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Alliances key to Kuwait's security



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

A small country wedged between large neighbors, Kuwait has throughout its history struggled to protect its borders and preserve its existence. From the time of its establishment in the mid-18th century, Kuwait faced numerous threats to its security from the economic interests and political ambitions of other states and leaders in the region. Powerless to defend its borders on its own, Kuwait has over the ages cultivated strategic alliances with more powerful global players.

The 1899 treaty, which led to Kuwait becoming a protectorate of Great Britain, ensured a period of



relative calm that allowed the country to transition peacefully into an independent state in 1961. However, the brutal Iraqi aggression and seven-month occupation of Kuwait in 1990-91 was a reminder to the people and leadership that despite the country's wealth, influence and its regional and global affiliations, it still remained vulnerable to external threats.

Following liberation in 1991, Kuwait adopted several strategic policies that leveraged its diplomatic, political and financial resources to enhance the country's global influence. The state also signed military agreements and pacts with global powers to ensure its continued stability and security going into the future.

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MUHURAT
WEDDING JEWELLERY

KALYAN
JEWELLERS

Kuwait celebrates 60 years of UN membership

Kuwait's mission at the United Nations headquarters in New York celebrated the country's 60th anniversary of UN membership on 21 May. In a televised message broadcast at the UN General Assembly Hall, Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah affirmed that ever since joining the UN, Kuwait had worked diligently to boost cooperation and understanding amongst all members of the international organization.

He affirmed that he was proud of Kuwait's 60 years of accomplishments on the regional and the international levels, saying that his country had called for boosting security, sustainable development and human rights during its membership. Sheikh Salem reiterated Kuwait's keenness on continuing its efforts at the UN, affirming that his country was a reliable partner of the international organization in bolstering justice and



Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs
Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber
Al-Sabah speaking at the UN General
Assembly's Hall

supporting moderation on a global scale.

For his part, Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN, Ambassador Tareq Al-Banai, in his address to the UN highlighted the strong ties between Kuwait and the

UN. He further affirmed that "wherever the UN would seek virtue in the world, Kuwait would be there to support the international organization through commitment to the noble tenets of the UN charter. Also speaking on the occasion, the current UN General Assembly (UNGA) President, Csaba Korosi, noted that since joining the UN in 1963, Kuwait had been an active and valuable member of the international organization through its commitment to its charter and

efforts.

Despite its small size, Kuwait is working strongly to realize various plans of the UN, including the 2035 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He asserted that the international community also depended on the rational voice of the State of Kuwait in issues pertaining to regional and international security including issues connected with the Middle East.

Kuwait's humanitarian role also reflected its deep care regarding the plight of fellow human beings affected by conflict or natural disaster, and the country plays an important role in reducing suffering worldwide, said the UNGA president.

Also attending the celebrations were the Deputy UN Secretary General Amina Mohammad, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Washington Sheikha Al-Zain Sabah Nasser Al-Saud Al-Sabah, Kuwait's General Consulate in New York City Azzam Al-Asfoor, and a large number of Arab, Islamic, and foreign diplomats. The event also saw the participation of a Kuwaiti national music band in addition to exhibitions displaying the history and culture of Kuwait.

Kuwaiti women join police force in larger numbers

While earlier it was taboo to talk about Kuwaiti women working alongside male counterparts in the military and police force, it has now become the norm with women serving in 13 different security sectors of the Ministry of Interior.

Media reports indicate that the first time that Kuwaiti women joined the police force was in 2009, and last March, the first batch of female graduates attained the rank of colonel.

Today the Ministry of Interior boasts of 585 female officers, non-commissioned officers and female police officers, and 256 new graduates will join them at the end of this year, bringing their number to 841, said a source at the ministry. The number of females enrolling in the police force is steadily increasing, after their success over the past 14 years proved their ability to deal with the rough nature of security work.



LuLu Exchange expands network with 33rd branch at Khiran Mall



The new branch is the 279th global branch of LuLu Financial Holdings and will serve the popular tourist region of the country. LuLu Exchange – one of Kuwait's most trusted names in cross-border payments and currency exchange, launched its new branch in the popular tourist destination of Al Khiran today. The new branch at Khiran Mall was inaugurated by Mr. MA Yusuff Ali, Chairman and Managing Director of LuLu Group International. It is the company's 33rd branch in the country, and the 279th globally under LuLu Financial Holdings. The branch will offer remittances and foreign exchange services to the residents of the region, as well as the many tourists who frequent the region.

Speaking post the inauguration, Mr. Adeeb Ahamed, MD, LuLu Financial Holdings said, "Kuwait is a key market for us at LuLu Financial Holdings, and the opening of our new branch is in line with our vision to bring our network closer to the people of Kuwait. As a responsible financial services provider, we aspire to combine

the benefits of our physical network with our digital payments app Lulu Money and create meaningful experiences for our customers. The Al Khiran

region is one of the most commercially active areas in Kuwait and we are delighted to open a new branch here which will enable us to enhance our capabilities among a wider cross-section of society."



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Czechia and Kuwait, 60 years of fruitful cooperation

Ambassador H.E. Jaroslav Siro

By Reaven D'Souza
Managing Editor

Ambassador Jaroslav Siro is a seasoned diplomat with many decades of experience and exposure to diplomacy. His postings in several countries across continents make his insights into world events and happenings very pertinent and interesting.

In a lengthy meeting with The Times Kuwait Managing Editor Reaven D'Souza Ambassador Siro, detailed the long and friendly relations his country enjoys with Kuwait and how his country plans to further enhance relations not just with Kuwait but with the entire region.

The ambassador began by highlighting the 60 years of fruitful cooperation between Czechia and Kuwait and his plans to develop bilateral ties with Kuwait in all fields. "The

the two countries have flourished steadily.

"Today, relations between our two countries are strong as ever. Kuwait remains for Czechia a natural and important political and trading partner and ally in the region, with whom we share a number of key international concerns and objectives.

Czechia is committed to build on the successes of the past sixty years and to further strengthen the bilateral cooperation in all fields, spanning from political, economic and trade, investment, research and scientific cooperation to cultural cooperation and people-to-people ties. This multi-dimensional approach is based on the principle of mutual respect and partnership."

Elaborating on future plans to strengthen bilateral relations, the Czech ambassador stated: "Our focus now is on the intensification

Technical Cooperation is expected to be signed during this visit. Based on this agreement a joint intergovernmental commission will be established, and I am convinced this visit will strongly contribute to enhancing mutually advantageous economic and trade cooperation between our two countries. We would also be very happy to host a high-level trade and investment delegation from Kuwait."

Emphasizing the huge potential for investment opportunities in Czechia for Kuwait, the ambassador said: "Czechia remains a great location for foreign direct investment. It is a developed economy, a safe and peaceful country. Its strategic location in the very center of Europe provides a great access to the European market. The country provides a well-developed infrastructure, transparent business environment, stable political situation, well developed private and banking sectors, effective legal environment, including investment protection, high quality of life and an educated and skilled workforce. All of that together represents a great asset for businesses and investments.

"In Czechia, Kuwait is perceived as an investor with a high potential. Kuwait is currently mostly investing not directly but through large investment funds. Of course, Czechia would like to see more investments coming from individuals and enterprises in Kuwait and other Gulf countries, especially in sectors with high-added value. Last year the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a successful international investment forum and presented investment opportunities to representatives of sovereign funds from the Gulf region, including Kuwait Investment Authority."

Alluding to the expanding trade between the two countries, and Czech acumen in industrial production, the ambassador noted: "Mutual trade exchange witnessed an extraordinary growth. I am glad that we marked a year on year increase of 40 percent in trade volumes last year. Kuwait's stability, geographical location and its balanced policy encourage Czech companies to look for opportunities here.

"Czechia also belongs among countries with a long industrial tradition and high export orientation. Today, it is the most industrialized economy within the EU, in terms of gross value



added of industry, offering many innovative technologies in various sectors. The most important branch of the Czech industry is automotive. The others are the mechanical engineering, ICT, chemical, nanotech, biotech and food sectors. The energy, construction and consumer goods industries are also important components of the Czech economy. More than a half of the Czech industrial production is exported. Nowadays, trends in industry are focusing on innovation, digitization and smart solutions.

"Kuwaiti people have a solid awareness of Czechia thanks to its traditional products like beautiful crystal glass from Lasvit Design, Aldit, Bohemia Crystal and others) or from the blue-white striped iconic mushroom shaped water towers, which were built by a Czech company in the 1970's. In many Kuwaiti private houses, you can find hand-cut Bohemian crystal glass. Beautiful crystal design lightings made by Czech companies decorate lobbies of the Avenues Mall, Assima Mall (the largest light installation in the world) or of the Kuwait Investment Authority Headquarters.

"Important cooperation also takes place between the two countries in the field of environmental protection.

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Middle East region and the Gulf in particular have traditionally been a focal point of Czech foreign policy, which reflects in our strong diplomatic presence in the region.

"Czechia, a successor of former Czechoslovakia, and Kuwait have historically enjoyed cordial and friendly relations ever since Kuwait became an independent state in 1961. Both countries established diplomatic relations on 27 May, 1963 and the former Czechoslovakia was one of the first European countries to open its Embassy in Kuwait in 1965. Since then, the political, economic and cultural ties between

of political dialogue, through high-level contacts as well as on economic and trade cooperation. Last year, a mechanism of political consultations was restored with the meeting in Prague. I expect that the next round will take place in the near future, this time in Kuwait.

"The 60th anniversary presents a good opportunity for the exchange of high-level visits. In this regard we are planning for a visit by a delegation from the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade in order to discuss new business opportunities and to boost economic and trade ties. An Agreement on Economic and



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Kuwait, Philippines talks fail to resolve differences

Talks held last week between relevant authorities in Kuwait and a delegation comprising representatives from Philippines Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Migrant Workers, failed to find an amicable solution to tackling the issues surrounding Filipino domestic helpers in Kuwait.

Following the talks, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Acting Minister of Defense, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty and protecting the dignity of its people. He announced Kuwait's intention to continue the suspension of all types of visas for Filipino workers.

The decision to halt visa issuance for Filipino workers was prompted by what Kuwait perceives as inappropriate practices by the Philippine embassy in the country, as well as crimes committed by members of the Filipino community residing in Kuwait. Al-Khaled stressed that Kuwait remains dedicated to upholding the international agreements between the two nations, while continuing to renew residence permits for those workers who possess valid permits and wish to continue working in Kuwait.

Al-Khaled has directed the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) to conclude labor agreements with various other labor-exporting countries for the supply of trained workers to the Kuwaiti market. In a statement posted on its website, PAM highlighted the outcome of bilateral negotiations between Kuwaiti and Filipino representatives. The statement, which noted that the meeting was prompted by the Philippine government's request to discuss the recent visa suspension, detailed several violations attributed to the Philippine embassy including:

- Instructing domestic labor recruitment offices to withdraw domestic workers from citizens' homes under false pretenses.
- Pressuring recruitment offices to accommodate workers in private housing in violation of Kuwaiti laws, and assuming the responsibilities of state institutions



in apprehending runaway domestic workers.

- Exerting pressure on employers during contract renewals and contacting citizens and recruitment offices directly without involving the relevant Kuwaiti authorities.
- Inappropriate treatment of citizens when they visit the embassy at its request.
- Labor recruitment offices at the embassy fail to document contracts without any legal justification.
- Placing a ban on employers despite knowing that there are pending complaints in relevant government agencies, which violates Kuwait's laws.
- Accommodating workers in a private residence or shelter center affiliated with it, even if some of these workers are in violation of the residency law or have notices of absence issued against them.

The statement added that in response to these violations, the Kuwaiti side has set forth a series of conditions during the negotiations. These conditions include:

- The Philippine Embassy must acknowledge and admit to committing violations and infringing on the laws, decisions, and regulations of Kuwait, which goes against recognized diplomatic norms.
- The Embassy is required to submit an official undertaking, ensuring that such acts will not be repeated in the future.
- The Embassy must inform its government

about this acknowledgment and pledge, with the commitment not to engage in similar actions in the future. This information should be published in official media channels.

- The relevant authorities within Kuwait will issue an official statement, warning against any violations of the applicable laws, decisions, and regulations to preserve Kuwait's sovereignty and legal framework.

If the Philippine side agrees to these

conditions, the Ministry of the Interior will assess the situation and monitor the Embassy's adherence to security controls and conditions set by the ministry for a minimum period of three months. Following this evaluation, the Ministry will determine the appropriate course of action.

However, the Philippine side, after a 72-hour deliberation period, refused to comply with the conditions set by Kuwait, which aimed to prevent future violations. Consequently, Kuwait's Ministry of Interior has stood by its decision to suspend all types of visas for the Filipino community until further notice. Nonetheless, the renewal of residence permits for Filipino workers with valid documents, who wish to continue working in Kuwait, will proceed according to the existing laws and regulations.

Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has directed the Public Authority for Manpower to engage in concluding labor agreements with various labor-exporting countries. The aim is to ensure a robust supply of trained workers to meet the demands of the Kuwaiti market.

New digital platform fosters communication with government

Government last week launched a new online platform to foster direct communication between citizens, ministers, and high-ranking officials. The platform is part of the government's aim to enhance transparency, streamline processes, and address public grievances effectively.

This initiative also aligns with the government's commitment to digital transformation

and to leverage technology to improve governance and public services. By embracing digital platforms, Kuwait aims to enhance administrative efficiency, promote citizen engagement, and ensure timely resolution of issues.

Through this platform, citizens can submit their complaints, suggestions, and inquiries online directly to concerned ministers and high-ranking officials, eliminating the need for physical visits to government offices, and fostering a sense of inclusion and responsiveness.

The platform, which provides a user-friendly interface, allows individuals to access various services and interact directly with relevant authorities. The launch of the digital platform represents a significant step towards modernizing government-citizen interactions in Kuwait.

LuLu Food Festival: Celebrating the best of global food



LuLu Hypermarket, the leading hypermarket chain in the region, launched its exciting LuLu Food Festival that showcases and celebrates some of the best foods from around the world. The promotion, which runs from 24 - 31 May across all outlets of the hypermarket in Kuwait, offers amazing discounts and special prices on various food items and categories, including groceries, fruits and vegetables, meat, fish, dairy, and more.

The promotion was launched on 24 May at the AlRai outlet by Indian Master Chef Season-7 winner Nayanjyoti Saika, the Indian actress Saniya Iyyappan, and Kuwait-based Arabic Chef Jomana Jaffar, along with top management of LuLu Kuwait and representatives of the main and co-sponsors of the event. One of the main highlights of the LuLu Food Festival inauguration event was the special live cooking demonstration by Master Chef Saika.

A series of food contests and competitions are planned to be held throughout the promotion

period at all outlets of the hypermarket where participants can showcase their cooking prowess. Among the competitions are the Cookery Contest in Arabic, Indian, Italian, Continental, and Filipino cooking, and a special desserts cooking contest. People who prepare health-conscious meals can prove their skills in the 'Health Food Contest, with the focus being on millet-based recipes, considering that 2023 is the UN designated International Year of Millet. Additionally, there is a special Millets Preparation Contest for both juniors, which seeks to encourage the use of this nutritious grain in creative ways.

Meanwhile, the 'Wow the Master Chef' competition will challenge young aspiring chefs to create unique and impressive dishes, while the 'Junior Chef Contests' are designed for young culinary enthusiasts to showcase their talents. The junior chefs compete in two separate age groups, from 6 to 10-year-olds and those from 11 to 15 years of age. Other

thrilling events include the Barista Competition, Cake Challenge, and a special chit-chat that allows shoppers to interact with the Master Chef. Exciting prizes await all the winners, while everyone who participates will also receive consolation prizes for their efforts.

In addition to contests and competitions, the LuLu Food Festival also showcases several specific food categories through the Grand Meat Fest, Lulu Seafood Fiesta, Breads and



More, Cheese and Olives, Street Foods, Sweet Moments, Homely Deals (to showcase home favorites), Arabian Delights, Desi Dhaba for Indian street foods,, and 'Nadan Thattukada' for those seeking rural Kerala fare.

One of the major attractions of the promotion is the Street Food Counters, offering a variety of delectable street food delicacies that highlight the diverse culinary traditions around the world. To add to the excitement and to showcase the grandeur of the food extravaganza, there are several record-breaking feats being displayed during the promotion, including cutting the longest shawarma, the biggest burger, the biggest pizza, and preparing the biggest biryani.

The LuLu Food Fest is proudly sponsored by Alwazzan, while several esteemed companies serve as co-sponsors, including Afia, Betty Rucker, Nature Valley, IFFCO, Noor, Tiffany, London Dairy, Nestle, Americana, Kitco, Seara, Arla, Kraft, Panasonic, Black+Decker, Kenwood, and many more.

Bulgaria celebrates 60 years of diplomatic ties with Kuwait



Bulgarian Embassy celebrated the country's 60 years of diplomatic relations with Kuwait, through a grand reception held at the Radisson SAS Hotel on 24 May.

In his address on the occasion, Bulgarian Ambassador, H.E. Dimitar Dimitrov expressed his happiness at the long-standing, excellent relations between Bulgaria and Kuwait, which he described as historical, being built over the course of the past 60 years. He highlighted that the two friendly nations shared mutual positions on various regional and international issues, as well as maintained strong cooperation and support in international forums and United Nations bodies.

Noting that the two countries have achieved significant milestones through their bilateral cooperation across multiple

areas, Ambassador Dimitrov said that the two countries have established a reliable mechanism for trade and economic cooperation, including joint committees and foundational agreements on economic cooperation, investment protection, and the avoidance of double taxation. With efforts ongoing to develop new agreements to strengthen the legal framework for cooperation.

The ambassador also stressed on the need to maximize the mutual economic benefits through investments between Bulgaria and Kuwait, citing Bulgaria's favorable investment environment, stable financial situation, easy tax system, and access to European markets. He also encouraged further collaboration in education, and underscored the contributions of Kuwaiti medical graduates from Bulgarian universities to the advancement of Kuwait's



healthcare sector, as well as Bulgarian students developing their Arabic language skills at Kuwait University's Language Center.

Pointing to the strong people-to-people level ties between the two countries, the envoy said that one of the first bilateral agreements signed after the establishment of diplomatic relations was a cultural

cooperation agreement. "Today, Bulgaria is a popular tourist destination among Kuwaitis, particularly the picturesque Bulgarian Black Sea coast and mountain resorts, which offer excellent opportunities for tourism and recreation throughout the year," said the ambassador.

He added that over the years, a small but active Bulgarian community, consisting mainly of medical professionals, doctors, engineers, architects, and teachers, has formed in Kuwait. This community serves as ambassadors, contributing to the development of the relationship and strengthening the close friendship between the two nations. The presence of the Bulgarian community adds diversity to Kuwait's social and cultural fabric, alongside representatives from various nations residing in the country, concluded Ambassador Dimitrov.

ZCrew pays tribute to late doyen of Zumba in Kuwait

By Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

ZCrew, one of the pioneering Zumba teams in Kuwait, organized a tribute class in honor of its founder the late Blanche Bravo who passed away in the Philippines recently. The event, held at the Radisson Blu Hotel on 19 May, was attended by participants from different Zumba groups who expressed their condolences on the untimely demise of Bravo.



"It's been a tough week for all of us, as it's so hard to get over such a loss of a great mentor and a friend to everyone. Her kindness and respect for others touched so many of us and knowing that she won't be with us in coming classes is just hard," said Nympha Luat, fitness coach currently acting as the leader of the team ZCrew under the mentorship of Ida Pellaud, spouse of the General Manager of Radisson Blu Hotel Philippe Pellaud, was present on the occasion. Luat spearheaded the project along with the support of its team members; Mynnah Anna Bernardo Digdigan, Ronna Pacia, Dennis Apolonio, Jamie Red, Rowena Atienza and Jamila Abraham.

ZCrew Team expressed their promise to perpetuate the legacy of Bravo by forging ahead with the Zumba classes every Friday at the Chai Al Dhaha Hall from 8:30 am till 11 am. A ride for a cause simultaneously was organized by SRK - Scooter Riders Kuwait in honor of Bravo.

Sponsors included Skyfreight Cargo, Grantos Clinic, P/F- Pilar Alarcon, Friendi Mobile, (Pro Manpower Dr. Lino Rosete), BSI, Business Solution Innovation-Dr. Lino Rosete, Bricks Little Eatery and Mega Love Radio.

ZCrew said it wishes to thank all volunteer presenters for the Zumba class, sponsors and donors, Radisson Blu Hotel and everyone who came to attend the event.



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Google cements its presence in Kuwait by opening local office

In a bid to assert and cement its presence in Kuwait, global infotech leader Google last week announced the establishment of a 'single-person' company with an initial capital of KD600,000. According to industry analysts, the tech giant's entry into the local market could have a significant impact on Kuwait's digital landscape.

The opening of a local office is reportedly a strategic move by Google to assert its presence in Kuwait, a country with a growing digital economy and the potential



for technological advancements in the region. The establishment of a single-person company allows Google to establish a legal entity and commence operations in Kuwait while aligning with local regulations and business practices.

Google's decision to enter the Kuwaiti market comes at a time when the country is actively fostering its digital transformation and promoting innovation.

The move is aligned with Kuwait's Vision 2035, which aims to position the country as

a regional hub for technology and digital advancements.

As a global technology leader, Google brings extensive expertise and resources to Kuwait, offering opportunities for collaboration, knowledge transfer, and skill development.

The company's entry into the Kuwaiti market is expected to foster the growth of the local digital ecosystem, encourage entrepreneurship, and support the development of digital skills among Kuwaiti youth.



Kuwait Chapter of ACI hosts its Annual Awards Ceremony

Kuwait Chapter of the American Concrete Institute (ACI) hosted its Annual Awards Ceremony on Tuesday, May 9th, at the Palms Hotel and Spa. The esteemed event was graced by the presence of the Minister of Public Works, represented by Eng. Eman Ahmad Al Omar, Assistant Undersecretary for Governmental Center for Testing, Quality Control, and Research Sector.

The highly-anticipated occasion witnessed a significant turnout, with ACI-Kuwait Chapter presenting two prestigious annual awards. One award recognized an outstanding project, while the other honored a distinguished individual for their invaluable contributions to the engineering profession.

The evening commenced with a warm welcome from Mr. Azizz Mamuji, the President of ACI-Kuwait Chapter. Eng. Eman Ahmad Al Omar then delivered a speech on behalf of the Minister of Public Works, highlighting the ministry's steadfast commitment to supporting the construction industry in Kuwait.

Following an overview of the Chapter's activities by Dr. Khaldoun Rahal, Director of the Chapter, after which the award ceremony commenced.

The Assima Mall and Tower project received the Award of Excellence 2022. As Mr. Azizz Mamuji provided a brief presentation, praising the project's



innovative and sustainable design as a distinguished mixed-use urban center. The project seamlessly blends sophisticated structural and concrete engineering with aesthetic beauty.

The esteemed award was presented to Salhia Real Estate Company, the developers of the Assima Mall and Tower, with Mr. Ghazi Alnafisi, Chairman of Salhia Real Estate Company, accepting the trophy. Representatives from the design and supervision consultants, PLP Architecture of England and PACE of Kuwait, including Mr. Tarek Shuaib, CEO of PACE, collected the award on their behalf. Additionally, Ahmadiyah Contracting and Trading Company, the General Contractor and Main Concrete Supplier, were recognized, with Mr. Elie Hani, CEO of Ahmadiyah, receiving the accolade.

Mr. Mamuji then announced the recipient of the Award of Achievement

2022. The late Mr. Hamad Thunayan Alghanim, the founder of Dar Gulf Consult, was posthumously honored for his unwavering dedication and contribution to the engineering profession in Kuwait. He was recognized for his promotion of ethical standards in professional practice and his selfless service to humanity. The award was graciously accepted by his wife, Ms. Laila Alghanim.

ACI-Kuwait Chapter, a non-profit professional organization affiliated with the American Concrete Institute International in the USA, aims to foster the development and dissemination of technical knowledge and information to enhance the quality of concrete and related construction practices in Kuwait. The Chapter achieves this mission through organizing technical seminars, training courses, conferences, publications, webinars, and other informative activities.

Thought “
for the
week

How you start is important,
but it is how you finish that counts.
In the race for success, speed is less
important than stamina

- B C Forbes

RECIPE

MINI BAKLAVA CUPS



Total time: 30 minutes
Yield: 12 to 15

Baklava, a popular dessert in the Middle East and Central Asia is said to have originated in Ottoman Turkey. Made from multiple layers of unleavened filo dough, filled with chopped nuts and sweetened with syrup or honey, this delicious and attractive pastry can be enjoyed any time of the day and on any celebratory occasion.

INGREDIENTS:

1 box phyllo sheets
1 cup mix nuts (almonds, walnuts, pistachios) roughly chopped.
5-6 tbsp honey
1 tbsp brown sugar
1 t sp Orange Zest
4-5 Dry apricots
1 tsp cinnamon powder
1/2 cup pistachio powder
200 gm. butter (melted)

*FOR GARNISHING:

Rose petal (dry)
Chocolate (melted)

INSTRUCTIONS:

*For filling:

- First, in a bowl mix nuts and finely chopped dry apricots.
- Then add brown sugar, cinnamon powder, orange zest and 1 tsp butter and mix well.
- Now on 1 phyllo sheet apply melted butter evenly.
- Sprinkle pistachio powder and put phyllo sheet on it again. Apply butter again and sprinkle pistachio powder and put 1 phyllo sheet again. (3 layers)
- 3. Now cut it into small square pieces with scissors and arrange the 2/3 layers on top of each other oddly place the layers in a small muffi



Chef Chhaya Thakker

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

Raising Kuwait's medical standards through Canadian Accreditation Foundation

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Canada's Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Aliya Mawani, praised the long partnership in the health sector between her country and Kuwait, noting the strong mutual commitment to providing quality care and patient safety by applying the highest Canadian healthcare practices and standards in Kuwait.

Addressing a select gathering of local healthcare professionals and a visiting delegation from the Canadian Accreditation Foundation, she said that it was great to see Accreditation Canada, one of the leading international companies in this field, making such important contributions to the health sector in Kuwait and continuing to be the preferred provider of accreditation for many prestigious hospitals and medical facilities here.

Ambassador Mawani pointed out that these were important achievements in the long-term partnership in the health sector between Canada and Kuwait, and noted that Accreditation Canada was the largest international provider of accreditation in Kuwait. She added that Accreditation Canada

had partnered with the Ministry of Health to build the Kuwaiti national accreditation program for public hospitals, private sector hospitals, and also clinics.

She indicated that this in turn reflected the high level of respect for Accreditation Canada in Kuwait, and for its aim to improve patient care, provide high-quality treatment, and ensure superior clinical outcomes in Kuwait. Ambassador Mawani also emphasized the ongoing important contributions made by Accreditation Canada, and considered it an important step in bringing Canadian healthcare practices to Kuwait and strengthening relations between the healthcare systems of the two countries.

Ambassador Mawani concluded by noting the similarities between the Kuwaiti and Canadian healthcare systems, as well as the strong reputation of the Canadian medical ecosystem, and that Kuwait continues to view Canada as a partner of choice in this vital sector."

For her part, Katrina Tarasova, executive director of the Canadian Accreditation Foundation, said that the expansion of quality initiatives in Kuwait is expected to continue with the increasing number of clinics seeking Canadian accreditation. She praised the joint



cooperation with Kuwait in the government and private sectors, as well as its commitment, which she described as exemplary in the application of quality and safety standards in the health care sector over a period of 20 years, since the beginning of the cooperation of the Canadian International Accreditation Foundation with hospitals and medical centers in Kuwait.

She pointed out that the Foundation has been working and cooperating with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health from 2008 to 2018, explaining that "the Foundation has trained about 40 medical and nursing cadres in the government

sector on how to achieve quality, security and safety standards and develop their knowledge and expertise." She noted that the Foundation's cooperation program with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health to develop government hospitals included 14 government hospitals, and the Kuwaiti government's goal was for all its hospitals to obtain Canadian accreditation. Praising the efficiency of the Kuwaiti medical staff participating in the program, she added that despite the challenges posed by pandemic in past years, the program continued applying quality standards in Kuwait.

Filipino bicycle riders run over on Gulf Road

Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

A group of sixty Filipino bicycle riders were run over by a vehicle driven by an unidentified Arab on Friday early morning while riding along the Gulf Road. Twelve were rushed to the Al Amiri and Mubarak Hospitals for treatments, with the condition of three victims remaining in serious condition.

The bicycle riders, on their regular weekend ride along the Gulf Road, were to meet another group of riders further down the road. One of the victims and a witness to the horrific accident said that a vehicle had been tailing the riders for a while before it rammed into the middle of the group from behind. The riders were flung in different directions by the force of the impact and a couple of them were dragged by the car as it escaped from the scene.

The vehicle was identified as a white Nissan Patrol and its plate number has been provided to the security authorities. Twelve were reported injured with serious wounds by the direct impact while others suffered scratches and bruises all over their body. Four of the seriously injured are still in hospitals. "One of us is still unconscious although the bleeding has stopped, another victim had broken ribs causing the lungs to be punctured and will have to go through an operation, while the third one is immobilized as it affected part of his spine," commented the witness. Some have serious skin scratches.

Riders said that contrary to reports on Arabic news that the bikers were riding in the wrong direction on the road and causing the accident, they were riding in the correct direction, as was the vehicle that rammed into them from behind. The riders pointed out that they had been riding the same route for years and were following all traffic rules and keeping to one side so as to allow all other traffic to move past unhindered. "Motorbikes and bicycle riders follow traffic protocols such as remaining on the extreme right side of the road, this is the first time this



occurred to the group although a minor accident did happen once, but not on such a massive scale.

Report of the accident has been registered by the authorities and details of the vehicle, including

plate number have been submitted. Some reports stated that the driver, a young Arab surrendered to the authorities, although no such information was imparted to the victims by the police.

Embassy of the Philippines and Migrant Workers Office in Kuwait were notified immediately after the incident and officials were present in the hospitals to look into the conditions of the victims.



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UNHCR, National Security College conduct joint training

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the National Security College of the Ministry of Interior jointly conducted a four-day training workshop on emergency preparedness.

The workshop was a continuation of the success of last year's session, and within the framework of UNHCR's exchange of its extensive experience, capacity building and strengthening with partners in this field. The workshop was presented by UNHCR experts in field work, and aimed to exchange experiences and lessons learned from the field of emergency response planning at the local level. The sessions included emergency preparedness, communication with the media, foundations and principles of international protection, and the role of donor countries in supporting urgent humanitarian response efforts.

The workshop also included practical training to apply the theories and lessons learned through exercises to simulate emergencies and displacement. Commenting on the launch of the



second edition of the workshop, UNHCR Representative to the country, Nisreen Rabian, said: "We are proud to launch the second edition of this workshop, which is an extension of the success of the workshop that was coordinated by the Commission and the National Security College in November of last year. We thank the Ministry of Interior, represented by the National Security College, for its confidence in the Commission



and its keenness to organize such important workshops for officials concerned with leading emergency response efforts."

For his part, the Director of the Institute for Strategic and Security Studies, Brigadier General, Dr. Abdulaziz Bu Dhair, said that "sensing emergencies, preparing for them, and taking precautionary measures to confront them are some of the most important works of foreseeing the future

and strategic planning to deal with difficult challenges to national security. Hence this keenness of National Security College to enhance the expertise of national competence and share its rich experience in this field with international organizations.

"The areas of work of the Commission as an organization specialized in the field of emergency response and humanitarian work include coordinating the response to emergency displacement situations, whether within the countries of origin or at the international borders, or in countries of asylum, where more than 91 percent of its employees are present in the field to provide assistance and support to host countries and communities and people of concern to the Commission wherever they were in the world."

He added that at a time when displacement levels have reached unprecedented numbers, exceeding the barrier of 103 million forcibly displaced people, it is important to develop and empower the local and national expertise of UNHCR's partners to prepare for emergencies more efficiently.

Fake online accounts breed misinformation, discord

Proliferation of fake online accounts that propagate misinformation to achieve the nefarious aims of the individuals and groups behind these accounts, has increased significantly worldwide in recent years, and Kuwait is no exception to this.

A recent report underscored the detrimental effects of these fake profiles and the alarming amount of misinformation they generate. The detrimental role played by fake accounts in fueling rumors and disseminating falsehoods was also found to serve as a catalyst for public discord and social unrest.

Ministry of Interior and other related entities involved in curbing this online activity are said to be actively engaged in rigorous investigations to uncover the origins and modus operandi of these fake accounts. The objective is to safeguard the integrity of public discourse and protect society from the adverse effects of manipulated information. The investigations into fake accounts have revealed a complex network of individuals and entities working tirelessly to create and propagate false narratives. The investigations reveal that the motivations for such illegal activities range from personal agendas, financial gains, to political manipulation. These findings highlight the need to strengthen countermeasures to combat this insidious phenomenon.

Dr. Safaa Zaman, a member of Kuwait University's faculty and the head of the Kuwaiti Society for Information Security, emphasized



the importance of bringing charges against individuals found accountable for fake accounts and their orchestrators. Fake accounts, she explained, serve as a means to purchase followers or generate artificial retweets. These accounts often impersonate well-known figures, including politicians and officials, thereby spreading false information under their guise.

Efforts are reportedly underway to educate citizens about the dangers of misinformation and encourage critical thinking when consuming online content. Promoting media literacy and providing tools to verify the authenticity of information can empower individuals to make informed decisions and resist the influence of deceptive accounts.

Furthermore, collaboration between technology platforms, government agencies, and law enforcement authorities has been shown to be vital in identifying and neutralizing fake accounts swiftly. By leveraging advanced technologies and sharing intelligence, the collective response to this issue can be more effective.

Kuwait, US share information to fight terrorism, financial crimes

Acting Chargé d'Affaires at the US Embassy in Kuwait, James Holtsnider, said in the field of combating money laundering and also combating terrorism "there is cooperation between America and Kuwait and stressed that the "Kuwaiti-US relations are strong and excellent, and we participate in training and exchange views and experiences."

Holtsnider made the statement on the sidelines of the workshop which was organized under the title "Model for Investigation and Prosecution Teams", at the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, in cooperation with the Office for the Development, Support and Training of Prosecutors Abroad of the US Department of Justice and the Public Prosecution in Kuwait, reports Al-Rai daily.

The aim of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity of prosecutors in combating organized crime, including terrorism, terrorist financing and money laundering.

The Institute's Deputy Director for Communications, Relations and Research, Counselor Adnan Al-Jasser, said "the title of the workshop was carefully chosen, within the annual program that was agreed to be held, in cooperation with the Office of Development, Support and Training of Prosecutors Abroad of the US Department of Justice."

He stressed that the "societies with all their institutions are responsible for combating and



responding to this scourge. As much as the security institutions have obligations, it also falls on the intellectual, scientific, media and educational institutions, a great responsibility to instill correct concepts and values, and immunize society against deviant ideas».

The US Attorney General for the Southern District of Texas, Almadar Hamdani, told Al-Rai, "There are US agencies and institutions working under the umbrella of the Public Prosecution, and we have experience in making these agencies work together, and therefore the workshop will focus on joint work," noting that "America is seeking to transfer these experiences to Kuwait and offer the best ways to investigate cases.

Hamdani, who has many years of experience working in the National Security Department of the US Department of Justice, said, "With regard to combating terrorism, all parties are concerned with this matter, and we share information and cases with the Kuwaiti side."

Turkish Embassy celebrates Turkish Food Week

Turkish Embassy held a gathering on 24 May at the residence of the Turkish ambassador to celebrate Turkish Food Week. The event, which marked the second successful edition of the annual Turkish Food Week in Kuwait, was attended by a gathering of ambassadors and representatives of diplomatic missions, special guests and media personnel.

In her address on the occasion, Ambassador of Turkey H.E. Tuba Sonmez noted that food diplomacy is considered an effective mechanism for building relations and serving as a bridge for cultural exchanges and communication between nations. She added that food is a crucial element of cultural identity, as it forms an integral part of people's daily lives.

The ambassador pointed out that Kuwaiti people have a fondness for Turkish cuisine, given their familiarity with it and Turkey's popularity as a tourist destination for Kuwaitis. Kuwait boasts approximately 70 Turkish restaurants, along with hotels that offer renowned Turkish dishes. She also emphasized that Turkish cuisine represents a rich tapestry of flavors, shaped by thousands of years of civilizations, traditions, and social heritage. It is sought after by individuals from various countries globally. The celebration included live cooking demonstrations on preparing some of Turkey's famous dishes. Turkish cuisine is renowned worldwide for its delectable dishes, and the annual Turkish Food Week, held this year from



21 to 27 May, provides an opportunity to showcase and introduce Turkish culinary delights.

The week-long celebration not only allows for food tasting sessions but also presents a selection of prominent recipes from Turkish restaurants across different regions of Turkey. One noteworthy addition to this year's Turkish Food Week is a special menu from Hatay Province.

This menu consists of 650 dishes and highlights the region's emphasis on vegetables and natural olive oil. By showcasing ancient and authentic food practices within a contemporary context, Turkish cuisine continues to enchant and captivate individuals, uniting cultures through the universal language of food.

African Union announces celebration of Africa Day



In a press conference held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on 24 May, Ambassadors of African Union countries in Kuwait announced that a grand reception will be held on 11 June to mark Africa Day, which commemorates the founding on 25 May, 1963 of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the African Union.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador of Comoros and Deputy Dean of the African diplomatic corps in Kuwait, H.E. Dr. Al-Arif Syed Hassan, explained that Africa Day symbolized the determination of the African people to free themselves from foreign domination and exploitation. On relations between Africa and Kuwait, Ambassador Hassan highlighted the long and deep ties that bind Kuwait and the African continent. He commended Kuwait's tireless efforts over the years to promote and support

development in Africa. Additionally, he acknowledged the Kuwait Fund's collaboration with more than 51 African countries, in providing technical assistance, soft loans, and grants to support project financing and development programs, particularly in infrastructure.

Ambassador Hassan emphasized that in recent years, Africa's promising and rapid growth has attracted significant foreign investments, including from Kuwait.

He also underscored the strong cooperation between Africa and Kuwait in various fields, including in politics, economy, social affairs, culture, tourism, and humanitarian efforts, including reciprocal visits between leaders of Kuwait and the countries on the African continent, as well as scholarships granted to African students.

On the homefront, he called for the expedited implementation of the African Free Trade Area, an initiative that seeks to establish a common market among all African countries, encompassing a population of 1.4 billion people. This project aims to create the largest global market with an estimated domestic income of up to \$34 billion, thereby enhancing local trade, attracting investments, and increasing exports. He highlighted the potential of the region to create at least 18 million additional jobs by 2035.

He noted that Africa is currently one

of the fastest-growing economies in the world, with a young population of 1.4 billion people and the highest population growth rate globally. This, he said, underlined the continent's potential in terms of human capital and consumer market.

For his part, Egyptian Ambassador, H.E. Osama Shaltout emphasized Kuwait's pioneering role in charitable

and humanitarian work and expressed his appreciation for the efforts of Kuwaiti charitable organizations in supporting development projects in Africa, including recent initiatives such as the humanitarian air bridge to Sudan. He emphasized that Kuwaiti public benefit associations make a significant contribution to the African continent.

LuLu Exchange relocates its Riggae branch to Street 21



LuLu Exchange – one of Kuwait's most trusted names in cross-border payments and currency exchange, has relocated its existing branch at Riggae to a more convenient location on Street 21. The new branch was virtually inaugurated by Mr. Adeeb Ahamed, Chairman and Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings.

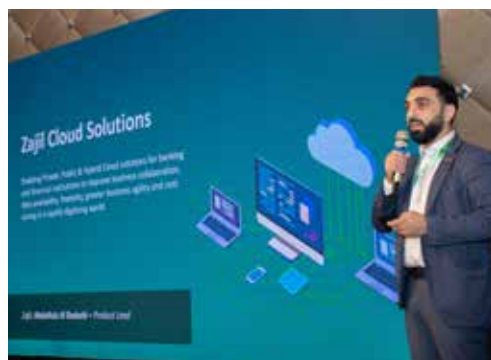
The branch will offer remittances and foreign exchange services in a more convenient location to customers, without compromising on the

quality that LuLu Exchange is known for

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Adeeb Ahamed, MD, LuLu Financial Holdings said, "Kuwait holds significant strategic value as a market for us, and as we continue our expansion efforts, we are placing equal importance on the relocation of certain branches. Today's relocation of the Riggae branch is part of this strategic repositioning to offer our customers enhanced accessibility to our physical and digital services, keeping their evolving needs in mind."



KEMS-Zajil Telecom rebrands as next-gen Digital Solutions Partner



KEMS-Zajil Telecom, a Kalaam Group Company and Kuwait's first and leading ISP Provider since 1991 serving critical market segments like Banking, Finance and large Enterprises successfully hosted a flagship event under the banner, 'Your Digital Solutions Partner'.

The event launched the new branding of KEMS-Zajil Telecom and showcased the brand's transition from consumer centered brand to a more enterprise focused brand offering extended portfolio of next-gen digital solutions tailored to the needs of businesses of all sizes and verticals across the region. With a new CEO on board KEMS-Zajil Telecom is all set to lead the digital transformation in Kuwait and announced its radical shift from an ISP Provider to Digital Solutions Partner in growing the company to be more agile and aligned to focus on Business and Government sectors in the Kuwait market.

The flagship event is the first step for the

newly transitioned brand KEMS-Zajil Telecom towards establishing a stronger presence in Kuwait as a Digital Solutions Partner driving digital transformation by launching cutting edge solutions and services with innovative value propositions across Connectivity, Voice & Communication, Cloud, Cybersecurity, Managed Networks, ICT, Datacenter, IoT and Big Data.

The event served as an effective platform for the audience to interact with key solution partners, industry leading experts and explore how KEMS-Zajil Telecom is currently investing in their core network, enhancing customer Service Level Agreements, digitizing service delivery and customer support to build an effective marketplace to ease the customer transformation journey.

KEMS-Zajil Telecom's key solution partners that attended the event were Motorola, Netapp, Quadron, Nanodems, Allied Engineering Group and Mitel.

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Social media, online campaigns gather pace ahead of elections

Election process observers claim that candidates for the upcoming National Assembly elections have resorted to a wide range of IT tools and digital and social media to manage their campaigns, to deliver their messages and to better communicate with their voters.

Relying on information technology to boost their campaign has become a major feature in electoral campaigns in recent times. The use of IT and analytical tools help candidates gauge a better understanding of the voters' opinions and preferences, as well as respond to inquiries more readily, said one IT specialist. He added that candidates are

increasingly turning to online advertisements rather than print media or billboards. Digital media allows candidates to target their campaigns specifically to their electorate and to reach voters in real time.

For her part, the director of the design and e-marketing section at an information technology company, highlighted the significant impact of social media on electoral campaigns. She noted that most candidates heavily rely on advertisements on social media platforms, as it provides the candidate with the opportunity to reach a broader and more diverse audience in cost-effective ways, in addition to the ability to directly interact



with voters. She added that the information technology had also facilitated the conducting of opinion polls, using digital analytic tools and smart technology that helps collect data more accurately and provides insights into the opinions of voters.

Voicing his opinion, the editor-in-chief of a digital newspaper said that modern media, including electronic newspapers, provide an enormous amount of information that contributes to the shaping of voters' opinions and attitudes. He added that anyone who follows the ongoing electoral campaigns will note that traditional electoral gatherings in large tents and diwanis declined as the candidates rely on social media to deliver their messages directly and effectively. He also pointed out that electronic media plays a crucial role in improving public awareness and providing voters with necessary information to make informed voting decisions.

Alliances key to Kuwait's security

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In line with this new strategy, Kuwait and the United States signed a historic Defense Cooperation Agreement in 1991. Also, in 2013, Kuwait and the US signed the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement that supports a robust US presence in Kuwait today. Tens of thousands of US forces are stationed in Kuwait, primarily at Camp Arifjan and at the Ali al-Salem Air Base. In a recent media meeting, Commander of the Regional Support Group and supervisor of operations at Camp Buehring and Arifjan, Colonel Martin Wolgemuth, reiterated US commitments to Kuwait's security.

He added that Kuwait is a vital US partner on a wide range of regional security issues, and the two sides work collectively towards their common goal of a stable and secure Kuwait. In its latest 2021 index of safest countries in the world, the Global Finance magazine ranked Kuwait fourth among Arab countries, and 18th globally. The index reflects the degree of safety in the listed countries based on several factors including national and personal security.

Since 2004, Kuwait has also been designated as an US Major Non-NATO Ally. Beyond the US-Kuwait partnership, at the 2004 NATO Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, it was agreed to establish the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) as a partnership forum between NATO and non-NATO countries in the Gulf region. The partnership framework offers the four ICI member countries the opportunity to cooperate with NATO so as to contribute to long-term global and regional security. Currently, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates joined the initiative. And, in January 2017, the NATO-Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Centre was inaugurated in Kuwait.

As NATO's only office in the Gulf region, the NATO-ICI Regional Centre serves as a regional hub for partnership and cooperation, through political dialogue, education and training, and public diplomacy. In a recent media interview, Acting Director of the NATO-ICI Regional Centre, Mariam Al-Jiran, and Head of the NATO Office at the NATO-ICI Regional Centre, Nora-Elise Beck, spoke at length on relations between NATO and Kuwait, and on the activities of the NATO-ICI Regional Center. At the onset, Ms. Al Jiran outlined the key objectives of the Centre: "Strengthening relations with NATO is our primary mandate at the Centre, which is under the oversight of Kuwait's National Security Bureau. Practical cooperation forms the fundamental pillar of this initiative and the key objectives at the Centre are to: facilitate political dialogue between NATO Member States and their partners in the Arab Gulf region; to discuss global and regional security issues; to develop a common understanding of the security challenges; and to create opportunities for practical cooperation.

"Our main objectives also include the provision of highly efficient and effective education and training, in addition to raising public awareness about NATO, partnership with the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), dialogue on security and regional affairs, and bringing stakeholders' views closer together. Furthermore, the Centre regularly holds conferences, events, and programs that bring together the ICI states

and NATO Member states.

"Since the end of last year, we invited not only NATO Allies and ICI/GCC countries to events, but also NATO Partner States such as Jordan, Morocco, Japan, Korea, Tunisia, Australia, and Switzerland. These invitations will benefit all stakeholders because the basis of the Centre and the training programs and events is the strengthening of national capacities and the exchange of expertise among partner States and NATO Member States.

"The beneficiaries of the Centre's programs and events are mostly government institutions, such as the ministries of interior and defense, Kuwait Fire Force, and the National Guard in Kuwait, as well as the Telecommunications Authority CITRA, the Ministry of Health, and the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation. The National Security Bureau has been chosen to be in charge of the Centre as a neutral body. If the Centre was reporting to the Ministry of Interior for instance, it would have had a military character and civilians would not have benefited from it. Therefore, the National Security Bureau was chosen in order to have balance and neutrality."

Elaborating on the partnerships, Ms. Beck added: One of the most important achievements that we have made early this year is our collaboration with our counterparts and relevant NATO entities to review the Centre's



vision, that is, for the Centre to be a regional hub for partnership and cooperation on security matters between NATO and the Gulf region through political dialogue, education and training, and public diplomacy.

"We coordinate with our four ICI partners, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, regarding the work, activities, and training courses held by the Centre. Although Oman and Saudi Arabia did not join the ICI, in their capacity as GCC countries, they can also participate in the activities of the Centre, as can officials from the GCC Secretariat. As our Kuwaiti counterparts like to phrase it: The Centre is NATO's home not only in Kuwait, but in the Gulf region. Our partnership with ICI countries, in addition to Saudi Arabia and Oman, is a strategic and excellent cooperative initiative that is important to us, and we thank Kuwait very much for hosting us."

Speaking about the role of NATO in the issue of security of Kuwait's borders and in the fight against terrorism, Ms. Al Jiran said: "We offer training programs to develop the capacities of the

security authorities responsible for the security of sea and land borders and for combating terrorism in Kuwait and in the Gulf countries.

"One of the most important topics we are working on currently is cybersecurity. We deliver strategic training courses to build capacities through lectures, workshops, and training programs at different levels, after which successful individuals obtain a NATO-approved certificate as specialists in the domain of cybersecurity.

"We also have a working group that is affiliated with the 'Standing Committee for Kuwaiti Focal Points with NATO'. This committee includes the five most important stakeholders we deal with in Kuwait: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Guard, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, and the General Fire Force. Working group meetings are held on a monthly basis. Through these meetings, we can identify stakeholders' areas of interest or needs and we build and deliver our training programs accordingly."

Adding to this line of discussion, Ms. Beck pointed out: "We consider terrorism in all its forms and manifestations one of the greatest threats to the security of the Alliance. Therefore, we deem cooperation with our partners very important in this domain, and we provide training courses for our partners in this field.

"After identifying the needs of the ICI countries

Adding her input, Ms. Beck said: "We also held an event last year in which we discussed the new strategic concept of the Alliance. During this event, the Deputy Assistant Secretary General of NATO, Mr. Javier Colomina, briefed event attendees about this new concept.

"This year, we introduced an event format called 'NATO Talks'. We plan to conduct a series of four events this year, with each event covering a specific topic and being conducted in cooperation with a specific partner institution. The first event was held on 20 March, in cooperation with the Embassy of Canada to Kuwait. This event focused on interoperability, a crucial topic for the Alliance and its 31 member states. It was one of the most successful events that took place in the Centre since 2017, and was held in the presence of ambassadors of NATO Member States, Gulf countries, and other NATO partner countries, in addition to military attachés and military personnel.

"For the next NATO Talk, we would like to focus on youth and security, in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Youth Council. Hopefully, this event will take place next June. The idea of 'NATO Talks' is to have an open, out-of-the box discussion. The audience is closely involved and can ask questions to the invited speakers."

Turning to security challenges facing the Alliance, Ms. Beck said: "As outlined in NATO's new Strategic Concept, the most serious security challenge for the Alliance at the moment is Russia, because of the Ukrainian crisis. As for the second major challenge, it is terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In order to face these challenges, NATO is strengthening its various partnership formats. Therefore, political dialogue is very important to us, especially cooperation with the MENA countries, specifically in the field of counterterrorism, as we provide training courses for our partners in order to cooperate in these areas.

"A third area is climate change, which is a defining challenge of our time, with a profound impact on global security. Climate change is a challenge facing everyone and not a specific geographical area. In this area, we cooperate by providing our expertise, but at the same time we learn from Kuwait and the Gulf countries, given their long experience in how to deal with high temperatures, humidity, and dust. This involves, for example, the effects of climate change that have a direct impact on equipment. This year, we conducted a first seminar on climate change and security at the Centre, and would like to continue working on this topic in the years to come. "Climate change is important as it has a strong impact on conflicts. Let's take the example of water scarcity. If fresh water or fertile soils are not available, people might need to leave these regions and move somewhere else, which could give rise to conflicts. Climate change also has similar effects on food security and health."

Concluding the interview, Ms. Al Jiran pointed out that Kuwaitis desiring to work at the Centre would have to apply as they would to any other government agency. "As I mentioned earlier, the Centre falls under the umbrella of the National Security Bureau, which is a government agency. Therefore, application for the Centre is similar to that for any other government agency, and the appointment is made through the National Security Bureau and not through the Centre itself."

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



Climate Loss and Damage Fund Is Coming



Sameh Shoukry

COP27 President and Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Last November's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, concluded on a historic high note, with the last-minute agreement to establish a 'loss and damage' fund. The decision to offer financial support to vulnerable countries suffering the worst effects of global warming was a remarkable achievement that has resonated worldwide. But as we move from establishing the fund to implementing it, important questions remain.

What is a realistic funding target? Who will receive financial assistance? Which entities will have final say over the fund?

As we near the halfway mark between COP27 and COP28 in Dubai, the international community must address these critical questions in the spirit of constructive multilateralism that animated the proceedings in Sharm El-Sheikh. Governments, activists, and affected citizens were able to agree on this key plank of climate justice, and we must now demonstrate the same level of collaboration in making it a success.

In March, the COP27 presidency held the first Transitional Committee meeting in Luxor, Egypt, to begin addressing the operationalization of the fund. The composition

of the committee ensured a diverse range of voices, and complex issues were discussed in a constructive spirit of cooperation.

The three-day meeting concluded with the adoption of a work plan containing substantive and procedural milestones to deliver actionable recommendations well in advance of COP28. Moreover, the plan outlines how the committee will focus on all elements of its mandated recommendations at each gathering, gradually working toward consensus.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines loss and damage as

designed precisely for this purpose: to discuss effective methods and modalities that will turn the concept of the loss and damage fund into a tangible reality while identifying gaps in the existing climate-finance system. Requests and demands are currently being analyzed and considered before finalizing the mechanics to ensure proper implementation.

Backed by a broad range of government, civil-society, and private-sector stakeholders, the fund is designed to consider the short-, medium-, and long-term effects of climate change on developing countries. It will supply financial and technological resources for

hardest by global warming. The burden of climate change is unequal, and we have the chance to create a much fairer and stability-enhancing balance.

The loss and damage fund represents a major step forward, but it is not enough. We must continue to work tirelessly to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions – the root cause of climate change. This can be achieved by accelerating the transition to clean energy, empowering communities to adapt their livelihoods, and adhering to scientific recommendations in line with internationally agreed principles.

At the same time, the need to create a working loss and damage fund that delivers on the promises made at COP27 is acute. East Africa and the Sahel are currently experiencing severe droughts caused by human-induced climate change, which has resulted in meager rain levels as well as increased evapotranspiration in plants and soil. Plagued by food insecurity, many people in the affected countries are internally displaced or have been forced to migrate, underscoring global warming's disruptive effects and the increasingly limited ability of both nature and humanity to adapt to them.

The newly created fund will remain a top priority in climate discussions, and it is crucial to enter COP28 with a clear strategy for its effective implementation. We must approach the task with a unified sense of purpose – only by working together and getting the details right can we begin to address the vast inequities of the crisis. But given the significance of the task at hand, I am confident that we will succeed.

“It is our collective responsibility to implement effective policies to combat global warming, as well as to alleviate suffering and provide financial support to people whose lives have been upended by rising temperatures.”

the harm caused by human-generated climate change. Solutions to postpone, minimize, or prevent such harm to vulnerable communities worldwide must also be human-generated. It is our collective responsibility to implement effective policies to combat global warming, as well as to alleviate suffering and provide financial support to people whose lives have been upended by rising temperatures.

The Transitional Committee meetings are

responding to loss and damage caused by both immediate and slow-onset events. That could mean early-warning systems, disaster-risk reduction, or ecosystem restoration.

As the architect of the fund, Egypt is committed to ensuring its effectiveness, transparency, and accessibility. We strongly believe that all stakeholders must fully collaborate to fulfill its objectives and make a significant change in the communities hit



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Backsliding on Maternal Mortality



Natalia Kanem

Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund.

In 2020, an estimated 287,000 women died in pregnancy, childbirth, or soon after delivering, according to the latest data from the United Nations Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group, which includes the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), where I am executive director. This figure is roughly equivalent to the death toll of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami or the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, two of the deadliest natural disasters in modern history.

Human devastation on this scale is usually met with weeks of news coverage, an outpouring of public support, and calls for urgent action. Yet the staggering number of women dying every year in the act of giving life remains largely a silent crisis. Even more worrying, the group found that progress on reducing maternal deaths has ground to a halt.

How many of us know someone who died, or came close to dying, during pregnancy or childbirth? Perhaps the pervasiveness of suffering is part of the problem — maternal deaths may seem inevitable. Yet the vast majority are preventable with simple interventions that save money in the long run.

One of the most cost-effective ways to reduce maternal mortality globally is to invest in community-based care, including the education and deployment of midwives. Achieving this will require scaling up the workforce substantially — the world is currently facing a shortage of 900,000 midwives — and countering persistent gender norms that devalue the contributions of a predominantly female field.

Lowering the high number of unintended pregnancies is another crucial step toward reducing maternal mortality. UNFPA research shows that nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended, more than 60 percent of unintended pregnancies end in abortion, and an estimated 45 percent of all abortions



“Policymakers know how to address this issue: increase access to quality contraceptives, improve comprehensive sexuality education, and protect a woman’s right to decide whether, when, and with whom to have children.”

are unsafe, making them a leading cause of maternal death. Policymakers know how to address this issue: increase access to quality contraceptives, improve comprehensive sexuality education, and protect a woman’s right to decide whether, when, and with whom to have children.

World leaders have made significant progress when called upon to save women’s lives. In 2000, governments agreed to the Millennium Development Goals, which aimed for a 75 percent reduction in the global maternal mortality rate by 2015. The 44 percent decrease in deaths over that period was a meaningful accomplishment, even if it ultimately fell short of the goal.

In 2015, with the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals, countries once again committed to reducing the maternal death ratio, this time to below 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030. Yet, eight years on, we are nowhere near achieving that target, and progress has stalled. In fact, between 2016 and 2020, the maternal mortality rate has increased in two regions — Europe and North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean — and these estimates do not account for the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on health systems.

Underinvestment in addressing persistent racial and ethnic disparities in the delivery of maternal health care is one factor contributing

to this stagnation. In the United States, for example, the 2021 maternal mortality rate for Black women was 2.6 times the rate for non-Hispanic white women. Similar disparities can be observed in Afro-descendant communities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

A holistic, community-based approach to care is crucial to eliminating these disparities. Early in my career, I worked as a pediatrician and HIV researcher in Harlem at a time when crack cocaine and AIDS were devastating the poorest and most marginalized patients and communities. It became clear that I could not treat a child without understanding the wider social context and the challenges facing the child’s mother. And the medical needs of the mothers and pregnant women I met often paled in comparison to the urgency of their social needs, highlighting the importance of treating the whole person.

Even though progress on maternal mortality has stagnated at the global level, there are some glimmers of hope. Nepal, for example, decreased maternal deaths by nearly one-third between 2015 and 2020, after halving the country’s rate between 2000 and 2015. In this period, the government doubled health spending, legalized abortion, and made maternity care free of charge.

Similarly, Sri Lanka has halved maternal deaths at least every 12 years since 1935, owing largely to a health system that provides free services to the entire population and to a dramatic increase in the number of skilled midwives, who now attend 97 percent of births, compared to 30 percent in 1940.

While the latest maternal mortality rates reveal the damage caused by neglecting life-saving solutions, there is a way to end this needless suffering. Building midwifery capacity and ensuring equal access to quality sexual and reproductive health care would go a long way toward improving health outcomes for mothers and pregnant women.

But getting back on track requires reviving the sense of urgency among governments, communities, and all stakeholders needed to provide adequate financing and create a conducive legal and social environment for these interventions. We know the reasons why women still die giving birth. Indifference should not be one of them.

Czechia and Kuwait, 60 years of fruitful cooperation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

This March, KOC signed a contract with three selected suppliers for the implementation of the largest decontamination project in the world, within the framework of which a total of 8.34 million cubic meters of soil, massively contaminated at the time of Iraqi invasion, are to be rehabilitated. One of the selected suppliers is an association formed by the Kuwaiti Al-Sayer/Enshaat comp. and the Czech DEKONTA company, which has unique remediation technologies and extensive experience in the implementation of international projects.”

Turning to security cooperation between the two sides, the envoy pointed out that Kuwait is a widely recognized impartial broker and plays a crucial role in promoting security, stability, and development in the Gulf region and in the Middle East as a whole. He added, “Both countries share principles of freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and Czechia highly appreciates the positive and constructive role Kuwait plays on the international arena. Czechia is ready to work closely with Kuwait both on a bilateral as well as on multilateral basis on maintaining and further strengthening global and regional stability, peace and cooperation.

“It is worth noting in this regard that Czech

industry production in the defense and security sector has a long tradition of more than 100 years, and now increasingly focuses on new technologies and areas. With around 95 percent of defense industry production being exported, the high-quality Czech defense and security equipment and advanced technologies are well appreciated internationally.

“I am glad that there is renewed interest on both sides to develop cooperation in the defense and security sectors. Visit of our Deputy Minister of Defence to Kuwait in May 2021 opened a new chapter in cooperation in this field. Cooperation with Kuwait in this sensitive and important sector also has the full support of the Czech Government. A delegation of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) visited Czechia last year and several Czech companies from the security and defense sector introduced themselves in Kuwait. The potential lies in military-technical cooperation, military-medical cooperation and training. Czechia, as a member of NATO, also fully supports this cooperation, especially through the NATO-Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Centre based in Kuwait.”

The ambassador also underscored his country’s superb tourism attractions, including its many rejuvenative medical spas, beautiful landscapes and numerous UNESCO World

Heritage Sites that attract millions of visitors each year. “Kuwaiti citizens are well known for their love to travel and explore new places. I am proud that over the years Czechia has become a popular destination for Kuwaiti tourists as well. I wish to invite them to visit Czechia in even greater numbers. I am sure it will give another impetus to deepening of friendly relations between the two countries.

“There is much to see and to do in Czechia, whether you are looking for business, history, natural beauty, fantastic architecture, spas, leisure and relax, food and gastronomy, music and entertainment. Czechia has the largest density of castles, chateaux and historical monuments in Europe. In fact, there are over 2,000 of them around the country. Between 10 and 12 million tourists visit Czechia every year.

“Moreover, since last year, Prague and Kuwait City have become easily accessible by Jazeera Airways seasonal direct flights. This year again the direct service will resume at the end of June. In order to ensure timely and convenient processing of Schengen visas I recommend travelers to apply for visas well in advance. I would also like to stress that the Czech Embassy does not accept applications submitted by any intermediary. All applicants must apply in

person in the VFS visa center.”

The ambassador concluded by commenting on the celebrations being planned to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. “I am convinced that the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Czechia and Kuwait, and six decades of fruitful cooperation deserve an appropriate commemoration. To mark this important milestone in our relations the honorable Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both countries will exchange congratulatory letters.

“Also, in cooperation with the Czech Tourism Promotion Agency (CzechTourism), and Czech travel agencies and spas, we plan to organize later this year another roadshow to re-introduce and promote Czechia as an attractive tourism destination. The Czech Embassy also intends to organize later this year, in cooperation with the National Council for Culture Arts and Letters (NCCAL), a concert of a Cimbalom ensemble of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra to bring Czech music and works of composers like Antonín Dvořák or Bedřich Smetana closer to Kuwaiti music lovers. I also consider this interview to be an important part of the celebration and promotion of successful mutual relations. So please accept my highest appreciation for your valuable collaboration.”

Co-Parenting: Finding Harmony for the Sake of Children



By Hermoine Macura-Noble
Special to The Times Kuwait

Co-parenting is a concept that has gained recognition around the globe as divorce rates continue to increase. Traditionally, the Gulf region has adhered to a patriarchal system, where divorce often resulted with the father as the primary caretaker however, societal shifts, changing family dynamics, and the recognition of children's rights, have led to the emergence of co-parenting arrangements, where both parents ideally share responsibility.

"I separated from my husband when my children were very young and it was very distressing for all of us at the time. It's very difficult to understand your children's feelings, especially when you're going through a separation. Family support counselors helped me navigate and understand their behavior and how to deal with their distress through play, and listening to their needs more than assuming they were just behaving badly. It was at this point I began to understand childhood trauma," shares Gulf resident, Afiya Benjamin.

Psychologist and Relationship Coach, Sadia Khan explains why co-parenting is the best option when a marriage breaks down. "Co-parenting is a collaborative parenting approach where both parents work together to raise their children after separation or divorce. It involves sharing responsibilities such as decision-making, financial support, and time spent with the children. Co-parenting seeks to maintain a healthy and positive relationship between both parents for the well-being and best interest of their children. Communication, mutual respect, and flexibility are key factors in successful co-parenting."

The Middle East has experienced significant changes in family structures and dynamics due to societal shifts, economic development, and increased female empowerment. As a result, more women have entered the workforce, pursued higher education, and become more independent, resulting in a rise in divorce rates. Consequently, co-parenting has emerged as a viable solution for parents aiming to prioritize the well-being and upbringing of their children.

Many countries have also recognized the importance of shared parental responsibility. Laws in some Arab countries require divorced parents to jointly make decisions regarding their children's upbringing, education, healthcare, and religious practices. However, with many people choosing to marry expats from other countries there is also an emergence of cross-cultural challenges when it comes to co-parenting.

"Healthy co-parenting involves communication, cooperation, and putting the best interests of the children first.

Some characteristics include effective communication where both parents prioritize open and respectful communication to keep each other informed and make joint decisions about their children and respect each other's role... Both parents should also work together to provide consistent routines and boundaries for their children across both households," explains Khan.

On the other hand, unhealthy co-parenting involves high conflict, lack of communication and cooperation, and putting the needs of the parents first. Khan says high levels of conflict where parents who engage in yelling, arguments, and disagreements are not child-centered. "A lack of cooperation where parents fail to work together to make joint decisions about their children or show a willingness to work together, and a lack of consistency where parents provide different rules and expectations in each household, can create tension and confusion for the children," shares Khan.

Experts say that both parents should provide their children with a home base that is stable, secure, and loving. It's also important for both parents to create a home environment that promotes the physical and emotional well-



being of the child as kids benefit from having a close relationship with both parents, as long as the relationship is healthy and positive. Children thrive when they feel supported and loved by both parents, and both parents need to be involved in their lives as much as possible.

"If your child expresses a desire to live with one parent more than the other, be sensitive to their feelings. Explain that the parenting plan was agreed upon to ensure they are loved

and cared for equally by both parents. When addressing these questions, be sure to remain calm and remember to put the child's needs first," advises Khan.

When it comes to disagreements, Khan advises taking these steps when you and your co-parent are unable to agree:

- **Communication:** The first step is open and honest communication. Call and talk to the other parent about the specific issue and both share your points of view.
- **Mediation:** If you and your co-parent still cannot agree, it might be helpful to consider seeking professional mediation. A neutral third party can facilitate a discussion and help both parents to arrive at a mutually satisfying agreement. The mediator may be a licensed family therapist, social worker, or even a judge in the court process.
- **Parenting Plan:** In the event, you have a parenting plan or custody order, consult it for guidance as to how to resolve disputes. The plan might provide methods on how to resolve disputes such as the use of a mediator, a parenting coordinator, or even an arbitrator.

Khan reiterates that regardless of whether the situation involves major or minor decisions, the most important thing is to be calm and respectful in communication, put the children's best interests first, and pursue legal action or mediation when necessary.

If your child is showing signs of distress and nervousness, it is also essential to take action to address the situation. Experts say it is important to be available for your child and listen to their concerns and feelings. It is also important to be empathetic and show your child that you understand how they are feeling

and that you are there for them. Reassure them that they are loved and cared for and that you will work with them to help them feel better. Additionally, it is good to seek professional help if your child's distress and nervousness persist. You may want to consider seeking the help of a mental health professional, such as a therapist, counselor, or child psychologist.

Statistics also show that sometimes co-parenting does not work out and some parents end up having to navigate raising their children alone due to one parent being mentally unwell or absent, which can also be extremely difficult. "I think the stigma of being a single parent is not as bad as it used to be. At first, I felt embarrassed to be a single parent and then I learned to accept my situation and be very open that there is no other parent involved in my children's upbringing," shares Benjamin.

Unfortunately, the dangers of this situation is when the parent ultimately starts projecting their negative and bitter emotions on their children. "In my personal experience, most of my clients who suffer the most are those who had mothers that brainwashed them. What I mean by this is they are loyal to their mother at the expense of their relationship with their father. They go into the dating scene with a bias and naivety about relationships. So if you are a mother reading this try your best to avoid this," concludes Khan.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Keeping Small Islands Financially Afloat



Ralph Gonsalves, Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, and Wavel Ramkalawan

Ralph Gonsalves is Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa is Prime Minister of Samoa.

Wavel Ramkalawan is President of the Seychelles.

It is too early to tell whether all the talk about reforming development finance at this year's International Monetary Fund and World Bank Spring Meetings will translate into meaningful policy action for the Global South. But multilateral financial institutions increasingly recognize the need to evolve to remain relevant in light of new global challenges, and world leaders are paying attention to innovative approaches, such as Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley's Bridgetown Initiative to address the immediate financial needs of debt-distressed countries or Secretary-General António Guterres's stimulus to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Better late than never. The current international financial architecture is outdated and ill-equipped to handle the massive disruptions caused by climate change, a global economic downturn, the COVID-19 pandemic, and changes in income distribution fueled by technological developments and globalized competition. The unique geographic and demographic characteristics of small island developing states (SIDS) like ours make it even harder to cope with these disruptions.

The remoteness of SIDS, coupled with limited

usable land and small populations, all but guarantee significant barriers to integration in a fast-paced global economy. Our countries are overdependent on imports, especially of food and energy, and often rely heavily on a single economic sector (usually tourism), making us prone to supply-chain disruptions and other external shocks.

The United Nations has long recognized our special circumstances, but the international community has done little to help us manage them. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the global financial system, where we are often left to fend for ourselves — small fish at the

The Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, currently under consideration at the UN General Assembly could be a lifesaver. The MVI, a universal ranking based on developing countries' susceptibility to external shocks, provides the basis for international institutions like the IMF and the World Bank to allocate the concessional financing needed to prepare and recover from unforeseen crises. While the Bridgetown Initiative addresses the immediacy of the climate-change threat, SIDS measure highly across all three dimensions of vulnerability: economic and social, as well as environmental.

of COVID-19, owing to their isolation. But one must also consider their capacity constraints, including their limited ability to provide health services. Without the workers and facilities needed to weather the waves of infection experienced by larger countries, these states were forced to implement stricter lockdown measures for far longer than the rest of the world. The social, psychological, and economic effects of these policies will be felt for a generation or more.

Finally, while higher temperatures and rising sea levels pose a grave threat to SIDS, they are not the only environmental concerns. The population of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is at the mercy of an active volcano — a ticking time bomb that last went off in 2021. Moreover, the island chain sits in the Atlantic hurricane belt; these storms will become stronger and more frequent as the climate crisis deepens. When a country's GDP could be wiped out in an instant, how relevant is income as a measure of vulnerability?

It is true that GNI per capita remains the most reliable way to identify the least-developed countries, which are in serious need of financial aid and other concessional resources to stand on their own. The MVI does not seek to replace GNI or interfere in the provision of material assistance to those countries that need it most. Instead, it is designed to complement this process by identifying vulnerable countries that deserve concessional financing but currently have no access to it.

It will always feel like an inconvenient time to reform the international financial architecture. But that architecture is denying adequate shelter to vulnerable countries like ours: we are being forced to pay a premium for unsound accommodation. If multilateral financial institutions take too long to address the design flaws, the entire structure will eventually collapse.

“Using income as the sole determinant for financial assistance means more debt for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which disproportionately suffer the effects of global warming and other external shocks.”

mercy of predators that profit handsomely from the repackaging of our debt.

The problem is that concessional financing is primarily tied to traditional measures of development, namely a country's gross national income (GNI). But the relatively high income of SIDS — more than half qualify as upper middle-income countries — prevents many from accessing the cheap finance offered to the lowest-income countries. Using income as the sole determinant for financial assistance means more debt for SIDS, which disproportionately suffer the effects of global warming and other external shocks. There is no way to escape this Catch-22 without a credible framework that takes these vulnerabilities into account.

For example, the gas crisis in Europe and high inflation in the United States, both fueled by the war in Ukraine, have dominated headlines over the past year. Yet the war's economic ramifications have been especially painful for remote island states like the Seychelles, where the energy shortage is compounded by higher transport costs. High inflation and soaring airfares have deterred European visitors, undermining the post-COVID recovery of the country's tourism industry, a crucial source of budget revenue.

As for the social dimension, the pandemic has had a profound effect on Samoa and other Pacific island states. Some may argue that they were spared the worst health outcomes



Human, animal, environment bond key to global health

A new initiative led by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) aims to achieve optimal global health outcomes recognizing the interconnections between people, animals, plants and their shared environment. Labeled 'One Health for Global Health', this is a collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach that works at the local, regional, and global levels.

According to the principles of One Health, humans are not isolated beings — we are integral parts of a much larger system. One needs to understand this bigger picture when preparing for action against threats near and far, from pandemics to global warming, climate change, natural disasters, and more. This holistic approach evaluates the interconnected nature of humans, animals, and environment through a wide range of disciplines and professions, and involves various stakeholders.

Studies show that over two thirds of the world's infectious diseases are zoonotic, meaning that they originate in animals and spread to humans. Controlling the spread of zoonotic diseases improves the health and well-being of man and animals. Taking care of our environment by reducing, reusing, and recycling helps to minimize our negative impact on the planet, and lessen effects of climate change.

One Health represents different things to different people. For some, it symbolizes the human-animal bond (HAB), to others it also includes the environment. The relationship

between pet and pet lovers provides a very visible example of the importance of One Health to individuals and pets. To understand this relationship one needs to look no further than the regular examinations and treatments that veterinarians recommend for pets.

These preventive measures protect pets and their human handlers. For example, veterinarians recommend monthly flea and heartworm preventatives for pets, because fleas and ticks carry diseases that can negatively affect the life of pets, and serve as carriers of various diseases that affect humans. Similarly, heartworms spread several intestinal parasites among pets, many of which are also contagious to people who come in contact with infected pets.

Scientific research recognizes that animal hosts are the primary transmitters for the spread of over 60 percent of all human infectious illnesses and the source of 75 percent of all up-and-coming contagious threats. These zoonotic diseases pose risks to humans and animals alike. Protecting our pets helps to protect ourselves. Some examples of zoonotic diseases are rabies, Lyme disease, avian flu, plague, ebola, ringworm, anthrax. The COVID-19 pandemic, while devastating, has shown us how interconnected the world is, not just humans but animals to humans and more.

Infectious diseases can have far-reaching effects, causing deaths, forced euthanasia of many animals, hospitalizations, and more. Illnesses that may not be contagious to humans but infect species in our food supply, can also negatively affect the food chain and lead to food



shortages, higher-priced goods, hunger, and starvation.

Beyond human or animal issues, environmental and economic concerns, One Health issues have far-reaching implications including:

- Antimicrobial-resistant bugs, or organisms that do not respond to common medication, which are now being increasingly found in hospitals, nature, animals, and among people.
- Vector-borne diseases, or infectious ailments transmitted by ticks, fleas, mosquitoes, and other related species (vectors), such as West Nile Virus, Lyme disease, and Malaria.
- Food and water safety and security through protecting our food supply from diseases and spoilage by ensuring soil health and water safety by preventing toxic chemicals and farmland waste run-off from contaminating soil and waterways.
- Preserve wildlife and their habitats by ensuring that conservation of habitats is high on the agenda of local and governmental agencies.

As individuals we can take several 'one Health' steps to make a difference to global health. These include:

- Reduce, reuse, and recycle items to protect the environment, save money, preserve natural resources, and give back what we take from the Earth. We can donate
- Donate unused food to your local food bank or charity organization.
- Remove food waste by composting at home or sending your food waste to a local composting company.
- Recycle properly, as many areas now have local collections or drop off for paper, plastic, glass and other materials. Electronics and appliances often need to be picked up by a specific company.
- Prevent parasites by protecting your pets from infectious parasites with regular monthly preventatives.
- Vaccinate your pets and children for common infectious diseases. For example, distemper and parvovirus vaccinations effectively protect against disease in dogs. In people, measles, mumps, and rubella vaccinations (MMR) help protect against easily preventable but potentially deadly diseases.
- Clean up. Make sure you clean up after yourselves and your pets.
- Health checks. Get routine wellness checks for you and your family members (two and four-legged alike).
- Stay home. If you are sick, rest at home. If you have signs of illness, such as coughing, sneezing, fever, chills, or a rash — protect others by staying away.
- Practice proper hygiene. Wash your hands regularly and effectively, use sanitizer where necessary, make sure your body and clothes are clean and not transmitting bacteria from one area to another.

Recognizing the importance of 'One Health' and incorporating protective steps to protect not just humankind, but the natural and animal kingdom too is vital to a healthier world and critical to our survival.

Muscle fat linked to higher mortality

High levels of fat often accumulate deep within muscles and pose a danger to our health and well-being. Studies show that 'myosteatosis', the accumulation of fat in skeletal muscles, can raise the risk of death among otherwise healthy adults as much as type 2 diabetes and smoking.

A growing body of research identifies serious health dangers associated with myosteatosis, but unfortunately it often goes overlooked by physicians, who estimate body fat by relying only on body mass index (BMI). This evaluation fails to provide an accurate representation of body composition, and people with similar BMIs can have widely varying levels of health risks.



A new study by researchers at Louisiana State University in the United States tracked adverse health events such as heart attacks, strokes, and aneurysms during a follow-up period of about nine years. Of the nearly 9,000 healthy adults in the study, 507 died during the follow-up period. Myosteatosis, which was found to increase the risk of major adverse events, appeared in 55 percent of those who died during the follow-up period.

The researchers reported that excess muscle fat increased the absolute mortality rate at 10 years by 15 percent, more than for known risk factors for early death such as obesity (7%), fatty liver disease (8%) and muscle wasting (9%). Experts say that accumulation of fat in muscles increases with age and as muscles atrophy. While genetics may partly explain this fat accumulation, the specific cause of this is not precisely clear.

Previous research has linked muscle fat to several health risks. One study showed that

high levels of intramuscular fat infiltration increased the risk of heart failure. Another study revealed that the amount of lean muscle a healthy person has in middle age is linked to their future risk of heart disease. Other studies have drawn a link between fatty muscles and poor outcome, including one which found that cancer patients diagnosed with myosteatosis had a 75 percent greater mortality risk than those without fatty muscles.

Other studies have assessed the effects of exercise alone on mitigating the severity of myosteatosis, and some studies have reported promising results. Overall, the findings indicate that exercise can significantly improve muscle quality in populations at risk of developing obesity, as well as in patients facing disabilities due to age-related gradual loss of muscle mass, strength and function.

Analysts evaluating the new study said that such a high death rate because of the elevated fat levels in muscles is really important and needs to get serious attention from the broader medical community, especially considering that the link between myosteatosis and higher risk of death was unrelated to age or obesity markers revealed by BMI. The new findings indicate that we need to rethink standards on assessing the health risks of muscle fat.

They note that abdominal CT or MRI scans provide a more accurate and thorough assessment of muscle fat than a mere BMI test. Currently available artificial intelligence (AI) programs can also enable medical professionals to extract more specific body-composition metrics from abdominal CT scans. A better understanding of the factors that regulate myosteatosis may lead to the development of novel therapies that influence healthy outcomes.

Researchers behind the study say that further studies will be needed to identify the specific physiological mechanisms that influence myosteatosis, and the processes that link this fat depot with insulin resistance. Studies will also need to help determine whether myosteatosis is solely a biomarker of poorer health status or whether it is causally associated with an increased risk of death.

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A World of Debt



Anne O. Krueger

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Recent headlines seem to augur a global debt crisis. The United States is teetering on the precipice of a self-inflicted default. Egypt, Ghana, Pakistan, and many other countries are in grave financial difficulties. Italy and Japan's debt burdens have grown heavier. And the Chinese are delaying or hampering multilateral efforts to restructure low- and middle-income countries' debt. The International Monetary Fund counts 41 countries as being heavily indebted, and that does not include middle-income countries such as Argentina, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

The concerns these stories have fueled are real, but there are fundamental differences between them. The US has the capacity to service its debts, and it has been a reliable borrower for many years. Its problem is political. By contrast, the question for poorer countries is whether, or how much, they can repay. Many heavily indebted low-income countries have debt levels that are already unsustainable or will be soon. Some have missed payments or announced that they will have to suspend debt service. Private lenders have responded by refusing to lend more.

But this cohort of indebted countries can be broken down further into two groups. Some

countries were in relatively satisfactory positions until COVID-19 forced them to borrow more to finance pandemic-related expenditures. International financial institutions have created special facilities to help these countries secure rapid additional financing, and to sustain normal financing as their economies recover.

The other group already had high and rising debts before COVID-19, often because they had splurged on projects with low or negative rates of return. Sri Lanka is a case in point. A new government took office in 2019 and cut taxes dramatically, increasing already large fiscal deficits and borrowing even more. While ill-advised domestic policies — notably a prohibition on imported agricultural inputs — sharply reduced the country's agricultural production, the government spent down its foreign-exchange reserves and then borrowed at higher interest rates (especially from China) until it could borrow no more.

Because many heavily indebted countries rely on imports for essential food, medicines, and intermediate goods, an inability to finance imports during a crisis can result in factory closures and a sharp decline in economic activity — as happened in Sri Lanka. Until the afflicted country acquires the foreign exchange needed to finance renewed import flows, essentials will remain scarce.

In these cases, the IMF works with the government to formulate policies to enable the country to restore growth and creditworthiness. If the IMF did not insist on such reforms, it would merely be increasing the country's indebtedness and postponing an inevitable reckoning. Hence, to ensure that the country follows through, the IMF generally disburses funds in tranches as reforms are carried out, with the initial disbursement enabling a resumption of import flows and debt servicing.

Recognizing the impact of such crises on the poor, some observers have called for debt reduction and new funds to be offered without any condition that the country correct the policy



failures that led to extreme indebtedness. But in assuming that new lending will help the poor, they fail to see that this is often a case of 'throwing good money after bad'. In many cases, one reason why the country is poor is that its previously accumulated debt went toward low-productivity investments.

Despite the long process that the IMF undertakes before agreeing to a program, additional complications may emerge after it is established. When the IMF deems a country's debt burden too heavy for it to sustain its debt-servicing requirements, restructuring of sovereign debt must be part of the agreed IMF program and negotiated with private and public creditors. Sometimes, reforms and IMF money can help a country achieve growth and finance its debt service. But in other cases, the debt has become so large that it is unreasonable to expect the country to resume servicing it fully. To address this issue, officials from the creditor countries' governments will meet and agree on debt-restructuring terms, which might include a reduction in the face value of the debt, a rescheduling of principal repayments, or even a grace period. Traditionally, private creditors will also participate in these talks and agree to a haircut on outstanding debt.

But China's rise as emerging and developing

economies' largest bilateral creditor has frustrated matters. The Chinese have been reluctant to restructure debts, and have insisted on lending to debtor countries whatever they need to cover their obligations. If the IMF disbursed funds under those conditions, some portion of them would simply go to repay China, which would then be treated more favorably than other creditors.

IMF programs therefore cannot be implemented until all creditors have reached an agreement on restructuring. Sri Lanka could not receive funds from the IMF for months because the Chinese refused to take a haircut on loans they had made. Instead, they wanted to lend even more money to Sri Lanka so that it could service its debt (and increase its overall debt to China). Likewise, Zambia's restructuring has been delayed since November 2020.

True, China finally has made some arrangements with several countries that would enable the IMF to disburse funds. But many other indebted countries still need to undertake policy reforms in accordance with an agreed IMF program, which means that more delays can be expected. One hopes that China will see that it is in its own interest to devise a smoother, faster process for policy reforms and debt restructuring.

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