also popular as a natural appetite suppressant, which is why some people consume it before their meals or directly after. One study showed that apple

cider vinegar has the ability to delay gastric emptying which is a good thing for normal individuals (not for people suffering from ulcer and reflux).

It increases the satiety feeling, meaning you can stay full for a longer time. This prevents you from eating more, which is possibly one reason that you lose weight. But it does not burn fat. It only delays the feeling of hunger.

There is no substitute for exercise, eating less and lean. Apple cider vinegar is a natural source of potassium (5mg/serving). It is healthy to cook with it, or have it as a salad dressing, especially to treat mild hypertension.

But ... A weight loss miracle? I doubt very much. Please do not apply what you always hear. Ask for an expert's opinion.

Eat like Mira
Create healthy habits, not restrictions

To subscribe to my diet programs,
don't forget to log in to:
www.eatlikemira.com.



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

PAM reviews rules for expat workers above 60 years of age

In a new development in the recurring saga of non-graduate expatriates above the age of 60 years, the Board of Directors of the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) in their meeting last week, reviewed the articles related to this issue and decided to amend some provisions of Article 37 pertaining to the rules, regulations and procedures for granting work permits to this category of workers.

Announcing this, official spokesperson and the Director of the Public Relations and Media Department, at PAM, Aseel Al-Mazyad, said that following their review, the Board of Directors has decided that the these workers are now allowed to renew and transfer their work permit under the same conditions stipulated in Article (37) before the amendment, which are:

Paying an annual additional fee of KD250.

And, that the worker must be insured with an irrevocable comprehensive health insurance policy issued by one of the companies qualified and approved to issue the insurance policy by the Insurance Regulatory Unit.



DDI organizes awareness event on World Obesity Day

Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI) marked 'World Obesity Day' on 4 March with a public awareness campaign under the banner of 'Changing Perspectives on Obesity and Encouraging Talking about Obesity in All Aspects' with the goal of driving change in perceptions on obesity.

The campaign, which was held in cooperation with the Ministry of Health (MoH), Kuwait Obesity Society, and obesity-related entities in the public, was sponsored by the Danish multinational pharmaceutical company, Novo Nordisk.

In a talk delivered on the occasion, Chief Medical Officer at DDI, Dr. Ebba Al-Ozairi, elaborated on obesity and its associated comorbidities such as: insulin resistance, diabetes, heart disease, blood pressure, breathing problems, fatty liver disease and other possible health complications. Pointing out that obesity could be avoided and overcome by preventive measures and proper treatment, she presented the latest global trends on overcoming obesity, due to its close association with diabetes, and eliminating the negative societal perception about obesity.



He added, "According to the World Obesity Atlas 2023, published by the International Obesity Federation on World Obesity Day, the global economic impact from implications of overweight and obesity could reach \$4.3 trillion annually by 2035. In Kuwait, childhood obesity continues to rise rapidly, and if no preventive measures are taken, 52 percent of adults will suffer from obesity by 2035, which puts the country in a very high-risk category globally."

Speaking on the occasion, representative of the Primary Health Care Department at MoH, Dr. Dina Al-Dhubaib, announced the launch of a new service for the diagnosis and treatment of obesity in primary healthcare centers through non-communicable chronic diseases (NCD) clinics. She explained that these new clinics provide diagnosis, treatment and support services for patients who suffer from obesity.

For her part, Dr. Aisha Al-Fahd, vice-president of Kuwaiti Obesity Association explained that obesity is a serious and chronic disease, and the Kuwaiti Obesity Association pays great attention to raising awareness among the public and educating them about obesity through continuous cooperation with the public and private sectors.

"Obesity is recognized as a serious, chronic, relapsing disease with high prevalence in Kuwait. Due to this alarming situation, Novo Nordisk continues its commitment to drive change in obesity by collaborating with key stakeholders to support people living with obesity in Kuwait," said Venkat Kalyan, vice president and general manager, Novo Nordisk Pharma Gulf.



Vietnamese musical group charms audiences

Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Embassy of Vietnam held a two-hour musical concert on 7 March at the Jumeirah Hotel featuring a Vietnamese musical band headed by Dong Quang Vinh. The event was spearheaded by the Vietnamese Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Ngo Toan Thang and was attended by members of the diplomatic community and invited guests.

The musical concert themed with 'Hello Vietnam' commenced with an introduction of the musical group followed by welcome remarks delivered by the Vietnamese envoy. Popular songs were played by the group with the highlight being the use of traditional bamboo musical instruments. The group was composed of three female artists and two



children who participated in the show. One of the most applauded songs played was a popular Kuwaiti music, which enthralled and brought nostalgia to the audience.

Mr. Vinh is a talented musician whose reputation in music has been recognized globally. His love for traditional musical instruments was an influence from his father who was a popular bamboo musical



instrument maker, and mother who taught music in Vietnam National Academy of Music. Mr. Vinh has traveled to countries in Asia and Europe and proved that music could bring together everyone and spread joy and love. "I am overjoyed to be here and perform for everyone," stated Mr. Vinh.

Dinner which followed the concert showcased traditional Vietnamese cuisine

to the delight of everyone who attended the event. One of the highlights of the night was the set of raffle draws featuring gifts from Hamona Food JSC, Hien Le Group, Mitix Group, Tam Hiep Than, Huong Jewelry and the grand prize included one return air ticket to Vietnam with hotel accommodation courtesy of Vietravel. The major prize winner was Mohamed M. Rasheed, Advisor to the Chairperson of Fouad Al Ghanim and Sons Company. "This is one of the most remarkable experiences I have had in my life. I am thankful and excited to travel and experience Vietnam," stated Mr. Rasheed.

Ambassador Thang thanked everyone for attending the event and the evening ended with the audience trying out their hands on the musical instruments with guidance from the artists.

Amazing Rental Deals from AlSayer Car Rental

Now Available at Crowne Plaza Hotel



Committed to exceeding customer expectations and as part of the strategic expansion of the Group towards delivering quicker service in the hospitality sector, AlSayer Car Rental has opened a brand-new office at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Farwaniya Governorate.



The opening ceremony was represented by Bengt Schultz Chief Operating Officer and Munir Salous Senior General Manager Car Rental from AlSayer with Najib Nasser Cluster General Manager and Wadih Abdel Ahad Cluster Director of Sales and Marketing of Crowne Plaza & Holiday Inn Kuwait Al Thuraya City.

Commenting on the opening ceremony Munir Salous said "We have embarked on an ambitious journey to enhance the brand image of AlSayer Car Rental to International Standards. With the opening of our outlet here in Crowne Plaza Hotel Farwaniyah, we now have even better network of 7 locations across Kuwait and we have a positive outlook on further expansion of this network. From a strategic point we also aim to enhance digital service for our customers that includes advances web solutions".

Bengt Schultz said "AlSayer is confident on expansion plans for our Group specially Car Rental Division and we are excited to associate with five-star hospitality partners Crowne Plaza Hotel. Since its inception in 1976 Car Rental and Leasing operations has recorded exceptional growth in the ranks of one of the leading companies in the region on the strong foundation of unparalleled service".

According to Najib Nasser "It gives us great pleasure to have Al Sayer's Car Rental booth with us here on premises at the Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza Kuwait Al Thuraya City. The legacy, long history and legendary service of Al Sayer Holding is a testament to their commitment to serve their customers and we are very happy to be a small part of their continued journey. Wishing the team continued success for now and the future".

Integrated Rental Solutions

At the Crowne Plaza Hotel, AlSayer Car Rental will offer Toyota vehicles, the most reliable product in the automotive industry; from small sedans to medium class vehicles, and the toughest 4X4 Land Cruisers. Premium range of cars from Lexus will also be available for customers, in addition to chauffeur driver service available upon request, meaning AlSayer Rental portfolio includes all options to meet customers' requirements.

Supporting the hospitality sector AlSayer Car Rental also has an outlet at Al Bastaki International Hotel, Bneid Al-Gar in Assimah Governorate. Also committed to delivering quicker service to the growing business sector in Ahmadi governorate, AlSayer Car Rental and Leasing had recently opened a brand-new building for Head Office, Sales Operations and Service Center.

ROASTY TASTY

EATING RIGHT IS EVERYONE'S RIGHT™

100% ROASTED

Whole Grain Snack

TASTE KA MAZAA WITHOUT FRIED KI SAZAA

0% CHOLESTEROL | 0% TRANSFAT

Desi Treat

Roasted Namkeen

Snack Smarter

45+ years of Continued Excellence Since 1974

Sole distributor in Kuwait

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

P.O. Box: 22984 Safat 13090 Kuwait

Tel: 22284335 | 22284336 | 22284337

22284338 | 22284339

Email: obtc Kuwait@qualitynet.net

www.obtc Kuwait.com

@obtc_kwt

Bulgaria and Kuwait celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations

Bulgarian Embassy organized an enchanting orchestra concert under the patronage of the Ambassador of Bulgaria, H.E. Dimitar Dimitrov, on 6 March at the Abdulsattar Abdulsattar Theater in Salmiya. The concert was part of the 28th iteration of the ongoing Al-Qurain Cultural Festival — Kuwait's annual cultural fest held under the sponsorship of the National Council of Culture Arts and Letters.

The event was attended by Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi, along members of the diplomatic corps, and the Director of the Al-Qurain Cultural Festival, Muhammad bin Reda, as well as a large audience of music lovers.

In his speech on the occasion, Ambassador Dimitrov stressed on the importance of cultural exchange in supporting and strengthening relations between countries, as "music is an universal language that acts as a distinctive bridge of communication and provides a solid



ground for common understanding.

He also noted that the participation of the Bulgarian musical troupe in the Al-Qurain Festival celebrates the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two friendly countries. He added that more events and activities would be arranged throughout the year to highlight the importance of this

historic anniversary.

Giving an overview of the orchestra, Ambassador Dimitrov said it was founded in 2017 and its ensemble includes three women and two men, who were joined for the performance in Kuwait by two guest artists, opera singer Anna Karadimitrova, and her husband, clarinetist Preslav Petkov. He added that the two Bulgarian guest



artists had spent 17 years of their lives studying music in Kuwaiti schools and universities.

The performance by the band on the clarinet, guitar, mandolin and mandola, as well as renditions by Soprano Anna, were thoroughly enjoyed by the audience, who showed their appreciation with loud applause at the end of the performance.

Kalaam Carrier Solutions Partners with Riedel Networks to Connect Motorsports across the Middle East and Around the World

The partnership will deliver ultra-reliable and robust connectivity to support real-time data transfer and broadcasting for motorsport events in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates.

Kalaam Carrier Solutions (KCS), the Wholesale division of Kalaam Telecom Group, has been selected by Riedel Networks, a Riedel Group company and global network provider focused on customized networks, as partner of choice to serve their comprehensive connectivity networking requirements to support motorsport events in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in 2023 and beyond.

In collaboration with its strategic national partners and Riedel Networks, KCS will provide multi-service connectivity from racetracks in the Middle East to partners in Europe and Asia. This will support a comprehensive network that will enable teams racing at the events to seamlessly share data from the cars and drivers, as well as to support social media platforms and broadcasters. KCS is

providing a Point-of-Presence in the region for Riedel Networks, allowing them to connect to their global POPs in Europe and Asia with ultra-low latency service level assurances. The solution will utilise the fully owned Kalaam Network Optical Transit (KNOT) cable system and the Europe-India Gateway cable (EIG). KNOT is a 1,400km terrestrial network which spans Kuwait, Bahrain, KSA, UAE and Qatar. EIG is a 15,000 km international fiber-optic submarine cable system covering 12 countries from India and the Middle East to Europe.

"Together with Riedel, we are serving one of the most dynamic and data-driven sports in the world. We collaborated to go beyond what was previously available to motorsport teams and deliver a solution that is robust, reliable, and future-ready to meet growing demands," said Veer Passi, Group Chief Executive Officer at Kalaam Telecom. "We are an ambitious and agile player that puts customers first and our

people and innovative mindset set us apart. Our people, precision and performance are a great fit for Riedel and demonstrate the value of our global network to develop unique, customised connectivity solutions that meet customer needs in the MENA region."

KCS was invited to tender in late 2022 and was selected after an extensive review of potential global and regional partners. In 30 days, KCS provided the infrastructure needed to ensure Riedel's customers could benefit from new levels of network performance throughout motorsport events in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE.



"Riedel Networks prides itself on delivering the highest quality of services to our clients and we wanted a partner in the region who understood our need to deliver and matched our passion for success. Kalaam Carrier Solutions was chosen for its innovative thinking, robust connectivity and consistent experience across multiple markets in the Middle East. Riedel now benefits from a secure network with control over its design so that it can deliver the services our global customers have come to expect since we started serving the motorsports industry in 2006," said Michael Martens, CEO, Riedel Networks.

KCS delivers redundant services to the racetracks and build a robust and secure network in a relatively short period of time, demonstrating its strong global presence and making it a trusted partner of choice for the world's leading telecommunications operators.

LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Ramadan Special' promotion

LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region and the destination of choice for discerning shoppers, is all set to welcome the holy month of Ramadan in a grand manner with the 'Ramadan Special' promotion that launched on 8 March.

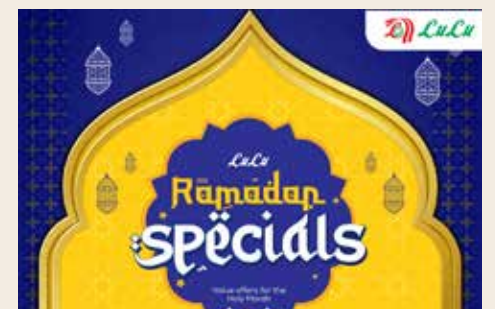
Upcoming weeks will witness the launch of several promotions, and special discount offers and deals on Ramadan-related items, including on Ramadan foods, non-food items, household products, gifts and more.

Heightening the spirit of the holy season and providing an attractive backdrop to the 'Ramadan Special' promotion are displays of traditional Ramadan-related items, as well as the traditional Ramadan Souqs set up in all outlets of the hypermarket. The Ramadan Souqs will be launched with a formal opening scheduled at the Al-Qurain outlet of the hypermarket on 15 March.

Many exciting promotional events and one-time offers are also planned to be unveiled during the month of Ramadan, including special Ramadan-kits that carry all necessary Ramadan food items packed in a box, and special Iftar meals counter that provide warm, ready to eat meals for those seeking to break the fast without the hassle of cooking. Special gift cards are also available at all outlets of the hypermarket in denominations of KD10, KD25 and KD50 that can be purchased for presenting to family, friends or employees.

Other major promotions and offers during the month of Ramadan include the 'Dates Festival' with alluring offers on best quality dates; 'Big TV Majlis' that offers amazing deals

on big-screen televisions; 'Ramadan Home Fest' with special offers on various appliances, household items and furnishings; as well as a 'Ramadan Sweets Treat' that provides special Ramadan sweet delicacies to cater to all those with a sweet tooth.



In addition, there will also be 'Ramadan Meat Market' offering discounts on the choicest cuts; and 'Healthy Ramadan' celebration that features organic foods, superfoods, vegan meals, and 'free-from' food products for those allergic to certain food items. A 'Ramadan Nights' festival planned for the promotion period will further attract shoppers of all ages with fun-filled activities and food counters.

The 'Ramadan Special' promotion reiterates LuLu Hypermarket's continued commitment to participate in the community's social and religious events and to provide shoppers with a comfortable and safe shopping experience in an unrivaled ambiance, while offering high-quality products from around the world at exceedingly competitive prices.

Customs bans import of poultry meat from Spain, US

General Administration of Customs has issued a ban on importing all types of bird meat from Spain and select states in the United States. The order, issued on directives of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, was signed by the Acting Director of the General Administration of Customs, Suleiman Al-Fahd.

Sources indicated that the import prohibition instructions were issued under directive No. 9 of 2023, which bans the import of all kinds of

fresh, chilled, frozen and processed bird meat, its derivatives and products, and table eggs, from Spain and 22 US states due to the outbreak of highly pathogenic bird flu in those places.

On a related note, the General Administration of Customs announced the lifting of a previous ban on the import of all kinds of fresh, chilled, frozen and processed poultry meat of all kinds, its derivatives and products, and table eggs from 16 American states and from Ireland.

Indian Ambassador hopes to rejuvenate Indo-Kuwait bilateral cooperation

Staff Report

Strengthening Indo-Kuwait partnership and having a high-level visit in the near future were among the several priorities H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika, Ambassador of India to Kuwait disclosed to media persons on 7 March, shortly after presenting his credentials to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmad Al Sabah.

Elaborating on his remarks, Ambassador Swaika said "India and Kuwait have been traditional and time-tested partners. It is a relationship that has both historical foundations and modern-day ingredients for a strong partnership. Geographically, we are maritime neighbors, with the Arabian Sea connecting our shores. Culturally, we are close to each other, especially the strong people-to-people connections that make our relationship unique. Economically, India is crucial to Kuwait's food security while Kuwait is crucial to India's energy security. And most importantly, it is a relationship to which the leadership of both countries attaches the utmost importance."

He pointed out that the 60 years of Indo-Kuwait diplomatic relations coinciding with the 75th anniversary of India's independence in the last two years had led to over 250 cultural events being organized by the Indian embassy. Events like



'Namaste Kuwait', and 'Splendors of India' have remained in the hearts of many who attended. He added that one major aspect that bound the large community of Indians living in Kuwait was their vibrant and multifaceted culture. The people of Kuwait have also formed a deep appreciation for this vibrant Indian culture.

Touching on tourism and investment, he noted that there was untapped potential, in terms of trade and investments from both sides. "On the economic side, the total bilateral trade between India and Kuwait was over US\$12 billion in 2021 and our trade is

increasing following the pandemic recovery. India is the second largest destination for Kuwait's oil exports. Kuwait also has good investments in India, through its investments by the state-owned Kuwait Investment Authority."

He also pointed out that the presence of the large Indian community in Kuwait kept the embassy busy. Touting it as their responsibility, Ambassador Swaika affirmed that the embassy's consular service delivery mechanisms were robust. "The Embassy also has a strong feedback and grievance redressal mechanism including 12 WhatsApp lines and various services. The WhatsApp lines are being monitored on a 24x7 basis by embassy staff dedicated to this service," he noted.

The Ambassador also holds an 'Open House' program where he personally attends to grievances and people's unresolved issues. He said that it was a useful feedback mechanism that he intended on continuing. Ambassador Swaika was also working towards ensuring a tourist visa to Kuwaitis within 24 working hours.

He concluded by adding that as part of India's celebration of the UN International Year of Millets in 2023, the Embassy had organized a 'Millets Week' in mid-February and indicated that a month-long campaign will be held again in May or June to spread the message of 'Millets for Sustainable Development'.

IWG celebrates International Women's Day



International Women's Group (IWG) celebrated International Women's Day (IWD), at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on 5 March in the presence of lady ambassadors accredited to Kuwait, including the Ambassador of Indonesia, H.E. Lena Maryana, Ambassador of Canada, H.E. Aliya Mawani, Ambassador of Turkey, H.E. Tubanur Sonmez, and the Ambassador of Australia, H.E. Melissa Kelly.

the Republic of Italy, H.E. Carlo Baldocci, and Ambassador of Egypt, H.E. Osama Shaltout, presenting roses to IWG members and guests.

In her opening speech, IWG President, Ghada Shawky, welcomed members and guests, and added that International Women's Day is a remarkable annual tradition that symbolizes appreciation, respect, love and care towards women. She also shed light on the achievements of women in the MENA region. She also stressed that the focus on gender equity needs to be part of every society.

The panel discussion focussed on experiences, perspectives and insights of six exceptional women leaders. While speaking of barriers in her career, MP Alya AlKhaled mentioned the stereotyping of women as unsuitable for politics. Sundus Hamza, Co-founder of Abolish 153, spoke of Thoubha, the first App of its kind in Kuwait to fight soaring domestic violence crimes by giving women access to a hotline and live chat where they can report emotional, sexual, financial and physical abuse while creating a safety plan.

For her part, Thuraya Al Baqsmi spoke of her journey as an artist and urged the government and society to patronize and support artistic endeavors. Nisreen Al Rubyaan spoke of the absence of women in the higher echelons of leadership and the need for women to amplify their contributions. Neera Dukhi, spoke about ways women can find balance in their lives, while Dr. Sahar Ghannam, shared her view of how ambitious women are perceived by society. The insights and experiences shared by these trailblazing women was widely appreciated by the women present in the audience.

The IWG celebration of International Women's Day also included a magnificent fashion show carefully curated for the IWG by highly accomplished and famous fashion designer Hayat Karimi, an Italian citizen of Moroccan origin. The members were stunned by the display of the beautiful collection of traditional Moroccan caftans. The evening ended with a raffle draw and a sumptuous dinner.



An insightful moderated discussion on Women's Empowerment was hosted on the occasion, which included a panel of eminent women personalities in the country. Among the panel members were Member of Parliament, Alya AlKhaled; the co-Founder of civil society organization, Abolish 153, Sundus Hamza; Representative of the UNHCR in Kuwait, Nisreen Rubiyaan; pioneering Kuwaiti artist, Thuraya Al Baqsmi; Charge d' Affairs of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Neera Dukhi; and Dr. Sahar Ghannam, a renowned dermatologist based in Kuwait. The panel was moderated by Chaitali B Roy from Arab Times and Radio Kuwait.

The event began with Ambassador of Palestine, H.E. Rami Tahboub, Ambassador of Mexico, H.E. Miguel Isidro, Ambassador of

CSC to announce flexible working hours during Ramadan

Civil Service Commission (CSC) is reportedly planning to announce a four and a half hour work schedule for the public sector during the upcoming holy month of Ramadan.

Pressure has been mounting on the CSC to

decide on the issue of flexible working hours and to apply it in the holy month of Ramadan on an experimental basis, especially with the onset of summer and the difficulty of enduring the traffic congestion crisis when people are fasting.

The application of flexible working hours during Ramadan also aims to change the current half-hour time difference between two groups of ministries, to an hour and a half during the holy month, while maintaining official working hours.

Kuwaitis account for a third of the population

The Central Administration of Statistics announced the results of the 'Registral Census of the State of Kuwait 2021', which is the first census that adopts the registration census methodology based on administrative records from the country's authorities rather than the traditional field census methodology based on field data collection, through surveys.

Final results from the 2021 census project reveals that the total population of Kuwait stood at 4,385,717, of whom 1,488,716 are Kuwaitis, or 34 percent, compared to 2,897,001 non-Kuwaitis, or 66 percent.

The results of the census organized by the Central Administration of Statistics, in cooperation with the Public Authority for Civil Information, showed the number of Kuwaiti males as 729,638, or 49 percent, compared to 759,078 Kuwaiti women, or 51 percent. On the other hand, the number of non-Kuwaiti males is 1,941,628, or 67 percent, while the number of non-Kuwaiti females reached 955,373, or 33 percent.

Farwaniya governorate took the lead in terms of population density (1,125,562, or 26 %), followed by Al-Ahmadi (940,176 or 21 %) and Hawalli (937,978, or 21 %), then the capital (582,311 or 13%), Jahra (573,120 or 13%), and Mubarak Al-Kabeer (283,269 or 6%).

The largest number of citizens were recorded in Al-Ahmadi Governorate (329,121), followed by the Capital Governorate (283,579) and Al-Farwaniyah Governorate (243,912), then the governorates of Hawalli (243,919), Al-Jahra (212,160), and Mubarak Al-Kabeer (175,744).

As for non-Kuwaitis, the largest number was recorded in the Farwaniya governorate (881,650), followed by Hawalli (694,059) and Al-Ahmadi (611,055), then the governorates of Al-Jahra (360,960), Capital (298,732), and Mubarak Al-Kabeer (107,525).

While the number of non-Kuwaitis exceeds



the number of Kuwaitis in most governorates, Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate alone registered the largest number of citizens (175,744 compared to 107,525).

It is remarkable that the data on the number of illiterate and semi-illiterate residents, showed that there are 50,421 illiterates and 442,202 who can barely read and write, which means there are about half a million non-Kuwaitis between illiterate and semi-illiterate.

Speaking about the 2021 Census figure, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Mazen Al-Nahedh stated that the project was implemented within the framework of efforts aimed at achieving the state's direction in technological, digital and technical transformation to develop the work environment and promote the use of information technology in all fields while supporting efforts in implementing the objectives of the vision of the State of Kuwait 'New Kuwait' by 2035.

He also underlined that the importance of statistics is due to its major role in the development planning process, stressing that such data is the backbone of any development planning, as there is no development without planning, and no planning without statistics.

UN House organizes panel discussion on International Woman's Day

The UN house organized a panel discussion on the occasion of International Woman's Day under the theme "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality", and to also celebrate the 1 year anniversary of the Woman's Economic Development Platform.

This discussion explored the impact of the digital gender gap on widening economic and social inequalities, while highlighting the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls in digital spaces and addressing online and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence.

The seminar included participation from the Heads of Human Resource Departments from several Kuwaiti companies and banks that joined WEEP.

The Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) Secretary General Dr. Khaled Mahdi stated that Kuwait continues to develop and empower women in various fields with the support of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women and the Department of Women's Studies at Kuwait University.

Women constitute 60% of the workforce in the government sector and that the percentage

of decision-makers and those in leadership positions rose to 21%, after it was 13% in the last study. The study also indicates an increase in the percentage of women in state scholarships and in civil society organizations.

Despite these percentages and the observations that the study highlighted, the percentage of women's involvement in the private sector in Kuwait is relatively weaker than in the government sector due to several reasons.

Meanwhile, the UNDP Resident Representative Hideko Hadzialic confirmed that despite the acceleration of world economies in employing women in their various sectors, the proportions of some sectors are still relatively small. The theme of this discussion aimed to align with the priority theme for the upcoming 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW-67), "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality with empowerment of all women and girls".

Kuwait takes lead in the strategic transformation of education. As it is important to make human capital development more



Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) Secretary General Dr. Khaled Mahdi

future-oriented and agile.

Science, technology and innovation (STI) can be crucial in meeting the internationally agreed development goals. However, they cannot effectively facilitate equitable and sustainable development unless women's and men's aims, concerns, situations and abilities are considered

when formulating STI policies. Economic empowerment of women in their workplaces and communities, optimizing women's perspectives, skills and innovative ideas whether in the markets or workplaces is key to business development and inclusive development.

Susanne Mikhail, UN Women Regional Director for the Arab States stated "If we apply strategic financial levers such as public sector digital programs, research grants and procurement, and private sector investments, we can transform innovation ecosystems. Public and private sectors must fund gender analysis and interventions in all digital policies and programs, research grants and procurement."

Followed by Dr. Lubna Alkazi, Director Women's Research & Studies Center in Kuwait University stated that a number of companies in Kuwait have adopted the Women's Empowerment Principles. From only 7 companies in 2017 to over 45 companies at present. They have not only signed but shown their commitment by implementing policies that have empowered women in their organizations.

New government, old challenges

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

It is in this regard that the recent statement by the Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Mazen Al-Nahedh, gains added importance.

Inaugurating and addressing the 'Towards a Digital Economy' conference, organized by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), in cooperation with The Business Year (TBY) magazine, on 8 March, Minister Al-Nahedh said that his ministry is working on forming a high-level committee, with the inclusion of other ministers and all relevant government agencies, to build a national roadmap for overseeing the digital transformation of the country, and unifying all related projects under a comprehensive digitalization master plan.

He also confirmed that Kuwait would continue to work with its strategic partners to promote digital transformation in public institutes and achieve Kuwait's 'Vision 2035' plan. Pointing out that the recent inking of partnership agreements with several leading global technology firms had led the country to adopt promising and smart technologies. Al-Nahedh added that these deals have also assisted in furthering the scope and development of indigenous unified digital applications such as the 'Sahel' app, 'Kuwait ID' and 'Meta' app that simplify administrative processes and make public services more accessible and transparent.

The minister went on to note that, in line with Kuwait's Vision 2035 the ministry is also working on maximizing benefit from IT and communications to support the country's economy diversification plans. The minister stressed that these initiatives would help create new industries, stimulate competitiveness, and create job opportunities for national youth in different sectors of the economy.

Another top priority that will require immediate attention of many new ministers will be selecting the right people to fill top tier positions in ministries and public entities that have been lying vacant for months. Lack of leadership at the helm has paralyzed the reviewing and approving of plans, and the implementation of several vital projects.

Reports indicate that there are around 15 public sector entities that have been without a head for nearly six months, as a result of which work on important projects and plans of these organizations have stagnated. Additionally, more than 600 posts in government agencies have been lying vacant for months due to various reasons, including the absence of the entity head needed to review, approve and sign appointment letters.

Ironically, even as hundreds of posts in the public sector remain vacant, the authorities will simultaneously need to reduce the employee burden on these entities. Reports have repeatedly indicated that the public entities are currently bloated with surfeit employees. Finding gainful employment for national manpower in the private sector will have to be a priority for the new government, despite previous attempts to lure young citizens to work in private firms have not yielded the desired results.

In yet another sign of a new sense of purpose among ministers

and policy makers, the Minister of Public Works, and Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Amani Bougammaz, last week submitted a proposal to the Council of Ministers calling for the scrapping of the Public Authority for Roads and Transport (PART). This followed an extensive evaluation of the Authority and its functioning, by the Ministry of Public Works (MPW), which found that PART had failed to realize the goals or achieve the objectives behind its formation.

Since its establishment in 2014, PART has proved to be a public-sector 'white elephant' that provides very little productivity while eating into the limited resources of the ministry. For much of its existence, the Authority has been in large measure mirroring the activities and duties that were more effectively and relatively quickly performed by existing departments of the MPW.



The ministerial report noted that the two greenfield projects that the Authority was tasked to accomplish have made little or no headway. The development of a Metro rail system for the country, as well as the National Railway Project that aims to link Kuwait with the rail network in other countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, have not advanced beyond the paper-work stage so far. This comes, despite the Authority having overarching control in undertaking planning, designing and implementing of the two vital projects.

Detractors point out that since its inception, PART has served mainly as a venue for providing sinecure 'jobs' to nationals, often to reward loyal supporters, or to placate opposition groups in parliament by employing cadres recommended by them. The report noted that over the course of eight years since its formation, the authority has spent a total of over KD2.7 billion on various road work projects, in addition to the huge expenses from employee salaries, perks, and administrative costs.

However, these expenses have not been reflected in the quality of work carried out by PART, neither in the quality of road networks nor in implementing new public transport mechanisms such as the Metro and Rail Network. The Authority has also made little or no progress in furthering its original mandate of taking over functions from MPW and performing them in a more

professional, productive and effective manner.

On another front, and in yet another indication that things were beginning to head in the right direction, the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, represented by the National Center for Knowledge Economy, recently launched the third Knowledge Economy Forum under the theme of 'Knowledge Markets' on 6 March.

The forum was noteworthy in that it came in the wake of an address by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al Sabah to the World Government Summit held in Dubai in mid-February. Speaking at the Summit, which was organized under the banner of 'Shaping Future Governments', Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf underlined the importance of implementing epistemic governance based on knowledge and information to tackle present and future natural and man-made challenges facing nations and the global community.

In a statement issued on the sidelines of the Knowledge Economy Forum, the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Dr. Khaled Mahdi, said that the two-day forum aims to build a supportive environment for the vision of 'New Kuwait 2035' by transitioning the country to a knowledge economy, educating public institutions and leaders about the importance of knowledge economy and of its role in enhancing competitiveness and diversifying economic bases.

One of the objectives of the forum was to build bridges of cooperation with the international community in the field of knowledge economy and benefit from international experiences in the practice of knowledge activities. Several discussion sessions held during the forum were addressed by international and regional specialists and experts in the field of knowledge economy.

These sessions helped explain the concept of knowledge markets and their role in supporting the economies of countries, the future of job opportunities and skills within the knowledge markets, the requirements of education and scientific research in the knowledge economy, as well as the legislative environment for promoting cognitive markets. Experts also underlined the need

The statement by Dr. Mahdi also noted that Kuwait is steadily moving towards progress in the knowledge economy, by benefiting from the successful experiences carried out by the best countries in the world in this field. The statement also underlined that the knowledge economy is mainly based on knowledge as the main driver of this economy, and on accurate information that relies on communication and information technologies. The statement also stressed on the importance of investing in quality education and training so as to achieve the structural transformation required for a knowledge economy.

It is certainly reassuring that the head of Supreme Council for Planning and Development recognizes that the knowledge economy cannot be achieved by theoretical applications alone, but that it requires effort and time on the part of all concerned to successfully realize this aspirational goal. The remarks in the statement are pertinent not just to ministers and lawmakers but also to ordinary citizens in Kuwait.

UN water conference to give renewed hope to nations

Under the leadership of President Emomali Rahmon, Tajikistan has worked tirelessly to make the UN 2023 Water Conference possible after several years in the making. A watershed moment: not only for the global water agenda but more importantly for sustainable development at large. The UN 2023 Water Conference, which will be held in New York from 22 to 24 March, will raise global awareness on water. It will bring together indigenous people, youth, women and businesses from across the world along with financiers and innovators.



The UN 2023 Water Conference will be hosted by the United Nations at the end of this month on a Tajik-Dutch initiative, said Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan, H.E. Dr. Zubaidullah Zubaidov during a media conference he held on 8 March, along with the Ambassador of The Netherlands, H.E. Lawrence Westhoff and the Acting Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr. Asad Hafeez.

Ambassador Zubaidov began by noting that for more than two decades, Tajikistan along with The Netherlands, has been advocating the global water agenda due to the great importance that the two countries attach to this issue, and to the climate change phenomena.

He pointed out that Tajikistan has so far launched eight resolutions related to water at the United Nations General Assembly, explaining that the global initiative on fresh water, international cooperation and now

water for sustainable development contributes greatly to the advancement of water-related goals, to provide a platform on sustainable development and integrated water resources management to achieve social, economic and environmental goals.

He added that there was strong cooperation over the past two years between the Netherlands, Tajikistan, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Committee on Water, to organize the United Nations Conference on Water.

For his part, Ambassador Westhoff, expressed his pride in his country's participation in the first UN-dedicated conference on water in nearly 46 years, which will be jointly organized by Tajikistan and the Netherlands to assess progress made in the International Decade of Action for Water in 2023.

According to the World Commission on Water Economics, more than two billion

people do not have access to safely managed water, and one child under the age of five dies every minute because of polluted water.

The Dutch Ambassador stressed on the importance of taking measures to restore balance in the global water cycle to ensure universal access to safe drinking water and to enable water to support economic development and sustainable growth, calling for the need to reorient water management locally and globally. He said, "We are working with Kuwait to develop technologies to improve water use. We are also cooperating with a Kuwaiti company on using hydroponics that use minimal water for producing plants in greenhouses. The company's mission will end in May, when it will be able to produce vegetables using this technology."

Speaking at the media conference, Acting Representative of the UN Secretary-General Dr. Hafeez, expressed his thanks to the Embassy of Tajikistan for organizing this

important briefing on the United Nations Water Conference 2023, which will be held in New York from March 22 to 24.

He added that this conference is the first for the United Nations to focus on water since 1977 and is a pivotal moment to accelerate action in the field of water to achieve Sustainable Development Goal No. 6 on water and sanitation.

Turning to Kuwait, he said that the main water challenges the country faces are from increasing water scarcity, and the growing financial, economic and environmental impacts associated with meeting the demand for water in these sectors. These challenges are expected to increase due to rapid population growth and urbanization, increased demand for food, the effects of climate change, and unsustainable consumption, water losses, insufficient water reuse, and the continuous degradation and depletion of groundwater resources.

Embassy of Nepal organizes tourism promotion event

Embassy of Nepal organized a highly interactive program titled 'Destination Nepal: Nature, Culture and Adventure', with the participation of travel agents and tour operators, as well as media representatives, on 5 March.



The program was jointly inaugurated by Ambassador of Nepal H.E. Durga Prasad Bhandari, his spouse Bindhya Bhandari and Minister Plenipotentiary, Asia Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kuwait, Khalid Jassim Al Yassin.

Ambassador Bhandari began the program by providing a detailed picture of Nepal's major tourism destinations, including Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur, Pokhara, Chitwan and others.

Pointing out that the start of direct flights between Nepal and Kuwait provides a direct link between the two countries, he thanked the management of both Kuwait Airways and Jazeera Airways for operating the direct flights between Kathmandu and Kuwait. He also noted that direct air services now connect Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, with major cities of other countries in the Gulf region, including Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Dammam and Muscat.



With regard to the visa system, the ambassador said that the Embassy is providing visas to visitors in the shortest possible time and added that most nationalities, including Kuwaiti nationals, can obtain visa-on-arrival from the immigration office at Tribhuvan



International Airport in Kathmandu and other entry points as well.

Shedding light on Nepal's rich natural heritage, diverse culture, and numerous sports and adventure activities available in the country, the envoy pointed to the country's high quality tourism infrastructure, including 5-star hotels, value accommodation arrangements, and added that Nepal offers competitive and quality services to visitors from around the world.

During the program, Counsellor of the Embassy Sujani Rana, shared information on various tourist destinations, products, and

activities in Nepal through an interesting powerpoint presentation. The activities included, mountaineering, trekking, bird watching, rafting/ kayaking/ canyoning, paragliding, mountain biking, Zip lining, bungee jumping, mountain flights, as well as information on the country's many national parks, wildlife reserves, world heritage sites, annual events and festivals.

The program ended with a raffle draw, which saw two participants each winning a round-trip for two people from Kuwait to Nepal through tickets sponsored by Kuwait Airways and Jazeera Airways.

MALTA

Where time stands still



I did not understand the reason for this famous proverb until after I visited Malta. I am a person who is very interested in heritage, folklore, stories and history, and it is part of the reason why I enjoy traveling. And the tour guide who accompanied me on my tour around Malta told me that the story of the destruction of Malta began when the French army led by Napoleon Bonaparte occupied the island of Malta in 1798.

The French army destroyed everything in the city and forced the inhabitants to flee to the island of Sicily. Inhabitants of Malta returned to their homes only after the British under Sir Alexander Ball liberated it in 1800, but only after it was ruined by Napoleon; and hence the saying, 'After the ruin of Malta'.

Another proverb I used to hear growing up was, 'Like calling for prayers in Malta'. When I asked my guide about this, he explained that once there was a Moroccan Muslim man who came to Malta, and when the time for prayer came, he began the call for prayer, but no one paid any heed to his call. The proverb is used to describe a situation where no one pays any attention to what you say.

Proverbs aside, I started my visit to Malta from the capital Valletta, which is also the largest city and the cultural center of Malta. When you are in Malta, especially in Valletta, you will feel that time has stopped moving in this place. The city has managed to maintain many of its old buildings and infrastructure remarkably well even to this day. And, this is one reason why the city has been included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites since 1980.

In Valletta you will find many palaces, museums, castles and forts, most of which are within walking distance of each other. The city also includes a large port developed from one of the natural ancient harbors in Valletta. Today, the port is a popular European marina where many luxury cruise ships, private boats and luxury yachts dock. A cruise from this port is an excellent way to see the city's stunning skyline and distinctive neighborhoods, and is understandably one of the most booked tourist attractions in Malta.

Even though English is the language in Malta, the locals have their own official language called Maltese. There are many Arabic words in Maltese that you can understand clearly, and the Italian language is also widespread on the island, and is spoken by more than half the population.

If you are a fan of staying up late and love the night life, all you have to do is head to St. Julian's, which is about 9 km from Valletta. The town is famous for its bustling nightlife, and this is the main reason why it receives thousands of tourists from all over the globe daily.



By Nourah Khan
Exclusive to
The Times Kuwait

There are many reasons why people travel; some do so for shopping, others for exploring culture, nature or history, and many people travel to relax and take a break from routine daily life. But how many of us would insist on traveling to a country because you heard its name mentioned in many common proverbs since childhood? Well, this was the reason for my first ever visit to Malta.

Malta is an archipelago lying to the center of the Mediterranean Sea, between Sicily in Italy and the North African continent. It is a country

known for its historic sites and for its successive occupation by, among others, the Romans, Moors, Knights of Saint John, French and British. Numerous fortresses in various architectural styles attest to this changing of hands in Malta, while remains of megalithic temples point to the country's ancient history.

[[And Many students in GCC countries are sent to study various medical specialties in Malta every year and There is many Kuwaiti students studying in Malta

Malta features a number of tourist attractions that include elements of the island's rich history and culture, as well as water activities associated with the Mediterranean. In addition, medical tourism has become popular in it.]]

For a long time I wanted to visit Malta, but no one in my family supported me in this desire. Every year, when travel plans were being fixed, I would be the lone voice suggesting Malta as an option for travel, the majority would say, "Let's go visit again the Champs-Élysées cafes in Paris and then complete the rest of our vacation in London between Oxford Street and the Agarwood."

As I mentioned earlier, proverbs about Malta were the main reason for my inclination to visit that country. One of those proverbs was, 'After the ruin of Malta', which conveys the meaning of expressing something about an event after it has occurred.



Also, when in Malta, you must visit a village called Marsaxlokk, which is a small, traditional fishing village in the south-eastern region of Malta that is famous for its picturesque views, its Mediterranean atmosphere, and its harbor dotted with colorful boats. And, since it is largely a fishing village, tourists can expect to relish on delicious fresh seafood. Fresh fish is also available for purchase on Sundays early in the morning. Visitors can also join the locals in fun-filled fishing trips.

Popeyes Village is another famous place that must be visited in Malta. Popeyes is the ideal destination in Malta for tourists, especially for those visiting the country with their children. This is because this beautiful city is a major filming location used by Paramount Pictures and Walt Disney Productions for many popular children's comedies, especially EC Segar. Who among us does not like to go to the beautiful village of Babai and wander around it.

The city also includes many entertaining activities for children as well as adults, such as water trampolines, boat rides, and play pools. This is helped by the city's wonderful location off Mellieha Bay, which gives it stunning coastal beaches.

Another beautiful Maltese town worth visiting is the Blue Grotto. The reason for its name is due to the fact that it is a series of wonderful sea caves scattered along the southern coast of the island. This provides tourists with an amazing journey along the scenic coastline. As well as scenes of blue sea water that sparkles under the bright sun, then enters through the caves and sheds light on marine life. Because of the unusual chemical composition of the waters of the region, the caves here are very famous for the many different minerals that give the sea its bright blue color. In addition to the famous colorful traditional fishing boats known as luzzus, other boats are also available for tours.

I thought that visiting Malta for a week would be enough to explore this country especially because it is not considered one of the favorite tourist destinations for Gulf nationals, but I was shocked at the many beautiful places and regions that I could not visit during my week in Malta.

I visited Malta in February, and during this month there is a large annual carnival, the Malta Carnival that takes place along the streets of Malta. The Malta Carnival was amazingly wonderful and I do not know why it is not as popular as say the Venice Festival, among Arab tourists.

I loved Malta and I am thinking of visiting again soon. And, if you are thinking of an unusual and uncrowded destination to visit on your next trip abroad, do not hesitate to include beautiful Malta.

Noura Khan, a Kuwaiti national, holds a degree in law from Kuwait University and has worked as a journalist prior to taking up a position in the government. In 2018 she started blogging on travel and has visited more than 57 countries since. She has more than 54K followers and her blog post @nourajtraveller is well appreciated for content and travel information. Noura writes exclusively for The Times Kuwait on her travel visits.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Book bans and culture-wars



Ian Buruma

Author, most recently, of *The Churchill Complex: The Curse of Being Special, From Winston and FDR to Trump and Brexit*.

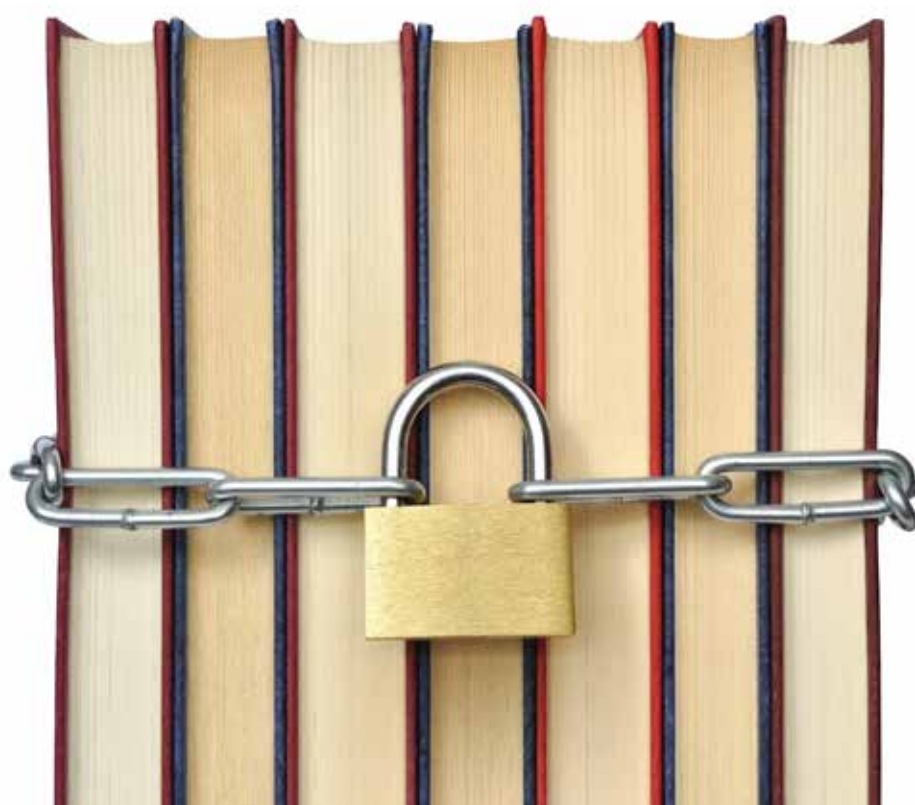
The United States is in the midst of a book-banning frenzy. According to PEN America, 1,648 books were prohibited in public schools across the country between July 2021 and June 2022. That number is expected to increase this year as conservative politicians and organizations step up efforts to censor works dealing with sexual and racial identity.

Republican-controlled states like Florida and Utah have cracked down on school libraries in recent months, banning titles that address racial as well as gender and sexual issues, such as Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Antiracist* and Maia Kobabe's *Gender Queer: A Memoir*. In parts of Florida, schools have been instructed to limit access to books on race and diversity, and they have been warned that teachers sharing so-called 'obscene and pornographic materials' with students could face five years in prison. In South Carolina, Governor Henry McMaster pointed to Kobabe's book, which won the American Library Association's Alex Award for young adult literature in 2020, as an example of 'obscene and pornographic materials'.

Today's book bans are largely driven by right-wing populist politicians and parent groups claiming to protect wholesome, family-oriented Christian communities from the decadence of urban America. As such, a children's book featuring LGBTQ+ characters falls under their definition of pornography.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, a likely presidential contender, is arguably the leading advocate of state censorship and modern-day book bans. Last month, DeSantis and his allies in the state's House of Representatives introduced a new bill that would prohibit universities and colleges from supporting campus activities that 'espouse diversity, equity, and inclusion or critical race theory rhetoric'. The bill also seeks to remove critical race theory, gender studies, and intersectionality, as well as any 'derivative major or minor of these belief systems', from academic curricula.

But even though there are fewer calls



“Progressives who want to stop teaching Huckleberry Finn in schools or demand that words like 'fat' be taken out of Roald Dahl's children's books follow the same logic. They, too, do not want children to feel offended or 'unwelcome'.”

from left-wing progressives to ban books, they, too, can be intolerant of literature that offends them. Such classics as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* have been removed from some school reading lists because they contain racial slurs and might 'marginalize' certain readers.

To be sure, the right-wing crackdown on academic freedom is more dangerous than the left's literary allergies. What is interesting, however, is how much left-wing and right-wing intolerance have in common. Right-wing populists like DeSantis tend to mimic progressive rhetoric about 'inclusivity' and 'sensitivity' in the classroom. White students, they claim, must be shielded from learning about slavery or the role of white supremacy in American history because it might upset them and

make them feel guilty.

Progressives who want to stop teaching Huckleberry Finn in schools or demand that words like 'fat' be taken out of Roald Dahl's children's books follow the same logic. They, too, do not want children to feel offended or 'unwelcome'. Their idea of education is akin to therapy: its purpose is to make children feel good about themselves, rather than to learn how to absorb information and think for themselves.

Right-wing mimicry of left-wing jargon can be viewed as a form of bad-faith payback. After all, the driving force behind conservative puritanism in the US has always been fundamentalism, not inclusion. But religious dogmatism is intimately linked to the fear of being offended. The controversy that followed the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*

in 1988 is a case in point. In addition to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's fatwa calling for the author's death, Christian conservatives condemned Rushdie for mocking religion. Some on the left, though they did not belong to any religion, still criticized Rushdie for offending millions of Muslims.

Christian puritans do not oppose books about gay topics just because the Bible forbids homosexuality, but also (and perhaps primarily) because it violates what they believe to be the natural order. This is not so different from the sentiments of thousands of people who recently signed a letter protesting the coverage of transgender issues in the New York Times. Signatories were upset by the fact that some articles assumed that the question of gender might not be scientifically settled. One, by the columnist Pamela Paul defending J.K. Rowling, caused particular offense. Rowling does not hate people who have transitioned from one sex to another, but she does not believe that being a woman, or a man, is simply a matter of choice.

Progressives who call for the banning of Rowling's *Harry Potter* books (which are also denounced by right-wing zealots for promoting witchcraft) do not on the whole do so for religious reasons. Again, they talk about unwelcoming workplaces, marginalization, insensitivity, and so on. But they are often as dogmatic as religious believers. They are convinced that someone born with male genitals is a woman if he/she says so. To doubt this conviction, as Rowling does, violates their view of nature.

This is not to suggest that threats from the left to students' access to books are as serious as those coming from the far right. Unlike extreme right-wing parties, including today's Republican Party, left-of-center politicians do not generally call for state-enforced legal bans. Nevertheless, some progressive rhetoric is playing into the hands of the populist right.

Bereft of a coherent economic platform, the GOP has gone all in on the US culture wars. But given that appeals by religious and social conservatives tend to gain more purchase on voters than dogmatic positions on racial and sexual identities, this is not a war the left is likely to win. Democrats, and other progressive parties in the Western world, would be well advised to concentrate less on hurt feelings and more on voters' economic and political interests.



THE TIMES
KUWAIT'S PREMIER WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE

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

For latest News Updates please visit
www.timeskuwait.com

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



Evidence for Equity

**Atiya Anis**

A Salzburg Global Fellow, is a former senior manager of the Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy.

‘What gets measured gets done’. It is a well-worn maxim, attributed to everyone from management guru Peter Drucker to physicist Lord Kelvin. Regardless of who said it first, the point is a crucial one: if there is no data illustrating a problem or imbalance, it is unlikely to be a consideration, let alone a priority, for those in a position to address it. And solutions, if they are attempted, are unlikely to be well targeted or efficient. This is certainly the case for gender equality.

One might assume that, in today’s world of information overload, policymakers have ample data with which to diagnose problems, devise innovative solutions, monitor implementation, and adjust policies to maximize their impact. But even in an age of big data, policymakers often lack accurate, consistent, timely, and representative information. As a result, they are working with an incomplete picture of socioeconomic conditions.

For example, data show that female labor-force participation in India has been declining since 2005. Reversing this trend, and achieving gender equality, could add \$770 billion to India’s GDP by 2025, according to McKinsey Global Institute. But effective solutions would need to be informed by comprehensive data that capture the complex relationship between women’s labor-force participation and various social, political, and economic

forces, and they would need to link gender equality to broader development outcomes.

In any effort to boost gender equality, both sex-disaggregated data and reporting on issues that primarily affect women and girls are crucial. Consider gender-based violence: according to the World Bank, one in three girls or women aged 15-49 has experienced physical and/or sexual violence.

As Data2x has documented, the collection of data on violence against boys and girls in Tanzania led to effective government interventions, which brought about long-term, multisectoral change. Similarly, the World Bank reports that Vietnam used data

of collection and production, can render data unrepresentative, as can prejudice by respondents, who are often primarily men.

Before the COVID-19 crisis, the world broadly adopted the most representative method for collecting household data: surveys. But the pandemic forced a shift toward phone-based surveys, which are less likely to represent women and other groups with reduced access to mobile phones. Weak leadership, a lack of political will, and poor resource allocation have been mentioned as crucial impediments to the collection of sex-disaggregated statistics.

One way to overcome these constraints is to

“More effort must be devoted to enhancing the capacity of women to contribute and use data. Increased female leadership within open-data organizations can spur progress toward new, more inclusive data collection.”

from demographic and health surveys to boost protections for women and girls, such as by adopting legislation banning domestic violence.

Beyond informing policy, the data sparked debate in Vietnam about gender-based violence, leading to the creation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality. Women facing violence in their homes now have greater access to counseling, health, legal, and shelter services.

But producing comprehensive data is no easy feat. Any tiny statistical error or hint of measurement bias, at any stage

improve the integration of data at the national, regional, and international levels. Moreover, more effort must be devoted to enhancing the capacity of women to contribute and use data. Increased female leadership within open-data organizations can help spur progress toward new, more inclusive approaches to data collection.

Such efforts should, of course, be guided by existing best practices. Norway, for example, has been publishing national gender-equity indicators — including gender distribution in total income, the workforce, business, the public sector, education, and leadership—

since 2008. Sweden, for its part, requires that all public agencies present sex-disaggregated statistics in their annual reports. These are models worth emulating.

Engagement by civil-society and multilateral organizations can also make a big difference. As part of its Strengthening Gender Statistics project, the World Bank — with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation — is already providing technical assistance to 12 International Development Association countries, in order to improve the scope and quality of their gender-related statistics. Replicating and expanding this initiative can go a long way toward enabling governments to make evidence-based policy decisions that improve the lives and livelihoods of their citizens.

To be sure, data collection and analysis are just the beginning. Improved dissemination and uptake of gender-related data for policymaking is also needed. Defining useful and consistent indicators is crucial, because it enables comparison across regions and assessment of progress over time.

Finally, the role of data in bolstering accountability and improving governance must not be overlooked. Just as high-quality, timely, and comprehensive data enable us to devise targeted policies and allocate resources more efficiently, they also enable us to measure those policies’ impact — and the government’s performance.

Improving data collection will require some investment. But, by enabling more efficient, better-tailored, and more cost-effective policies, that investment will ultimately ease the strain on government budgets. And, as countries make progress toward gender equality, the social, economic, and development benefits will continue to multiply.



Eyes, windows to health as well

Eyes have often been called the 'windows to the soul', as they reflect a person's inner emotions and thoughts. But new studies show that there is a lot more to eyes than, well, 'meets the eye'. Fresh evidence suggests that eyes could also be windows to both the brain and body health, as they are the only part of the body that allows doctors to peer into the body non-invasively and examine a health condition.

Researchers claim that a regular eye examination, besides checking vision and correcting eye problems, can also help diagnose several health conditions, including, among others, diabetes, multiple sclerosis (MS), and even Alzheimer's disease.

Before we begin, here are the basics on some eye functions. The pupil of the eye, or the small round opening in the center of the iris — the colored portion surrounding the pupil that gives eyes their characteristic color — changes in size to let the right amount of light into the eye. This is referred to as the 'pupillary light response'. The pupil contracts in bright light and dilates as the amount of light decreases, so as to improve 'visual acuity', or how well you can see details of whatever specific you are looking at, under various light conditions.

Irrespective of the ambient light, pupil size also dilates in response to signals from the autonomic nervous system — the body's alarm network — that warns us of threats, or opportunities, in a visual environment. This 'visual sensitivity', or how well you can see the overall environment and gather visual information from what you are looking at, is improved by dilation of the pupil.

Since the size of your pupil is not under your voluntary control, psychologists consider pupil dilation to be a cue to sexual or social interest. They maintain that contracted pupils are an indication of a lack of interest, while a dilated pupil shows signs of interest, whether in another person or a situation. The dilation allows the viewer to gather as much visual information as possible from whatever they are looking at, under the ambient light condition.

New research now shows that eyes not only provide clues to our emotions, they are also a valuable aid in diagnosing other illnesses. At the back of the eyeball is the retina — a light-sensitive layer of tissue — that captures light coming from an object and passes this information to the brain, along the optic nerve through electrical and chemical signals.



Recent studies by researchers at the Liverpool University Hospital in the United Kingdom reveal that the condition of these blood vessels and nerves can help to diagnose systemic diseases — those that affect other organs in the body or the whole body, such as hypertension, diabetes, thyroid disorders, and neurodegenerative diseases including Alzheimer's disease, and multiple sclerosis.

Optometrists and ophthalmologists can clearly see blood vessels and the optic nerve when they conduct a regular eye examination to diagnose disorders of the eye such as nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism. By examining the blood vessels in the retina and the optic nerve, the eye-specialist can also non-invasively discover a lot about a person's general health. If a routine eye test raises concerns of systemic disease, the examining ophthalmologist can then refer the person to a relevant specialist.

Diabetes is the most commonly diagnosed disease given the frequency of the illness as well as the classic findings on retina exam, which can include bleeding, leakage of fluid, and areas of poor blood flow. Although a firm diagnosis of diabetes can only be made with a blood glucose test, changes in the blood vessels of the retina can give a strong indication that a person may have diabetes. They can then be referred for further testing.

Signs of diabetic retinopathy — damages to the retina from high blood sugar — can sometimes be detected by eye examination even before a person suspects they may

have diabetes. Once diagnosed, provided the diabetes is well controlled, the person can then minimize the risk of further eye damage. In addition, studies have shown that signs of hypertension, or high blood pressure, are found in the eyes of around 10 percent of the adult, diabetes-free population.

On examination, an eye doctor might see traces of narrowing of arterioles in the retina, arteriovenous nicking, retinal hemorrhages, all of which are indicators of hypertensive retinopathy. The good news is that if hypertension is detected and controlled early on, through appropriate precautions and lifestyle changes, the damage can be halted.

During a routine eye test, the eye doctor will also examine the optic nerve to look for any abnormalities or changes, as the optic nerve connects the eye to the brain and is therefore an extension of the central nervous system. It is the only part of the brain that can be clearly visualized by examining the back of the eye.

Optic nerve swelling or inflammation (optic neuritis) can be detrimental to vision and color vision, and can also be an indicator of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) — a potentially disabling disease of the brain and central nervous system. In MS, the immune system attacks the protective sheath (myelin) that covers nerve fibers and causes communication problems between your brain and the rest of your body, which could eventually lead to permanent damage of the nerve fibers.

Optic neuritis is the first symptom in up to

20 percent of people who are subsequently diagnosed with MS, although it can indicate other disorders, or even be the result of a viral infection or vitamin deficiency. If an optometrist suspects optic neuritis in a routine eye examination, they will refer a person for further testing to confirm the diagnosis and identify the cause.

Retinal screening of Alzheimer's disease is another exciting prospect at the forefront of current medical research. Current methods of diagnosing Alzheimer's are often lengthy, invasive and expensive, so being able to diagnose the condition from the retina would be a huge advance.

Recent research has suggested that doctors could, in the future, diagnose Alzheimer's through retinal scans. The new technique, so far tested only in mice, combines the results of two scans to assess the condition of the retina.

Those with Alzheimer's disease have a much rougher retinal surface than those without. These findings could, in future, lead to easier, earlier diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease enabling treatment to begin before symptoms become severe.

After 40 is when eye-specific ailments can start to become more common — including presbyopia, glaucoma, cataract, and changes to the retina from diabetes or high blood pressure.

So doctors now recommend that anyone over 40 should get their eyes examined even if they have no need for glasses or contact lenses — it may detect a condition that you were unaware of and help you to take control of your health.

App to help people eat more fruits and veggies

Despite health guidelines to increase fruit and vegetable intake, consumption of these items remains low. A new smartphone app labeled 'Smart 5-a-day' helps a person track the food they consume, and could hopefully encourage them to increase their intake of fruit and vegetables. The regular consumption of fruits and vegetables has been proven to help reduce the risk of developing several health conditions.

The new app is the invention of researchers at the University of Bournemouth in the United Kingdom. Although the app is based on the '5-a-day' recommendations issued by health and nutrition authorities in the UK, the recommendations to consume plenty of fruits and vegetables applies worldwide. The recommendations can be tailored based on the local fruits and vegetables available, local portion sizes, and other local nutritional concerns.

Reasons why people are not consuming sufficient fruits and vegetables despite health



recommendations, include poor knowledge or confusion about the benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption; availability or access to nutritious fruits or vegetables; not

knowing the ideal portion sizes and number of daily servings of fruits and vegetables; and the need for a variety of fruit and vegetables to meet all body requirements.

In this regard, the new app could be of help as it would increase awareness around what constitutes adequate fruit and vegetable consumption that will assist individuals to improve their overall health.

To use the app, you input what fruits and vegetables you have eaten after each meal and how much. The app then converts consumption to correspond with the UK guidelines of five portions of different fruits or vegetables per day. The app also allows users to track their daily consumption over time.

One of the key benefits of the app is that it draws the attention of users to how few fruits and vegetables they consume, and this hopefully will alert them to improve their diets. The developers of the app said their hope was that the use of the app over a number of weeks would help individuals increase their knowledge and understanding of these fruits and vegetables, until such time that the app is no longer required.

Tearing Down Big Tech's Walls



Margrethe Vestager

Executive Vice President of the European Commission.

In the coming months, new laws – the first of their kind anywhere in the world – will come into force in Europe to hold Big Tech companies accountable to the societies where they operate and do business. At this point, we have all heard about the dangers that large online platforms pose to our lives, to our democracies, to our children's mental health, and to economic competition. Now, the European Union is doing something about it.

With each of these threats, the same basic processes are at work. Algorithms narrow down conversations to small groups of data-determined 'friends' while gatekeepers narrow down online markets to benefit themselves. With such narrowing comes the risk that we will lose track of the broader world, and the broader market, around us.

For decades, tech platforms were left mostly free to do as they wished, and there was very little legislation to limit them as they seized ever-greater control of the world's information channels. But that began to change a few years ago, when the EU spearheaded a global effort to restore some balance to the digital economy, by ensuring fairness and basic protections for people.

Privacy was the first issue of concern. With major platforms boosting their revenues to record highs by amassing user data, it was clear that our conception of privacy needed to be modernized. Privacy thus became a non-negotiable right for everyone in Europe. As citizens, we, and only we, now set the boundaries of what we do or do not share about ourselves.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

This understanding of privacy as a fundamental right was enshrined in the EU's 2016 General Data Protection Regulation. With the GDPR, Europe was setting a course for democracy to catch up with technology. Today, there is no going back to how things were before the law. The EU's landmark legislation has since inspired similar frameworks in other jurisdictions around the world.

Following closely on the heels of this initial data-privacy initiative came the Cambridge Analytica scandal, when we learned that Facebook had shared 87 million user profiles with a researcher who then provided that data to a political consultancy that was working for Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. Suddenly, we all began to wonder whether our digital lives were safe, and to what extent we were being surveilled, influenced, and manipulated online.

Brick by brick, the wall of pseudo-neutrality that the platforms had hidden behind – often claiming that they are mere 'pipes' for passing along information – was being dismantled. It was becoming increasingly obvious that the

Big Tech companies should take responsibility for the content that they and their algorithms disseminate to the body politic. We responded by establishing this responsibility loud and clear in the Digital Services Act, which was first presented in December 2020.

The DSA is the central piece of EU legislation that will soon regulate how content is treated on major digital platforms. It requires platforms to remove all illegal content, while also ensuring that their users' freedom of expression remains untouched. It also addresses how platforms use algorithms to determine what we do and do not get to see. We are currently in the process of designating which large platforms and search engines will be subject to these DSA provisions before they enter into force this fall.

The last major issue that the EU's new digital legislation will tackle is the lack of healthy competition in the tech sector. Over the past few years, regulators have pursued important cases against large online platforms, some of which have increased public awareness about the platforms' undue market power. But as digital

markets have become more complex, we have needed new systemic tools to supplement the usual antitrust instruments.

The Digital Markets Act was drafted to address this need. It features a list of 'dos and don'ts' aimed at preventing so-called gatekeeper platforms from abusing their position in digital markets, and enabling some space for new entrants to compete with incumbents on their merits. Just as the DSA will officially articulate platforms' responsibilities toward their users, the DMA will establish their responsibilities toward other, often smaller, market participants. The result will be a more vibrant, more innovative, and fairer tech market.

We passed this legislation in record time. Throughout the process, we made sure that our work was guided by values, rather than by the underlying technology. This matters, because while technologies change all the time, values do not.

We are proud that Europe has become the cradle of tech regulation globally. It has been gratifying to see similar laws being drafted in countries that share our democratic and humanist values, and we remain eager to coordinate our own regulatory and rule-making efforts with others. The EU-US Trade and Technology Council, launched in 2021, was one early example of how we can deepen international cooperation to ensure that technologies work for everyone. We have now established similar partnerships with India, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea.

For democracy to thrive, it needs open spaces where people can talk, disagree, contradict one another, and find common solutions. In the past, we had public squares, elected chambers, universities, and cafes. When the internet first arrived, it held the promise of expanding these forums globally. But the rise of large platforms got in the way, fragmenting our conversations into a constellation of opaque, walled-off spaces, thus posing a threat to our democracy.

It is now the job of citizens everywhere to tear down those walls.

المزيني
Al Muzaini
للصيرفة Exchange Co.

التحويلات المالية إلى بطاقات VISA

من دون عمولة!

العرض متوفر فقط لدى المزيني للصيرفة!

TRANSFER MONEY TO VISA CARDS

WITH ZERO FEES!

EXCLUSIVE OFFER AT AL MUZAINI EXCHANGE!

رقم الترخيص: 2301111273

14/01/2023 - 31/03/2023

18 888 18

www.muzaini.com

Download on the
App Store

GET IT ON
Google Play

EXPLORE IT ON
AppGallery