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strong economic
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250 Fils

Water scarcity an existential threat



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Water is the most precious natural resource required for the survival of all life forms on Earth. We need water to sustain our health, to ensure food security, and to provide the energy that fuels industries and drives our modern way of life. Despite the essential role that water plays in human development, and the existential threat that water scarcity poses for humanity, World Health Organization (WHO) estimates show that in 2021 more than 2.2 billion people around the world lacked access to safe drinking water, while 4.2 billion did not have adequate sanitation.

According to studies by the World Resources Institute (WRI), a global non-profit research organization, one-quarter of the world's population currently live in countries facing extremely high water stress, where demand regularly outpaces available supply. Repercussions from climate change and weather patterns, including an increase in the number and intensity of floods and droughts have exacerbated existing water risks and pushed water systems around the world into



greater stress.

The WRI's latest 'Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas' released a week back on 16 August, reveals that at least 50 percent of the world's population — around 4 billion people — live under highly water-stressed conditions for at least one month of the year. The two most water-stressed regions in the world are the Middle East and

North Africa (MENA) region, where 83 percent of the population is exposed to extremely high water stress, and South Asia, where 74 percent is similarly at danger.

The Atlas also reveals that 25 countries — home to one-quarter of the global population — face extremely high water stress from regularly using up almost their entire annual

available water supply. Unsurprisingly, Kuwait, known for its arid climate and absence of any natural surface water sources, is one of these two-dozen countries challenged by risks arising from water stress.

Kuwait is also among the five most water-stressed countries in the world, along with Bahrain, Cyprus, Lebanon, Oman and Qatar. The water stress in these countries is mostly driven by low supply, paired with high demand from domestic, agricultural and industrial use. A new report by Fanack Water, a Netherlands-based research group that focuses on water availability and demand in the MENA region, showed that Kuwait's per capita water consumption of an average 447 liters per day is among the highest in the world.

The Fanack profile on Kuwait also revealed the country's near-complete dependence on water-desalination plants for potable water. Desalinated water provides around 92 percent of water for domestic and industrial needs, and accounts for 60 percent of total water supply. In addition, the report provided other water details including that gross freshwater consumption reached 730.4 million cubic meters (MCM) in 2019,

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Kuwaiti Dinar remains world's strongest currency

The Kuwaiti Dinar retains its position as the strongest currency in the world in the latest listing of top-ten global currencies, by Forex.com, a leading online currency trading platform. Receiving over 80 percent of its global revenue from the oil industry, and with trade in this oil conducted in US dollars allows the country to have large reserves of US dollars to back their own currencies. Interestingly, the Kuwaiti dinar is not widely available for currency trading and even if it was, the stability of the currency makes trading the instrument a low-yield investment when factoring in fees and commissions.

The second strongest currency is the Bahraini Dinar (BHD). Bahrain, similar to Kuwait, is an exporter of crude oil. Other major exports include textiles and aluminum. Bahrain entered a free trade agreement with the US in 2006, and since 1986 the Bahraini dinar has been pegged to the US dollar at 2.652. That means a single US dollar equals 0.376 dinar.

In third place is the Omani Rial (OMR) with a single rial worth 2.60 US dollars. The rial was introduced in the

1970s and pegged to the US dollar in 1986. The significant jump in value between the fourth-place Jordanian dinar and the Omani rial is due to the country's strong petroleum production. Sharing the tip of the Arabian Peninsula with Yemen, the country has ample access to the valuable natural resource.



Other countries whose currencies are ranked in the top-ten strongest currency list include in order of their descending strength, Jordanian Dinar (JOD), Pound Sterling (GBP), Gibraltar Pound (GIP), Cayman Islands Dollar (KYD), Swiss Franc (CHF), and the Euro (EUR) in ninth spot.

The United States Dollar (USD),

which was indexed as the 10th strongest currency in the world, is both the world's most traded currency and largest percentage of federal reserve currency around the globe. At number ten on this list, only nine currencies can have a single unit exchange for more than one dollar.

Due to its global dominance, the dollar is used to price many commodities such as oil and precious metals like gold and silver. It is also the most widely traded currency on the global foreign exchange market. USD is involved in 88 percent of all forex trades, according to the Bank of International Settlements.

A currency's strength is determined by many factors including supply, demand, inflation and price changes over a long period of time, and the amount of foreign currency that can be exchanged for one unit of said currency. The US dollar is widely used as the fixed base currency because of its high utility across foreign markets and large reserves in foreign banks. In fact, US dollars make up over 60 percent of the world's central bank reserves.

In forex trading, a currency's

strength is relative to another foreign currency in the given pair. The US dollar and the euro (EUR/USD forex pair) are the two currencies with the largest reserves around the world and therefore are among the most impactful currencies on the forex market.

Foreign exchange occurs around the strength of various currencies. This can be seen immediately in how currency pairs are displayed, with the stronger currency listed first and the weaker currency listed second. The spread is then calculated by the ever-changing strength of both currencies.

Al-Shaab area included in WHO Healthy Cities network

Governor of Hawally and Acting-Governor of the Capital Governorate Ali Al-Asfar announced last week that Al-Shaab area located in Hawally governorate had been included in World Health Organization's (WHO) Regional Healthy City Network.



Speaking to the media after signing the registration document, Al-Asfar said that the selection was a positive step for the residents of the area. He expressed hope that all areas within Hawally and the Capital Districts would join the Regional Healthy City Network to elevate health services of these areas.

For her part, Dr. Amal Al-Yahya, the head of Healthy Cities office at the Health Ministry indicated that Al-Shaab's membership would increase the number of Kuwaiti areas in the network to 17. She added that implementing the network standards within health districts would help develop services and infrastructure and in turn provide quality healthcare to the population.

The Health Cities initiative, launched by WHO in the 1990s, is aimed at improving the health of societies worldwide by, among others, including healthcare in policy agendas of countries. A healthy city is defined not by a particular health status or health outcome it has achieved, but rather by its commitment to health and a process and structure to achieve it.

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Masterclass Lifestyle to hold media workshop

By Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Masterclass Lifestyle Workshops in collaboration with The Times Kuwait and Mega Love Radio will hold a news media workshop on 2nd of September from 9am to 12 noon at the Masterclass Lifestyle Studio located in Salmiya. Resource speakers include Ricky Laxa, Journalist of The Times Kuwait and GMA 7 TV news correspondent, Jane Nolasco, a former TV segment host of SPN TV 5, and Ruel Centino, founder and host of Mega Love Radio.

The event, a project initiated by Masterclass Lifestyle Workshops, aims to provide informative details on news writing and formatting, identifying fake news and legal concerns pertaining to media. The event will be hosted by Laxa, while Nolasco will share her own insights and personal experience as a segment presenter and Centino will provide

hands-on details on technicalities of live broadcast and podcast.

Participants to the workshop have been limited to 25 as Masterclass aims to organize a second batch to accommodate more interested individuals. Certificates of attendance will be awarded at the end of the workshop.

Mega Love Radio airs its segment on Facebook with its own set of DJs: Mega Hugot Dugtungan with DJ RJ, Color Game Time with DJ Thinkerbell, Mega Chikahan with DJ Annie, DJ RZ on air and Mega Win with MLR DJs. Jane Nolasco popular of Facebook and YouTube with her international and local travels and food vlogs under its banner 'Uptown Goddess' and Ricky Laxa with The Morning Talk Asia which features segments on recipes, Talk N' Talk a personality profile show, Music and me which showcases vocal artists and Ricky Laxa Reports for news and public affairs.



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Viet Nam – A Proud and Welcoming Country



By H.E. Ngo Toan Thang
Ambassador of Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

I have been telling stories of how beautiful, welcoming Viet Nam is in meetings, receptions and talks with the local people and other diplomats for the last two years of my tenure as the Ambassador of Viet Nam in Kuwait. As Viet Nam is going to celebrate its 78th Independence Day, allow me to, one more time, share how proud and open Viet Nam is nowadays.

We are proud that after thousands of years, Viet Nam is created, shaped and shown in the map of the world as a small but amazing country. Viet Nam has stood the test of time, creating itself a unique culture with stories, traditions that cannot be mistaken with any other places in the world. President Ho Chi Minh officially declared the nation's identity and independence in 1945, while the place, its people and language had been created for almost a century.

Our pride also blooms from challenges. Both in the past and in the present, Viet Nam has always overcome the external and internal challenges with every tool the people have in hand, to help the country move forward on the path of peace and development. We fought wars and erased the separation between the North and the South.

Today, Viet Nam is a unified, independent

country in the international arena. Challenges in the past have helped us realize the important, valuable lessons that could pass on for generations, and those lessons nurture the thing which is called 'Viet Nam pride' in us all.

Nothing is more valuable than independence and freedom. That is the sentence learned by heart by everyone in Viet Nam. To be born as citizens of an independent, developing country, and to contribute for the prosperity of it — that is the ultimate mission for all the Vietnamese people around the world, including me and my staff at the Embassy of Viet Nam in Kuwait.

Ever since Viet Nam and Kuwait established relations in 1976 and we opened the embassy in Kuwait in 2003, promoting people-to-people exchange, trade and tourism, attracting more tourists to come to Viet Nam has been one of the main priorities. This year, we are happy to say that Viet Nam is once again open for all.

You may have heard about the beauty of Viet

Nam, but only by setting foot on our land can you feel it in every sense. First thing you would notice is how pleasing the weather here could be: with a long shoreline from the North to the South, mountains that reach more than three thousand meters above sea level, our country offers all kinds of seasons. Pick the time and you can enjoy one, two, even four seasons in a day in just one place!

On the road, you will explore the beauty of the scenery. No matter how you travel – by car, train, motorbike, or even by the unique tricycle called 'xich lo', you will see the vibrant colors in the city streets, country roads, curving passes and rivers, and so on.

You might have seen the photos on social media, but it would be more impressive to see it for yourself. And we should also mention how enjoyable the beat of life in Viet Nam is. From the peace and tranquility of far out unexplored destinations, to the excitement and buoyancy

in the top attractions, tourists have the chance to immerse in one-of-a-kind experiences.

The openness of Viet Nam lies not only in tourism but everything else. We welcome friends from all around the world, and we are proud to serve you with the best. Tourists will also be able to enjoy a month-long stay with the convenience of e-visas, meaning you could think of a trip to Viet Nam anytime and anywhere.

The Embassy of Viet Nam in Kuwait, with the support from partners from both countries, has organized many events to promote cultural exchange, with a view to boosting the identity of Viet Nam among Kuwaiti people and attracting more tourists. On behalf of all the staff that helped organize the events and realize the visions, I am proud to say that the events have been remarkably successful.

My wish for this year's Independence Day is simple — to see more and more Kuwaiti people come and explore all the beauties of my country. Now, Kuwaitis can easily apply for e-visa to Viet Nam. On the other side, Kuwait has Viet Nam's support in aspects of development and cooperation, and by strengthening the work on tourism between two countries, Viet Nam and Kuwait will gain its image of each other as an important partner in the development paths of both nations.

From my heart, I would like to express my gratitude to the Kuwait Amir, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; the Kuwait Crown Prince, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; the Kuwait Prime Minister, His Highness Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah; the government, businesses and people of Kuwait for choosing Viet Nam, then and now, as a destination for more opportunities. I also have faith that as time passes, Kuwait will always thrive as a well-developed, proud country in the Gulf region.



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Indian MoS V. Muraleedharan with First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Sabah

Visit by Indian Minister of State revitalizes relations

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Indian Minister of State (MoS) for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan's 2-day visit to Kuwait has helped further revitalize and energize the age-old friendly relations with Kuwait. In a packed two-day schedule the visiting minister held a series of meetings with senior government officials and a wide cross section of the large Indian diaspora.

While meetings with the government officials centered around bilateral relations, trade, investment and community welfare issues, the minister took time off from his busy schedule to meet with Indian community members to hear their issues of concern.

MoS Muraleedharan started his trip by paying floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi's statue at the Indian Embassy premises, and then unveiling a 'Shilaphalakam', a memorial plaque dedicated to the spirit of sacrifices, and in remembrance of bravehearts of the nation. He then held extensive



V Muraleedharan with Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al Sabah.

Following the ICSG meeting he had a good interaction with representatives of Indian Nurses Federation of Kuwait (INFOK). While appreciating their services, the minister pointed out that they made important contributions by strengthening the support system provided by Indian nurses in Kuwait. The minister, along with members of professional associations such as the Indian Doctors Forum (IDF), Indian Engineers and Indian schools principals, also witnessed India's historic landing on the moon.

Later in the evening the minister interacted with some members of the large Indian community, where he expressed pleasure to meet the dynamic and vibrant community. Calling them the building blocks of India-Kuwait relations, he briefed them on the several initiatives taken by the government of India in the country's path to development.

The next day, in his first meeting the MoS called on the First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Sabah and discussed the welfare of the Indian community residing in the country.

He also had a good interaction with Deputy

Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Sabah where he reviewed several aspects of the bilateral partnership and discussed ways and means to diversify the trade and investment relationship. He was also touched by the warm gesture of the Deputy FM in organizing a special cake on the success of the landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the moon the previous day.

The minister held his final official meeting with Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al Sabah. They had wide ranging and productive discussion on further strengthening India-Kuwait partnership in bilateral and multilateral contexts.

The meetings with Kuwaiti government officials provided an opportunity to discuss avenues to further strengthen bilateral relations in different areas. There was a clear interest on both sides to give more emphasis to the economic partnership. Diversification of bilateral trade and greater bilateral investments was stressed by both delegations. MoS expressed appreciation to the Kuwaiti side for the welfare of the Indian community in Kuwait and discussed issues affecting the Indian community.

Later the minister also visited a worker camp run by the NBTC Group, a leading local engineering and construction company, where he interacted with Indian workers and highlighted Indian PM Modi's policies that were bringing benefits to the Indian community abroad. He also reaffirmed the government's commitment for their continued welfare and wellbeing.

In his last engagement the minister attended a reception held in his honor by the Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC) at the Radisson Blu Hotel. In his address to the gathering the minister highlighted the Indian government's efforts to create a conducive environment for business and trade by removing unnecessary restrictions and compliance measures.

He further emphasized India's transformation into a global power, highlighting its achievements in areas like food exports and pharmaceuticals, including the significant role played during the COVID-19 pandemic by supplying vaccines and medicines globally. The Minister echoed the sentiments of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi by emphasizing inclusivity, development, trust, and collective efforts. He mentioned that India aspired to achieve a per capita income of US\$20,000 and attain developed nation status, urging the business community's active participation to achieve this goal.

The Minister also praised the substantial contribution of the Indian business and professional community abroad in India's transformative journey. He underscored the importance of their contribution in India's pursuit of becoming a developed nation. The Minister encouraged the members of the business community in Kuwait to engage in India's growth journey, collaborating with organizations like IBPC and the Indian Embassy in Kuwait.



Indian MoS with Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Sabah, cutting a cake to mark India's moon landing

talks with Embassy officials on counselor issues.

In the afternoon he met with representatives of some of the Indian associations to discuss community related issues. In his first meeting with members of Indian Community Support Group (ICSG) he had a brief discussion related to the Indian community and also appreciated their support and contributions for the welfare of the Indian community in Kuwait particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Meeting with workers at a camp



Meeting with members of Indian Community Support Group



Watching the Moon landing with members of Indian community



MoS at a dinner reception hosted by Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaikar

Ukraine's Independence Day

Building a better future



H.E. Dr. Oleksandr Balanutsa
Ambassador of Ukraine



Irina Gusachenko
Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Delegation of the European Union to Kuwait

The 24th of August marks the 32nd anniversary of the restoration of Ukraine's independence after 70 years of Soviet rule. Since February last year, Ukraine has been heroically resisting Russia's brutal war of aggression and its clear violation of the

international law and UN charter.

Kuwait, which was brutally invaded 33 years ago, joined the vast majority of members of the UN General Assembly in supporting the concept of safeguarding the rules-based international order and standing firmly behind the UN Charter, international law and the sovereignty of Ukraine.

The European Union (EU) is working with other partners to support Ukraine across the ten points of Ukrainian President Zelenskyy's Peace Formula, from food and nuclear security to safe return of Ukrainian children to their home country, and securing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the UN Charter and international law. The Peace Formula should be, for all of us, the basis to put an end to Russia's unjustified aggression. We welcome all international efforts to this effect, including the recent meeting of National Security Advisors in Jeddah (attended by some 40 countries and the representatives of the UN).

The EU will support Ukraine for as long as it takes and will continue to ensure the widest

possible international support for the key principles and objectives of Ukraine's Peace Formula. While the atrocious war continues to rage, the EU remains determined to continue supporting Ukraine through the process of a sustainable recovery and reconstruction.

Ukraine has determination, an impressively resilient economic base, a vibrant civil society and many friends around the globe who want to support in rebuilding a modern and prosperous country. European cities are joining the reconstruction effort too, with 36 European cities from Vilnius to Venice working with 10 cities in Ukraine. This is a living proof of the enormous support to Ukraine from all over the European Union. We encourage other countries to join in supporting Ukraine's reconstruction efforts.

Russia's illegal military actions do not only grossly violate international law, but also undermine European and global security and stability, with disastrous consequences for people in Ukraine, and also globally in terms of energy and food security. We stand united

and will not let Russia tear down the security architecture that has given Europe peace and stability over many decades or replace the rule of law by the rule of force and ruthlessness.

Europe and Ukraine are historically and culturally interconnected. Ukraine applied for EU membership in February 2022 and was granted EU candidate status in June 2022, in response to Ukraine's aspirations to join the European family. The EU stands by its unwavering support of Ukraine since the first day of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression. The EU will be by Ukraine's side as long as it takes to fully restore its sovereignty within internationally recognised borders. The EU will work to ensure Ukraine's economic and military resilience, through continuous political, financial, military and humanitarian support. The EU stands by its promise to support Ukraine and its people.

Once again, on the occasion of Ukraine National Day, we wish Ukrainians in Kuwait and all of Ukraine's friends in Kuwait and beyond a happy and safe Ukraine's Independence Day.



LuLu Hypermarket opens 14th outlet in Kuwait

LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, opened its newest branch in Kuwait at the Warehouse Mall in South Sabahiya. The store, which is also the brand's 14th branch in the country, was officially inaugurated by Asst. Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Ahmad Gaid Al Enaizi, in the presence of the UAE Ambassador, H.E. Dr. Matar Hamid Al Neyadi, and the Chairman & Managing Director of LuLu Group International, MA Yusuff Ali.

Other dignitaries present on the occasion were the Indian Ambassador, H.E. Adarsh Swaika, the British Ambassador H.E. Belinda Lewis, the South African Ambassador, H.E. Manelisi Genge, the Aung Gyaw Thu, Charge D Affairs, Myanmar, the Romanian Ambassador, H.E. Mugurel Loan Stanesco, the Omani Ambassador Saleh Amer Al-Kharusi, and



a large number of diplomats, government officials and other dignitaries.

Also present on the occasion were LuLu Financial Group Managing Director, Adeeb Ahamed, LuLu

Kuwait Director, Mohamed Haris, Regional Director of LuLu Kuwait, Sreejith, and other senior officials. Spread over 48,000 sq. feet, the new outlet will offer a wide range of fresh fruits, vegetables, grocery food,

non-food items, health and beauty products, meat and seafood, in-house kitchen and delicatessen and a special area for local agricultural produce.

In addition, the product range at the new branch encompasses children's toys, seasonal party supplies, electronic and mobile devices and accessories, IT products and peripherals, as well as premium cosmetics and perfumes under the brand BLSH. All items on the hypermarket's shelves have been curated from the best products worldwide and are made available at the most competitive prices, so as to fulfill and exceed the expectations of the brand's valued customers.

The inauguration of the new premium outlet serves as an affirmation of LuLu Hypermarket's continued commitment to provide customers the best shopping experience in the country.

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MEW to enforce bill payments from expatriates

Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy (MEW) is reportedly intensifying efforts to establish an online linkup with the Ministry of Interior by early September, so as to facilitate data exchanges aimed at preventing expatriates from leaving the country without paying their due MEW bills.

The strategic Tie-up between the two ministries will enhance the collection of outstanding electricity and water bills owed by expatriates before departing the country. Reports also indicate that the data

systems at both ministries are ready for implementing the link-up, but a few specific agreements are being finalized to complete the linking mechanism within a few days.

In an upcoming phase, the linkup will extend beyond Kuwait International Airport to encompass all national ports and border crossings, to comprehensively address the long-festering issue of expatriates leaving the country for good without paying their MEW bills.

Many expatriates have accrued overdue debts due to shifting their residence from



an old building to a new one without settling MEW bills linked to their previous residences.

The initiative not only helps address fiscal balance at MEW by collecting due debts, but also introduces an avenue for collection of millions of dinars in expatriate debts owed to other ministries. Pending approvals from the Council of Ministers and relevant authorities, these efforts might contribute to resolving this challenge and streamline debt management for services rendered across various ministries.

LuLu Financial Holdings opens 284th global branch at Warehouse Mall



LuLu Financial Holdings, a global financial services conglomerate specializing in cross-border payments and foreign currency exchange, opened its 284th global branch and 34th LuLu Exchange branch in Kuwait at Warehouse Mall.

The new branch was inaugurated by the Ambassador of UAE, H.E. Dr. Matar Hamed Hlais Almkasafa Al Nehyadi, in the presence of Chairman & Managing Director of LuLu Group International, MA Yusuff Ali, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, Adeeb Ahamed, and other senior management of the country operations.

The event was also attended by other dignitaries including Ambassador of the UK, H.E. Belinda Lewis, the Ambassador of South Africa, H.E. Dr. Manelisi Genge, and the

Ambassador of Oman H.E. Dr. Saleh bin Amer Alkharusi.

The new branch marks the company's expansion strategy for Kuwait, in line with the region's economic progress. Sharing his thoughts on the sidelines of the inauguration, Mr. Ahamed said, "Kuwait has been a cornerstone of our operations from the very beginning, and the unwavering trust and support we've received from our valued customers continues to drive us. Our commitment to Kuwait is resolute as we expand our presence, aligning with the nation's aspirations to achieve financial inclusion. This new branch not only brings us closer to our customers but also serves as an engagement hub, facilitating their seamless transition to digital payment solutions. We extend our gratitude to the government and regulators for fostering an environment that nurtures digital innovation and advances sector growth."

LuLu Exchange, which is among Kuwait's leading financial services providers, presently provides cross-border payments, currency exchange and value-added services in a timely, transparent and reliable manner through its network of branches and mobile payments app, LuLu Money. The app is highly rated for its security and convenience and is fully aligned with Kuwait's digital transformation efforts. Visit www.luluexchange.com to know more



Over 25,000 expats deported since the beginning of the year

Under the directive of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Talal Al-Khalid, the process of deporting expatriates engaged in residency violations, criminal activities, misdemeanors, and those administratively deported in the public interest has gained momentum. This strategic move aims to enhance national security and cleanse the nation of both marginal labor and

individuals who show disregard for the law.

A senior security source revealed to Al-Qabas that 25,000 expatriates were deported from the beginning of January until August 19, 2023, (that is, an average of 108 expatriates are deported from Kuwait daily).

The source explained that these expatriates were administratively deported for several reasons, most notably violating residency and labor laws, and their involvement in drug abuse and promotion, begging, and committing acts that harm the country's security, and others. Among those administratively deported in the public interest are 10,000 women who have transgressed the law and committed violations.

Kalyan Jewellers opens 200th global showroom



Kalyan Jewellers, one of the largest and most trusted jewelry brands, recently announced the momentous milestone of the company's 200th showroom globally, and its first showroom in Jammu, in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The showroom was inaugurated by Bollywood superstar Hrithik Roshan, in the presence of Managing Director of Kalyan Jewellers, T.S. Kalyanaraman, along with the Executive Directors, Rajesh Kalyanaraman and Ramesh Kalyanaraman.

Addressing the large crowd that had gathered for the event, Mr. Roshan said, "I am delighted and honored to be part of the 200th showroom launch festivities of Kalyan Jewellers. With a legacy spanning over three decades, Kalyan Jewellers has time and again revolutionized India's jewelry industry with its pioneering initiatives. It is a matter of pride for me to represent this iconic brand that is built on the core pillars of trust, transparency and customer centricity. This magnificent Kalyan Jewellers' showroom is a testament to the company's unwavering commitment to providing an unparalleled shopping experience to patrons. I am confident that the patrons here will warmly welcome and wholeheartedly support the jewelry brand."

The brand new showroom, which promises a luxurious shopping experience in a world-class ambiance, displays an extensive array of exquisite jewelry. The launch celebrations also encompassed the unveiling of Kalyan Jewellers' e-commerce platform Candere's 3rd Experience Centre in India. Following a phygital model, the company had introduced this first-of-its-kind 'Experience Centre' concept in September

2022. The Experience Centre is designed to work seamlessly alongside its online platform, offering next-gen consumers with a distinctive shopping experience.

Talking about the 200th showroom launch, Mr. Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director of Kalyan Jewellers, said, "As we inaugurate our 200th showroom, we extend gratitude to our customers, partners and employees, who have been an integral part of this three-decade long journey that has been marked with trust and transparency. This significant milestone echoes our unwavering dedication to not only creating exquisite jewelry but also nurturing relationships with patrons across the country that shine as timeless treasures. At Kalyan Jewellers, we have taken major strides in creating a holistic ecosystem to offer an enhanced service-backed shopping experience to patrons across the country. As we move ahead, our customer-centric approach remains key to our continued growth, building upon the very essence that defines our brand."

To mark the occasion, Kalyan Jewellers has launched its 'Celebrating 200 Showrooms' campaign, which includes unique offers to ensure that patrons gain maximum benefits on all their jewelry purchases.

At Kalyan Jewellers, patrons also receive Kalyan Jewellers' 4-Level Assurance Certificate, which guarantees purity, free lifetime maintenance of ornaments, detailed product information, and transparent exchange and buy-back policies. This certification reflects the brand's commitment to offering the very best to its loyal customers. For more information on the brand, its collections and offers, visit <https://www.kalyanjewellers.net>



Indian naval ship's visit reinforces maritime partnership with Kuwait

Indian Ambassador, H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika, and the Western Fleet Commander of the Indian Navy, Rear Admiral Vineet McCarty, hosted a reception aboard the Indian naval ship INS Visakhapatnam during its recent visit to Kuwait.

The event was graced by the presence of the Under Secretary of the Ministry of Defence Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah who was the chief guest on the occasion. The function was also attended by ambassadors of various countries, members of the diplomatic corps, government officials, Kuwait Naval Force officers, and other distinguished guests.

In his speech welcoming the attendees, Rear Admiral Vineet McCarty said that the visit by INS Visakhapatnam was a continuation of the increased maritime cooperation between India and Kuwait, which gained momentum in 2021 when five Indian naval ships transported essential liquid medical oxygen from Kuwait to India. This was followed by the visit of INS Teg in July 2022 and a port of call by three ships from the First Training Squadron in October 2022.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Abdullah Al-Sabah emphasized that the visit of the Indian navy vessel underlined the profound and long-standing relations between the two nations. He expressed optimism about future development in maritime and defense collaboration between Kuwait and India, and disclosed that preparations were underway to hold more joint exercises between the two navies to foster mutual learning



and experience sharing.

Brigadier General Salah Al-Salal, the representative of the Commander of the Naval Force, echoed similar sentiments of cooperation. He revealed the existence of numerous joint exercises and agreements between the naval forces of Kuwait and India, and added that the Kuwaiti Navy had frequently requested specialized training courses from India.

Stressing that enhancement of Kuwaiti naval capabilities is crucial for maintaining security and stability in the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, Al-Salal revealed that the Kuwaiti Navy is actively engaged in strengthening its capabilities, with India extending consistent military offers in this realm. Elaborating on potential marine agreements between the two countries, Al-Salal said that several deals are in progress, including intended purchases of marine equipment from India.

For his part, Indian Ambassador Dr. Adarsh Swaika, praised the visit of the Indian naval destroyer, and underscored the historical maritime connection between India and Kuwait. Pointing out that sailboats and ships have historically fostered strong relations between the two countries, he emphasized the natural alignment and partnership that exists between India and Kuwait.

Elaborating on strategic defense cooperation, he highlighted the growing importance of bilateral defense partnerships between the two countries and their role in the shared regional vision. Ambassador Swaika acknowledged the increasing deployment of Indian naval assets to address regional maritime needs, and noted that the Indian Navy has also played a role in capacity-building activities, including hydrographic surveys, search and rescue operations and enhancing capabilities across the region.

INS Visakhapatnam, the lead ship and the inaugural vessel of the Visakhapatnam class stealth guided missile destroyers, was meticulously crafted by Mazagon Dock Limited in Mumbai, showcasing India's prowess in indigenously developed naval technology. Commissioned on 21 November 2021, this imposing 164-meter ship ranks among the Indian Navy's largest destroyers. It boasts cutting-edge navigation and communication equipment, advanced sensors, radars, and electronic warfare capabilities. The ship is also equipped to carry two helicopters, further enhancing its operational versatility.

During its three-day port of call visit to Kuwait, INS Visakhapatnam engaged in various professional and training interactions with the Kuwait Naval forces, fostering knowledge exchange and enhancing collaborative efforts. The ship opened its doors to Indian citizens, offering them a glimpse into naval operations and maritime life.

The visit of INS Visakhapatnam to Kuwait encapsulates the enduring maritime partnership between India and Kuwait, which has significantly contributed to the robust India-Kuwait partnership. It serves as a demonstration of the Indian Navy's unwavering commitment to establishing cooperative partnerships, particularly in the realm of maritime security. This visit further underscores the dedication of both nations to working together to tackle regional maritime challenges, solidifying their mutual

LuLu Onam celebrations witnesses thrilling 'Tug of War' competitions



As part of the vibrant and joyous Lulu ONAM Celebrations, a high-energy Tug of War (Vadamvali) competition took place on August 25, 2023, at the Lulu Alrai Outlet. The event was marked by fierce competition and enthusiastic participation, creating an electrifying atmosphere that brought the community together.

The Lulu Tug of War competition was proudly sponsored by prominent companies including Alwazzan, Afia, IFFCO, and Noor Oil, whose support contributed significantly to the success of the event. A total of 12 teams participated, each showcasing their strength, teamwork, and determination to claim victory.

The coordination of the participating teams was expertly managed by the Kuwait Kerala Tug of War Association (KKTA), ensuring fair play and a well-organized competition. The event was graced by the presence of Lulu Kuwait's top management and representatives from the sponsoring companies, who handed over the coveted cash prizes and trophies to the deserving winning teams.

1st Prize winners team "AHA KUWAIT BROTHERS" received KD : 400, the 2nd prize winner team "KKDA" gets KD : 300, 3RD prize winner team "KKB SPORT CLUB KUWAIT" gets KD: 200, the



4th winners team "FRIENDS OF KUWAIT" gets KD: 100 and Every participating team received consolation prizes as a token of appreciation

In the spirit of sportsmanship and appreciation for all participants, consolation prizes were also awarded to every team that took part in the competition. This gesture underscored the importance of participation and camaraderie in events like these.

The Lulu ONAM Celebrations Tug of War competition was not only a test of physical strength but also a celebration of unity, teamwork, and the rich cultural heritage that ONAM represents. It brought together people from diverse backgrounds to create cherished memories and promote the values of sportsmanship.

Lulu Hypermarket extends its heartfelt thanks to the sponsors, participants, KKTA, and the enthusiastic audience who contributed to the resounding success of the event. We look forward to more such celebrations that strengthen the bonds of our community in the future.

ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth

Message on the 78th anniversary of Indonesian independence

Indonesia is celebrating its 78th Independence this year. It is home to over 278 million people, the world's fourth largest nation in terms of population, and the world's largest archipelagic state, with more than 17,000 islands.

Indonesia has abundant resources and has become the largest economic country in the region, and has proven to be one of the strongest nations in terms of maintaining its economic resilience. Compared to other countries in the world, Indonesia had a low



H.E. Lena Maryana

Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, Kuwait.

inflation of only 3.08 percent in July 2023, which was the 6th lowest inflation rate (after China, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Spain). The robustness of Indonesia's manufacturing sector, driven by the strong domestic consumption, is the largest contributor to Indonesia's gross domestic product (GDP), making up 18.3 percent of total GDP in 2022. The leading manufacturing sub-sectors include basic metal, machinery, leather and footwear, textiles, transportation tools, electronics, pulp and paper, and food & beverage. These sub-sectors support other down-stream industries such as energy,

information technology, communication, transportation, and logistics.

In July 2023, Indonesia reacquired its status as an 'upper-middle-income country', according to the World Bank, putting it back on track to pursue its high-income status goal — an ambition for 2045, the centenary of Indonesia's independence.

Indonesia had successfully presided over the G20 last year and became the chairman of ASEAN this year. The tagline of this year's chairmanship of ASEAN is 'ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth'.

Fifty-five years ago, on 28 February 1968, Kuwait and Indonesia initiated diplomatic relations that have grown in strength over the years through reciprocal visits by leaders, and other high ranking officials of both countries.

The two countries have also signed the agreement on the establishment of a joint commission. The first meeting was held in Kuwait in 2019 attended by Indonesian Foreign Minister, Her Excellency Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi and the second will be held in Jakarta.

In terms of manpower, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Government of the State of Kuwait signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 30 May 1996 regarding the Placement of Manpower, which remains valid until now. This MoU regulates the governance of the placement of migrant workers according to demand and supply and based on work contracts. So far there are around 7,000 Indonesian people here in Kuwait, most of whom work in the health, oil and gas, hospitality and manufacturing sectors.

Both countries have a rich culture and a seafaring background. I am sure that based on the connection shared throughout these years, both Indonesia and Kuwait have similar goals to build and maintain stability in international relations.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo

Indonesian President Joko Widodo speaking during the 42nd ASEAN Summit Plenary Meeting, which was held on 10 May at Labuan Bajo, said that the challenges in the world and region, even internally, are increasingly complex, so ASEAN's relevance is also increasingly questioned. "ASEAN continues to be highlighted by the world. Can ASEAN centrality be maintained amidst the vortex of big country rivalries?" asked President Jokowi.

The Plenary Session of the ASEAN Summit focused on interpreting the theme of Indonesia's Chairmanship, ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth. In the ASEAN Matters aspect, three things need to be done. First, ASEAN must be effective, where ASEAN needs a more transformative, effective, and fast approach for the common good.

"We need an effective and timely decision-making mechanism, in the midst of emergency situations," said the President. The preparation of the codification mechanism remains based on the ASEAN Charter, which has always been the guiding principle of ASEAN.

Second, ASEAN must be relevant, which means it must be able to address current and future challenges, including the short term, such as the situation in Myanmar, and the long term, such as respecting human rights. Third, ASEAN must be beneficial to the people in the region and the world, amidst the current difficult crisis.



The built energy security is expected to support the acceleration of the energy transition. "For this reason, the development of the electric vehicle ecosystem in the region is a priority, encouraging ASEAN to become a global electric vehicle hub, and strengthening efforts to decarbonize the transportation sector," said President Jokowi.

President Jokowi also emphasized the need for regional financial policies alignment to complement the concrete efforts to enhance regional financial stability that have been made. These efforts are carried out through the implementation of local currency transactions in several ASEAN countries and digital payment connectivity between countries with QR-Code technology. In line with this, at the 22nd ASEAN Economic Community Council Ministerial Meeting held on 7 May at Jakarta, two Leaders'



Meanwhile, from the Epicentrum of Growth aspect, the President reminded that ASEAN needs to strengthen regional resilience and connectivity as a foundation for survival. "This is why Indonesia is determined to ensure regional resilience in the food, energy, financial stability, and connectivity sectors as well as health architecture," President Jokowi explained.

Declaration related to the development of an electric vehicle ecosystem in ASEAN and a local currency payment mechanism were agreed upon. This was disclosed by Indonesian coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto who as Chair of the ASEAN Economic Community Council (AECC), accompanied the President to the 42nd ASEAN Summit Plenary Meeting.





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ASEAN as a Center for Economic Growth

ASEAN has proven that thanks to collaboration, cooperation, and synergy between the Government and the business world, it was capable of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic that severely hit the region over the past two years. However, the challenges ahead are still very heavy, such as geopolitical risks and the condition of several financial institutions in the United States and Europe which are still full of dynamics.

The theme adopted by ASEAN-BAC this year is 'ASEAN Centrality: Innovating Towards Greater Inclusivity' and focuses on five areas — digital transformation, sustainable development, health resilience, food security, and facilitation of trade and investment.

The focus area is in line with Indonesia's economic priorities in ASEAN, so it is expected to support the completion and produce tangible results from Indonesia's Chairmanship agenda in ASEAN 2023.



Indonesian President Joko Widodo, accompanied by the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto, in the ASEAN Leaders' Interface with Representatives of ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) session invited every ASEAN Member States to strengthen collaboration to maintain ASEAN as the Epicentrum of Growth.



"Let's join hands to formulate a common agenda, to ensure that this region continues to be the Epicentrum of Growth," said President Jokowi in the meeting, which is a series of events of the 42nd ASEAN Summit, held in Labuan Bajo, NTT, on 10 May).

This is supported by the enormous economic potential of the ASEAN region, accompanied by an economy that is growing above the world average and is currently entering a demographic bonus period, with the number of middle-class people that will continue to increase to 65 percent by 2030.

The ASEAN Heads of State and Government expressed their support for the various strategies raised by ASEAN-BAC and encouraged enhancing collaboration between the Government, the private sector, and the community, to achieve the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025 and the ASEAN Post-2025 Vision. Some sectors that ASEAN Country Leaders are concerned about are connectivity, digital transformation, sustainability, and inclusiveness for MSMEs.

Furthermore, President Jokowi conveyed several strategies ahead of the summit. First, the need to consolidate a joint response to address the global economy. Second, collaboration in preparing the ASEAN Agenda 2045. Third, encouraging concrete and inclusive cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, including through support at the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF) in September 2023.

"Partnerships and collaboration between the business world and the government must be further strengthened to ensure that this region becomes the Epicentrum of Growth," concluded President Jokowi.

ASEAN-BAC was established by ASEAN Heads of State and Government at the 7th ASEAN Summit in 2001. ASEAN-BAC has the mandate to provide inputs and recommendations in promoting regional economic integration and identifying priority areas for consideration by the Governments of ASEAN Member States.

Indonesia registers strong economic growth, ranks high in competitiveness

In the midst of a slowdown in the global economy which was also marked by a declining trend in the price of the main export commodities, the Indonesian economy in the second quarter of 2023 was still able to record positive growth of 5.17 percent year-on-year (YoY), 3.86 percent quarter-on-quarter and accumulate growth in the first-half of 2023 at 5.11 percent.



This achievement also marked Indonesia's economic growth which has been above five percent for seven consecutive quarters. In addition, Indonesia has also returned to being an upper middle-income country, based on the World Bank classification which was updated in July 2023.

"Data from several countries that have reported economic growth in the second quarter of 2023, only China, Uzbekistan and Indonesia are still able to grow above 5 percent, and Indonesia's economic growth was ahead of Vietnam, the United States, Singapore, and even Germany, which is still experiencing contraction," said the Coordinator Minister for the Economy Airlangga Hartarto, at a Press Conference on Indonesia's Economic Growth in the Second Quarter of 2023 at the Office of the Coordinator Ministry for Economic Affairs, Jakarta, on 7 August.

According to the Coordinator Minister, the positive growth of the national economy in the second quarter of 2023 answered concerns that there would be an economic slowdown which was mainly caused by a decrease in the prices of Indonesia's leading export commodities such as Crude Palm Oil (CPO) and mining as well as due to a slowdown in manufacturing from Indonesia's main trading partner countries such as the United States and China.

The achievement of economic growth in the second quarter of 2023 was supported by positive growth in almost all expenditure components and business fields. From the expenditure side, household consumption grew strongly, namely 5.23 percent YoY in line with increased community activity during the holidays. Gross Fixed Capital Formation (PMTB), which reflects investment activity and the realization of government infrastructure development, increased to 4.63 percent YoY, and government consumption increased to 10.62 percent YoY.

Meanwhile, in terms of business fields, all sectors grew positively and were marked by the transportation and warehousing sector which grew expansively reaching 15.28 percent YoY, in line with increased mobility of the people.

The manufacturing or processing industry, which is still the largest contributor to growth supported by strong domestic demand, also grew faster than the same period last year with a share of GDP reaching 18.25 percent YoY.

In the second quarter of 2023, the economy spatially across the island also grew positively. This growth was dominated by Java Island with a contribution to GDP of 57.27 percent, while all regions outside Java Island also grew supported by increased investment and industrial development. "In the third quarter, we will still be able to boost economic growth, especially through government spending, in particular for large ministries/institutions in the infrastructure, labor-intensive and agriculture sectors," said the Coordinator Minister Hartarto.

Indonesia's economic competitiveness has also recorded a sharp increase as shown by a report from the Institute for Management Development (IMD), in which Indonesia is the country with the highest increase in competitiveness ranking in the world. Indonesia's competitiveness ranking has increased by 10 positions from rank 44 in 2022 to rank 34 this year. Indonesia managed to improve the ranking of all the main components, namely the components of economic performance, efficient government, efficient business and infrastructure availability. Apart from that, the increase in competitiveness is also followed by the prospect of Indonesia's investment financing which is also increasingly attractive, especially with the affirmation of Indonesia's sovereign rating by various international rating agencies.

"Our growth at the end of 2023 is still targeted at 5.3 percent according to the state budget, and the lever is in the third quarter. Later we will see contributions from the mining, natural resources and palm oil sectors, all of which depend on commodity prices, but now they are approaching normal prices, which means that they can be boosted in terms of export volume, and also related to other superior products such as chemical products and iron-steel," concluded the Coordinator Minister.

Indonesia's Demographic Dividend

Indonesia's current population is around 275 million people, an increase of almost 35 million people from a decade ago and marking an annual population growth rate of around 1.25 percent, according to information provided by the Directorate General of Population and Civil Registration (Dukcapil) of the Ministry of Home Affairs of Indonesia.

The encouraging thing is that almost 70 percent of Indonesia's population is in the productive age category, between 15 to 64 years. The remaining 30 percent are not yet productive or are not productive. A breakdown of this age category shows that nearly 25 percent of the population were aged up to 14 years and 6 percent are the age group of over 65 years. Thus, it was concluded, the dependency ratio or dependency ratio/dependency burden was 44 percent. The result is the ratio between the total population that has not/is not productive with the productive population.

This means that every 100 people or people of productive age bear around 44 people of non-productive age. A dependency ratio below 50 percent will last for 15 years. This indicates that Indonesia is entering an era of 'demographic dividend', namely the productive population is more than those who are not or have not been productive.



In relation to the 2045 vision, if the demographic dividend is managed professionally, this condition will become capital for Indonesia's vision to reach one hundred years of independence in 2045. However, if it is not managed properly, it can become a burden to the state, both for economic growth and for state finances.

Indonesia's population growth in the 2000-2010 period slowed to 1.5 percent. With this trend, Indonesia's population is estimated to reach around 320 million people in 2045. The percentage of the elderly or elderly population continues to increase from 7.5 to almost 10 percent. This shows that Indonesia has begun to enter an 'aging population' structure. However, the 2020 Population Census shows that the productive age was around 70 percent, so Indonesia is entering a demographic dividend period. This means that the productive age is higher than the non-productive age, while the demographic bonus will end in 2040.

To overcome these problems, it is necessary

to implement various policies, so that the quality of Indonesian human resources (HR) can support and play a role in national development. Aspects of HR competence can be carried out with social protection and health insurance, one of which is by improving health services that are efficient, effective and simple. The productive age of Indonesia's population is a potential demographic bonus. Even so, we are also faced with the challenge of utilizing it so that we can provide additional bonuses for national development.

Measurement of the quality of the population refers to the achievement of the Human Development Index (IPM), namely education, health, and income / economy. HR education is the first and main component. Education will be able to change the way and thought of educators to be better, modern and advanced, and remain focused on advancing the younger generation through improving the quality of education. Ease of access to education, complete educational infrastructure and reliable, qualified teaching staff will create a modern society.

Furthermore, the provision of health services as a long-term investment is needed, as every human being needs good health. As a public service, the government seeks to improve the quality of public health with various policies such as national health insurance, health access, coverage of medical personnel, and affordable health facilities to increase human life expectancy.

On the other hand, the provision of employment opportunities plays a very important role, as a means to meet the daily needs of the community. The government and the private sector must facilitate employment for the community. Communities must also have competitiveness, be skilled and have the ability to be more creative in creating employment opportunities.

The change in population structure will also make Indonesia a consuming class in the world, namely people with adequate purchasing power. The Ministry of National Development Planning predicts that by 2040 upwards of 70 million people living in urban and rural areas will become a consuming class. This consuming class society will encourage economic growth from the domestic consumer side. But it will be negative if it is not accompanied by the ability to generate and invest yourself.

The quality of human resources is the basic capital in national development. For this reason, improving the quality of human resources must begin with fulfilling basic service needs, namely clothing, food and shelter, providing access to mental and physical health facilities, as well as innovative and productive applied education. Currently Indonesia is still far from that size.

*Written by: **Abhimanyu** UGM Lecturer at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta. Head of the Department of Economics and Business, UGM Vocational School. Head of Organizational Affairs, Association of Indonesian Economic Scholars*



Indonesian Automotive Industry, Backbone of National Economic Growth

Indonesia's economic growth in the second quarter of 2023 reached 5.17 percent year-on-year (YoY), marking a record seven consecutive quarters of above 5 percent economic growth.

According to Indonesian Coordinator Minister for the Economy, Airlangga Hartarto, Indonesia's GNI per capita was at US\$4,580, and it was hoped that at the end of 2024 it would reach US\$5,500. Based on World Bank data updated in July 2023, Indonesia is again included in the upper middle-income country category.

The Indonesian Manufacturing PMI Index in July 2023 also continued its expansionary trend for 23 consecutive months, namely at the level of 53.3, which shows the high optimism of manufacturing industry players in Indonesia amidst the instability of global conditions and weakening world markets.

The economy has grown beyond the expectations of both analysts and institutions, said Coordinator Minister Hartarto, while speaking at the opening of the 30th Gaikindo Indonesia International Auto Show (GIIAS) in Tangerang, Banten, on 10 August. "We have the ability for strong resilience," emphasized Mr. Hartarto, adding that, "in light of this, the Secretary General of the OECD, who is in Jakarta for a visit, has given a very positive response to Indonesia's

interest in becoming a member of the OECD."

One of the reasons for this expansive economic growth in the second quarter of 2023 was the manufacturing sector, which was able to grow by 4.88 percent YoY, and contribute 18.25 percent to the country's GDP. Meanwhile, the Transportation Equipment Industry, which has been recording positive growth for nine consecutive quarters from Q2-2021 to Q2-2023, grew by 9.66 percent in the second quarter, and contributed 1.42 percent to the national GDP, said the coordinator minister. He also



revealed that based on the latest report from the Institute for Management Development (IMD), Indonesia's competitiveness jumped 10 levels from 44 to 34 with economic performance being the key.

Closing his remarks, Mr. Hartarto noted that the Government continues to promote export growth while also reducing carbon emissions by, among others, encouraging the use of electric vehicles. In the doorstep session, the coordinating minister explained to the media that the number of electric vehicles that were displayed at this year's GIIAS, was a huge increase from that in the previous year.



Indonesian Embassy holds folk festival to mark Independence Day

Ricky Laxa,
 Staff Writer

Embassy of Indonesia held an 'Indonesian Folk Festival' in celebration of the country's 78th Independence Day anniversary at the Jaber Ahmad hall in Ardiya. Ambassador of

Indonesia H.E. Lena Maryana, along with more than 500 attendees including members of the foreign diplomatic missions in Kuwait graced the remarkable celebration.

In her opening remarks on the occasion Ambassador Maryana expressed her gratitude to ASEAN ambassadors, Asian dialogue partners,

international organizations in Kuwait, local government agencies, and the Indonesian diaspora in Kuwait.

The event themed 'Amazing Nusantara' (Amazing Archipelago) showcased ceremonial cutting of the 'Tumpeng' — an Indonesian cone-shaped rice dish with side dishes of vegetables

and meat originating from Javanese cuisine of Indonesia — which is a traditional thanksgiving ceremony. The ceremony was followed by the ambassador along with invited guests visiting all the booths. The event also featured traditional ethnic dances, fashion shows, culinary exhibitions, and live music performance by the community.

Investment in real estate prices remain stable

A report released by Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has highlighted the stabilization of occupancy and rental rates across various tiers of the investment real estate sector. Figures show that average real estate occupancy rates remained consistent over the past two quarters, ranging between 85 and 88 percent, while the average rental value of a two-bedroom apartment with a hall, spanning an area of 60 square meters across governorates stood at KD278 at the close of the second quarter of 2023.

It is important to note that rental prices vary based on factors such as location, design quality, finishing, and property age. New properties, which tend to have higher prices, exert pressure on the rental values of older properties in the market. Certain areas like Al-Shaab, Al-Mirqab, Bneid Al-Qar, Sharq, and others hold distinct status, influencing rental prices. Conversely, less distinguished areas include Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Abu Halifa, and Khaitan.

For instance, within the Capital Governorate, the average rent reached KD313, representing a quarterly surge of 4 percent. In the Hawalli Governorate, the same property type commanded a rental value of KD306, marking a 3.4 percent quarterly climb and

a 2.7 percent annual rise. Similarly, regions within governorates also displayed a variance in rental prices. The Salmiya region in Hawalli Governorate showed a 1.7 percent annual growth, reaching an average value of KD305, while in the Hawalli region, the rental value attained KD278, exhibiting a 2.8 percent annual increase. Jabriya region experienced a 1.6 percent annual upswing, with the average rate climbing to KD315. In the Farwaniya governorate, the rental value stood at KD279, reflecting a 1.6 percent quarterly and 1.1 percent annual growth. Meanwhile, the Farwaniya region saw an annual surge of 1.9 percent, establishing the average rent at KD273.

For two-bedroom apartments paired with a hall and ranging from 70 to 74 square meters, the average rental value in Kuwait City surged to KD315, reflecting a steady 2.1 percent annual increase. In the capital region, this value rose to 343 dinars by the conclusion of the second quarter in 2023. This marked a quarterly escalation of 3.6 percent and mirrored the same percentage on an annual basis.

An interesting development is the expansion of rental demand in inner areas where Kuwaiti citizens reside, driven by elevated real estate prices. The anticipation of housing allocations



prompted a significant portion of citizens to opt for private housing rentals. This led to an increased demand, particularly in areas close to workplaces and shopping centers. This demand stimulated an uptick in the rental market for this real estate category.

In terms of private housing, the average rental value for a three-bedroom apartment with a hall spanning an area of 400 square meters, the average rental value reached KD482 by the end of the second quarter in 2023, remaining unchanged from the previous quarter and declining by 0.4 percent on an

annual basis. In the Capital Governorate, the average reached KD570.

In Hawalli Governorate, the value settled at KD516, indicating a 0.7 percent annual decrease. For the Farwaniya Governorate, the average value dipped to KD397 without experiencing a quarterly change, yet marking a 1.9 percent annual increase. The Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate reported an average rental value of KD437 for the same area, representing a 0.8 percent annual increase. Al-Ahmadi maintained an unchanged average value of KD375 on both a quarterly and annual basis. Conversely, in Jahra Governorate, the average price of KD345 indicated a 0.7 percent quarterly and annual decrease.

The rental value for an entire ground floor of a private housing property, spanning 400 square meters, averaged at KD890. This represented a slight 0.1 percent increase compared to the first quarter of 2023, alongside a 0.5 percent decrease on an annual basis. Within the Capital Governorate, the value reached KD1,045, showcasing a 0.9 percent annual decline. In Hawalli Governorate, the value of KD953 marked a 0.5 percent annual decrease. Meanwhile, the Farwaniya Governorate marked a 0.9 percent annual increase to reach an average of KD736.

Water scarcity an existential threat

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

while freshwater production from desalination plants was 729.3 MCM and per capita consumption topped 419 liters per day.

Although the report's comparative decadal data shows that freshwater production increased by around 7 percent from a decade ago, and per capita consumption decreased by nearly 10 percent during the same period, gross consumption increased by nearly 20 percent over the past ten years. The increase in gross water consumption has been largely attributed to the surge in population over the past decade, increase in developmental and agricultural projects, and the expansion of community services.

Freshwater consumption in Kuwait was also shown to have strong seasonal variation, with higher consumption rates recorded during the hot summer months from June to September each year, when demand rises by 20 to 25 percent over the annual average figure. For instance, media reports in early August this year, indicated that over two consecutive days in the first week of August, when temperatures soared to record levels, water consumption surged to a record level of 2.54 MCM per day, while daily production lingered at 2.39 MCM. The situation forced the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy (MEW) to dip into its strategic reserves to meet demand.

Additionally, the Fanack study disclosed that brackish water consumption in 2019 totaled 63.3 MCM by the end of 2019, while production was 71.5 MCM and per capita consumption stood at 36.4 liters per day. Over half of the annual groundwater withdrawal in 2019 went for agricultural purposes, even though agriculture contributed less than 0.4 percent of the country's GDP. In addition, the continued use of unsustainable and traditional methods such as flood irrigation in raising agricultural crops results in high water losses and severe irrigation inefficiencies.

In an effort to enhance food and water security in the country, Kuwait's Cabinet established the 'Supreme National Committee for Strengthening the Food and Water Security

System' in August 2022. The committee was tasked to draw up a food- and water-security strategy, and to implement this strategy through a 'road map' on policies and procedures to be followed in order to realize this security plan.

Speaking to a local media back then, Dr. Saleh Al-Muzaini, chairman of the Kuwait Water Association, a non-governmental, civil society organization, welcomed the formation of the Supreme Committee, and said that the committee had an important role to play in ensuring long-term water security of the country. Lamenting the then prevailing situation where the country lacked clear policies and implementable strategic plans for long-term sustainable water security, Al-Muzaini urged the committee to draw up a comprehensive, integrated and sustainable work program, so as to achieve and ensure Kuwait's long-term water and food security.

Underlining the importance of clear policies and strategies in managing water resources, Al-Muzaini went on to note that, with freshwater needs projected to rise by 20 to 30 percent by 2030, on the back of increases in per capita consumption and gross demand, the MEW would find itself in the unfeasible situation of having to establish a new desalination plant with a production capacity of 380 million liters, and at a cost of around KD450 million per plant, every five years.

Unfortunately, since the establishment of the supreme committee last year, political developments led to resignation of the cabinet, the holding of a fresh general election, and the swearing-in of a new cabinet and parliament. Amidst these parliamentary turbulences, it is not clear whether, or how, the Supreme National Committee's planned road map on food-water security has progressed since then.

Although its ample strategic reserve of nearly 19 MCM in storage tanks around the country helped the MEW tide over the temporary surge in demand in early August, the shortfall should serve as a warning, and be treated as a precursor to what could be in store if negative impacts from climate change and summer temperatures continue to rise as predicted in

the coming years.

Increasing the country's strategic water reserves through constructing more storage facilities, or building more desalination plants, are clearly not sustainable strategies. Without a rationalization in consumption and a commitment to preserve water by everyone in the country, these extraneous plans to produce and store more water would over the long-term be nothing more than an exercise in futility.

Across the world, demand for water is outstripping what is readily available. This is largely the result of population growth, increased irrigation, and the large-scale industrialization of agriculture and livestock-rearing, as well as due to rise in demand for energy production and manufacturing. The water shortfall from increasing demand is further exacerbated by a fall in supplies arising from lack of investment in water infrastructure, unsustainable water use policies and practices, as well as increased variability due to climate change effects.

Globally, water demand is projected to increase by 20 to 25 percent by 2050, while the number of watersheds facing high year-to-year variability, or less predictable water supplies, is expected to increase by 19 percent. For many countries in the Middle East and North Africa region this could result in their entire populations having to live under extremely high water stress by 2050. This is a problem not just for consumers and water-reliant industries, but for governments and their political stability in the years ahead.

Although water covers more than 70 percent of the Earth's surface, around 97 percent of this water is salty and remains in oceans and seas that people, animals and plants cannot directly use to sustain life. The remaining 3 percent is freshwater, but nearly 70 percent of this is locked up in the north and south poles, in glaciers, and on snowy mountain ranges. Of the balance 30 percent of freshwater, nearly 29 percent lies in natural underground reservoirs as groundwater, leaving only 1 percent of freshwater readily accessible to sustain life.

Despite the scarcity in water availability,

people continue to engage in excessive consumption patterns and wanton wastage of this vital commodity with the result that places around the world are now facing increased water stress that threatens their economic and social development, as well as their food security. In addition, water stress is often a threat multiplier that fuels local and regional conflicts and crises, which then have the potential to impact countries far removed from the affected area.

Water stress occurs when the demand for water exceeds the available amount, or when deterioration of available freshwater resources restricts its use in terms of quantity and quality. The smaller the gap between supply and demand, the more vulnerable a place is to water shortages. The WRI defines a country facing 'extreme water stress' as one that uses up at least 80 percent of its available supply, while 'high water stress' refers to countries withdrawing 40 percent of its supply annually.

Across the world, water stress is expected to get worse and develop into full-blown water crises, particularly in places with rapidly growing populations and economies, as well as in those places vulnerable to the deleterious impacts of climate change. The good news is that water stress need not necessarily develop into a water crisis; like other challenges, it can be managed through effective and timely intervention.

Water-security specialists say that through new and smart investments in water infrastructure, far-sighted governance policies, and better water management, even countries with relatively high water stress can secure their water supplies. While overcoming the complex, interconnected challenges posed by water stress will not be easy, it is achievable through bold commitments and innovative solutions.

Through efficacious policies and measures that set clear and measurable targets for managing water, and accountability for achieving them, as well as providing dedicated finance, and transboundary collaboration, water stress can be mitigated and water availability improved to benefit the people, economies and the planet.



Breaking the Silence

Understanding Women's Reproductive Health



By Hermoine Macura-Noble
Special to The Times Kuwait

Women's reproductive health has always been a taboo subject across the Gulf, leaving many women to suffer from various conditions in silence. From endometriosis to fibroids, various woman-centric medical conditions remain overlooked or untreated due to the lack of awareness and medical support available to women.

This lack of awareness and access to the right medical treatment can lead to further illness and possibly the death of millions of women across the globe, according to a recent study on the 'Top 10 public health challenges to track in 2023' published in the Public Health Challenges journal. Addressing this challenge involves empowering women to openly discuss and seek medical assistance for their concerns at all stages of their lives, be it minor infections or other more serious issues which can lead to diseases like cancer, if left untreated.

"After giving birth to three children, I soon began to struggle with unexplained vaginal pain and dryness which led to severe anxiety and depression for me as I was no longer comfortable in my body or being intimate with my husband. When I would go to see a gynecologist, they would run tests and do a medical exam and find all my results were clear...they would send me away and say it was all in my head," shares Halima Ahmed.

Aiming to encourage and create a supportive environment for women's well-being, is Medical Director and Functional Gynecologist at King's College Hospital London-Dubai, Dr. Maria Karakoulaki. She has treated hundreds of women across the Middle East who seek her help for conditions they have been suffering with for days, months and for some, almost a lifetime. Following her passion to deeply comprehend and research the hormonal changes in a woman's life, from childhood to menopause, Dr. Karakoulaki emphatically explains that the days of women suffering in silence are over. "There are many misconceptions women may have when it comes to treatment options... however the truth is there are many non-surgical or



surgical procedures that can help to alleviate their problems so they can be pain-free and enjoy their life," she says.

There has been a growing recognition of the unique challenges faced by women, especially after childbirth, which also introduces a range of physical and emotional changes that require particular attention. Conditions such as postpartum vaginal dryness, weakened pelvic floor muscles, and tearing during delivery, are



Medical Director and Functional Gynecologist at King's College Hospital London-Dubai, Dr. Maria Karakoulaki

quite common concerns for many married women.

"Whether you have a vaginal delivery or a cesarean section, a woman's body goes through tremendous changes after childbirth. Muscles and supportive tissues in the pelvis get stretched to make space for the baby in the womb. The uterus, bladder, vagina, and rectum are not as supported as they used to be. The pelvic floor muscles are stressed and not that strong anymore. Furthermore, the vaginal wall, which also keeps the organs in the right position will be affected as well. The consequences of these changes can include urinary incontinence and painful intercourse because of the stressed vaginal wall and a loss of sensitivity," explains Dr. Karakoulaki.

Doctors say the hormonal changes during the post delivery period can also lead to severe vaginal dryness (especially during breastfeeding) and mood swings, due to the abrupt drop of estrogen after delivery. Other concerns include the tears after a vaginal delivery which can be the reason for painful intercourse or even stress caused by the aesthetic result after healing. Other concerns include perimenopause (the time close to menopause) and menopause which are phases in a woman's life when dramatic changes are happening.

struggling with for years. "I have struggled with vaginal pain since I was a child, and no doctor has been able to diagnose or address it. Sometimes it flares up just before my periods or when I am sleeping. It comes and goes without any reason and causes me immense stress and anxiety as no doctor has been able to tell me what's wrong."

Known as vaginismus, doctors advise women who suspect they have this condition to seek the guidance of medical professionals, including gynecologists and psychologists. A tailored treatment plan might include various treatments and counseling techniques.

"Vaginismus is a very common condition that affects women of all ages. Among all reproductive dysfunctions, Vaginismus is the one that can be treated in almost all cases. Every day, I see women suffering from vaginismus and I teach doctors all over the world how to treat it. We doctors must do it with great empathy and love, otherwise it's not going to work. My message to all women suffering from vaginismus, is to find a doctor who knows about vaginismus, treat your condition, and enjoy your life. It's possible," says Dr. Karakoulaki.

Experts agree that by breaking the silence, encouraging open dialogues, and providing access to comprehensive medical and emotional support, women can overcome many conditions they may have thought there was no cure for.



In a world that champions women's rights and health, it's imperative that we leave no stone unturned in addressing issues that impact the lives of countless women around the globe.

"Please don't give up looking for solutions. Most of the problems women face can be treated and there is always something you can do about it. You just have to address your concerns with the right medical professionals and ask to be heard," concludes Dr. Karakoulaki.

Hermoine Macura-Noble

The first Australian English speaking News Anchor in the Middle East. She is also the Author of Faces of the Middle East and Founder of US-based 501c3 charity - The House of Rest which helps to ease the suffering of victims of war. For more from our Contributing Editor, you can follow her on Instagram, @hello_hermoine





India's lunar-landing, a triumph for humanity

Sky is no more the limit

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

India's ambitious endeavor to safely land a spacecraft on the Moon and conduct scientific experiments on the lunar surface reached its apogee on 23 August, when the lunar-landing module from the Chandrayaan-3 mission made a successful touchdown on the lunar surface.

The historic moon landing by India's space agency, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), placed the country alongside only three other nations — the United States, Russia, and China — to successfully land a spacecraft on the Moon. India also entered the record books for being the first country to soft-land a spacecraft on the uncharted southern polar region of the Moon.

As the lunar landing module from Chandrayaan-3 successfully touched down on lunar soil on Wednesday, billions of people from all walks of life across India and globally who were watching onscreen the much-awaited moment applauded and cheered loudly, and spontaneous celebrations broke out across the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was in Johannesburg, South Africa, attending the 15th BRICS Summit, and was monitoring the live telecast, waved the national tricolor on witnessing the successful touchdown. In his congratulatory message to the ISRO team and to Indians everywhere, the premier proudly stated, "India is now on the Moon".

"When we see such history being made before our eyes, life becomes blessed. Such historical events become the eternal consciousness of a nation's life. This moment is unprecedented, it is unforgettable, it is the triumph of the new India," said the Indian prime minister. "This moment is about crossing the ocean of difficulties, this moment holds the capability of 1.4 billion hearts, it signifies a new energy, new belief, and new consciousness in India.

"This moment is the call of India's ascending destiny. Through the hard work and talent of our scientists, India has reached the polar region of the Moon which no other country in the world has ever reached. India's successful Moon mission is not just a success of India alone... this success belongs to all of humanity," the Indian premier stated.

A timeline of the space-faring craft's 40-day journey to the Moon shows that the spacecraft was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh's Sriharikota on 14 July. The ISRO's heavy-lift vehicle, the 44-meter Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Mark 3 (LVM 3) was used for launching the spacecraft in orbit above Earth.

Following its successful release, the upper stage of the LVM3, powered by India's most powerful C20 cryogenic engine, entered into lunar orbit on 5 August. A series of orbital maneuvers then took the

spacecraft ever closer to the moon. On 17 August, India's moon mission marked another milestone when the 'Vikram' lander module — named after Vikram Sarabhai (1919–1971), who is widely regarded as the father of the Indian space program — successfully separated from the propulsion module.

The technically challenging two-phase deboosting of the lander module was then undertaken to slow down and position the lander close to its landing site. The final descent of Vikram for its historic soft-landing rendezvous with the lunar surface was successfully achieved, precisely as planned, at 18:04 Indian Standard Time (+5:30 Universal Mean Time) on 23 August.

The first part of the stated objectives of India's Chandrayaan-3 mission, to safely soft-land on

the lunar surface, and to roll out its payload, the 'Pragyan' lunar-rover, down the ramp onto the lunar soil, have now been completed flawlessly. Over the next two weeks, equivalent to one lunar day, the self-propelled Pragyaan will travel over 500 meters across the lunar surface conducting in-situ scientific experiments.

Historically, other spacecraft missions to the Moon have mainly targeted the equatorial region due to its more favorable terrain and operating conditions. However, the Chandrayaan-3 mission of landing and exploring the uncharted terrain along the 69th latitude of the Moon's southern polar region, presents a vastly different and more challenging prospect.

The probing studies to be conducted over the

hitherto unexplored southern region have the potential to reveal entirely new facets of lunar geology and seismic activity. The new findings will hopefully contribute to a deeper understanding of the Moon's evolution, its connection to Earth, and also help to augment human knowledge for future space explorations.

The successful lunar landing on Wednesday was met with jubilation at ISRO's headquarters. The ISRO Chief S. Somanath extended his gratitude to the space-agency team and to well-wishers everywhere for their unwavering support and dedication to the Chandrayaan-3 project. Reflecting on the journey, he emphasized the invaluable lessons learned from previous setbacks had ultimately paved the way for Wednesday's triumph. "Thank you everyone for the support... We learned a lot from our failure and today we succeeded," said the space agency chief.

The country's first lunar mission, Chandrayaan-1 was launched in October 2008 and operated until August 2009. The mission included an orbiter and a Moon Impact Probe that made a controlled impact with the lunar surface on 14 November 2008. The second lunar mission in July 2019 was only 'partially successful' as the lunar lander deviated from its trajectory due to a software glitch, when it was barely 2 km above the moon's surface on 6 September 2019, and crash landed on the lunar surface.

Amazingly, earlier this week, the ISRO was able to successfully establish two-way communication between Chandrayaan-3 lander module and the Chandrayaan-2 space-craft that still orbits around the moon. To stamp India's entry into the elite group of nations that have so far landed on the Moon, the rear wheels of the lunar rover will leave behind imprints of India's national emblem and the ISRO logo as it moves on the lunar surface.

The successful landing sends an emphatic message to young people all over the world that the pursuit of knowledge is a life-long journey filled with infinite possibilities. The success of Mission Chandrayaan-3 and the image of a Vikram lander, as it made its nail-biting descent and its momentous touchdown on lunar surface, will hopefully ignite the imagination of young minds everywhere, encourage them to think boldly, dare them to dream big, and to dedicate their energies to the pursuit of knowledge.

The journey of Chandrayaan-3, from its fiery blast-off to its triumphant landing on the Moon's southern polar region opens up exciting possibilities for further lunar exploration, scientific discoveries, and international collaboration in exploring the final frontier. The Chandrayaan mission is also an attestation of human ingenuity, innovation, and the unquenchable human thirst for new knowledge. The success of India's mission is, as Prime Minister Modi put it, a triumph for all of humanity.



Thought for the week

“ To do the useful thing, to say the courageous thing, to contemplate the beautiful thing: that is enough for one man's life.

— T.S. Eliot

Nutrition has to do with everything

.....
Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy
.....



Nutrition, health, wellbeing, and beauty are all closely inter-related on multiple levels, and neglecting one can have a significant negative effect on another.

Here is a list of foods that help:

To maintain your immunity:

Kiwi fruit: You know that vitamin C plays a big role in your immune system, but did you know that kiwi has twice as much vitamin C than oranges? Have 2 to 3 kiwis a day, or take it in the form of fresh kiwi fruit juice.

Probiotic yogurt: It helps to multiply the level of good bacteria in the digestive tract and prevents pathogens from entering your system.

Oysters: Oysters are an excellent source of zinc, which plays an essential role in enzyme system regulation. Oysters consumption also helps to boost your immunity.

Smoked oysters on a whole grain toast are tasty, nutritious and full of zinc.

To control your cholesterol:

Oats: These cereal grains are rich in soluble fiber, and in beta- glucan, which binds with bile acids and helps flush out bad cholesterol before they get absorbed into the body.

Nuts: just like avocados and olives, nuts are rich in unsaturated fatty acids which are needed to decrease cholesterol level in the body. Eating 45g of nuts a day (one handful) reduces the risk of heart diseases. Also try walnuts and almonds as a snack.

To enhance your energy:

Breakfast cereals: Choose wholegrain breakfast cereals to get an energetic morning and to feel energetic for the rest of the day. Many breakfast cereals have added vitamin B like thiamin and vitamin B12, so check your nutritional panel while shopping.

Red lean meat: If you feel that you are weak and you do not have energy for anything, one of your first stops is to check your iron intake. Iron deficiency is a significant health problem. Too little iron intake in daily meals and high

demands at certain stages of life can lead to low iron stores in the body, which causes anemia.

Lean red meat is one of the richest sources of iron, so aim to have 3 to 4 servings (almost 150 g) a day.

To support your skin:

Berries: Some nutrients are very beneficial to skin health. Richly pigmented purple and red fruits are packed with antioxidants called anthocyanins that have been shown to have anti-ageing properties, specifically for the skin and the brain cells. Berries are also rich in vitamin C, which is needed to build collagen, and maintain elasticity and firmness in the skin.

Tomato: Rich in vitamin C and the antioxidant Lycopene, tomatoes protect against sun-induced skin aging; this is because Lycopene has the ability to neutralize the free radicals that form when skin is exposed to ultraviolet light.

Leafy greens: Folate in green leafy vegetables can help prevent cellular DNA damage. It helps your skin, your hair and nail cells to divide, repair and renew.

Nearly all beauty products now contain folate in the form of folic acid mentioned on packing.

And, of course, exercise well, sleep tight and let your personality shine.

Eat like Mira
Create healthy habits, not restrictions

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



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

RECIPE

CRUNCY CELERY STICKS



Celery has long been a staple kitchen ingredient that finds ready use in complementing other dishes or on their own. Not only is celery flavorful, delicious and satisfying, it is also a great source of vitamins, minerals, and protein.

So let us get creative with this baked celery recipe that involves no deep frying and is accordingly a better option for those choosing to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

Total time: 30 minutes.

Serving : 4

Ingredients:

For coating:

- 1 cup puffed rice crumbs
- 1/2 cup oats
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp paprika
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 cup all purpose flour

For batter:

- 2 tbsp cornflour
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp onion powder
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1/4 cup water

Other Ingredients:

- 5 celery stalks, strings removed, cut into sticks
- Olive oil cooking spray

Instructions:

For coating:

- Coarsely grind the oats and puffed rice in a food processor
- Combine the grinding with salt, paprika and black pepper in a bowl.
- Preheat the oven to 200C.

Making Batter:

- Whisk batter ingredients with a little water in a bowl to form a thick batter
- Add the celery sticks one by one to the batter and toss to coat.
- Pick up the sticks using tongs and place them in the bowl of mixed crumbs.
- Use tongs to press the celery sticks so crumbs adhere all over its surface
- Spray a baking tray lightly with olive oil
- Arrange the coated celery sticks on the baking tray
- Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or till the color turns golden brown.
- Remove from the oven and serve immediately, with dipping sauce of choice.



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

Effective, long-term treatment for chronic pain

A new review paper on an effective and long-term therapy for chronic pain found that the non-invasive 'Scrambler Therapy' can yield significant relief for approximately 80 to 90 percent of patients with chronic pain. The review, published in mid-July by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center in the United States, also noted that scrambler therapy was more effective and longer lasting than the non-invasive transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) therapy currently prescribed to many patients.

Scrambler therapy, which has been around since 2009 and has received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), is less well known than TENS, on account of not much data being available on its effectiveness in real-world situations. The researchers at Johns Hopkins aimed to fill this void by evaluating the efficiency and efficacy of scrambler therapy on its own, and in relation to other chronic pain-relieving therapies in the market.

Estimates show that globally 1 in 5 adults

suffer from pain and another 1 in 10 adults are diagnosed with chronic pain each year. The importance of finding an effective, long-term solution to chronic pain lies in the fact that chronic pain affects people everywhere and there are very few, if any, long-term solutions that provide relief to this debilitating condition. To gain a better understanding of chronic pain, it helps to find out what pain is, how it manifests, and why we feel pain.

Pain is basically an indication that something in the body is not functioning as it should, and that certain actions need to be taken or avoided. It is an unpleasant sensation that may mildly or significantly impact the physical or emotional wellbeing and quality of life of individuals. Pain can be temporary or permanent and can range in intensity from being almost imperceptible to mild or excruciatingly unbearable.

Pain, which often manifests in the form of a tingling, pricking, stinging, burning, aching, or a shooting sensation, is also a complex experience that varies widely between people, even among patients suffering from



similar injuries or illnesses. Although most pains go away after a time on their own or with treatment, there are other pains that can persist and develop into long-term chronic pain, which is often the debilitating symptom of many underlying diseases.

We sense pain when thousands of specialized sensory nerve cells called nociceptors spread throughout the body respond to stimuli from damaged tissue, or tissues facing a threat of damage, or indirectly from chemicals released by damaged tissue. The stimulus triggers an electrical impulse that travels through nerves from the site of the injury or diseased area to the spinal cord and up to the brain.

Thalamus is a region of the brain that receives pain signals and then distributes them to appropriate brain regions, including those in the cortex — which process the sensory information and generates the experience of pain. Many other regions of the brain have also been associated with characteristics of pain generation.

There are also regions in the brain that help to dampen or decrease pain by sending signals down from the brain through nerves in the spinal cord to the area of pain, which block or interfere with the intensity of incoming pain

signals to reduce the pain experience.

All chronic pain and almost all nerve and neuropathic pain result from two things: pain impulses coming from damaged nerves that send a constant barrage up to pain centers in the brain, and the failure of inhibitory cells to block those impulses and prevent them from becoming chronic. By blocking the pain impulses going to the brain and stimulating the inhibitory system, it is possible to reset the brain area that receives and responds to chronic pain.

Scrambler therapy works by administering electrical stimulation through the skin via electrodes placed in areas of the body above and below where chronic pain is felt. The goal is to capture signals emanating from the nociceptors in the area experiencing pain and replace it with signals coming from adjacent areas experiencing no pain, thereby 'scrambling' the pain signals sent to the brain.

The review by researchers at Johns Hopkins found that patients receiving three to 12 half-hour sessions of scrambler therapy experienced substantial, and in some cases permanent relief from chronic pain. Proponents of the new therapy say it is effective, non-invasive and significantly reduces the use of opioids prescribed for chronic pain.

The current TENS therapy also administers low-intensity electrical signals through the skin, but it uses a pair of electrodes at the sites of pain. However, TENS therapy was found to be less effective than scrambler, and the relief provided by TENS was short-lived, with the pain returning when the electrical impulse was turned off. On the other hand, pain relief from scrambler therapy sustained for months or even years, and sometimes permanently after the treatment sessions are completed.

The researchers believe that their new review would provide the authentication for Scrambler to be employed in more clinical surroundings and could significantly benefit chronic-pain patients.

Food, mood and how healthy swaps make a difference



The influence of food on mood is well-known but how this relationship works is less well-understood. The phrase, 'you are what you eat' has often been used to explain the fatigue and weakness we experience when we do not eat for an extended period, or the bloated, or sluggish feeling we get when we have eaten too much, or when we eat foods that do not agree with us.

Besides its physical effects, food has also been shown to impact our mental health.

Previous studies have established that what we eat not only affects our physical health but also our mental wellbeing. A new study by researchers at Washington University in the United States has added to the compendium on food intake and mental health by linking a diet high in the consumption of fried foods, in particular fried potatoes, with increased anxiety and depression.

The study involved 140,728 people and revealed that regular consumption of fried foods carries a 12 percent higher risk of anxiety and a 7 percent greater risk of depression. Results from the new study are a further vindication of decades of research showing that fried and unhealthy foods in the standard Western diet increase the risk of common chronic diseases and mental health conditions.

One of the reasons that fried foods are associated with higher instances of anxiety and depression is that they have been shown to contribute to neuroinflammation, or inflammation in the brain, by producing compounds known as advanced glycation end-products (AGE) which adhere to tissue, damage them, and cause inflammation.

The inflammation then blunts the areas of the brain that are associated with reward and decreases the release of dopamine, a type of neurotransmitter and hormone that plays a key role in many important body functions. High or low levels of dopamine are associated with several mental health and neurological diseases. Low levels of dopamine have been

linked to schizophrenia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Parkinson's disease, restless legs syndrome, and a lack of motivation, among others.

However, it needs to be pointed out that the function of a single neurotransmitter like dopamine cannot be viewed in isolation of other neurotransmitters, or other chemicals in your brain or body, as many of them interact with each other. Moreover, doctors are still undecided on whether high or low levels of dopamine cause disease, or it is the disease that leads to lower or higher levels of dopamine, or whether both are involved.

Fried-food lovers everywhere who may be dismayed by the new findings can take heart in knowing that by paying closer attention to what we eat, it is possible to help reduce our risk of some mood disorders. For instance, studies have shown that mental health outcomes can be vastly improved when people follow a diet high in anti-inflammatory foods for 12 weeks.

Some of the healthy swaps that a person could make to reduce diet-induced inflammation include choosing cooking methods like poaching, stewing, steaming, and boiling rather than dry, high-temperature cooking. Oven-frying or air-frying can be great options as well because you use far less oil.

Replacing tropical oils, such as coconut- or palm-oil that are high in saturated fats with extra-virgin olive oil, avocado oil, or rapeseed oil, can also help reduce inflammation. Additional benefits can be gained by swapping fried items with baked or grilled products such as baked potatoes and grilled chicken and adding in more whole foods like nuts, seeds, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

In general, doctors recommend patients to follow a healthy lifestyle by eating a variety of whole plant foods with plenty of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, and seeds; engage in regular exercises; manage stress; get sufficient restful, quality sleep; and to avoid risky substances such as tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Health Benefits of Financial Inclusion



Kim Fe Cramer

An assistant professor at the London School of Economics, studies household finance in developing countries.

At least half of the global population lacks access to essential health services, and health-care expenses push almost 100 million people into extreme poverty each year. How scarce resources are distributed should matter, and there are good reasons to believe that finance could play a crucial role in addressing this challenge. More than 60 countries have launched national financial-inclusion strategies, and academic research is keen on understanding their impact.

Until recently, there was no evidence that finance could make a significant difference for health. Randomized controlled trials that offered households financial products such as savings accounts, credit, and health insurance found no effects. But, crucially, these studies did not examine important long-term and large-scale aspects of banking, nor did they account for the financial products and services offered to businesses and health-care providers.

In a recent study, I used a natural experiment that introduced variation in bank presence in India to assess the effects of improving financial inclusion nationwide, over ten years, and on different actors in the market. In contrast to previous research, I found substantial improvements in households' health.

In 2005, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced a policy to incentivize banks to open new branches in underserved districts nationwide. After five years, the number of bank



branches in these districts had increased by 19 percent. More importantly, two nationally representative household-level surveys have shown improved health in these districts compared to similar districts where the policy did not apply.

The Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS), conducted six years after the RBI policy went into effect, demonstrates that households in districts with an increased bank presence were 36 percent less likely to experience non-chronic illnesses such as fever or diarrhea. Likewise, the Demographics and Health Survey, conducted ten years after the policy was implemented, shows higher vaccination rates and lower risks associated with pregnancy in these districts. Decreased morbidity rates also improved health-related economic outcomes: the IHDS shows that households missed less school and

work owing to illness and incurred significantly lower medical expenses.

Three mechanisms likely played a role in improving health outcomes. For starters, banks provided credit to local businesses, allowing households to earn more and invest more in health. Second, the data suggest that households directly gained access to financial services. They established savings accounts and, importantly, could also buy health insurance. In India, as in over half of developing countries, local banks sell health-insurance policies to their customers, serving as middlemen for insurance companies in major cities. This differs sharply from most developed countries, where health insurance is purchased only directly from insurance companies or obtained from government programs.

Lastly, health-care providers gained access

to credit. Eight years after the RBI policy was implemented, the number of hospitals operating in the incentivized districts had grown by 140 percent, and providers were more likely to report institutional loans as their primary source of finance. Local households also reported fewer problems with health-care supply. Policymakers took to heart the importance of expanding credit to health-care providers: in May 2021, during the COVID-19 crisis, the RBI provided \$6.78 billion in easily accessible credit for the sector.

The substantial effects of finance on health in this natural experiment are more evident than they were in prior randomized controlled trials. Exploring finance using a natural experiment has two important added merits. First, it allows one to capture general equilibrium effects: evidence suggests that both demand and supply of the health-care market are stimulated, potentially creating a virtuous cycle. Second, one can explore effects on a larger scale over a longer period of time.

Increased bank presence could also help achieve other United Nations Sustainable Development Goals worldwide. Given the relationship between improved access to bank branches and fewer school absences owing to illness, education is one policy area that could be amenable to financial-inclusion efforts. Allowing households to invest more in education and providing credit for creating new schools and training programs could generate better education outcomes.

The success of the RBI policy bodes well for policymakers in developing countries seeking to improve health outcomes. It also warrants further study of how similar interventions could affect demand and supply in other markets. Policy incentives to increase the number of bank branches in underserved areas could ultimately have multiple positive community outcomes, beyond improved health indicators.



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