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Climate Science Must Mobilize, not Paralyze Us

Monica Araya and Carlos Manuel Rodriguez

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations body tasked with providing scientific evidence and consensus on climate change and its implications for decision-makers and the public, in its latest report presents challenges that have irreversible consequences for people and the planet. Unless the global community responds readily and positively to these environmental challenges, the social, economic and political impacts could be catastrophic.

To avoid severe economic and social shocks and protect essential ecosystems, we urgently need to



limit the increase in global temperature to within 1.5° Celsius of the pre-industrial level. Achieving the required reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will require boldness, creativity, and some hard choices. But Costa Rica's experience shows that, in the long run, what is gained far outweighs the sacrifices for all. Climate change is not the first daunting challenge our country — among the world's most biodiverse countries per square meter — has had to overcome to preserve its natural beauty. Deforestation for cattle grazing nearly halved the land covered by forest over the four decades prior to 1986. Government investment in protecting these natural assets was essential, which meant eliminating subsidies for the cattle industry and perverse incentives for agrarian reform.

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MoI keen to upgrade border security systems

During an inspection tour last week of several border outposts, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, said the ministry's strategy with regard to borders was to ensure continued training of personnel, and to employ the latest equipment and technology in monitoring the country's borders.



The interior minister was speaking following an inspection tour of personnel and facilities at border checkpoints on Umm Al-Maradim Island, Khairan Coastal Center and other border outposts.

He added that the political leadership is keen on installing state-of-art technology to upgrade the security system, with priority dedicated to the security of borders. During the tour, the minister

was filled-in on the new radar systems that monitor smuggling and trafficking violations.

Umm Al-Maradim Island serves as the gateway for vessels entering the country's territorial waters and border security personnel serving on the island stamp passports of people and record all relevant information of vessels entering and departing Kuwait's waters.

KOC to launch project for desert greening

Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) is undertaking a large-scale project to green barren desert land in oil-field areas to the north and south of Kuwait. The project is part of the company's commitment to the Kuwait Environmental Rehabilitation Program (KERP), which aims to improve the environment and reduce the effects of climate change.

In this regard, the company issued a tender in January 2023 that called for bids through the Central Agency for Public Tenders. The tender is expected to be awarded by the third or fourth quarter of 2023, and projected to be completed by the first quarter of 2029.

KOC is also a participant in an UN-backed initiative to afforest many areas in the desert to make Kuwait green. The Vegetation Restoration initiative aims to plant and rehabilitate damaged terrestrial ecosystems in Kuwait by rehabilitating the land with new plant soils to restore and enhance biodiversity and natural plant coverage. This will create a favorable environment for many plant and animal species, and help achieve environmental recovery and ecosystem balance in Kuwait. The project will also help



preserve existing natural resources and enhance their sustainability. All the projects fall within the scope of Kuwait's strategic plans and as part of the United Nations' sustainable development goals.

The North and South Kuwait Vegetation Project aims to plant vegetation on approximately 42 square kilometers of land within KOC areas in North and South Kuwait, by planting nearly 10 million local desert plants in these areas. The project is divided into four different areas, which will be delivered by four contractors. The first two

areas are located in northern Kuwait, covering a total area of 13.1 square kilometers. The third and fourth areas are located in southern Kuwait, covering a total area of approximately 28.9 square kilometers.

In addition to the four main areas, the project will also include an area covering approximately 3.46 square kilometers along Mina Abdullah – Wafra Road (Road 306) in southern Kuwait. The project will also include a nursery for local plants, estimated at 300 square meters, located in Ahmadi.

The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, the Environment Public Authority, the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources, and the Kuwaiti Focal Point agreed on the plant selection, which includes eight types of shrubs, two types of herbaceous plants and other trees. KOC confirmed that the projects of greening Kuwait and providing plant diversity will contribute to providing a range of environmental benefits, such as finding solutions to control sand desertification in areas prone to sandstorms and dust, combating the negative effects of climate change, preserving biodiversity, and rehabilitating wildlife.

Authorities raid cosmetic store selling unlicensed products

Officials from the Drug Inspection Department, affiliated to the Ministry of Health, in coordination with the ministries of Interior, and Commerce and Trade, conducted a raid on a cosmetic store in Salmiya that was reported to be selling unlicensed items in violation of various laws.

The inspection resulted in the discovery of a 1,000 square-meter basement warehouse that was being used to store cosmetics without a license from the Ministry of Commerce or the General Fire Force. The products also did not meet the quality standards and specifications outlined by the concerned ministries.

In addition, the company was found to be storing expired products, on some of which the expiry date had been tampered with. The committee that inspected the warehouse also noticed that the store owner did not have the necessary registration certificates or purchase invoices for the products being sold through the outlet.

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Feminist Foreign Policy could Transform International Relations



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

In line with achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially SDG 5, which calls for women's equal participation in decision-making, and in support of its advocacy for increased representation of women in key decision-making positions, the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared by consensus to mark 24 June each year as International Day of Women in Diplomacy.

Last week, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs marked International Day of Women in Diplomacy with a lavish ceremony recognizing the increasingly significant role of Kuwaiti women in the realm of diplomacy. Citing some of the most notable achievements of women diplomats in Kuwait, Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah applauded the increased participation of women in diplomacy given their dedication and commitment. He added that the government backs all initiatives to support women as they seek to establish parity with their male counterparts.

Historically, diplomacy has been the preserve of men; although women have played a critical role in diplomacy for centuries, yet their contributions have often been overlooked. Between 1992 and 2019, women represented only 13 percent of negotiators, 6 percent of mediators and 6 percent of signatories in peace processes worldwide, though their contributions behind the scenes were far higher. And, while the UNGA has been the setting for several historic moments for gender equality, much has yet to be achieved regarding women's representation and participation in the UN body. Just four women have been elected President of the UN General Assembly in its 77 years.

In 2014, Margot Wallström, then serving as the foreign minister of Sweden, proclaimed that the Swedish government would adopt a so-called feminist foreign policy, becoming the first nation ever to do so. Since then, Canada, France, and Mexico have followed suit, and a handful of other nations — most recently, Luxembourg, Malaysia, and Spain — have pledged to develop similar policies.

In each of these countries, the announcements have provoked questions among foreign policy experts. What, exactly, do these policies set out to achieve? At a time of rising global activism for gender equality, what does it mean to conduct foreign policy from a feminist perspective?



Unveiling of "The Best Weapon" at UN Headquarters. In the words of Nelson Mandela "The best weapon is to sit down and talk." - Photo: UN Photo/Mark Garten

tive? And in an era of economic uncertainty, is a focus on gender equality an unnecessary distraction?

Evidence from recent studies suggests that the status of women is closely aligned with a country's prosperity and security. In this respect, promoting gender equality as a foreign policy priority seems like common sense. Closing the gender gap in workforce participation could add as much as \$28 trillion to the global GDP.

Ensuring women's meaningful participation in peace processes makes agreements more likely to last and be implemented. The more women there are in a country's parliament, the lower the incidence of human rights abuses and conflict relapse. Equalizing access to agricultural resources for women could result in 150 million fewer hungry people on the planet. The bottom line: research confirms that nations seeking to fortify their own security, better use foreign aid, or support stable and democratic partners should prioritize women's advancement.

Women's rights have had a place in public policymaking since at least the late 1970s, supported by both international institutions and a proliferation of local ones in more than 100 countries. But national reforms have primarily addressed domestic concerns. A feminist foreign policy offers something different, in that it promotes programs that make gender equality and women's empowerment central to national security, including diplomacy, defense, aid, and trade.

fense, aid, and trade.

The government of Sweden has undertaken the most comprehensive plan of this type with the feminist foreign policy it first articulated in 2014. But the Swedish policy actually builds on the prior efforts of many other nations. Such efforts share a focus on promulgating change in three broad areas. They seek to promote women's leadership, to commit to policies that advance equality, and to allocate resources in a manner that supports those commitments. The specific initiatives governments have proposed vary, as do the extent of their implementation and the means of measuring their success. And although all aim to elevate gender equality as a foreign policy priority, not all are explicitly termed 'feminist'.

Over the last decade, many countries have brought more women into their foreign policy decision-making circles and placed greater emphasis on gender equality in their conduct of foreign affairs. Today, a record 34 countries have female foreign ministers, 84 have female ministers of trade, and 20 have female ministers of defense. Several countries have established ambassador-level positions to promote women's issues abroad or within their foreign policy apparatus. Not all of these countries have signed on to a foreign policy unequivocally dedicated to advancing women's rights, but the shifts in their leadership have diversified foreign policy debates and led to effective policies.

Countries with and without explicitly femi-

nist foreign policy agendas have pursued policies and dedicated resources that further gender equality, some of them adopting specific plans to address women's rights through diplomacy and development cooperation. Eighty-three nations have adopted national action plans to encourage women's participation in peace and security processes. Donor countries, including Australia, Canada, and the United Arab Emirates, have pledged a percentage of their foreign-assistance funds to programs that promote the advancement of women, or they have created new pooled funds to support women's rights organizations. These efforts add up to a collective shift in resources and political will.

The effort to change leadership, adopt policies, and commit resources in order to advance gender equality as a foreign policy priority has met with some skepticism. Critics argue that increasing the focus on women's rights and gender equality detracts from promoting other national interests abroad. Even many who believe that gender equality is a worthwhile goal do not agree that it should be institutionalized as a foreign policy priority.

Such criticism overlooks evidence that gender equality is not only a human right worthy of protection but also a means to advance a country's economic and security interests. Raising the status of women and girls has been shown to increase GDP, improve global health, combat radicalization and extremism, improve the chances of lasting peace, and strengthen democracy. The world confronts too much poverty, insecurity, authoritarianism, and violence for any nation to afford to overlook the talents and contributions of 50 percent of its population.

Other skeptics argue that a true feminist foreign policy would require nothing short of a transformation in international relations. These critics maintain that the feminist policies that the governments of Canada, France, Sweden, and other countries have adopted do not do enough to reshape aid infrastructure, decrease militarism, address the root causes of inequality, or incorporate the experiences of women and girls.

But to the extent that such critiques are valid, they risk making the perfect the enemy of the good. Moreover, policies promoting gender equality in the national security space are relatively new, and it is still too early to know just what effects they will have, whether on improving the lives of women or on generating the political will to bring about further change.



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Increase in labor market size in first-quarter of year

Latest statistics from the Central Administration of Statistics and the Public Authority for Manpower reveal that the number of workers in the labor market increased during the first three months of 2023 by 2.2 percent from the end of the previous year.

Data shows that 63,000 workers were added to the labor market in the first-quarter of this year, bringing the total number of workers in Kuwait to 2.85 million. A breakup of these numbers by nationality notes that the number of Indian workers increased by

22,993, bringing the total number of Indian workers to 857,671.

Egyptians came in second place with 486,656 workers, an increase of 3,473. Kuwaiti workers came in third place with 444,822 workers, up 2,175. Filipino workers surpassed Bangladeshi workers to jump to fourth spot. In the same period, the number of employees in the government sector increased by 3,722 bringing public sector employment figures to 468,328. The rise was driven by an increase of 2,290 Kuwaiti nationals, against 1,432 expat workers.



Meanwhile, the number of domestic workers increased by 26,886, bringing the total number to 780,183. Of these, 98.9 percent are from 10 main nationalities, while the remaining 0.1 percent are from other nationalities. India has the most number of domestic workers in the country, with a total of 347,000 workers.

This is an increase of 9,700 workers from the end of last year. The Philippines is in second place, followed by Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Ethiopia, Benin, Indonesia, Mali, and Pakistan.



Grand Hypermarket opens latest outlet in Farwaniya

Grand Hypermarket, a leading retail chain in Kuwait, opened its 35th outlet in Kuwait, in Farwaniya, Block 1, Street 122 on 26 June. The new branch was inaugurated by Chairman of Grand Hypermarket, Jassim Mohammed Khamees Al Sharrah, along with Managing Director Dr. Anvar Ameen Chelat,

Regional Director Ayyoob Kachery, CEO Mohammed Suneer and other top management officials of Grand Hyper, in the presence of a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

The new store, which marks the fourth outlet of Grand Hyper in Farwaniya, has an area of 18,000 square feet and is located conveniently

with ready access to customers in the neighborhood and surrounding areas, as well as offering plenty of parking options.

A press release issued by Grand Hyper noted that the latest store in Farwaniya is intended as an Eid gift for the hypermarket's loyal patrons in the neighborhood. Significant discounts

are being offered As part of the inauguration, significant discounts and competitive prices are being offered on products across all departments, including electronics, clothing, footwear, cooked food items, fruits, and vegetables from all over the world, as well as all types of daily essentials.

Walk Mall opens Sky Rink to public



By Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

The Walk Mall located along Salem Mubarak Street in Salmiya recently opened its 'Sky Rink' ice-skating facility to the public. The facility is managed by Suffix, a company known for its construction and management of sports activities and facilities.

In a brief interview with The Times Kuwait, Facility Supervisor at Suffix, Mohammad Shami, said that the Sky Rink is part of the company's aim to provide a totally new experience for kids to learn and enjoy new sporting activities.

He added, "Sky Rink is ideal for events such as skating competitions, leisure sports on ice, celebrating special events like birthdays and other occasions, as well as learning ice-

skating through training classes. In addition, the venue is open for all ice-related activities in the future. Operating hours are from three in the afternoon till eleven in the evening, with the possibility of opening earlier in coming months."

Suffix showcases its services on planning, organizing, and executing sporting events from A to Z. Events range from international caliber marathons to highly competitive crossfit games. It caters to all types of sporting events in the region and conforms to international practices and standards. Some of its events fall in the categories of motorsport, marathons, fun runs, crossfit games, obstacle races, triathlons, and product launches.

"I would like to invite everyone to come and visit the Sky Rink and be a part of our activities" ended Shami.

Perfecta International sponsors culinary classes for domestic workers

By Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Perfecta International Foodstuff, popular for its world class baking and cooking ingredients, is the main sponsor of a program for training domestic workers in culinary skills. The one-month long program, conducted under the guidance of Masterclass Culinary Arts and Lifestyle Workshops, is open to all workers of all nationalities.

In a brief interview with The Times Kuwait, the General Manager and Partner of Perfecta International Foodstuff, Louis Joseph said that the company is privileged to be a part of such noble project in support of domestic workers who will have the opportunity to learn new skills that will assist them if they choose to change their jobs in the future, or start small business when they return home.

The scholarship program for domestic workers was a initiative by the former Philippine Labor Attaché Nasser Mustafa, with the support of foreign recruitment agencies and other generous sponsors such as Friendi, Jumbo Travel, Dadabhai Travel, Pag Ibig Fund, Queen Inasal, Grantos Clinic, Jane's Closet, Anne Clothes, LBC, The Times Kuwait and more. The program has produced three hundred eighty-five beneficiaries some of whom have returned home to their countries and started their home-based businesses.

Masterclass Lifestyle Workshops offer classes on Breads and Pastries, Cake Decorating, Chocolate Making, International Cuisines, Japanese Cuisines, Kids Baking and Cooking, Filipino Delicacies Cooking course, Art classes, Flower arrangement and more courses are on the pipeline. For more details, call: 55650296



Kuwait ranked fourth regionally in best livable cities

According to the Economist Information Unit Kuwait City ranked fourth among the best livable cities in the Middle East and North Africa region in 2023, while Dubai and Abu Dhabi retained the first and second positions for the fifth year in a row.

Also included in the list of the top ten cities for the current year at the regional level are: Doha, Manama, Muscat, Riyadh, Oman and Jeddah, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to the study the Canadian, European and Australian cities dominate the global list of the best cities to live in. Vienna ranks first, followed by Copenhagen, Melbourne, Sydney, Vancouver, Zurich, Calgary, Geneva, Toronto, Osaka and Auckland, while the least livable cities are



Damascus, Tripoli, Algiers, Lagos, Karachi, Port Moresby, Dhaka, Harare, Kiev and Douala.

The study classifies living conditions in 173 cities across several categories such as stability, health care, culture, environment, education, and infrastructure.

It is worth noting that last January; the Resonance Consultancy ranked Dubai first regionally and fifth in the world as the best city in the world based on the categories of prosperity, safety, landmarks, outdoor activities, and others.

The study stated that among the groups surveyed, only the stability rate declined on average in 2023, mainly due to a workers' strike in Greece, pension protests in France, and clashes in Peru.



IMA conducts Arafat Day Gatherings

Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait, an Indian socio-religious organization, conducted a series of events and programs as part of its Arafat Day Gatherings from 23 to 26 June in various mosques of Kuwait, to commemorate the month of Dhul Hijjah, also known as the Month of Sacrifice and Hajj. The gatherings, which were held at mosques in Khaitan, Farwaniya, Abbasiya, Salmiya, Mahboula, and Fahaheel, were attended by hundreds of people. Separate arrangements were made to accommodate families and to provide them a comfortable environment during the programs.

Several renowned scholars and 'khateeb' graced these gatherings and delivered their insightful speeches on a range of different topics related to the significance of the first ten days of Dhul Hijjah, Arafat Day, the purpose of sacrifices, the objectives and message of Hajj and Qurbani (sacrifice), the message of Eid Al-Adha, and the farewell sermon of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).



Among the religious dignitaries addressing the gathering were Maulana Waleed Umri, who highlighted the virtues of sacrifices in Islam through the life of Prophet Ibrahim (AS); Sharafudin Soofi, who discussed in details about the legacy and life of Prophet Ibrahim (AS), which serves as role model for all human beings. This was followed by a question and answer session moderated by IMA President Maulana Mohammad Umar Falahi.

Speaking at gatherings in Khaitan and Maliya on two different dates, motivational speakers, Nisar Ahmed and Yousuf Al Adsani, emphasized the virtues of the first ten days of Dhul Hijjah and Arafat Day, as well as the message of Hajj and Qurbani.

IMA Kuwait also organized separate Kids Islamic programs simultaneously in different mosques of Kuwait, ensuring an inclusive and engaging experience for young attendees. At the end of each gathering, dinner packets were served, fostering a sense of community and togetherness.

At the end of the series of gatherings, IMA Kuwait extended its gratitude to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Kuwait, for their patronage and support in organizing these impactful events.



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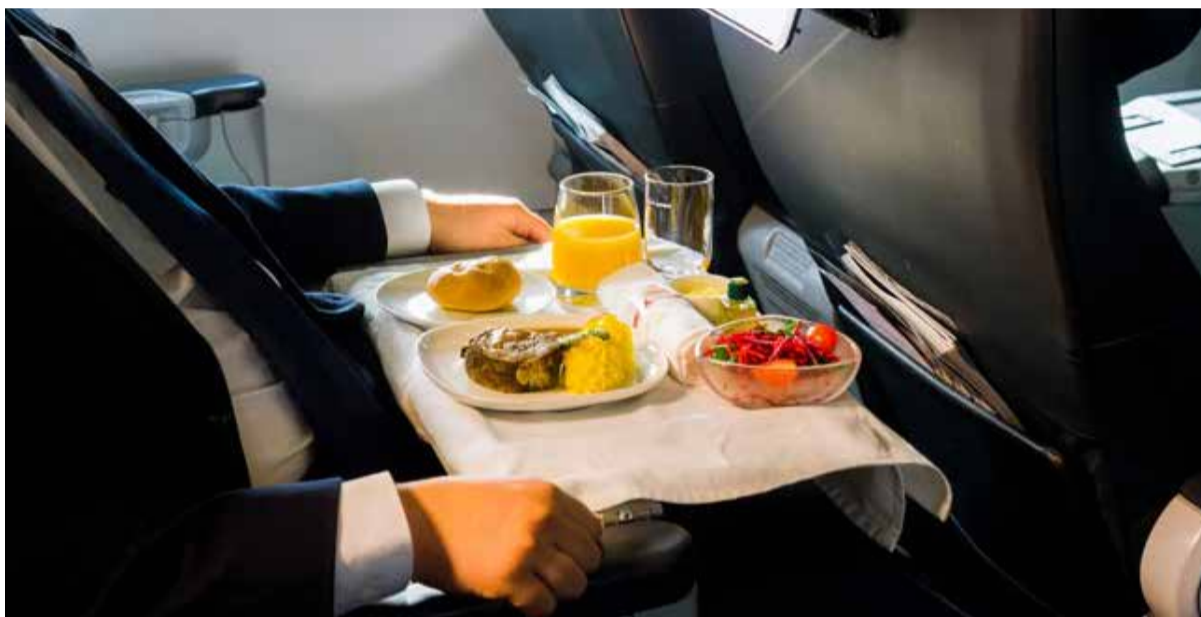
Thought for the week

“The tragedy in life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach.

- Benjamin Mays

Traveling without losing weight

Ask Mira : Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



We all travel, and we all worry about what food we might find to eat when we travel and whether we will be able to maintain our diet during the holidays. Some people eat a lot of rich food and gain all the weight they lost before going on holidays, while others remain aware and maintain the quality and quantity of the foods they consume.

For many people, being on vacation means a change in environment, getting out of the daily grind of routine and relaxing. Getting out of the routine can be hard on plans to maintain a diet, or a healthy way of eating, in addition to the difficulties involved in sticking to regular food timings.

But by following some of the tips below, you can make eating while on holidays less taxing on your stomach.

- Engage in touristic activities that involve walking, which helps burn calories as well as being a fun activity.
- Drink plenty of water and reduce the intake of other beverages such as soft drinks and juices that contain lots of added sugars and calories. Restrict yourself to having only one glass of fresh juice a day.
- Use sweeteners instead of white sugar for your coffees and teas, if you aim to lose calories. One teaspoon of white sugar has 20 calories while 1 teaspoon of sweetener has less than 1 calorie.
- Select a variety of vegetable salads, focus on mustard and lemon dressings, instead of mayonnaise and Italian dressings.
- Reduce the intake of junk foods and sweets that contain high amounts of fat, sodium, butter and sugar. But you can still indulge yourself once in a while.
- Replace fast foods with healthier meals such as mushroom steak with baked potato, grilled chicken breast with steamed rice, tomato sauce pastas, sorbets, fruit salads, jelly, frozen yogurt ice creams.
- Do not skip any of the three main meals. It is difficult to follow an intermittent fasting when traveling,

so do not starve yourself otherwise you will find yourself choosing wrong big fatty portion foods.

- Be wary of having a very late dinner, if you have to do so, opt for a zero carbs dinner.
- Avoid adding salt to your dishes. Taste the food first. If it needs more salt, you can add a little, but you have to taste it first. While salt does not have calories, it retains water in the body and will increase your weight and make you feel bloated; and we certainly do not need that during our holidays..
- For your breakfast, all hotels and even restaurants have a variety of diet food items.
- Always choose skim milk, white cheeses, boiled eggs, (an omelet without bread can work but not every day), low fat yogurt, muesli or bran flakes for cereals. If you need something sweet after your breakfast, go for fresh fruit salads.
- Controlling what you eat during your vacation does not mean you cannot taste the traditional food of the country you are visiting. But do it in moderation, especially if it is a rich calorie-dense variety.

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www.eatlikemira.com.



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

IYM 2023

Continuing with our series on millet recipes during this International Year of Millets (IYM), we introduce these tangy kodo millet muffins:

RECIPE

Savory Mini Millet Muffins



Ingredients:

- 2 cup kodo millet
- 1 cup masoor dal
- 1/2 cup sour yogurt
- salt to taste
- 2 - 3 tbsp oil
- 1.5 cup grated vegetables (cabbage+carrot)
- 1/4 cup fenugreek leaves
- 1/4 cup boiled whole jowar (sorghum)
- 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1 tsp green chili paste
- 1/8 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp carom seeds
- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp Eno fruit salt / 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 tbsp white sesame seeds
- 1/4 tsp asafoetida

Instructions:

- Rinse millets and dal twice and soak them in water for about 3 to 4 hours,
- Drain the water completely after the soaking period, add yogurt and grind the mixture to a coarse batter that is on the thicker side
- Leave the mixture to ferment for about 5 to 6 hours or overnight if weather is cold
- Once fermented, add grated vegetables, boiled whole jowar, fenugreek leaves, ginger-garlic and chili paste, turmeric, carom seeds, salt, oil and sugar, and mix well
- Add Eno's fruit salt to the prepared batter and give a quick stir to mix well
- Meanwhile, heat a tbsp oil and add mustard and sesame seeds. When the mustard starts to sputter and sesame seeds start to turn golden brown, add asafoetida and turn off the flame
- Pour the batter little more than 3/4 in a greased muffin tray lined with paper cups
- Drizzle 1/2 tsp of tempering over each cup
- Bake at 180 C for 10 to 15 minutes in a preheated oven until light golden brown
- Serve hot with green chutney and ketchup



Chef Chhaya Thakker

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

KCICAI announces winners of Yoga Competition

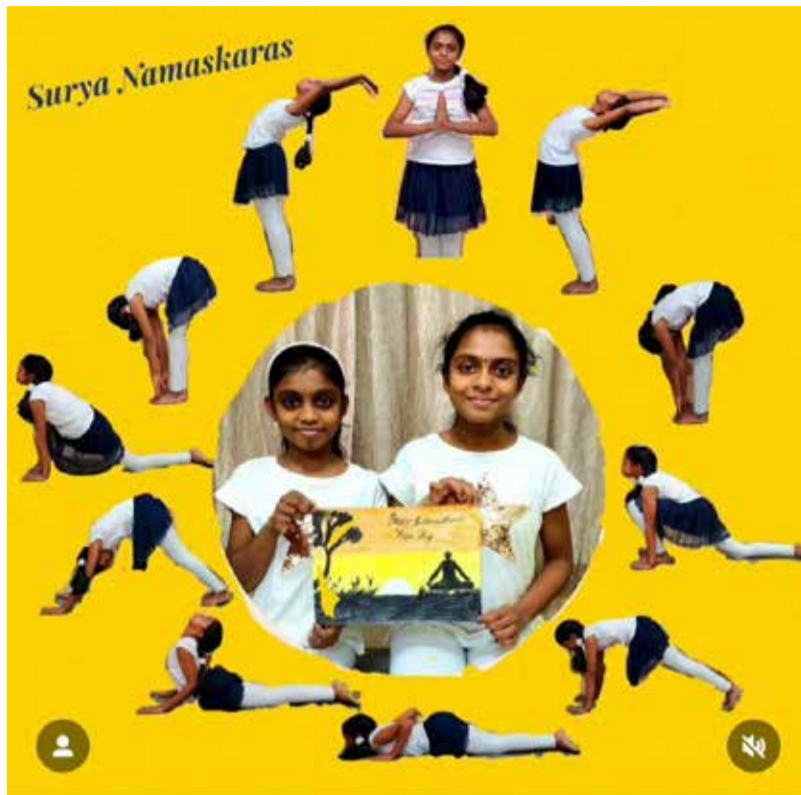
Kuwait Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (KCICAI) announced the winners of its recent Yoga Competition, where yoga practitioners demonstrated their expertise and dedication to the ancient practice of yoga and its transformative power.

The competition witnessed a remarkable display of strength, flexibility, and inner harmony as participants posted their yoga poses on social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram.

The large number of participants reflected the growing popularity of yoga as a means of fostering physical and mental well-being. In the fiercely contested competition, yoga



enthusiasts from various age groups and backgrounds, including in the kids category, came together to demonstrate their mastery of asanas, balance, flexibility, and overall artistry. After careful evaluation by the esteemed judges, CA. Vijay Agrawal and Yogi Shagufta, the winners were announced based on their technique, poise, the seamless



integration of mind, body, and breath and the brief write up of the benefits of their postures.

The first, second and third place winners respectively in various categories of the Winners of the KCICAI Yoga Competition were:

Kids Category: Tasneem Kabir, Nitya Devata and Tanishka Devata, Ayushman Agrawal respectively in first, second and third places.

Female Category: CA. Monika Chopra

Male category: CA. Sai Devata

KCICAI extended its heartfelt congratulations to all the participants

who exhibited exceptional skill and passion throughout the competition. Their dedication to the practice of yoga has undoubtedly inspired countless others to embark on their own transformative journey towards



physical and mental well-being.

The Yoga Competition not only served as a platform to recognize the achievements of the participants, but also aimed to promote the universal values of unity, harmony, and balance.



It provided an opportunity for practitioners to come together, learn from one another, and celebrate the profound impact of yoga on their lives.

KCICAI also expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the judges for their expertise, knowledge, and commitment to ensuring a fair and objective evaluation process, and to the sponsors, volunteers, and others who contributed to making the event a resounding success. To learn more about the KCICAI Yoga Competition and stay informed about future events, visit the website www.icaikw.org

Government begins to fill vacant top positions

In a move signaling the government's renewed resolve to overcome previous shortcomings, the Cabinet has given its approval to urgently begin filling top level posts in several public sector entities that had been lying vacant for quite awhile.

Days after the formation of the government, priorities were set in each ministry, foremost of which was to fill senior vacant positions to speed up work and complete delayed projects.

Reports indicate that the number of vacancies at the level of undersecretaries and their assistants, as well as directors in state entities, had risen to over 140 due to many senior officers having opted for retirement.

Even before the formation of the new government, the caretaker cabinet had approved decrees appointing 33 senior officers in government institutions to fill vacant positions.

The rush to fill vacant posts with qualified personnel came following reports that many government agencies have been working for some time without senior officers. This vacuum at the top had impeded work, and the implementation of many vital projects. The Council of Ministers is now said to be eager to fill vacancies with personnel based on merit.



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Turkey's Economic U-Turn



Selva Demiralp

Selva Demiralp, Professor of Economics and Chair of Yapi Kredi Economic Research at Koç University, is Director of the Koç University-TUSIAD economic research forum.

Despite facing his greatest electoral challenge in more than two decades in power, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won another five-year term in a run-off vote in May, while his Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its allies maintained their parliamentary majority. The contest was closely watched in part because the outcome would shape the direction of the country's troubled economy.

When Erdoğan, who campaigned on a promise to maintain low interest rates, reappointed Mehmet Şimşek, a widely respected champion of economic orthodoxy, as minister of treasury and finance, it signaled a shift from his unsustainable growth-oriented policies. The question is whether this apparent return to "rational ground," as Şimşek put it, is here to stay.

The deterioration of Turkey's economic environment began in 2018, triggered by a currency crisis that made it more expensive for Turk-



ish companies – many of which had grown dependent on foreign lending – to repay their dollar-denominated debt. The crisis deepened in September 2021, when the government implemented the unorthodox New Economy Program (NEP). Reflecting Erdoğan's economic mantra that high interest rates cause high inflation, the plan called for aggressive rate cuts to trigger a depreciation of the Turkish lira, which would, in turn,

increase exports. An export boom would then strengthen the lira, in turn reducing inflationary pressures and replenishing the central bank's foreign reserves.

None of these goals have been met. The nominal exchange rate never appreciated, even with huge interventions by the central bank. Instead, the dollar exchange rate slid from ₺8.5 in September 2021 to ₺26 as of this writing. Inflation soared,

reaching a peak of 85.5% in November 2022, and, last month, the central bank's net foreign reserves turned negative for the first time since 2002.

The government refused to abandon its unconventional approach, even though the NEP failed to achieve its aims. Instead, the central bank – strong-armed by Erdoğan – and the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (BRSA) implemented more than 250 rules and regulations to prop up the low-interest-rate policy long after it had reached its limits.

Showing no intention of changing course during the campaign (even going so far as to construe the AKP's success in the parliamentary elections as an endorsement of his approach, Erdoğan now confronts an economy on the brink of crisis. His appointment of Şimşek, viewed favorably by international investors for respecting central-bank independence and advocating fiscal discipline, indicates a new willingness to ease his grip on monetary policy.

Whether Şimşek can execute a major U-turn depends on his ability to convince investors that the NEP is dead and buried, never to be resurrected. This will be a challenging task, given that a similar return to orthodox policies in late 2020 lasted less than five months. Just because Erdoğan currently supports a more conventional approach does not mean he will fully abandon his views on interest rates.

It is promising that Hafize Gaye Erkan, previously managing director at Goldman Sachs and former president of First Republic Bank, has replaced Şahap Kavcıoğlu, who, as central bank governor, oversaw a series of sharp rate cuts at Erdoğan's behest. Despite her lack of experience in central banking, Erkan's professional background suggests that she will pursue orthodox monetary policy.

In fact, the central bank, under Erkan's leadership, raised interest rates by 6.5 percentage points on June 22. But given that inflation in Turkey is nearly 40%, a rate hike of

this size looks more like a detour to prevent an imminent balance-of-payments crisis, rather than a U-turn. A frontloaded interest-rate increase, coupled with a candid and thorough evaluation of the NEP by Şimşek, would have convinced the markets of a long-term transition to orthodox policies. Lacking that, it is difficult to have confidence in the country's commitment to monetary tightening.

Equally worrisome is the appointment of Kavcıoğlu to the BRSA, where he will likely act as a counterbalance to the contractionary impact of increasing borrowing costs. Erdoğan's speech on June 14, in which he approved of Şimşek's policies but reiterated his belief in lowering interest rates to reduce inflation, supports this hunch.

So far, there has been no discussion about how the costs of a tightening cycle – no matter how small or temporary – will be distributed (the AKP's election manifesto did not anticipate this "bitter medicine"). If low-income households, which already suffer the most from inflation, bear the brunt of these efforts, the social backlash could pressure the central bank to ease prematurely.

A tightening cycle will also impose costs on the banking system beyond the usual duration risk. In an effort to keep lending rates low, policy-makers asked Turkish banks to hold

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Deterioration of Turkey's economic environment began in 2018, triggered by a currency crisis that made it more expensive for Turkish companies, many of which were dependent on foreign lending, to repay their dollar-denominated debt.

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fixed-rate government bonds as part of their required reserves during the NEP. Rate hikes imply a capital loss on these bonds unless the banks hold them until maturity. While the overall size of fixed-rate bonds is about 10% of bank balance sheets and is not expected to cause systemic risk, the government should still consider swapping these bonds to limit capital loss.

Before Şimşek and Erkan can turn around the economy, the Turkish government must reckon with its own disastrous policies to gain credibility. Otherwise, any tightening will fail to attract foreign capital or bring runaway inflation under control.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Japan's Defense: A will to increase budget, but not the way



Takatoshi Ito

A former Japanese deputy vice minister of finance, is a professor at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University and a senior professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo.

Following Japan's defeat in World War II, the United States took pains to ensure that Japanese militarism could never again pose a threat to the Asia-Pacific or the world. As in Germany, these efforts were profoundly successful. For almost eight decades, Japan has eschewed foreign adventures and violent conflict. Pacifism was not only enshrined in its constitution; it also became deeply rooted in its political culture. By relying on America and its network of alliances and global partnerships, Japan could focus on itself, building economic strength rather than military, emerging as one of the world's largest and most advanced economies.

But over the past decade or so, the geopolitical environment has grown more dangerous, and Japanese leaders have increasingly recognized the need for a change. Some have proposed abolishing Article 9 of the constitution, which stringently limits the use of force to self-defense. This has been a contentious topic, owing to sharp divisions on the matter within the Japanese electorate. Nonetheless, in the face of threats such as North Korea's nuclear program and Chinese revisionism, public support for deepening Japan's defense-policy coordination with America has grown.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Japan ranked tenth



globally in 2022 military spending (in current US dollars), putting it behind not only the US, China, and Russia, but also India, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and South Korea. In relative terms, Japan spends only around 1 percent of its GDP on defense, leaving it at 106th in the world, far behind the US (3.45%), the UK (2.23%), France (1.94%), Italy (1.68%), Germany (1.39%), and Canada (1.24%).

But Japan now aims to catch up. In Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's 2023 budget, defense will receive 26.3 percent more than it did in 2022, and this will be merely the first increase in pursuit of a larger program known as the Fundamental Reinforcement of Defense Capabilities. Over the next five years, defense expenditures

are projected to increase to a total of ¥43 trillion (\$298 billion), up from about ¥26 trillion over the previous five-year period.

The Japanese public supports such a change. According to a December 2022 Nikkei survey (conducted in the middle of the 2023 fiscal-year budget discussions), 55 percent of respondents supported the Fundamental Reinforcement, whereas 36 percent opposed it.

Sensing that there are growing threats to Japan and its neighbors, not least Taiwan, the public recognizes the need for developing a greater deterrence capacity, even if doing so is expensive. Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine may be playing out on the other side of the Eurasian continent, but it none-

theless sent a shock wave through the Japanese polity. Suddenly, a major military power with the world's largest nuclear arsenal had taken it upon itself to redraw the map of Europe, brazenly violating the United Nations Charter.

If the world is entering a new era of rearmament and hard power, Japan's 'peace constitution' and soft power may no longer be sufficient to ensure its national security. Gone are the years after WWII when 1 percent of GDP could be considered the ceiling for defense spending. Back then, left-wing parties even suggested that Japan's Self-Defense Forces were unconstitutional. But almost no one thinks this way any longer. Japan and its fellow G7 members may have no wish to change the status quo by force; but other countries clearly do.

While a majority supports the Fundamental Reinforcement, there is deeper disagreement when it comes to paying for the increased defense spending. As Kishida made clear during the budget debate, tax increases will be necessary even after retaining budget surpluses and slimming down other expenditures. Hence, a February 2023 NHK survey shows that only 23 percent of respondents favored a tax increase to finance an increase in defense spending, while 64 percent opposed it.

When the Diet (parliament) finally approved the budget for the Fundamental Reinforcement on June 16, it did not specify when taxes would increase or whether the additional revenues would come from corporate income taxes, personal income taxes, consumption taxes (that is, the value-added tax), or elsewhere.

The implication is that Japan has agreed to expand its defense capability, while punting on the question of how to pay for it. Kishida will most likely postpone any tough decisions until after the next general election, which is expected sometime in the next two years. It is hard to blame him. Tax increases never make for a good campaign platform. Then again, the same could be said of defense weakness in the face of mounting threats to national security.

Climate Science Must Mobilize, not Paralyze Us

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

With subsidies and negative incentives gone, Costa Rica's cattle population dropped by a third, taking pressure off grazing lands.

In the nearly four decades since, forests have recovered and now cover more than half the country. And while forest cover doubled, Costa Rica's per capita income tripled. From this foundation, the economy has grown sustainably and the country has become a world leader in ecotourism.

Now, as this latest IPCC report makes clear, rising temperature is the new threat to both biodiversity and our economy. We all must combat it.

Costa Rica, for its part, has set what former president Carlos Alvarado has called the 'titanic and beautiful task' of decarbonizing the economy. One of the goals of the national decarbonization plan is to ensure that the market properly accounts for the costs of climate change.

This policy has the effect of rendering fossil fuels economically uncompetitive — and creating incentives to use Costa Rica's nearly 100 percent renewable power in the transportation sector to cut our dependence on oil. A moratorium on oil and gas exploitation, respected by five different governments, reinforces these incentives. Making the energy sector work properly — an objective that unites both environmentalists and

economists — means recognizing that a short-term economic boost cannot justify the long-term costs of fossil fuels.

Government has an important role to play in achieving decarbonization. But the work of non-state actors such as local businesses and communities will also be essential. For this reason, government policy has focused on boosting community-based low-impact tourism

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Costa Rica's approach to climate change is about people, not industry and markets. Our commitment to tackling climate change is based on an understanding of the enormous health risks and costs that arise from inaction.

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initiatives that value local knowledge. The Costa Rican experience shows that environmental stewardship is a job done best by alliances between local people and national leaders, united by the common cause of conservation.

At its heart, Costa Rica's approach to climate change is about people, not industry and markets. Our commitment to tackling climate change is based on an understanding of the enormous

health risks and costs that arise from inaction. Costa Rica devotes significant resources to tackling problems like dengue fever and malaria because our people remain our most important asset. And staying below the 1.5°C limit will mean 3.3 million fewer cases of dengue fever annually in Latin America and the Caribbean, fewer people at risk of malaria, and less food instability and poor nutrition caused by higher temperatures

and unstable weather patterns. Costa Rica is proud to be leading the world by putting this approach into practice. As a result, we are one of the few countries ready to exceed our commitments under the Paris climate agreement. Not all of the changes will be easy, and getting them right will require perseverance and a commitment to adaptability. Other countries that agreed as part of the Paris agreement to boost

the ambition of their national climate plans by 2020 can learn from our experience in aiming for decarbonization, investing in natural assets, and recognizing the importance of the climate for a healthy population.

One of the most obvious lessons is the interdependence of these policies. Climate change is a collective problem, no single policy is enough, and no country can solve it alone. But this interdependence cannot be an excuse for paralysis. Limiting warming to 1.5° Celsius is a goal around which we can all unite in diverse ways.

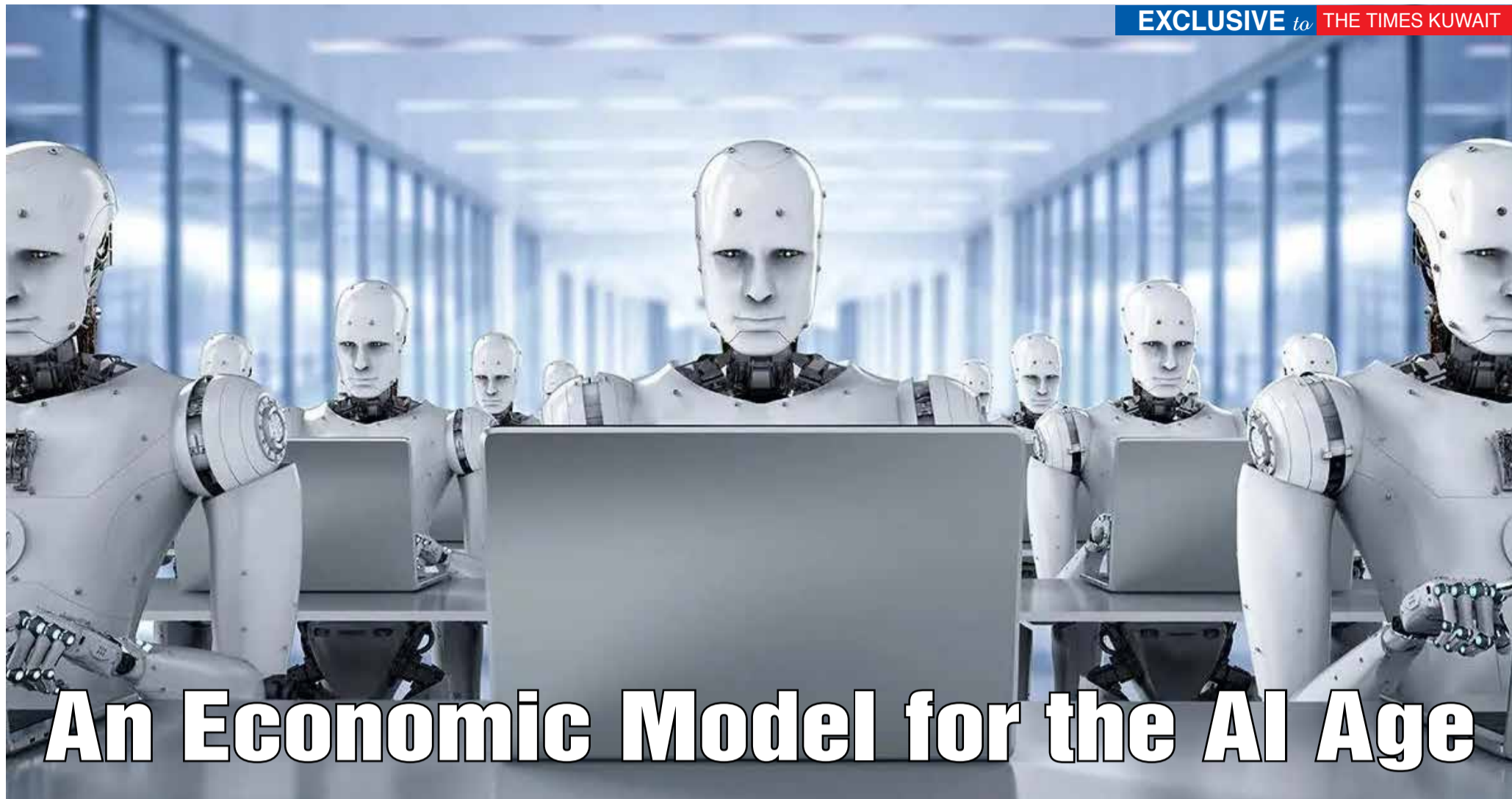
The next United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP 28, to be held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, provides an opportunity for political leaders to prove they understand the science underpinning the IPCC report, and are ready to take ambitious steps to achieve the 1.5° target.

Unless all of us do so, the consequences will spare none of us.

Monica Araya is Executive Director, International, at the European Climate Foundation since March 2024. The founder and Executive Director of Nivela, leads the citizens group Costa Rica Limpia

Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, former Costa Rican Minister of Environment and Energy, is CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



An Economic Model for the AI Age



Dambisa Moyo

An international economist, is the author of four New York Times bestselling books, including *Edge of Chaos: Why Democracy Is Failing to Deliver Economic Growth, and How to Fix It*.

In April, Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai predicted that artificial intelligence would have an impact "more profound" than any other human innovation, from fire to electricity. While it is impossible to know precisely what that impact will be, two changes appear particularly likely: demand for labor will fall, and productivity will rise. In other words, we appear to be moving toward a labor-less economic model, in which fewer human workers are needed to sustain growth.

Jobs in back-office support, legal services, and accountancy seem to face the most immediate risk from new generative AI technologies, including large language models like ChatGPT-4. But every sector of the economy is likely to be affected. Because language tasks account for 62 percent of employees' time, a recent report by Accenture notes, large language models could affect 40 percent of all working hours.

Accenture estimates that 65 percent of the time spent on these language tasks can be 'transformed into more productive activity through augmentation and automation'. And a new McKinsey report predicts that the AI-driven productivity boost could add the equivalent of

\$2.6-4.4 trillion in value to the global economy annually.

But, even as higher productivity boosts economic growth, the diminution of labor would undermine it, meaning that, ultimately, growth could well stagnate. Reduced demand for human workers implies a steep rise in unemployment, especially since the world population is set to continue growing.

Unemployment is already a persistent problem. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the total number of unemployed young people (15-24 years old) has remained around 70 million for more than two decades. And the global youth unemployment rate has been trending up, from 12.2 percent in 1995 to

15.6 percent in 2021. That way, the state and, in turn, the general population, would claim a greater share of the AI windfall. Of course, the AI revolution also has profound implications for businesses. For starters, companies will have to adjust their strategies and operations to account for the combination of higher

productivity and a smaller labor force, which will enable them to generate more output with less capital. Companies that adjust as needed, and deliver low cost-to-income ratios, will attract investors; those that are slow to change their operating models will lose competitiveness and could fail.

The effects of such corporate adjustments will reverberate throughout the economy. Reduced demand for capital by firms will put downward pressure on the cost of capital, and companies will have less need to borrow from banks, causing overall activity in capital markets also to decline. Higher taxes on corporate profits (or revenues) would create additional challenges. While the state will need to increase revenues to support the growing number of unemployed, this could leave corporations with lower retained earnings to reinvest, despite the additional profits generated by AI-driven productivity gains.

This is bad not only for the companies themselves. Lower investment in the economy would undermine growth, shrink the economic pie, and lower living standards. It would also narrow the tax base, erode the middle class, and widen inequality between the owners of capital and the traditional labor force.

So, while governments might want to raise taxes and redistribute the revenues in order to alleviate the short-term disruption caused by AI, in the long term, they will need to think bigger. In fact, policymakers are going to have to rethink prevailing economic models and principles — beginning with the assumption that labor is a key engine of growth. In the age of AI, workers may do little to drive growth, but they must benefit from it.

“Reduced demand for human workers implies a steep rise in unemployment, which is already a persistent problem. According to ILO, the global youth unemployment rate rose from 12.2 percent in 1995 to 15.6 percent in 2021.”

just under 13 percent after the 2008 global financial crisis to 15.6 percent in 2021.

AI will exacerbate these trends. And because AI's impact on labor markets is likely to be structural, the rise in unemployment would amount to a permanent dislocation. Structural unemployment could return to levels last seen in the deindustrialization of the 1980s, when joblessness in the United Kingdom, for example, remained above 10 percent for the better part of the 1980s. How can governments support GDP growth in a new era of persistent structural unemployment? The most obvious likely response is a shift to greater redistribution, with governments raising taxes on the proceeds from AI-driven productivity gains and using those revenues to support the wider population, including by implementing some version of a universal basic income.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Making International Summits Work



Ngaire Woods

Dean of the Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford.

The world leaders who just gathered in Paris for the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact have vowed to mobilize resources to support developing countries grappling with debt crises and to empower the Global South to assume a larger role in global governance. While these are worthy goals, such high-profile summits often yield little more than group photographs and empty pledges.

Even so, the Paris meeting is significant because it set the stage for a series of leaders' summits in September: the G20 meeting in New Delhi, the Finance in Common gathering in Colombia, and the United Nations' SDG Summit in New York.

The efficacy of these summits becomes even more important given what is at stake. The increase in extreme poverty over the past three years, together with the growing frequency of humanitarian and natural disasters, many of them caused by climate change, underscores countries' need to build resilience.

But international cooperation is declining just when we need it most. Developing countries feel excluded from a decision-making process that puts wealthy countries' needs first, whether in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic or by prioritizing Ukraine's security over theirs. Clearly, catalyzing effective cooperation requires a more concerted effort.

This is not to say that international summitry cannot lead to meaningful change. The G20 summits held in Washington in November 2008 and in London in April 2009, for example, averted a global economic meltdown and reshaped the financial system. And the 1944 UN Monetary and Financial Conference in Bretton Woods, New

Hampshire, which began and concluded with one-day leaders' summits, laid the foundations for international economic governance as we know it.

There are, however, several core elements that are crucial to the success of international summits. The balance of power in the room — specifically, the alignment between what attendees can actually implement and what they can agree on — is critical.

Another important element is participation. The leaders of many developing countries attended the Paris meeting, including Niger, Egypt, South Africa, Colombia, Tunisia, Sri Lanka,

building on its own efforts and those of others to suspend repayments in the event of a climate disaster or a pandemic. Moreover, by improving efficiency and fostering cooperation, multilateral institutions could maximize their impact.

But to increase multilateral lenders' resources and tools, or to implement innovative financing ideas such as an international tax on carbon emissions from shipping, G20 countries must forge a consensus. Imposing a shipping tax, for example, requires reaching an agreement on its implementation and the allocation of expected revenues. Currently, there are several competing claims.

Ukraine competed for participants in its Ukraine Recovery Conference, which overlapped with the Paris summit.

In addition to the absence of G20 leaders, the Paris summit and other gatherings have lacked adequate preparation, which reduces the likelihood of reaching viable agreements on goals and policies. As the political scientist Robert Putnam famously observed in his groundbreaking study of the 1978 G7 meeting in Bonn, preparation can make or break a summit. A dynamic preparation process can help political leaders marshal support for international agreements by broadening the range of policies that domestic interest groups would find acceptable (their 'win-set').

During the 1978 G7 summit, for example, the German government faced pressure from the Bundesbank, the finance ministry, the business and banking community, and the Free Democratic Party, a key member of the governing coalition, to oppose a global economic stimulus package. Only a small group of officials from the chancellor's office and economy ministry, together with the Social Democrats and trade unions, advocated a more expansionary economic policy. But the G7 negotiations created an opportunity for the expansionists to make their case and, ultimately, secure a modest victory.

Upcoming summits must lay the groundwork for future global cooperation. Without actively building public support in participating countries for the commitments made by their leaders, the emergence of overlapping and potentially transformative win-sets is highly unlikely.

A satirical cartoon once depicted a G7 summit, with one leader saying, "If we don't have to do what we promise, let's agree to eradicate all poverty." Such cynicism is a luxury we can no longer afford. In today's rapidly fragmenting world, leaders must meet, engage in meaningful discussion, and take decisive action to foster effective cooperation. Thoroughly prepared, well-attended summits would be a good place to start.

“Several core elements are crucial to the success of international summits. The balance of power in the room — specifically, the alignment between what attendees can actually implement and what they can agree on — is critical.”

Nigeria, Barbados, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. The heads of multilateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and major NGOs also participated. Many G20 leaders, however, were notably absent.

For developing-country leaders, the Paris summit was a unique opportunity to communicate their needs to their wealthier-country counterparts and the heads of international organizations. The World Bank, for example, could accelerate the implementation of its plan to increase lending capacity by \$50 billion over the next decade. The IMF could propose more ambitious ways to increase the funds available to developing countries. The Fund could also advocate improved methods of restructuring or forgiving sovereign debt,

The problem is that the heads of some major shareholding governments are missing. US President Joe Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for example, did not attend the Paris summit, meeting in Washington instead. With the United States approaching an election year and Republicans decrying international institutions' anti-fossil-fuel stance, the Biden administration is focused on other issues. Modi is also focused on an election next year and has already leveraged India's G20 presidency to launch the Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable with the IMF and the World Bank, as well as an expert group on strengthening multilateral development banks.

More broadly, prime ministers and presidents jostle among each other for center-stage when it comes to global cooperation. We saw a bit of this last week as the United Kingdom and



Obesity treatments constrained by medical misconceptions

People living with obesity not only confront social stigma and misunderstanding about their medical condition, but also end up receiving ineffective treatments because of misconceptions and presumptions among healthcare professionals.

Data from a new survey found that misunderstanding about the root causes of obesity leads many doctors to recommend treatments that do not help alleviate the condition for people living with this chronic disease. The survey, which included people living with obesity, healthcare providers, and even employers, found that 58 percent of healthcare providers believe that obesity is mainly due to lifestyle choices

Data from the survey also showed that 43 percent of respondents consider that people living with obesity can reach a healthy weight if they "try hard enough"; 24 percent believed most patients with obesity are metabolically healthy even though they are carrying extra weight; and 67 percent held the view that people with obesity should be "required to

demonstrate motivation to make lifestyle changes before medical treatment is offered."

Health experts say that these misconceptions and biases are harmful, as they ignore the fact that obesity can be caused by a wide range of factors, including genetics and other factors over which patients have no control. They add that in order to obtain optimum outcome, it is crucial that doctors recommend treatment only after a case-by-case diagnosis of patients.

Results from the survey, which looked at prevailing barriers hindering the prescription of anti-obesity medications, was released by Eli Lilly and Company, the US-based multinational pharmaceutical firm. Even if we discount the objectivity of the survey released by a pharmaceutical manufacturer, the findings still remain quite revealing.

The survey showed that many healthcare professionals assume obesity is due to wrong choices made by patients and can be treated through lifestyle adjustments. They point out that there are many obese patients who are able to sustain large amounts of weight loss for



complex condition, the medical causes of which science has yet to fully comprehend. Latest studies identify obesity as a chronic disease that requires long-term management, and is likely due to genetic susceptibility and triggered by a wide range of environmental factors — the food supply, barriers to physical activity, stressors, and drugs and chemicals that cause weight gain.

Additionally, research shows a correlation between obesity and infection with certain viruses, specifically a few strains of adenovirus. Evolving understanding of the gut microbiome also reveals that it too plays a role in lean versus obese phenotypes, at least in mice. Science is still trying to decipher the role of the microbiome and weight in humans,

Health experts say that it is high time that medical personnel everywhere start treating obesity like every other chronic disease, by acknowledging that there are biological factors working against most people as they try to lose weight, and until those biological factors are addressed, long-term weight loss is not likely to be successful.

Lifestyle changes are certainly foundational to work with weight management, and these changes are necessary to maintain weight loss over the long-term, but they are not the most common trigger for this disease. More intensive interventions are needed to treat obesity, including medications and surgery. Medications for weight loss and surgical options have been proven to provide, on average, more weight loss than lifestyle intervention.

many years. But studies show that most people who are able to lose weight and maintain this loss for extended periods, are usually people who had lower rates of adverse behavior changes to start with.

The finding that 43 percent of healthcare providers believe patients with obesity can generally achieve and maintain a healthy weight if they only tried enough is particularly surprising. The science has been clear for a long time that biology plays a critical role in someone's ability to lose and maintain weight loss, and for many people struggling with overweight and obesity, lifestyle changes are often not enough.

Believing obesity to be due to lifestyle choices, is an overly simplistic view of a



Diagnosing fever using a new mobile app

Whether at home, school or workplace, a temperature check using a simple thermometer provides a quick diagnosis of an illness, and could help introduce preventive measures to reduce spread of viral infections. However, many homes and even frontline workers, especially in under-resourced areas, do not have access to this simple medical device.

To address this issue, a team led by researchers at the University of Washington in the United States have now created an app called FeverPhone, which transforms smartphones into thermometers without adding new hardware. Instead, it uses the phone's touchscreen and repurposes the existing battery temperature sensors to gather data that a machine learning app model then uses to estimate people's core body temperatures.

When the researchers tested FeverPhone on patients in an emergency department, the app estimated core body temperatures with accuracy comparable to some consumer thermometers. The new app could allow people to share their fever results with public health agencies within minutes of being diagnosed by their smartphones, helping healthcare professionals to intervene faster and more efficiently.

Clinical-grade thermometers use tiny sensors known as thermistors to estimate body temperature. Off-the-shelf smartphones also have thermistors that are mainly used to measure the temperature of the battery. The researchers behind the app realized that they could repurpose these thermistors to track

heat transfer between a person and a phone. The phone touchscreen senses skin-to-phone contact, and the thermistors then gauge the air temperature and the rise in heat when the phone touches a body.

To test this idea, the team started by gathering data in a lab. To simulate a warm forehead, the researchers heated a plastic bag of water in low temperature and pressed phone screens against the bag. To account for variations in circumstances, such as different people using different phones, the researchers tested three phone models. They also added accessories such as a screen protector and a case and changed the pressure on the phone.

The researchers used the data from different test cases to train a machine learning model that used the complex interactions to estimate body temperature. Since the sensors are supposed to gauge the phone's battery heat, the app tracks how quickly the phone heats up and then uses the touchscreen data to account for how much of that comes from a person touching it. As they added more test cases, the researchers were able to calibrate the model to account for the variations in things such as phone accessories.

The researchers then took FeverPhone to the university hospital's Emergency Department for a clinical trial where they compared its temperature estimates against an oral thermometer reading. They recruited 37 participants, 16 of whom had at least a mild fever.

To use FeverPhone, the participants held the phones like point-and-shoot cameras — with forefingers and thumbs touching the corner edges to reduce heat from the hands being sensed. Then participants pressed the touchscreen against their foreheads for about 90 seconds, which the researchers found to be the ideal time to sense body heat transferring to the phone. Overall, FeverPhone estimated patient core body temperatures with an average error of about 0.23 degrees Celsius, which is within the clinically acceptable range of 0.5 C.

The researchers have highlighted a few limitations to their study and areas for further investigation, including that the study did not have participants with severe fevers above 101.5 F (38.6 C), because these temperatures are easy to diagnose and because sweaty skin tends to confound other skin-contact thermometers. Also, FeverPhone was tested on only three phone models; training it to run on other smartphones, as well as devices such as smartwatches, would increase its potential for public health applications.




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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

AI could challenge market systems



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Friedrich von Hayek is best known for his influential 1944 polemic *The Road to Serfdom*. But his most celebrated work in economics is *The Use of Knowledge in Society*, a rather short article on how society uses and acquires dispersed information about economic fundamentals such as preferences, priorities, and productivity.

The article develops a powerful critique of central planning, arguing that no centralized authority can adequately collect and process "the dispersed bits of incomplete and frequently contradictory knowledge which all the separate individuals possess." Without knowing each individual's preferences among millions of products, let alone their ideas about where to use their talents most productively and creatively, central planners are bound to fail.

By contrast, market economies can process and aggregate such information both efficiently and effectively. Price signals seamlessly convey data about market participants' priorities and preferences. When tin becomes scarcer, its price rises, and Hayek ex-

plains, all that "users of tin need to know is that some of the tin they used to consume is now more profitably employed elsewhere and that, in consequence, they must economize tin."

Nor is this just about processing existing data. The market system, Hayek argues, is also better at discovering, or even producing, new, relevant signals: "the 'data' from which the economic calculus starts are never for the whole society 'given' to a single mind which could work out the implications and can never be so given."

Although Hayek is celebrated for offering a knowledge-based (or 'computational') critique of central planning, his arguments are best understood as a call for decentralization more broadly. He notes that, "If we can agree that the economic problem of society is mainly one of rapid adaptation to changes ... the ultimate decisions must be left to the people who are familiar with these circumstances." Ultimately, Hayek concludes, "We must solve it by some form of decentralization" – namely, through the market economy and the price system. For decades, Hayek's arguments provided the basis for rejecting all kinds of regulation. If any regulation of economic activity (such as measures governing the release of new products) or of prices (such as caps or controls) interferes with the functioning of the price system, they will hamper the decentralized process of adaptation to an ever-changing world.

But now, artificial intelligence, especially generative AI models that encode, process, and deploy (via hundreds of billions of parameters) massive amounts of pre-existing information, raises two challenges for Hayek's argument.



First, given AI's ability to absorb, organize, and interpret data on a massive scale, one might wonder if it could render central planning more efficient than today's market systems. Such is the hope behind 'AI socialism' (or 'fully automated luxury communism'): AI will give central planners the means to determine optimal and (supposedly) benevolent economic allocations. But while AI socialism is an interesting thought experiment, it offers only a superficial critique of Hayek. Even if an AI could do all the computations and data collection that the market economy already does (a very big if), the concentration of power in the hands of a central authority would be a major cause for concern.

The famine that killed five million Ukrainians in the early 1930s was not

the result of Stalin failing to compute the right allocations.

On the contrary, he had sufficient information, and he used it to extract as much grain as possible from the region (owing to larger political motivations and possibly a desire to devastate Ukraine).

Moreover, Hayek's criticism of central planning goes beyond crunching the existing numbers. As we have seen, it is primarily focused on adaptation to change, and thus emphasizes the creation of information as much as its use.

"The sort of knowledge with which I have been concerned," Hayek writes, "is knowledge of the kind which by its nature cannot enter into statistics." The implication is that not even an all-powerful large language model (LLM)

could deal with the true nature of dispersed information.

Artificial Intelligence also poses a second, deeper challenge to Hayek's arguments. In the age of generative AIs like ChatGPT-4, should we even presume that markets will facilitate the decentralized use of information? The technology's development is being led by Alphabet (Google) and Microsoft, two massive corporations that are very much in the business of centralizing information. Even if other companies can compete with this duopoly, LLMs, by their nature, may require high degrees of centralization. It is all too easy to imagine a scenario in which a large share of humanity gets its information from the same model.

Of course, Google or Microsoft's control of information is not the same as that of the Communist Party of China. But, as Simon Johnson and I argue in our new book, *Power and Progress: Our Thousand-Year Struggle over Technology and Prosperity*, even seemingly benign forms of centralization bring myriad economic and political costs, depending on who is ultimately in control. In the United States, these costs include rising monopolization of the tech sector, because control of data creates entry barriers. Moreover, the development of business models based on constant online engagement and individualized digital ads, breeds emotional outrage, extremism, and echo chambers online, with damaging effects for democratic participation.

Decentralization therefore is still desirable. But to foster it in the age of AI, we may need to turn Hayek's argument on its head, or at least on its side, by embracing regulation, rather than focusing solely on its potential costs.



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