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# Kuwait and biodiversity challenges



## THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

**B**iodiversity refers to the variety of life on Earth and the patterns it forms, as well as the multitude of ecosystems such as seas, deserts, forests, wetlands, mountains, lakes, rivers and others that form our natural environment. Biodiversity has been shaped by nature-driven processes over billions of years, but also increasingly in recent times by human influences.

World Environment Day, marked each year on 5 June, reminds us of the need to urgently address the biodiversity challenges facing the world, and introspect our role in negatively influencing the environment. We are all an integral part of biodiversity and any loss or damage to this natural biodiversity threatens the lives and livelihood of everyone on this planet, either directly or indirectly.

The air we breathe, the water we drink, and



the land we live on, as well as other essential resources and services that allow societies and economies to flourish are delivered by the biodiversity that nature provides. Kuwait, a hot

arid land with scant rainfall, no natural surface water, and little if any groundwater supplies. has an environment that generates its own share of biodiversity challenges. Unlike nature-

induced biodiversity problems in many other places, much of the ecosystem breakdowns in Kuwait can be attributed to damaging human influences on nature, as well as from inexcusable negligence of this vital issue by policymakers over the years.

The 1990-91 invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces and the war to evict the occupation forces, was a major human influence that had devastating effects on Kuwait, its environment, and biological diversity. In addition to the air pollution from the more than 700 oil wells set ablaze by the retreating Iraqi troops, the crude oil spills in marine and land environments took a huge toll on biodiversity. Adding to this, the bombings, movement of military vehicles, proliferation of mines and weapons and building of long defensive and offensive trenches along the coastline and in the desert, had severe and long-lasting negative impacts on the soil and land.

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# Students on waiting-list for admission to private schools



Many private schools have had to place students seeking admission for the new academic year 2023-24 on wait lists, or turn them away, due to various reasons. Among the reasons cited for deferral of students were rules and regulations stipulated by the Ministry of Education that limit the maximum number of students per class, to the lack of facilities, amenities, teachers and other school staff needed to cater to more students than those already enrolled.

While some schools said they were unable to take on more students because they already have high student densities, others said they conduct entrance tests for new students, as they are reluctant to admit every student who applies for admission so as to maintain the quality and distinction of the education they provide.

The education ministry has set the student density ceiling based on the educational

system provided by the concerned school, and any transgression of these regulations by an institution could lead to legal measures being initiated against the respective school. The ceiling for Arab schools is reportedly 42 students per class, while that of 'model' schools, which are basically schools providing a Western model of schooling, is set at 28 pupils per class.

The ministry had excluded some schools from the density ceiling during the last academic year due to the fact that no new schools were opened during the Corona pandemic period. But this was an exception to the general rule and with more schools now opening up, the ministry has reverted to the old student limits. Some schools apologized to parents for not accommodating more students due to shortage of human resources, including administrative and educational staff, as well as cleaning and maintenance workers.

For her part, President of the Foreign Schools Union, Nora Al-Ghanim, said that there were various reasons why schools were forced to turn back students seeking admission, including student density rules that limit the number of students in each class, or their inability to open additional classes due to a shortage of teachers, or even due to lack of space to expand the school and accommodate more students.

Al-Ghanim explained, "The solution lies with the responsible government agencies, including the ministries of Finance and

Education, in granting distinguished private schools, regardless of their educational system, whether it is typical Arab or foreign, approval to expand their premises. This, she said, is better than granting licenses to open new schools, which may take time to prove their excellence and the quality of their

educational system."

Al-Ghanim emphasized that investing in education has become less attractive to many investors, because of the several obstacles and regulations that are placed before them, which makes them think twice before investing in an educational institution.

## MoI deports record number of expats in three days

In line with directives from senior officials to prevent overcrowding at deportation centers and speed up the deportation process, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) achieved a record, by deporting the largest number of expatriates in just three days.

The ministry said that between 27 and 29 a total of 680 expatriates, from eight Asian and African nations, were deported to their respective countries. The deportees had been housed in Talha Prison after deportation orders were issued against them.

The reasons for their deportation varied between administrative deportation and verdicts issued by the criminal court, in addition to those who were apprehended by security personnel for violating the residence



and labor laws.

All the deportees were fingerprinted and photographed and all procedures related to their deportation process were completed within a record time before they were flown out of the country.

The deportation of this large number of expatriates in just three days is seen as the first in recent years in terms of numbers, which confirms the deportation prison works for the speedy completion of deportation procedures to ensure deportees are not incarcerated for long periods as was the norm in recent years.

## Lulu Hypermarket Leads the Way in Creating Awareness on World Environment Day

Lulu Hypermarket, a leading retail chain in Kuwait, took a proactive step towards safeguarding the environment, was done by a comprehensive awareness program on the occasion of World Environment Day, 5th June 2023. Under the tagline "Act today, safeguard tomorrow," Lulu Hypermarket emphasized the urgent need to address plastic pollution and promoted the importance of reducing plastic consumption.

As part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, Lulu Hypermarket recognized the significance of World Environment Day as a global platform to raise awareness and encourage positive environmental practices. The day was marked with a series of activities and engagements across all Lulu outlets in Kuwait.

The highlight of the campaign was the launch of the hashtag #beatplasticpollution, which served as a rallying call for individuals and communities to come together and combat the adverse effects of plastic waste on our planet. Lulu Hypermarket believes that through collective action, society can make a lasting impact on the environment, ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.

Throughout the day, Lulu Hypermarket engaged its customers through various interactive initiatives, aiming to foster a sense of responsibility towards reducing plastic consumption. Informational sessions were conducted, providing valuable insights on the detrimental effects of plastic pollution and the simple yet effective ways to minimize its usage.

In addition, Lulu Hypermarket organized awareness campaigns within its stores, showcasing alternative eco-friendly products. Through these efforts, Lulu Hypermarket aimed to educate and empower individuals to make conscious choices that contribute to a greener and cleaner environment.



Lulu Top management expressed his gratitude to all customers and participants who actively engaged in the World Environment Day awareness program. They stated, "Preserving our planet is a collective responsibility, and Lulu Hypermarket is committed to being at the forefront of sustainability initiatives. By reducing plastic consumption, we can significantly minimize our environmental footprint and ensure a healthier future for our planet and future generations."

Lulu Hypermarket's initiative on World Environment Day reflects its long-standing commitment to environmental stewardship. By raising awareness and advocating for the reduction of plastic pollution, Lulu Hypermarket sets a positive example for the retail industry and inspires individuals to make a difference in their daily lives.



## British Airways inaugurates Kuwait-London daily flights

British Airways inaugurated its daily flights from Kuwait to London and marked the event with a grand ceremony held at the British Embassy on 5 June. The event was attended by



Chief of Protocol at the Amiri Diwan, Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah, and the Director of the Middle East and Pakistan at British Airways, Panayotis Theodoto.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Mr.

Theodoto said that London is an important tourist and study destination for Kuwaitis. The launch of daily direct flights to London will serve these customers, who will now not only be able to fly directly to London daily, but also catch onward flights from there to other destinations in Europe and America.

Mr. Theodoto also elaborated on the several new features introduced in the direct-flight aircrafts in the first, business, and economy classes, for a more relaxed and luxurious trip. He explained that doors had been added to business class cabins for more privacy in addition to providing the cabins with comfortable beds, more space for storage, and internet during the travel period.

In addition, the company has also updated its menu and services on the planes, and has also changed the livery of cabin crew. He added that while incorporating these changes, the company remained focused on preserving the environment and ensuring sustainability, by reducing the use of plastic and exhaust emissions, as well as measures to preserve the environment.





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# Malaysia-Kuwait relations on positive trajectory

*Malaysian Ambassador H.E. Alauddin Mohammad Nor*



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Malaysia and Kuwait enjoy strong and cordial relations on multiple levels and in various fields, and during my tenure in Kuwait I hope to further develop the existing excellent bilateral ties, as well as explore opportunities for growth in new domains, said Malaysian Ambassador H.E. Alauddin Mohammad Nor, in one of the first exclusive interviews he accorded to the media.

Ambassador Nor, who presented his credentials to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah on 30 May, began the interview with Al Jarida's journalist Rabiha Kallas by expressing his utmost gratitude to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait and the Crown Prince of Kuwait for the opportunity to present his credentials. He added, "I will do my level best to strengthen and improve the existing good relations between our two countries."

Indicating that relations between Malaysia and Kuwait began much before diplomatic relations were officialized, the envoy explained: "To reflect back, it is worth noting that the foundation for our relations began in April 1965, when the King of Malaysia, His Majesty Syed Harun Putra Syed Hassan Jamalulail undertook a State Visit to Kuwait at the invitation of then Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

"Our records also show that Kuwait is one of Malaysia's oldest ties among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The Malaysian Embassy was opened in Kuwait in 1974, followed by the Kuwaiti Embassy in Malaysia in 1980. Although there have been exchange visits at the official and diplomatic levels in the past, I hope the number would increase in the years to come, particularly at the highest level, and between Malaysia-Kuwait business communities.

Turning to bilateral trade, the ambassador noted: "Bilateral relations are currently on a positive trajectory, and I am convinced that the current warm and close relations between Malaysia and Kuwait will provide a strong foundation for more business and social interactions at all levels from both sides.

"I also firmly believe that there are several



areas with potential prospects that both countries can explore further so as to enhance cooperation at various levels. Additionally, in light of Kuwait Vision 2035, Malaysia hopes to forge greater collaboration, particularly in food security, cyber security and healthcare. In addition, Malaysia also offers several other emerging and potential economic sectors such as smart manufacturing, halal industry, food processing, Islamic banking, and finance that could be attractive to Kuwaiti investments."

Pointing to his country's official trade figures, the ambassador added: "In 2022, total trade between Malaysia and Kuwait reached more than USD 838 million, with Malaysian exports to Kuwait accounting for around \$189 million and imports from Kuwait totaling \$650 million. These figures were a 213 percent increase over the \$392 million achieved in 2021."

Giving a breakup of exports and imports the envoy stated: "Among the main products that Malaysia exports to Kuwait are palm oil and palm oil based agriculture products; processed food; metal products; electrical and electronic items; rubber products; and wood items. Meanwhile, Kuwait's main exports to Malaysia were crude petroleum, chemicals and chemical products; and petroleum products."

Asked about investments and scope for Kuwaiti investments in Malaysia, Ambassador Nor explained: "In terms of investments,

in Kuwait, currently there are a number of Malaysian companies working with their local partners in the field of energy, water desalination and hazardous waste management services, oil and gas and support services.

"While in Malaysia, there are several Kuwaiti companies working with their local partners in the field of oil and gas, banking, logistics and equity. All of these existing and ongoing partnerships, worth billions of dollars in investments, are only a tip of the potential investments that remain to be realized, and I believe there is still much that we can do to improve the status quo."

A professional diplomat who began his career as an Administrative and Diplomatic Officer at his country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2002, Ambassador Nor has over the years served at the ministry in various capacities, including as Undersecretary of West Asia Division. He has also held roles at the Inspectorate Division, ASEAN Division, and Human Resource Management Division.

His services abroad have taken the ambassador to several world capitals, including at Malaysia's diplomatic missions in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Prior to his appointment to Kuwait, the ambassador was the Consul General of Malaysia in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, since 2019.

Revealing his happiness to be in Kuwait with

his family and to meet with people and families in this country, the ambassador said: "I am very fortunate to have arrived in Kuwait just before Ramadan, because I got to experience the well-known Kuwaiti hospitality and generosity that is heightened during the holy month.

"Also throughout the month of Ramadan, I had the opportunity to engage in various Kuwaiti traditions, such as visiting 'diwanis' and participating in 'ghabga' events. As a diplomat, I was very fortunate to be part of this tradition as I got to meet a lot of people and made many friends in a very short time at these social events. I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all my Kuwaiti friends who invited me to share in their traditions and enjoy their hospitality."

The ambassador, who holds a Master's degree in English Literature from Universiti Putra Malaysia, is keen to develop relations between the two countries on the people-to-people level through enhancing cultural and social ties. He elaborated on this by stating: "Apart from trade and investment, I also would like to promote people-to-people contact between the two countries, and I believe tourism could be a good way to help me achieve this end.

"Since 1 April 2022, the Government of Malaysia has fully reopened its borders for the first time after nearly two years of COVID-19 pandemic-related closures. As a result, in 2022, Malaysia recorded more than 10 million tourist arrivals, surpassing its initial target of 9.2 million, and providing over RM28 billion (USD 6 billion) in tourist receipts."

Regarding visas to Malaysia, the ambassador explained: "Kuwaitis enjoy a Visa On Arrival facility for a maximum of three months stay in Malaysia. Other nationals that are required to have visas can apply through the Embassy by presenting the required documents, which include the passport of the traveler, confirmation of return flight ticket, confirmation of booking of accommodation, and a token visa fee of approximately KD1,500."

In conclusion, the ambassador expressed his profound appreciation to the leadership, the government and the people of Kuwait for the continued goodwill and support extended to Malaysia, and for hosting the Malaysian community in Kuwait.



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# Mughal Mahal celebrates IYM, launches millet-based menu



**M**ughal Mahal, the leading Indian restaurant chain in Kuwait, held an event on 3 June to announce the launch of special millet-based dishes on its menu. The event aimed to raise awareness on the nutritional and health benefits of this 'common-man's' cereal, and is part of celebration to mark the International Year of Millets 2023 (IYM 2023). The launch of the month-long Millets Month campaign, which featured a variety of millet-based dishes, was inaugurated by the Indian Ambassador, H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Swaika highlighted the Indian government's commitment to promoting millets as a people's movement. He pointed out that in 2018, the Government of India celebrated the National Year of Millets, and now, it

is spearheading celebration to mark the International Year of Millets 2023. Emphasizing the health benefits of millets and their potential to enrich lives, the Indian envoy said that millets are known for being a healthier alternative and offer various advantages. The embassy is also taking efforts to make millet cereals available in Kuwait.

During the event, Diviya Kalra, daughter of Ashok Kalra, the managing partner of Mughal Mahal, presented a captivating display of dishes prepared from millets. She also delivered a brief presentation, highlighting the benefits of millets and their potential to enhance overall well-being.

Millet refers to a group of small-seeded grasses cultivated as grain crops, including pearl millet (bajra), finger millet (ragi), and sorghum (jowar), which are among the most

popular varieties. Minor millets such as foxtail and barnyard millets are also significant. These crops are grown in marginal and dry lands across several countries in Asia and Africa, with India being the largest producer of millets globally.

The United Nations General Assembly, during its 75th session in March 2021, declared 2023 as the IYM2023, further highlighting the global recognition of this nutritious grain and its importance in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 1 to 3, of reducing poverty, ensuring zero hunger, and promoting good health and wellness for all people by 2030. The year-long global celebration of millets also focuses on the ecological and economic benefits of growing millets, as production of this grain requires the least amount of water among grains and yields quantities that can

economically sustain subsistence farming in the least developed countries.

Millets are known for their rich nutritional profile, including vitamins A and B, potassium, calcium, and iron. They offer various health benefits such as blood sugar control, improved digestion, cardiovascular health protection, diabetes prevention, antioxidant properties, and support for weight loss.

The partnership between Mughal Mahal and the Embassy of India is driven by the shared objective of raising awareness and promoting the significance of millets. Through their collaborative efforts, they aim to eliminate the neglect surrounding millets and empower the population of Kuwait to embrace the benefits that come with incorporating millets into their daily routines.

## Kuwait and biodiversity challenges

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The days and months immediately after the liberation of the country presented a surreal environment. The thick pallor of dark smoke and soot covering the sky from the burning oil wells turned day to night. The large oil slicks floating over the pristine Gulf waters threatened desalination plants and marine lifeforms. What was once untrammelled desert landscape, was pocked with track marks of heavy military vehicles, and equipment brought in to extinguish the oil fires.

In addition, oil spewing out of the wells along with waters used to extinguish the fires formed black glimmering oil lakes that dotted the oilfield areas, even as oil contaminants degraded the soil and chemicals seeped down to pollute the limited groundwater supplies. Probably, the one positive outcome from this devastating environmental tragedy was that for the first time it jolted the authorities out of their reverie, and made them realize the fragility of the natural landscape, and the enormous impact that environmental damage can have on the country and the wellbeing of people.

However, in what is considered archetypal Kuwait decision-making process, the time taken to acknowledge the vulnerability and to implement solutions to address the exigency, was significant. It was only in 2022, more than 30 years after the invasion that the concerned entities began efforts to remediate the soil damaged by the oil well fires. Negligence by policymakers, lack of awareness among the larger public, and an unwillingness to take responsibility for our actions have combined to create a situation where the country's biodiversity and environment continue to be degraded and damaged.

Our indifference to biodiversity and its consequences is highlighted in numerous environmental reports that show continued discharge of treated and untreated wastewater, including biological and chemical contaminants, into the marine environment. Additionally, the unrestricted outflows from power generation, water desalination and industrial plants, along with pollutants emitted by land and marine transport vehicles continue to deplete marine life and damage biodiversity.

Studies by Environment Public Authority (EPA) and others reveal that despite existing

regulations, marine biodiversity degradation continues unabated. The use of mechanized bottom trawlers that drag weighted nets across the seafloor to gather fish indiscriminately and then destroy and discard unwanted fish; illegal fishing during breeding seasons and in breeding areas; and hordes of amateur sports fishermen who contribute to damaging the marine environment by anchoring their fishing vessels on coral reefs.

On land, biodiversity challenges arise from overgrazing, uprooting of plants and shrubs, and from the seasonal increases in human activities, such as during spring camps when the use of vehicles to transport people and lug camping equipment to campsites, as well as the use of sand buggies and other motorized vehicles for leisure jaunts, destroys flora and fauna in the desert environment. Additionally, the proliferation of authorized and unauthorized gravel and sand quarries and other environmental infringements, have contributed to further biodiversity loss.

Kuwait's relatively small land area has also created its own biodiversity challenges, as huge demand for development of new urban, residential, industrial and tourism areas encroaches on desert environments. The urban expansions further exacerbate existing intrusions by roads, power generation plants, defense installations, and the sprawling oil industry. Additionally, ongoing and new construction projects to develop artificial islands and inland waterways, over existing intertidal and muddy coastal areas, destroys unique ecosystems.

Besides challenges within our borders, events taking place elsewhere could also have severe implications on the ecosystem in Kuwait, and threaten sustainability of its biodiversity in future. For instance, an increase in level of the Gulf waters due to climate change and other natural or human induced alterations, could be devastating to Kuwait, where most of its urban conglomerations are located along the coast at sea-level. Meanwhile, the Iranian nuclear plant at Bushehr on the shores of the Arabian Gulf remains a potential threat to Kuwait, not only in military terms, but also from the pollution danger they pose to Gulf waters and desalination plants in the region.

Similarly, dams being built by Turkey on the River Tigris, which flows through Syria and Iraq before emptying into the Arabian Gulf, also impacts Kuwait. The lack of freshwater flows

from tributaries of River Tigris increases salinity of waters around Kuwait and threatens its marine biodiversity. This only worsens existing marine afflictions, including depletion of fish population, increases in occurrence of fungal growth, and in bleaching of corals.

In a delayed, but nevertheless welcome move to protect biodiversity, Kuwait has in recent years established several nature reserves of various sizes that together comprise around 10 percent of the country's total area, with plans to eventually increase this coverage to 20 percent in coming years. These reserves have already begun to have salutary effects in reviving and rehabilitating natural habitats for migratory birds, small desert animals and plant life.

In its latest report on the biodiversity profile of Kuwait, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to which Kuwait has been a Party since 2002, identified several obstacles to implementation of a robust biodiversity strategy in Kuwait, including the lack of coordination mechanisms between government agencies and NGOs responsible for environmental affairs, as well as the lack of implementation of biodiversity legislation.

Other shortcomings noted in the report included an acute shortage of specialists for the protection and classification of indigenous plants, marine organisms and wild, migratory and endemic species; failure to adopt budgets for implementing national policies, strategies and action plans; and, finally, a multiplicity of powers producing overlap in institutional actions.

The number of entities currently associated with biodiversity in Kuwait include the Environment Public Authority (EPA), Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAFR), Kuwait University, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, Environment Protection Society (NGO), and the Voluntary Work Centre in Kuwait (NGO). Authorities in Kuwait have since clarified that they intend to strengthen coordination and coherence among policies, programs and legislation in various sectors so as to overcome institutional gaps, and improve operational efficiency.

It needs pointing out that Kuwait is not unique in facing biodiversity challenges, it is increasingly becoming the norm in many countries around the world. The latest report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on world

biodiversity describes a continued decline and degradation in biodiversity globally. The report notes that biodiversity loss along with climate disruption and pollution could deprive ourselves and future generations of the food, water and other natural resources needed to survive.

Despite the criticality of biodiversity to human survival, statistics from the UNEP on the continued degradation of the natural world is alarming. The figures show biodiversity degradation undermines the well-being of 3.2 billion people, or 40 percent of humanity; nearly 75 percent of the Earth's land surface has been significantly altered by human actions, including 85 percent of wetland areas and over 66 percent of ocean areas; close to 90 percent of the world's marine fish stocks are fully exploited, overexploited or depleted; and an estimated eight million animal and plant species are threatened by extinction.

Data also shows that the global food system is the primary driver of biodiversity loss, with agricultural expansion reportedly accounting for 70 percent of the projected loss of terrestrial biodiversity. In addition, around 25 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions are generated by land clearing, crop production and fertilization. Human developments through deforestation and land-clearing also brings people and animals in closer contact, thereby increasing the risk of diseases like COVID-19 spreading.

Speaking at the launch of the 'United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration', that began on World Environment Day in 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged governments, businesses, civil society and private citizens to undertake an unprecedented joint effort to restore ecosystems. He called for a global effort in replanting and protecting forests, cleaning up rivers and seas, greening our cities, and driving a transformation that will contribute to the achievement of all the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

He concluded by saying, "Let today be the start of a new decade — one in which we finally make peace with nature and secure a better future for all." Sadly, as we mark the third year of the 'Decade on Ecosystem Restoration', we look around and see very few signs of this push to restore the environment. Nevertheless, unless we change our attitude towards nature, nature will change it for us — irrevocably and catastrophically for the worse.



# Kuwaiti-Vietnamese relations steady, investments on the rise

Vietnamese-Kuwaiti relations, characterized by its strength and longevity are excellent and historical, said Vietnamese Ambassador H.E. Ngo Tuan Thang. He added that these ties, which were further cemented by diplomatic relations that began in 1976, have developed over the years at all levels and in various fields of cooperation.

The ambassador emphasized that high-level mutual visits between both countries have contributed significantly to supporting and strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. He recalled the visit of the Vietnamese president to Kuwait in 1995, and exchange visits by the prime ministers of the two countries in 2007 and 2009.

More recently, in 2016, the Kuwaiti prime minister visited Vietnam and the two sides signed several agreements and memorandums of understanding. He also revealed that the next round of political dialogue between the two countries will be held in Kuwait before the end of this year, said the Vietnamese envoy.

Ambassador Thang was speaking during a luncheon reception he held last week to introduce media personnel in Kuwait to the



richness and diversity of Vietnamese cuisine. Drawing attention to Vietnamese lychees, which are known for their extraordinary flavor, taste, and health benefits, the envoy revealed that the embassy was in the process of organizing a Vietnamese lychee promotion event at the Avenues Mall next week.

Turning to Kuwaiti investments in Vietnam that were growing steadily, the ambassador said that besides the more than US\$3 billion in Kuwaiti

government investments in Vietnam, there has been a significant increase in private Kuwaiti investments in recent years to total over \$200 million at the end of the last year.

He added that the total volume of trade exchange between the two countries is currently around \$5.5 billion, as Vietnam imports \$5 billion worth of Kuwaiti oil, and Vietnam exports to Kuwait about \$500 million of goods. He also disclosed that the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development

funded 18 projects in his country a year ago, with each project valued between 5 to 6 million dinars. On the diplomatic front, Ambassador Thang stressed that Kuwait conducts a distinguished, balanced and wise diplomacy, and this diplomacy is an important factor that contributes to stability in the region. He also appreciated the pioneering humanitarian role that Kuwait plays in alleviating the pain and suffering of victims of humanitarian disasters around the world.

## Tens of thousands of expat driving licenses revoked



Based on recommendations of the committee set up by the Ministry of Interior (Mol) to examine the driving licenses issued to expatriates and ensure they comply with conditions stipulated by ministerial decisions, the Mol has announced the cancellation of 66,584 valid driving licenses of expatriates whose residency is permanently canceled. The ministry added that other related recommendations by the committee will be implemented in due course.

The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled had issued Ministerial Resolution No. 277/2023 regarding the formation of a committee to examine issued driving licenses and ensure their compliance with the conditions stipulated in Ministerial Resolution No. 270 of 2020 regarding amending some provisions of Ministerial Resolution No. 81/1976 The executive regulations of the traffic law.

The initial recommendations of the formed committee came after the committee concluded that there were 66,584 valid licenses for workers whose residency has been canceled as a result of death or their absence from the country, and accordingly all those valid licenses have been canceled through the new regulations. If and when the concerned expatriate returns to Kuwait, he or she will have to undergo the same procedures required for obtaining a new license, and based on whether the person fulfills new rules and regulations regarding those entitled to receive a driving license.



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# Thought for the week

“It is often the small steps, not the giant leaps, that bring about the most lasting change.

- Queen Elizabeth II

## Dressing up your favorite food

Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



**D**ressing food before serving is often considered to make the dish more tasty and appealing. Salads in particular are prone to dressing with the addition of a vinegar and oil base sauce to which herbs and spices are added. Dressing also alludes to the variety of seasoned ingredients such as bread cubes, eggs, nuts, dried fruits, sausage bits, and herbs that are often prepared as a side dish to be served with meat, poultry, fish, or seafood.

But should you really be adding all those extra calories that end up adding extra kilograms to your weight? If you are planning to lose or to maintain your weight, remember that the dressing that you add to foods also adds to your weight.

Some food groups are considered extremely healthy and essential for you, and when dressing these foods with additional ingredients, you end up adding fatty items that minus the health aspect of the food.

For instance, salads are known to be healthy, light and rich in vitamins, but only if you are using the right kind of dressing. Two cups of shredded lettuce have only 20 calories, 0 fat and 8 mg of sodium. But, when you add 2 tablespoons of any creamy dressing to it your salad will end up having 150 calories, 15 g of fat and more than 300 mg of sodium.

Instead, here are a few lighter dressing options that you can use, guilt-free.

**In salads:** Replace normal dressings with:

- 2 tbsp of lemon and mustard (Adds only 2 calories and 0 fat)
- 2 tbsp of skim yogurt mixed with garlic (Adds 40 calories and 3 g of fat)
- 1 tbsp of balsamic vinegar mixed with lemon juice (Adds 30 calories and 3 g of fat)
- 1 tbsp of lemon juice plus 1 tsp of olive oil with salt and pepper (Adds 45 calories and 5 g of fat)

**In baked potato:** A baked potato is tasty and healthy when served with other meals, but only as long as you are eating just the potato. One large potato has 160 calories, 0 fat and 8 mg of sodium. However, when you add 1 tablespoon of sour cream for example to it, you end up eating 230 calories, 5 g of fat and more than 200 mg of sodium.

Instead, replace the sour cream dressing with:

- 2 slices of light cheese topped on the potato (Adds 35 calories and 2 g of fat)
- 2 teaspoons of light labneh topped on the potato (Adds 35 calories and 2 g of fat)

**Popcorn:** Air-popped popcorn is really nutritious and rich in fiber. Three cups of air-popped popcorn have only 100 calories, 1 g of fat and 2 mg of sodium. But instead when you pop the popcorn using oil or in the microwave, it doubles the number of calories and fat consumed.

For instance, eating the same quantity (3 cups) microwavable popcorn with butter flavor will lead to the consumption of 300 calories, 30 g of fat and more than 350 mg of sodium. If using the microwave then go for the light microwavable popcorn that says 95 percent fat free. It is light, low in calories and almost fat free. Better yet, go for the air-popped variety of popcorn, which is healthier and with no extra artificial flavors.

**Pasta:** If you choose whole grain pastas, you are obviously attempting to be smart and healthy. But if you then add up coating your pasta with heavy sauces, you ruin the whole health aspect of the pasta.

A cup of whole wheat pasta has 160 calories, 1 g of fat and 3 mg of sodium. However when you add just two tablespoons of full fat creamy white sauce, you end up having 300 calories, 12 g of fat and more than 350 mg of sodium.

Instead replace the white sauce with a healthier tomato sauce. But if you are a die-hard fan of white sauces such as béchamel, then it is better to prepare your own at home. In that way you will know the exact ingredients you are using. Instead of using calorie-rich ingredients go for skim milk, or light cheeses such as parmesan, or low-fat cream.

Only you who can decide about the healthy food choices you need to make. Also, a healthier choice does not imply foregoing all treats, just keep it in moderation.

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## RECIPE

# Fermented Kanji Vada



**K**anji Vada is a popular North Indian snack, especially in the states of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Kanji is a healthy fermented probiotic drink that is considered good for digestion and stomach upsets. Vadas are popular snacks made from various split pulses (dal). The mustard and other spices added to kanji helps to keep the body warm during cold winter months. Often served as an appetizer, the mild sweet and sour taste of kanji is an acquired one — you either like or dislike it.

**Total time:** 30 to 40 minutes

**Preparing time:** 2 to 4 days depending on fermenting time

**Serves:** 6 people.

### Ingredients:

#### For kanji:

- 2 liter boiled, cooled water
- 2 tbsp mustard powder
- 1 tsp mustard oil (optional)
- 2 tsp black salt
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp asafoetida
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1/4 tsp turmeric
- For vadas:
- 3/4 cup yellow moong dal (split yellow gram)
- 1/4 cup urad dal (split black gram)
- 1 tbsp ginger-chili paste
- 1/4 tsp asafoetida
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- Salt as per taste



Chef Chhaya Thakker

### Instructions:

#### For making Kanji:

- To a large glass jar add water, mustard powder, oil and other spices
- Cover mouth of the jar with muslin cloth and set in a warm place, for anywhere between two to four days, depending on sunlight and outside temperature, stirring the mixture 2 to 3 times daily with a clean wooden spoon.
- When the water produces a sour fermented taste it is ready for use.

#### Making Vadas:

- Soak moong and urad dals in enough water overnight
- Drain, wash and grind the dals in a mixer with enough water to form a medium thick, smooth batter.
- Transfer to a bowl, add salt, asafoetida, cumin seeds and ginger-chili paste
- Stir the mixture to make it light and fluffy
- Heat oil in a deep pan
- Drop a spoonful of batter in the hot oil and fry on medium flame until it turns golden brown in color on both sides
- Make four to five vadas at a time and drain out the excess oil
- Transfer the drained vadas to soak in a bowl of salted water for about an hour
- Drain and squeeze out water from the vadas
- Add them to the fermented kanji and refrigerate for a few hours
- Serve the kanji vadas chilled.

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





## Kuwait-Italy relations historical, deep-rooted

**E**mbassy of Italy held an event last week to celebrate the country's National Day. Speaking on occasion, Italian Ambassador H.E. Carlo Balducci, stated: "Italy and Kuwait share several commonalities in political, economic and social fields, and we speak the same language and stance when it comes to stability and security of nations, regions and globally."

Expanding on the similarities between Italy and Kuwait, the ambassador noted that "our relationship is strong, because we share the same family values, and when we talk about family businesses, there is

a great similarity, as Italy is known as the country where 65 percent of businesses are family owned. These companies may have been established in very different scenarios but are very much in the same spirit as in Kuwait."

For his part, Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs, Ambassador Sadiq Marafi, who was the chief guest at the Italian National Day celebrations, described Kuwait, Italy relations as historical and deep-rooted and added that both sides are keen to develop these ties further in all fields.

Referring to economic cooperation between the two countries, especially in

the sectors of oil industries and small and medium industries, as well as traditional areas of trade, Ambassador Marafie



highlighted the "distinction of cooperation in diverse fields between the two nations, and the multiplicity of opportunities to broaden these relations further."

Speaking at the event, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Al-Mishaal said: "My presence on this occasion as a representative of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense is an expression of the strength of the mutual relationship between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Italy and an affirmation of the close military cooperation that exists between the two countries. This relationship is getting stronger with time," he added.

## LuLu Hypermarket launches 'LuLu Beauty Delights'



**L**uLu Hypermarket, the retailer of choice among discerning shoppers in the Region, launched the 'LuLu Beauty Delights' promotion that captivated the interest of beauty enthusiasts and shoppers alike.

LuLu Beauty Delights, which runs from 7- 13 June across all outlets of the hypermarket, offers an array of value-packed promotions on cosmetics, perfumes, and wellness products. The event was inaugurated on 7 June at the hypermarket's Al Rai outlet by popular beauty vloggers and fashion influencers, along with top management of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait.

The main sponsor of the event, Nivea, ensured that LuLu Beauty Delights provided an extraordinary experience for shoppers who had the opportunity to explore a vast range of high-quality Nivea beauty products. Moreover, co-sponsors such as PNG, Unilever, L'Oreal, Yardley, and Colgate added their own touch of excellence to the event, enhancing the overall beauty extravaganza.

One of the major highlights of the event was the live demonstrations conducted by famous beauty brands. Experts from these brands showcased their expertise, unveiling the latest trends and techniques in the world of beauty. In addition to the live demos, various sponsors and co-sponsors set up exhibition stalls, showcasing their finest beauty products and providing shoppers with the opportunity to examine an extensive range of beauty options and interact with knowledgeable representatives.

Adding to the excitement, free sampling beauty kits were distributed by the generous sponsors. Customers eagerly embraced the chance to try

out new products and experience the quality and effectiveness of these items firsthand. To further enhance the customers' experience, the promotional event offered free live styling and make-up services. Professional stylists and make-up artists were on hand to provide

personalized consultations and create stunning looks for customers.

The success of LuLu Beauty Delights event can be attributed to the perfect combination of impeccable planning, the support of top beauty brands, and the enthusiasm of the attendees.

LuLu Hypermarket once again proved its commitment to delivering an exceptional shopping experience that goes beyond expectations, while providing shoppers with an extensive range of products, superb quality and exceptional customer service,



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# The Charm of Sharm



## THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

One can never go wrong when visiting Sharm El Sheikh, the beautiful coastal city located on the southern tip of Sinai Peninsula in Egypt.

Known for its crystal-clear waters, sandy beaches, and incredible diving opportunities, the amazing beauty is evident as soon as one lands in this city, just two hours by air from Kuwait.

With the addition of Sharm El Sheikh to its increasing number of destinations served by direct flights, Jazeera Airways now provides travelers with an opportunity to visit, experience and enjoy this truly world class holiday destination of relaxation, calm

and hospitality. Jazeera's route expansion is part of its policy to serve Kuwait residents with more direct travel destinations, cutting transit time and making the whole experience comfortable, convenient and memorable.

So then Sharm is but an obvious choice for the travel obsessed Kuwaiti resident, who is

constantly looking to explore and enjoy new destinations that appeal to their adventurous spirit of travel.

Our stay at the Rixos Resort in Sharm, one of the lavish gems, was truly a memorable and unforgettable vacation experience of luxury and comfort that took relaxation to the next

level of tranquility.

Managing Director of Rixos Hotels Egypt, Erkan Yildirim, told the visiting media delegation "We aim to spread Rixos global luxury concept as a destination by driving more tourists to explore and enjoy the majestic country of Egypt."

“

The serene, calm and crystal clear waters of Sharm makes it known around the world for its amazing diving opportunities. The city is home to some of the best diving spots in the Red Sea, and visitors can explore a variety of underwater wonders such as coral reefs, colorful fish, and shipwrecks.

”







Rixos Hotels Egypt leaves no stone unturned with Rixos Premium Seagate, which provides a memorable escapade for the whole family. Making the visit even more exciting is the Rixy Kids Club for the little ones to socialize and engage in, or the Rixos Aquapark boasting a 34,000 meter-square water haven of prolific slides and endless activities.

The beautiful resort has something for everyone and literally for all age groups and experiences. Adrenaline junkies can take advantage of the Exclusive Sports Club featuring a variety of activities to join and sports to try out. With well-equipped amenities and facilities to utilize, there is no time to slack around and miss a fun-filled staycation.

Either way one can escape the stress of life and take the load off at the award-winning Anjana Spa. The spa offers the ultimate relaxation and rejuvenation from a menu of massages, treatments, and pampering therapies that allow you to leave the property with utmost satisfaction.

The adjoining Rixos Sharm El Sheikh which also serves as Adults Only +18, across the elegantly appointed rooms, one can indulge their time with the breathtaking views of the sea or the overlooking sceneries of the entire property with the garden or pool vista.

A special place to party and endless entertainment await the grown-up guests at Rixos Sharm El Sheikh with the signature of festivities from blowouts at the fine sands of the beach, wet bashes at the pool, monotone fete on the sunset party, a bright celebration of colors, and the lively beats at the DJ party.

There is also a wide range of diverse gastronomic experiences available throughout the day. The restaurants spread all over the Rixos property serve some mouth watering cuisines that are world class and offer a variety far exceeding the expectations of guests.

Golf Villas Sharm El Sheikh By Rixos offers an exclusive All-Inclusive experience. The villa has its own gated entrance, private garden and swimming pool, a tranquil terrace, and a host of perks available only to guests of Golf Villas Sharm El Sheikh By Rixos. A stay at Golf Villas offers more than perfect accommodation, where delicious food, premium service, a luxurious buffet restaurant, and one-of-a-kind privileges at Rixos Hotels Sharm El Sheikh await your best vacation experience.

The serene, calm and crystal clear waters of Sharm has made it well known around the world for its amazing diving opportunities. The city is home to some of the best diving spots in the Red Sea, and visitors can explore a variety of underwater wonders such as coral reefs, colorful fish, and shipwrecks. One should not miss the incredible beauty of the underwater in Sharm that one needs to see and enjoy as the experience will remain embedded in one's memory long after the visit.

Among the main attractions in Sharm El Sheikh are its coral reefs. They are home to a diverse array of marine life, including hundreds of species of fish, turtles, dolphins, and even sharks. Divers and snorkelers flock to Sharm El Sheikh to explore the vibrant underwater world. The city also has many reputable diving schools and centers, making it the perfect spot for both experienced and novice divers.

Aside from diving, Sharm El Sheikh also offers many other activities and attractions. You could take a camel ride through the desert, go on a quad biking adventure, or even take a hot air balloon ride.

For those interested in history and culture, Sharm El Sheikh also has some interesting sites to

visit. The city is home to the Sinai Desert, which is believed to be the site where Moses received the Ten Commandments. There are also several monasteries and churches in the vicinity.

Whether a short get-away or a relaxed vacation, Sharm offers an ultimate retreat that can make people fall in love with this destination and want to visit the place more than once.

## BTB Tours, making the difference in travel experience

Crafting the best holiday experience is never easy and choosing the right tour package company is always a bit difficult from the many options available.

With BTB Tours, a team of passionate travel enthusiasts, the challenge of meeting client expectations never fails. Their personal touch, market knowledge and most of all staff dedication is always a winner.



Working with local guides and experts BTB has offices in seven countries while working with tour operators in more than 30 countries. BTB offers tailor made holiday experiences setting higher quality standards and constantly innovating to ensure development of the tourism industry.

Arranging unique experiences with the highest standards of personalized service for high-net-worth travelers, BTB services stand out for constantly and consistently delivering to clients satisfaction year after year. "We deliver the best results with the highest levels of satisfaction. The dedication we provide comes from our hearts," says Salih Gozcu, the founder of BTB.



## Jazeera Airways' expanding network and increasing convenience

Jazeera Airways has expanded its flight network to include Egypt as one of its key destinations. With the launch of its inaugural flight to Sphinx International Airport recently, Jazeera Airways now serves a total of seven destinations in the country. This extensive coverage enables the airline to connect travelers to various regions in Egypt, spanning the north, south, east, and west.

By offering flights to Cairo International Airport, Sphinx International Airport, Sohag, Assiut, Luxor, Burj Al Arab in Alexandria, and Sharm El Sheikh, Jazeera Airways is rising to meet the growing demand for air travel within Egypt. The airline will operate four flights per week to Sphinx Airport, catering to passengers heading to Greater Cairo. Additionally, it will serve the governorates of Fayoum, Beni Suef, and the northern parts of Upper Egypt.

The strategic location of Sphinx International Airport, only one hour away from downtown Cairo and two hours away from Cairo International Airport, allows Jazeera Airways to efficiently serve these areas. This development signifies a

departure from Cairo Airport's previous sole responsibility for serving these regions. By increasing its flights and expanding its destinations, Jazeera Airways aims to provide convenient travel options for passengers seeking to explore different parts of Egypt.

Through its commitment to connectivity and customer satisfaction, Jazeera Airways continues to enhance its flight offerings and extend its reach to meet the diverse travel needs of its passengers.

Three weekly connecting flights to Sharm El-Sheikh gives passengers an opportunity to visit this charming destination throughout the year with superb connectivity and convenience.

Jazeera Airways operates its flights from the T5 terminal at Kuwait International Airport, offering passengers a seamless and hassle-free travel experience. The airline is committed to providing a range of services that streamline the travel process and ensure passenger convenience. With a focus on customer satisfaction, Jazeera Airways aims to make every journey smooth and enjoyable for its passengers.



# CAP showcases paintings by artist Mahfouz Amin

Contemporary Art Platform (CAP), a non-profit private organization dedicated to developing and supporting the arts in Kuwait and throughout the region, held an exhibition last week of drawings and paintings by Syrian artist Amin Mahfouz.

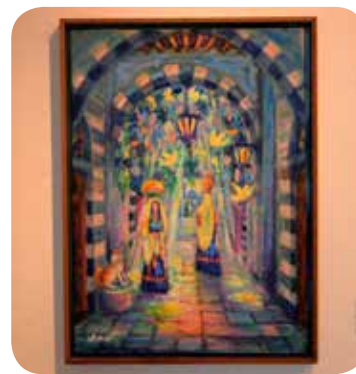
The exhibition, held under the auspices of the President of the Kuwaiti Artists and Media Union, Dr. Nabil Al-Failakawi, was inaugurated in the presence of several personalities from the art world, including Dr. Yousef Ibrahim, and Dr. Suleiman Al-Askari.

Following a tour of the exhibition, Al-Failakawi expressed his happiness with the opening of the exhibition and with the works of the artist, and added that the paintings showed the artist's strong interaction with life and society. Pointing out that art has no specific age limit, and continues as long as creativity flows from the mind of the artist, Al-Failakawi said that artist Mahfouz's works were a great motivation for other artists to continue their work in the field of arts.

Speaking on the occasion, artist Mahfouz said: "I draw and paint to express the amazing and pure beauty of this planet, which was destroyed and is still being destroyed by mankind through wars and pollution."

He added that the artist's mission is to express his art and his feelings with an honest brush. He explained that his works were influenced by the impressionist school that reflects the analysis of color and light, especially the works of French masters such as Claude Monet and Édouard Manet, who are among the world's leading impressionist artists.

Among the expressive titles on display at the exhibition were, 'The Conflict of Destiny', 'Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah Palace in the Early Twentieth Century', 'A Kuwaiti House in the Last Century', 'The Sword Palace in the



Sixties of the Twentieth Century', 'Palestine, Lake Galilee from the occupied Golan', and 'Damascus, an old neighborhood from the last century'.

Artist Amin Mahfouz's works record memories dating back to World War II, which makes his artworks a beautiful documentation of history. Born in 1933 in Ghouta near Damascus, he soon found his passion in the four arts — painting and photography, classical music, literature, and theater. Because of his love for the Syrian countryside in Ghouta, he wanted the subject of his artwork to be the nature of the countryside, including the orchards in which

he grew up.

Mahfouz said that he specializes in portraying the Syrian, Palestinian and American countryside, according to the Impressionist school. When he moved to Kuwait, he began photographing old Kuwait, including architecture and structures that are no longer standing. During the transition to realism, Mahfouz also worked on photographing a number of realistic paintings and Arabic calligraphy.

He added that he worked as a painter for two years at Damascus TV in 1958, then moved to Kuwait TV when it was established in 1961. He continued to produce art while

he was in Kuwait, and studied and produced works of art in many of the cities in which he lived, including Damascus, Munich, Paris and Milwaukee (Wisconsin) and Kuwait.

He has held many exhibitions, including the Spring Exhibition in the Damascus Museum in the fifties, the Schwaben Gallery in Germany in the sixties, at the Kuwait National Museum in 1970, Seine Street, Paris in the seventies, the Dylan Gallery in Milwaukee, 1998; the Plastic Artists Exhibition celebrating Kuwait Liberation Day 2003, and the Artists Exhibition Artists celebrating the National Day of Kuwait 2004, and Boushahri Gallery Exhibition - 2020.

## Indian Frontliners holds Silver Jubilee celebration



Indian Frontliners (IFL), a service organization established with the motto of 'United to Serve, United we Serve' celebrated its Silver Jubilee at the Innova International School, in Mahboula on 26 May, to mark 25 years of service to the community. Thousands of Indians gathered in the celebrations to make it a grand success.

Indian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika, former Union Minister of India, S. Thirunavukkarasar M.P., former Maharashtra Minister, Dr. Fouzia Khan M.P., and eminent Supreme Court lawyer, Priyadarshini, were present as special guests on the occasion. The event was celebrated as an Indian national integration cultural show and started with the traditional lighting of Kuthuvilakku followed by the National Anthem. IFL President Ramadoss presented the welcome address with an overview of IFL Services.

The cultural feast presented a variety of dance programs by young children covering dances of various genres and languages, following which IFL released the 23rd edition of its publication on the theme 'Enticing India', covering articles on special touristic places in India. The book was released by Mr. Thirunavukkarasar by presenting a copy to Ambassador Swaika. A souvenir published on the occasion was released by Dr. Khan with a copy being presented to Adv. Priyadarshini. The event also witnessed the release of a book by famous Tamil writer Dinamalar titled 'Anthumani', which was released by the ambassador with a copy presented

to entrepreneur Dr. S.M. Hyder Ali.

Mathi, the welfare secretary of IFL was felicitated by Thirunavukkarasar MP for his continuous and tireless social services. Mementoes were presented to the well-wishers, as a token of acknowledgement for their support over the years. In his address on the occasion, Ambassador Swaika extended his congratulations and appreciation to the IFL community for their services during the past 25 years. In her keynote address, Dr. Khan praised the intellect and virtue of Indians and advised everyone on the importance of education. She praised and congratulated the IFL organization for helping the needy. For her part, Priyadhrshni spoke about women's rights and the responsibility of parents to their children, while Dr. Ali touched the hearts of everyone present with his powerful and inspiring speech on IFL history, its achievements and services rendered to the society.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Thirunavukkarasar shared his experience and knowledge, while praising the services of IFL and highlighted the continuous leadership of the organization's founder and coordinator, NC Mohandoss, over the past 25 years. The national integration was well organized and exhibited throughout the four-hour event, and playback singers Deepak Blue and Soundarya giving a melodious musical night that enthralled the audience. The evening's program was compiled by Rajalakshmi Balaji and Rajeevi Raja.

## MoI announces new visa category

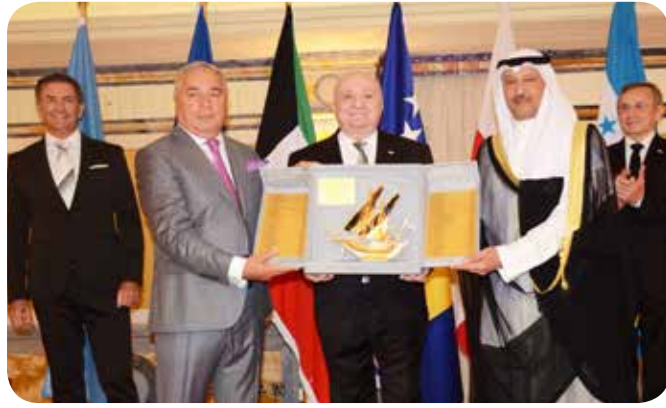


First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled issued a decision to add a new clause to Article 4 of Ministerial Resolution No. 957/2019, which stipulated the introduction of a new type of entry visa to Kuwait — visa to practice sports, cultural or social activities.

The visa is issued by the General Directorate of Residence Affairs based on a request submitted by one of the sports clubs or accredited cultural and social institutions bodies and associations in the country, and in accordance with the controls set by the General Directorate of Residence Affairs

According to the decision, the visa allows its holder to temporarily reside in the country for a period of three months, and it may be renewed for a period not exceeding one year from the date of entry in accordance with the provision of Article 11 of Amiri Decree No. 17 of 1959.





# Dean of Diplomatic Corps holds farewell reception for ambassadors

In a ceremony attended by heads of diplomatic missions in Kuwait at the St Regis Hotel on 7 June, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador of Tajikistan, H.E. Dr. Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda, held a farewell party for the ambassadors of Bosnia, Georgia and UNDP Resident Representative, on the occasion of the end of their tenure in Kuwait.

In his address to the gathering, which was held in the presence of the representative of the Protocol Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Zubaydzoda, praised the efforts exerted by his colleagues to develop the relations of their countries and institutions with Kuwait. He also expressed his thanks to the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its permanent cooperation with accredited diplomatic missions and international organizations and for providing all facilities for them to complete their tasks.

In turn, Bosnian Ambassador H.E. Sanin Halimovich, praised the development of his country's



relations with Kuwait, pointing out that the end of his tenure in Kuwait does not mean the end, but rather a beginning for him with challenges in another position in which he serves his country.

For his part, the Georgian Ambassador H.E. Konstantin Zhgenti,

expressed his thanks to all those who attended the farewell reception, as Kuwait was the last stage of his work in the diplomatic corps after 33 years of serving his country since its independence. He added that he benefited from all the experience he gained during his work in this field.

He also disclosed that he planned to write a book in which he will record all the experiences he gained during his work in many countries for the benefit of young diplomats.

The Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program in Kuwait, H.E. Hideko

Hadzialic, said that she is moving from Kuwait to Japan, taking with her the most beautiful memories from Kuwait. She thanked the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry for its hospitality, saying Kuwait was her seventh stop during her work within the United Nations.



## LuLu Hypermarket holds prize distribution for Shop and Win promotion

LuLu Hypermarket, in association with Black and Decker, organized a prize distribution ceremony on 29 May at their AlRai outlet to present prizes to winners of the 'Shop and Win' promotion, which ran from 8 February to 21 March.

During the promotion period, customers who made a purchase of KD20 or more of Black and Decker products were eligible to enter a draw for a chance to win two fabulous prizes, a Chery Tiggo 4 Pro and a Chery Tiggo 2 Pro car, as well as KD600 worth of LuLu gift vouchers.

The electronic draw for the promotion was conducted on 2 April at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and LuLu Hypermarket and Black and Decker management were thrilled to present the prizes to the lucky winners. The ceremony was a joyous occasion, with three winners walking away with the fantastic prizes.

The partnership between LuLu Hypermarket

and Black and Decker was instrumental in the success of the Shop and Win promotion. The two brands share a commitment to providing high-quality products and excellent customer service, and the promotion was a testament to this shared vision.

LuLu Hypermarket offers innovative and exciting promotions to engage with its customers and the Shop and Win promotion was yet another such event. no exception. The company provides its customers with the best possible shopping experience, and this promotion was a fantastic way to reward their loyalty.

The success of the Shop and Win promotion is a testament to the strong relationship between LuLu Hypermarket and Black and Decker, and the two companies said they would continue to work together to continue offering customers the best products, the best service, and more exciting promotions in the future.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Poverty of AI Pessimism



**Jim O'Neill**

*A former chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management and a former UK treasury minister, is a member of the Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development.*

Hardly a week goes by without various pioneers in artificial intelligence issuing dire warnings about the technology that they introduced to the world. I got an early glimpse of this emerging pessimistic consensus a couple of months ago, when I attended a dinner with some AI experts who suggested that millions of relatively sophisticated, high-paying jobs could be at risk. I came away asking if this bleak outlook is really justified.

I have my doubts. Since the start of my professional life in the 1980s (and of course for much longer), technological progress has repeatedly been held up as a major threat to jobs in key industries such as automobile manufacturing. Yet until the Brexit debacle, the United Kingdom was producing more vehicles than it did in the supposed heyday of the auto industry, owing to the role of sophisticated new technologies in boosting leading producers' core businesses. In the northern English port city of Sunderland, Nissan currently operates one of the most productive auto plants in the world.

Likewise, despite German auto workers commanding relatively higher nominal wages,

the country's carmakers have managed to adapt and thrive for decades, competing globally and helping to satisfy a growing global middle class's demand for high-quality performance vehicles. Yes, German auto companies face their biggest challenge yet with the global transition to electric vehicles, and the slowdown in China implies weaker growth in the short term. But if the past is any guide, the industry could adapt and emerge even stronger in the future.

AI doomsters also ignore the fact that populations are aging fast across most of the

Italy are two stand-out examples of this trend from the past few decades, but they are hardly alone. Among others, China, South Korea, and most of continental Europe are in the same boat. While immigration offers a partial solution, it is an increasingly charged political issue. Productivity-enhancing AI applications could be precisely what is needed.

Moreover, just look at what has been happening at the UK's treasured National Health Service, which is eating up ever more of the country's finances. The NHS employs more people than ever, yet it is becoming less and

could help to detect disease risks and provide earlier treatment — preferably through pharmacies or general practitioners. Such interventions would vastly improve both productivity and quality of care.

We already have early but extremely powerful evidence of what AI could do for public health globally. According to a recent BBC story, a group of scientists in Canada and the United States have used AI to discover a new antibiotic that is proving effective (so far) against *Acinetobacter baumannii*, one of the known antimicrobial-resistant superbugs on the World Health Organization's watch list.

Having led the UK's independent Review on AMR from 2014 to 2016, I am highly encouraged by this development. The drug will still have to go through the usual clinical trials, which is a lengthy and expensive process. But if all goes well, it will be the first time in decades that we have acquired a genuinely effective antibiotic for use against deadly superbugs. Now imagine what else AI could do just in the realm of medicine — from helping to discover or develop vaccines for hitherto unpreventable diseases to streamlining the clinical-trial process more broadly.

Of course, the AI experts are surely correct that we will need guardrails and high standards of regulation, lest this latest wave of innovation cause social, political, and economic havoc. The current era of round-the-clock social media, clickbait, and fake news has little to recommend it, and makes much of the pessimism understandable. But that is no reason to ignore the obvious, massive potential benefits of AI.

“ NHS needs a dramatic uptake of modern technology. For example, embedding AI-augmented diagnostics could help detect disease risks and provide earlier treatment — preferably through pharmacies or general practitioners. ”

developed world and many major developing and emerging economies. With the growth of the labor force slowing at a time when people are also living longer, there will be more and more pressure on smaller working-age populations to finance pensions, health care, and other (typically) nondiscretionary commitments.

Unless this smaller working population can become more productive, the economy's growth performance will struggle. Japan and

less productive. We in the UK are exposed to endless horror stories about the NHS's failings and what they mean for citizens seeking care.

Having dug into this issue as a member of the Times Health Commission, it is obvious to me that the NHS needs a dramatic uptake of modern technology to help with simple tasks (such as getting one computer system to talk to another), as well as more complicated ones. For example, embedding high-speed, AI-augmented diagnostics across the system



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# Jeju Island

## South Korea's serene paradise



By Nourah Khan  
Exclusive to  
The Times Kuwait

Jeju Island, located off the southern coast of South Korea in the Korea Strait, is a picturesque gem known for its natural beauty, vibrant culture, and unique geological wonders. With its stunning landscapes, pristine beaches, and captivating folklore, Jeju Island has become a must-visit destination for travelers to East Asia looking for an unforgettable experience.

Jeju Island, an hour away by plane from Seoul, the South Korean capital, was formed by an underwater volcanic eruption over two million years ago. Being a volcanic island it has unique

geological characteristics that render stunning natural formations and beautiful landscapes unseen elsewhere.

The island is also home to Hallasan, a dormant volcano and the highest mountain in South Korea, offering great



hiking trails and panoramic views from its summit. Lush forests, cascading waterfalls, and a serene crater lake make it a haven for outdoor adventurers. In addition, Seongsan Ilchulbong, also known as Sunrise Peak, is a volcanic crater known for its stunning sunrise vistas.

Jeju Island, the largest island and smallest province of South Korea, is blessed with an array of pristine beaches that attract sun seekers and water sports enthusiasts. Hyeopjae Beach, with its turquoise waters and white sands, is a popular spot for swimming, snorkeling, and relaxing.

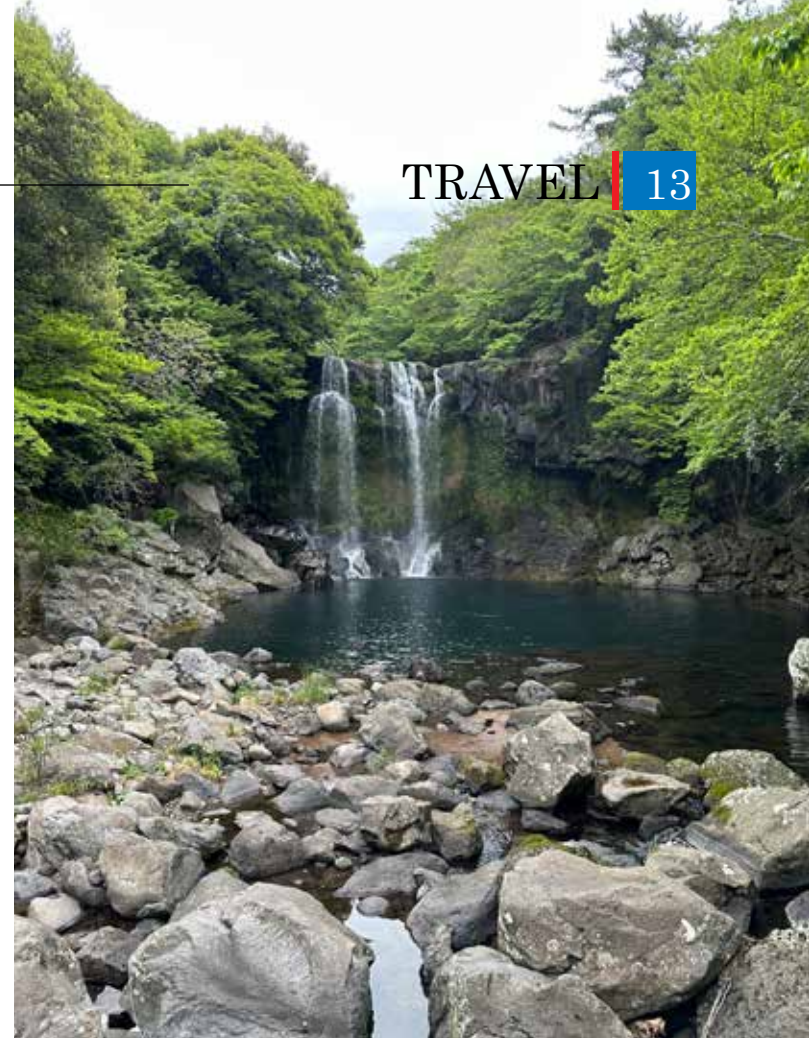
Jeju Island has three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, highlighting its cultural and historical importance. These

include the spectacular landscape and lava tubes of the Geomunoreum formed by ancient volcanic eruptions, which provide a fascinating glimpse into the geological history of the island. The traditional stone-walled houses of Seongeup Village, which showcase the island's unique architectural heritage; and the intricate dol hareubangs statues, which symbolize fertility and protection, can be found all over the island and serve as cultural icons.

The large dol hareubang rock statues were once considered as deities and placed outside the gates of homes to protect the occupants from demons. The carvings all have bulging eyes on a slightly somber or smiling face, and their hands rest on top of their stomachs, one slightly higher than the other. Their origins are obscure, but are often attributed to the shamanic traditions of the island.

Jeju Island has a rich cultural heritage shaped by its isolation from mainland Korea. The traditions, dialect and distinctive cuisine of the island provide a captivating glimpse into its unique identity. Visitors can watch captivating folk performances such as Seollal Nongak (New Year's Folk Dance), and plenty of fresh seafood.

Exploring vibrant traditional markets, such as Jeju Dongmun Market, provides an opportunity to immerse



yourself in the local culture and do some cultural shopping. The island also hosts a number of unique and exotic museums such as the Puppet Museum, the Museum of Modern Art and the Tea Museum.

The island is famous for its haenyeo women divers who harvest seafood from the bottom of the sea without the use of modern scuba gear. These distinguished women embody the island's resilience and contribute to its cultural heritage. Visitors can learn about their centuries-old traditions and witness their impressive diving skills at designated Henyeo villages, where they can also sample fresh seafood.

Seonim Bridge is another stunning tourist attraction located on the south coast of Jeju Island that provides a spectacular view of the coast, the Cheonjiyeon Waterfall and the nearby jungle. This beautiful 39-meter-long arch bridge that crosses from east to west over the stream between the second and third tiers of the waterfall is also called Seven Nymphs Bridge because of the seven nymphs carved on either side of the bridge.

Jeju Island, with its stunning landscapes, pristine beaches, vibrant culture, and unique traditions, provides a truly enchanting experience for travelers. Whether you are exploring the island's natural wonders, basking in the tranquility of its beaches, immersing yourself in its rich cultural heritage, or interacting with the daring haenyeo divers, Jeju Island promises an unforgettable trip that captivates the senses and nourishes the soul. Plan your visit to Jeju Island, and let its beauty and charm leave an indelible mark on your heart.

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





EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Post-American Middle East



**Mark Leonard**

Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, is the author of *The Age of Unpeace: How Connectivity Causes Conflict*.

May was a busy month for Arab diplomats. Twelve years after the Arab League suspended Syria's membership, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was officially welcomed back into the fold. As the protracted war in Yemen shows signs of winding down, Iran and Saudi Arabia appear headed toward reconciliation. Meanwhile, Egypt brokered a ceasefire between Israel and Islamic Jihad, and Saudi Arabia has emerged as a key player in the efforts to end the civil war in Sudan.

What is remarkable about these recent developments is the West's near-total absence. While Western involvement in the Middle East has fluctuated over the years, the United States and its European allies have spearheaded the vast majority of diplomatic breakthroughs in the region since the end of the Cold War, including peace between Israel and Jordan, the normalization of relations between Israel and some Gulf states, and the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Western engagement also included the invasion of Iraq in 2003, military intervention in Libya in 2011, support for anti-Assad rebels in Syria, and routing the Islamic State from its base in Syria and Iraq. The US also backed Saudi Arabia's air campaign in Yemen. But all that remains of these efforts is 2,500 US troops in Iraq and 900 in Syria.

America's disengagement from the Middle

East is part of a calculated strategy to shift its focus to its escalating rivalry with China. As a former US official told me, this is not simply a return to America's pre-9/11 posture; rather, the US seeks to revert to its pre-1990 approach to the region, which combined a minimal military presence with reliance on regional allies to keep the peace. President Joe Biden takes pride in his administration's ability to resist the Middle Eastern quagmire that ensnared his immediate predecessors, Barack Obama and Donald Trump, as they tried to pivot toward Asia.

There are two ways to understand the new reality in the Middle East. The first is to lament

brutal repression of the massive public protests that erupted across the country in September, as well as its military assistance to Russia in the Ukraine war.

But Iran's nuclear program is becoming a ticking time bomb. Earlier this year, the International Atomic Energy Agency found uranium particles in Iran enriched to a weapons-grade level of 83.7 percent. Iran's breakout time — the time it would need to produce enough fissile material for one nuclear weapon — has reduced from 12 months when the nuclear deal was implemented to around 12 days.

Other countries have rushed to fill the vacuum

interventionism itself as destabilizing, with the West's hasty departure from Afghanistan a case in point. The new order, led by regional actors and external powers such as Russia and China, may not align with Western preferences, owing to the role of autocratic regimes; still, it represents a distinct form of order.

Although the West may have hoped for a different outcome, there is no denying that the Middle East has become less violent, as reflected in the de-escalation of the conflict in Yemen, the (China-brokered) Saudi-Iranian détente, and the maturation of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Likewise, the increased sense of responsibility among regional leaders to address crises such as the incipient civil war in Sudan is a positive development.

To be sure, the emerging order can be described as an authoritarian peace, and the challenges facing Middle Eastern countries remain significant. But the region is currently focused on economic integration and development, while Western policymakers always seem to focus on other problems.

Of course, the Middle East could just be experiencing an interregnum between violent eras. But it is more likely that we are witnessing a glimpse into the multipolar future. As a Chinese observer of the Middle East told me, his country has come to see the region as a "laboratory for a post-American world." As the US continues to pull back, regional players assert themselves, and countries such as India, Turkey, Russia, and China gain influence.

In a multipolar world, as Julien Barnes-Dacey and Hugh Lovatt note, the West must either invest significant resources in shaping global affairs or learn to adapt to others' priorities. The latter option may not always result in outcomes that the West desires, but that is not necessarily a terrible thing.

“Despite initial concerns that a US withdrawal would plunge the region into chaos and disarray, many in the Middle East now view Western interventionism itself as destabilizing, with the West's hasty exit from Afghanistan a case in point.”

the gulf between Western aspirations and conditions on the ground. While the US and the European Union still verbally endorse the two-state solution, Israelis and Palestinians have moved away from it. As Israel's Jewish majority becomes more nationalist and ultra-orthodox, most Palestinians have come to favor armed resistance over President Mahmoud Abbas's sclerotic Palestinian Authority.

Meanwhile, as the West continues to tout the importance of diplomacy in addressing Iran's rapidly advancing nuclear program, there has been little action on this front. American and European passivity can be attributed to Iran's

created by Western withdrawal from the region. When a brief missile exchange between Israel and Islamic Jihad in Gaza threatened to escalate into a larger conflict, Egypt took charge of the mediation efforts that ultimately ended the hostilities. Similarly, it was Turkish special forces, rather than a US drone strike, that killed Islamic State leader Abu Hussein al-Qurashi in late April.

While many in the West may despair at these sobering developments, there is another way to understand the emerging post-American order. Despite initial concerns that a US withdrawal would plunge the region into chaos and disarray, many in the Middle East now view Western





# Sugar substitutes no alternative to reducing sugar intake

**S**ugar substitutes, whether natural or artificial, are no alternative to reducing sugar intake in order to reduce weight or the risk of diet-related diseases, said the World Health Organization (WHO) in its latest guideline on sugar intake that was published last month.

Based on evidence from hundreds of randomized controlled trials, and observational studies the WHO concludes that sugar substitutes do not help in reducing weight or in reducing the risk of diet-related diseases. The global health organization notes that while non-sugar sweeteners may help some people lose weight over the short term, these changes are not sustained and do not confer any long-term benefit in reducing body fat in adults or children.

As such, in its guidance released on 15 May, 2023, the WHO does not recommend the use of sugar substitutes to help with either weight loss, or reduce the risk of diet-related diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. The WHO guidance is applicable to people all over the world, except those with preexisting diabetes.

Although the latest WHO guidelines exempt people with preexisting diabetes, this was not because sugar substitutes were a healthier option for such patients. It was only because the studies used in the WHO review did not specifically include people with diabetes, and as such a firm conclusion could not be drawn on the risks of alternative sugars on diabetic patients.

The review also suggests that there may be "potential undesirable effects" from long-term use of non-sugar sweeteners, "such as an increased risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and mortality in adults." Non-sugar sweeteners are widely used as an ingredient in beverages and prepackaged foods manufactured by the food industry.

Many people also consider these 'artificial sweeteners' to be a healthier option than refined sugars, and add them to their food and beverages. In its previous review on sugar intake in 2015, the global health body had recommended that adults and children reduce their daily intake of added sugars to less than 10 percent, which consequently led to greater interest in the use of non-sugar sweeteners. The guidance is timely to many people who consume diet sodas and use sugar substitutes in the belief that it could help them reduce weight and maintain this healthful weight over time. More often than not, the chemicals used in non-sugar sweeteners have more side effects than benefits, including causing bloating and diarrhea in some people.

In addition, many sugar substitutes are hundreds of times sweeter than the normal white sugar used in homes. The continued use of these sugar substitutes for an extended period could cause other sweetened foods to taste less sweet, and lead to people craving more sweeter foods to attain the same satisfaction level.

The WHO review which examined more than 280 studies included both randomized controlled trials (RCT) and observational studies. In research, RCT is considered the gold standard as it balances participant characteristics, reducing bias and providing a rigorous tool to examine cause-effect relationships between an intervention and outcome. On the other hand, while observational studies can indicate an association with an outcome, they cannot show direct cause and effect.

Results from certain randomized trials showed that use of non-sugar sweeteners resulted in lower body weight and body-mass index (BMI), but most of these studies lasted three months or less. Longer-term studies did not show a sustained



effect on body weight. In addition, in randomized trials that compared people who used non-sugar sweeteners to those who consumed nothing, an inactive placebo or water, there was no effect on body weight or BMI.

Moreover, observational studies found that higher intake of non-sugar sweeteners was linked to higher BMI and an increased risk of obesity. These studies also showed an increased risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and death from cardiovascular disease or any cause. There was also an increased risk of bladder cancer, particularly among people who used saccharin.

The WHO recommendation applies to artificial and naturally-occurring non-sugar sweeteners, such as acesulfame K, aspartame, advantame, cyclamates, neotame, saccharin, sucralose, stevia and stevia derivatives. The inclusion of stevia, considered a natural sugar alternative, was a surprise to many, but experts point out 'Natural does not necessarily mean healthier'.

Also, since low-calorie sugars and sugar alcohols, such as erythritol, are sugars themselves or derived from them, they were not considered as non-sugar sweeteners. As such, the new guidance

did not review research related to them.

However, a recent study associated erythritol — used to add bulk to or sweeten stevia, monk fruit and other keto-friendly reduced-sugar products — with a higher risk of heart attack, stroke and early death. Health experts, nutritionists and dietitians have voiced serious concern following publication of the latest WHO guidelines, as non-sugar sweeteners are often marketed to people with type 2 diabetes, obesity and existing cardiovascular disease — all of whom are at higher risk of future heart attack and stroke.

They also point out that sweetened beverages and many processed foods like cookies, cakes, pastries and breakfast cereals also tend to be high in added sugars or non-sugar sweeteners. These sweeteners also show up in pre-packaged sauces, dressings and condiments. Consumers need to check the ingredient list on packaged foods and beverages.

Shoppers should be on the watch for non-sugar sweeteners in the ingredient list, including items such as aspartame, sucralose or stevia, as well as added sugars such as high fructose corn syrup and cane sugar. Ideally, whenever possible, opt for whole, minimally processed foods, or cook your meals at home, as this gives you better control over the ingredients.

Experts add that while reducing added sugars and non-sugar sweeteners is advisable, equal attention should be given to promoting a diet that prioritizes whole, unprocessed foods such as fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains. They also stressed the importance of conducting additional research to better understand the long-term effects of non-sugar sweeteners, including in people with certain diseases such as inflammatory bowel disease, high cardiovascular risk and type 2 diabetes.



## Depression increases risk of multiple health conditions

**A** coordinated study by researchers at several universities in the United Kingdom and Finland reveals that having depression can take a health toll on multiple fronts, and that healthcare providers need to consider a holistic approach that treats depression as a way to help prevent and treat other bodily diseases.

The study found that people with depression have a 1.5 times greater risk of developing 29 health conditions, and that it is a common risk factor in the development of several physical health issues requiring hospitalization, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disease, that frequently lead to hospitalization. The study pointed out that the most common causes of hospitalization in people with depression were endocrine, musculoskeletal, and vascular diseases — not psychiatric disorders.

The new study evaluated the health data of over 130,000 people in the United Kingdom and over 100,000 in Finland to determine if and how depression was associated with comorbid illnesses that commonly require hospitalization. The results suggest that depression may be an effective target for the

prevention of physical and mental health issues that can lead to hospitalization. While the data clearly shows that depression has a dramatic effect on the whole body and that its effect can cause significant physical health issues, what is less clear is why this is so. Researchers surmise that this is likely due to a mix of factors, including genetics, systemic inflammation, and dysfunctional neurotransmitters. For example, inflammation has been found to contribute to a wide range of health conditions, including depression, obesity, and diabetes.

Depression may also worsen pre-existing health issues, including in people with diabetes and heart disease, and make it difficult to follow doctor's advice, take medications, or engage in regular exercise, as well as to maintain supportive relationships that are vital to taking care of chronic conditions.

The study finds that not only does depression lead to more health conditions, but also having these conditions may increase the risk of developing depression. For example, being diagnosed with cancer, a heart attack, or a neurological disease like epilepsy can contribute to depression, creating a vicious circle where your mood and physical health are negatively impacting your entire quality of life.

The researchers suggest that early diagnosis and prompt treatment of depression may help prevent the development and exacerbation of other physical health problems, and that healthcare providers should increasingly focus on treating depression in an effort to improve overall health. Though there is much more clarity needed on the root causes of physical and mental health conditions, what is clear is that both are closely intertwined and should be treated comprehensively by integrating healthcare provided by primary care physicians, medical specialists, and mental health providers.

Treating comorbid depression and anxiety and even substance abuse in a collaborative relationship with mental health providers helps with not only improving mental health symptoms but also physical health.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Reassessing Climate-Tech Solutions



**Gernot Wagner**

A climate economist at  
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Everything from seat belts and condoms to health care and bank bailouts invites riskier behavior, or what economists call 'moral hazard'. Even the most justified and well-meaning policy interventions can have unintended, and undesired, consequences. In the 1960s and 1970s, many environmentalists objected to nuclear power because its promise of cheap, limitless energy ran counter to their own push for energy efficiency and conservation.

The debate continues today. Which climate technologies deserve our support, and which are distractions that could lull us into complacency with the false promise of a silver bullet? The list of climate 'solutions' is constantly expanding and now includes everything from futuristic fusion technologies to green hydrogen, from heat pumps to induction stoves to better insulation, and of course, solar and wind.

The media love to fawn over greentech 'unicorns' (startups with valuations above \$1 billion) that promise to provide the breakthrough innovation we have all been waiting for. But while innovation is certainly essential, not all technologies are created equal, and lists of what counts as 'climate tech' often become political litmus tests. Many, for example, now look beyond solar to newer, sexier technologies. Yet the plummeting cost of solar energy is a result of technological breakthroughs and research and development subsidies, and the fact that it is becoming an established climate technology does not make it any less essential.

Of course, solar is not the whole solution. We cannot talk about solar without also talking about



its land-use and grid implications, nor can we talk about green hydrogen without addressing the potential consequences of hydrogen leakage, a problem that has quickly turned natural gas from a promising 'bridge' technology into a cause of major environmental problems. It is right to cheer the rapidly growing electric-vehicle (EV) market, but it is similarly important to consider the vast potential not only of transportation alternatives like e-bikes (or old-fashioned bicycles) but also of better cities.

Many of these debates are simply moot. It is not EVs or e-bikes; it is both. Climate beggars cannot be choosers. But debates about tradeoffs are crucial, and reveal quite a bit about our priors, priorities, and worldviews. Why zero in on the folly of Germany's nuclear phase-out ten years ahead of its planned exit from coal, but not on German building codes, which should be a model for the rest of the world? Germany's 'well-sealed windows' do not make headlines, but investments in this admittedly boring climate technology could ultimately do more for cutting greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions than some of the most enthusiastically hyped innovations.

What really matters is the interplay between technology, policy, and behavioral change. While induction stoves alone will not make a big dent in global or personal GHG emissions, swapping one's old gas range for a new induction stove is often the last step before shutting off one's home gas line altogether. Induction stoves and heat

pumps are the two main climate technologies that have allowed new buildings to go without gas altogether. And since everyone needs to eat and regulate the temperature in one's home, neither technology creates much moral hazard.

Now consider carbon-removal technologies. They, too, have a crucial role to play in bringing about a low-carbon future, and yet they also hold the promise, justified or not, of allowing us to keep chugging along without changing our production and consumption patterns.

What to preserve is a political question. While some will welcome EVs as a way to decarbonize their suburban commutes, others will see a new moral hazard. After all, the more efficient cars become, the more guilt-free driving we can do. But rather than preserve long commutes, why not use zoning changes to create more walkable neighborhoods? Rather than always surveying the cutting edge, we can find some of the most powerful techno fixes already at work in the real world. Just look at the traditional European city. As Andrej Karpathy, the former head of artificial intelligence at Tesla, marvels, it is "more compact, denser... more pedestrian and bike friendly."

A final consideration is how some climate technologies may introduce the exact opposite of moral hazard. Solar geoengineering, for example, might be considered to be so radical and controversial that the mere mention of it could motivate us to cut more carbon pollution sooner. But, of course, we must not bank on this effect.

That, ironically, would be another case of falling into the moral-hazard trap.

How, then, to assess whether any given climate technology will deliver as promised? While there is no foolproof method, much can be learned from looking at the degree of decarbonization that has already been achieved. By and large, there are dozens of ways to cut emissions by 5, 10, or even 20 percent in each industry or economic sector. Most of these involve small process changes aimed at teasing out additional efficiencies. A more efficient gas furnace, for example, will reduce your fuel bill and emissions by 10 or 20 percent overnight, and much the same can be said for a more efficient turbine at the gas plant.

But making existing fossil fuel-based processes more efficient can go only so far. Moving well beyond the 20 percent cuts to 80-90 percent or more typically means switching from fossil fuels to zero-carbon energy sources. In most sectors, there are really only one or two ways to cut emissions by that much. In the construction sector, for example, large cuts require installing insulation and heat pumps. In steel, the two options involve green hydrogen or full-on electrification, with a closed-loop carbon-recycling system emerging as a strong contender for a third path. The key question when considering climate moral hazard, then, is whether a technology moves a company, industry, or sector closer to implementing an 80-100 percent solution, as opposed to a 10 or 20 percent measure that merely kicks the can down the road. Your new EV will not cut your transportation emissions to zero by itself — not until we have also decarbonized the steel used to make it, and the electricity that powers it. But it at least holds the potential to be an 80-100 percent solution.

It is a moral hazard to think that technology will save us. However, it is equally hazardous to ignore innovations that could be game changers if they are accompanied by the right kinds of policies, investments, and political commitments. Whether a climate solution creates a moral hazard has little to do with the solution itself, and everything to do with us.

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