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Functional literacy in a changing world



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

The world celebrates International Literacy Day each year on 8 September. Latest statistical data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) show that more than 86 percent of the world's population can now read and write compared to 68 percent in 1979.

Despite this achievement, worldwide at least 773 million adults still cannot read and write, of whom nearly 487 million are women. In addition, more than 244 million school-age children between the ages of 6 and 18 are not enrolled in schools. In low- and middle-income countries, the share of 10-year-old children who cannot read and understand a simple text with



comprehension has increased from 57 percent in 2019 to an estimated 70 percent in 2022.

Amid these depressing figures, in Kuwait, we are blessed to have an enviable adult literacy rate of over 96 percent. According to the latest data from the World Bank and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), from around 60 percent adult literacy in the 1970s, Kuwait has achieved an adult literacy rate of 96.1 percent in 2021. The literacy figure was even higher, at 99.1 percent, among the population's youth cohort (15 to 24 years of age). Adult literacy rate refers to the section of the population, 15 years and over, who can read and write.

Kuwait's nearly 60 percent gain in adult literacy over the past five decades owes a lot to the country's far-sighted and visionary

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Kuwaitis to get long-term Schengen visa

In a media statement last week, Italian Ambassador H.E. Carlo Balducci disclosed that the embassy issued 22,538 visas for Kuwaitis during the first eight months of this year. He added that the turnout of Kuwaitis to visit Italy was noticeably high during this summer vacation, and that the consular section completed all requests at a record speed. He denied that there had been any rejection of visa applications for Kuwaiti citizens.

The Italian ambassador went on to point out, "Italy is a very hospitable, welcoming and safe country, where it is very easy to feel at home. The beauty and diversity of the landscape, the richness of the artistic cities, and the history and culture that can be felt in every aspect of

the many Italian specialties, for example from cuisine to fashion to design, are truly special Italian characteristics. And I know that many Kuwaitis and residents of Kuwait who travel to Italy, appreciate these Italian characteristics."

He noted that, "Italy and Kuwait have particularly high-level bilateral relations, which are constantly growing in many sectors. And, in 2022, Italy was Kuwait's number one trading partner in terms of exports or the wide display of Italian cultural initiatives in Kuwait."

We have also finally defined a framework for relations, at the institutional level, that allows us to raise the level of relations further. This would greatly enhance the exchange of visits that we are working on, whether Kuwaitis to



Italy or Italians to Kuwait.

Explaining the EU's long-term multiple Schengen visa system, Ambassador Balducci

said that "it is a multiple-entry visa that allows its holder to enter and exit the Schengen area as many times as they want, as long as he does not violate Rule 90/180, which states that they do not remain in the Schengen zone longer than 90 days, within 180 days."

He added that, "The Schengen visa code has been updated to define new and well-defined rules regarding who will benefit from multiple-entry visas, and the law stipulates that multiple-entry visas will be granted with a validity of one, three and five years, depending on the applicants' visa and travel date, pointing out that this is the so-called 'cascade mechanism' that will be activated very soon for Kuwaiti citizens."

GFA Fintech Personality of the Year awarded to Adeeb Ahamed

Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, Adeeb Ahamed, won the 'Leading Fintech Personality of the Year' from the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) award at the prestigious Global Fintech Awards (GFA) 2023, held annually as part of the Global Fintech Fest (GFF) 2023 in Mumbai, India.



A visionary entrepreneur in the financial services world, Mr. Ahamed has been instrumental in revolutionizing cross-border payments between the GCC and India. His company operates a network of 300+ customer engagement centers and digital

payment solutions in 10 countries across the Middle East, Asia Pacific and GCC regions.

Accepting the award, Mr. Ahamed said, "I am deeply honored to receive this year's 'Leading Fintech Personality of the Year Award - GCC'. The GCC payments landscape is among the fastest evolving globally, and this award is a testament to the collective efforts of the LuLu Financial Holdings team to revolutionize cross-border payments. I am also immensely grateful for the regulatory support that has accelerated our progress in the region and beyond. This award isn't just my win; it reflects the tireless efforts of those working towards a shared vision: of enhancing lives through an inclusive financial system."

Recognising outstanding accomplishments of individuals and entities in the fintech ecosystem around the globe, GFA awards are given in three categories, divided into 15 subcategories. Other winners included President & COO, One97 Communications Ltd., Bhavesh Gupta, for 'Fintech Leader of the Year', Founder & CEO, Volt, Tom Greenwood, for 'Leading Fintech Personality of the Year - Europe', and CTO, Zerodha, Kailash Nadh, for 'Fintech CTO of the Year'. Among various enterprises that received GFA in different categories, the 'Fintech Company of the Year' award was given to the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).

The winners were selected from a large number of nominations, through meticulous adjudication by a jury comprising 15 members, all leading captains of the fintech industry.



New Municipal clause to speed up government projects

The long delays associated with implementation of government projects could soon be a thing of the past, following a new decision by Kuwait Municipality that any project which is allocated land by the municipality must commence work at the given site before four years, or risk having the permission to use the site forfeited.

In response to a proposal put forth by municipal council member Eng. Munira Al-Amir, the Acting Director-General of the Municipality, Eng. Saud Al-Dabbous sought to incorporate an additional clause into the Municipal Council Resolution No. LQMB/75/7/2013 of 2013, regarding sites allocated by Kuwait Municipality for the implementation of government projects. Under the new clause, government projects must initiate implementation within a four-year window from the date of site allocation. Failure to commence implementation will render the land allocation decision null and void.

The amended Municipal Council Resolution No. LQMB/75/7/2013 now reads:

First: The sites allocated to government agencies are delivered within two years from the date of issuance of the allocation decision, and the decision is considered canceled if the site is not received.

Second: Implementation of the scheduled projects must begin within four years from the date of receiving the site, and the decision to allocate the land is considered canceled if implementation is not initiated.

However, the Municipality rejected another item in the proposal tabled by Eng. Munira Al-Amir that the new decision be applied retroactively to all previously allocated plots. The Municipality pointed out Kuwaiti law stipulates that administrative decisions, whether organizational or individual, are effective only from the date of their issuance and with immediate effect, and do not apply retroactively except by a provision in the law.



LuLu Hypermarket and LOYAC partner to organize internship program

LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, has teamed up with LOYAC, a non-profit organization that aims to empower youth to become impactful leaders, to launch a groundbreaking internship program aimed at nurturing the talents of Kuwait's youth. This collaboration is a testament to both organizations' commitment to youth development, education, and community engagement.

The internship program, which took place at LuLu Hypermarket's Qurain and Egaila outlets,

brought together a diverse group of professionals and specialists of LuLu Hypermarket, who volunteered their time and expertise to mentor and train LOYAC's ambitious young individuals. This initiative was designed to provide hands-on learning experiences and to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

Over the course of the internship period, the interns had the unique opportunity to gain real-world insights into various aspects of the retail industry, including customer service, merchandising, logistics, and management.

They received personalized guidance and mentorship from LuLu Hypermarket's seasoned professionals, who shared their expertise and industry best practices.

To celebrate the successful completion of the internship program, LuLu Hypermarket hosted a certificate award ceremony at their regional office in Farwaniya on 5 August. During the event, certificates of achievement were presented to the dedicated interns of LOYAC who had shown exceptional commitment and enthusiasm throughout the program.

Speaking at the ceremony, Director of LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait, Mohamad Haris, expressed his delight in witnessing the growth and development of the young talents.

This collaborative effort between LuLu Hypermarket and LOYAC exemplifies their shared vision of empowering Kuwaiti youth and providing them with opportunities for personal and professional growth. By fostering such partnerships, they aim to contribute to the overall development of the community and create a brighter future for the young generation.



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India, Kuwait relations

A mutually cherished relationship that grows stronger each year

Indian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

India and Kuwait share a mutually cherished relationship that only grows stronger with each passing year, said Indian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika during a recent interview with local Arabic daily Al-Rai. Reiterating the strong bilateral relations between India and Kuwait, the ambassador noted, "India-Kuwait relations are historical and have been tested by time. We celebrated 60 years of our diplomatic relations in 2021. Relationships have grown stronger over the years and have become increasingly multifaceted."

"After the gap caused by COVID-19 in bilateral meetings, there has been a recovery in bilateral discussions this year with the aim of driving the relationship forward. After a break of more than four years, consultations between foreign ministers of our two countries were held in New Delhi in the first week of May. Our relations are also deepening in the multilateral context, with Kuwait's entry as a dialogue partner in the region. Relations between India and the GCC, of which Kuwait is a key member, are also on an ascending path. We need to work together to deepen it, especially in sectors of mutual interest."

Turning to the emerging sectors of economic cooperation and the volume of trade between the two countries, Ambassador Swaika said, "Last year, bilateral trade reached a record \$13.8 billion, mostly focused on oil and food, but we are seeing encouraging signs of diversification, whether it is exports of cars or machinery from India, textiles, precious stones, jewelry, etc. Additionally, the health and pharmaceutical sector as well as information technology are prominent between the two countries due to India's expertise in these areas. Cooperation in biofuels and renewable energy is another emerging sector of mutual interest."

"Indian companies have implemented high-quality projects in Kuwait, be it in the

road sector, oil and gas sector, electricity transmission, soil treatment, etc. Indian companies, many of which are multinationals, see opportunities in upcoming projects in Kuwait as part of the new government program, and we are seeing greater interest from Kuwaiti companies to invest in India, including investments already made in our country's steel and hospitality sectors."

On the defense and security front, the Indian ambassador stressed, "Bilateral cooperation in the field of defense and security between India and Kuwait is clearly growing, and we can see this in the increasing maritime relations that are evident in recent visits by Indian naval vessels to Kuwait to conduct transformation operations and traffic exercises. Docked in Shuwaikh port recently, the INS Visakhapatnam is one of India's newest locally built warships that demonstrated the power of the 'Made in India' slogan in the defense sector. In addition, Indian Army officers regularly attend staff courses at the Mubarak Al-Abdullah Joint Command and Staff College in Kuwait. Similarly, Kuwaiti military officers attended various courses at Indian military institutions."

"The Embassy also organized a seminar on the defense industry in Kuwait in May this year, in which 10 Indian companies from the defense sector participated with the good participation of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense. With India's military power, including defense exports to friendly countries, increasing by about \$2 billion in the last fiscal year, I would like to say that the field of defense cooperation offers enormous potential for bilateral partnership, and on the security front, there is an active exchange between our respective agencies."

The Indian envoy also expanded on the cultural, academic and sports cooperation between the two countries. "India and culture are synonymous; this is one of the reasons for the great affinity between our two countries. Not only is Indian culture widely appreciated in Kuwait, but there are a lot of similarities as well. There is a lot of cultural interaction



happening on its own because of the strong ties between our peoples, and both countries are also doing their best to promote it on the people-to-people level and through government interventions as well."

"Currently we have an effective cultural exchange program under which different types of cultural activities are carried out. Cultural groups come from India to Kuwait from time to time. One such occasion was the India Festival in March this year, and we look forward to the participation of Kuwaiti cultural and artistic groups in our international festivals in India during October and November this year."

"In terms of student exchange, there is active cooperation at the school level, there are 26 schools in Kuwait that follow the Indian CBSE curriculum, and have more than 60,000 students. Moreover, the Kuwait College of Science and Technology is managed in consultation with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Delhi."

"Sport is another area where we see signs of emerging cooperation. India and Kuwait faced off in the South Asian Football Confederation

finals in July, and Kuwaitis are increasingly interested in cricket, and I was surprised to see how many people came to watch the 2023 Cricket World Cup when they traveled to Kuwait last month. We must explore further cooperation in such areas."

Elaborating on the participation of Indian companies in Kuwait's mega Vision 2035 agenda, and the significant contribution by Indian workers to the development of Kuwait, the ambassador said, "Indian human capital in Kuwait is one of the main strengths of our bilateral relations, the contribution of the large Indian community to the Kuwaiti economy is large and widely recognized. You will find Indians working in all sectors of the Kuwaiti economy, be it executives, engineers, doctors, nurses, domestic workers, drivers, etc. With regard to the issues facing them, the issue of family visa restrictions is negatively affecting many Indians in Kuwait, and we hope that the authorities in Kuwait will ease this early."

Turning to recent developments in India's multilateral engagements that are of interest to the two countries, Ambassador Swaika pointed out that the BRICS, which is an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, is a gathering of five emerging economies from different continents. South Africa, which holds the current presidency of BRICS, chaired the fifteenth anniversary summit last month.

He added that BRICS is a gathering that embraces the aspirations of emerging economies and has led to positive results in many areas of cooperation. An example is the New Development Bank, which plays an important role in the development of countries of the Global South, and serves as a financial safety net, through its emergency reserve arrangement, for many countries.

The Indian envoy noted that other initiatives such as the BRICS satellite constellation, the Center for Vaccine Research and Development, and the mutual recognition of pharmaceutical products, is bringing positive changes

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North Korean Embassy celebrates 75th Founding Day

A ceremony was held to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. During the event, North Korean Ambassador Jo Myung Cho, the Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, reaffirmed the flourishing relations between his country and Kuwait.

The event witnessed the presence of

prominent figures, including Deputy Minister of Defense, Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah, the Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Asian Affairs, Khalid Jasim Al-Yassin, alongside various heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Kuwait.

Ambassador Cho took the opportunity to express his deep appreciation for Kuwait's humanitarian policies and its relentless efforts

in fostering social and national solidarity. He commended Kuwait's commitment to economic diversification and its continuous efforts to improve the quality of life for its citizens.

Furthermore, he acknowledged Kuwait's substantial role in supporting and strengthening Arab collective action and its dedication to preserving regional and international security and peace. He particularly emphasized the

mutual commitment of both countries to further develop and enhance their friendship and cooperation across various levels.

The event marks a significant step in the development of diplomatic ties between North Korea and Kuwait, highlighting the potential for growth between the two nations. These strong bilateral relations will undoubtedly contribute to regional stability and international diplomacy.



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Committee to design food waste prevention strategy



As part of government moves to rationalize food consumption and reduce waste, the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Muhammad Al-Aiban, issued a decision last week to form a committee to design and implement the national campaign to rationalize food consumption, and curb food wastage.

The committee is chaired by Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij, and includes Dr. Israa Al-Essa as vice-chairman, Dr. Nibal Buresli, Ayman Al-Ruwaih, Saud Al-Rakheikh, and Muhammad Al-Muzaini as members, and Ala'a Al-Saleh as a member and rapporteur.

The committee is tasked with conducting comprehensive research on current food waste statistics, trends, and contributing factors at the national level, as well as conducting studies to analyze social behavior and the motives behind misconceptions regarding the phenomenon of food waste and ways to address them. In addition, the committee will also design and implement a public awareness campaign to educate citizens and residents about the environmental and economic impacts resulting from food waste.

The decision set the duration of the committee's work at two months, gave it the right to seek assistance from specialists and experts it deems appropriate, and urged the relevant departments in the ministry to cooperate with it and facilitate its work.

The formation of the new committee comes on the heels of another committee formed recently by Minister Al-Aiban to prepare a comprehensive vision for developing mechanisms for preserving and developing food and commodity stocks in cooperative societies and supermarkets, and to prepare a vision for an awareness campaign on the necessity of rationalizing food consumption and reducing waste. On a related note, the minister also recently reconstituted the permanent committee to select and include food and discounted food items in the ration card system.

Kuwait's signing of TAC to enhance trade with ASEAN



Indonesian Ambassador H.E. Lina Mariana expressed her appreciation of Kuwait signing the Instrument of Accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) at the 43rd Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Jakarta.

Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, presented the accession instrument to the Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, on the sidelines of the ASEAN Ministerial meeting held in Jakarta, making Kuwait the 54th country to accede to the TAC.

The Indonesian envoy commended the

signing by saying TAC aims to promote political and security stability in Southeast Asia by facilitating peaceful resolution to disputes among the signatory nations. She also expressed her anticipation of increased cooperation between Kuwait and ASEAN countries in the near future.

Ambassador Mariana emphasized ASEAN's substantial potential as a market for investment and trade, given its vast population of approximately 600 million people, foreseeing this as beneficial for Kuwait. She added that the accession will provide opportunities for bolstered

cooperation in economic and various other domains, benefiting both Kuwait and ASEAN nations. The envoy also added that she looked forward to the upcoming summit between GCC countries and ASEAN nations, scheduled for later this year in Riyadh.

The ambassador further revealed plans for an Indonesian Trade and Tourism Forum and Exhibition, scheduled for 14 November, with the support of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Prominent officials, including the Minister of Cooperatives and Small and Medium

Enterprises, were expected to attend.

Additionally, a diplomatic reception on 22 October will introduce Kuwaiti diplomats to the city of Nusantara, Indonesia's new capital on the island of Borneo. The city is designed as a smart capital and aims to preserve the surrounding forests while fostering economic growth and development.

The Indonesian envoy extended invitations to investors, particularly from Kuwait, to participate in this innovative project, emphasizing its eco-friendly and sustainable nature.



Zain celebrates summer vibes with customers

Zain, the leading telecommunication provider in the country, recently held a special event at Al Khairan mall to celebrate the summer season, sharing vacation vibes with customers and mall visitors. The exciting activities and interactive games organized during the event attracted a large crowd of families and youngsters.

By organizing such unique events and entertainment programs that provide opportunities to create beautiful memories for the company's large customer base and the wider community, Zain is reflecting its brand values — Zain, A Wonderful World.

The event at Al Khairan Mall, which was organized in collaboration with Wainkoun, a local creative house known for organizing out-of-the-box events and engaging activities, drew families from around the Al Khairan area, where many Kuwaitis usually spend their summer vacation.

The event featured many exciting activities, fun games, and memorable experiences that appealed to visitors of all ages, opening up the space for them to compete for the chance to win prizes from Zain. The company also distributed summer-themed giveaways, set up a photo booth, and held other fun activities that left a wonderful impression on everyone.





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Skepticism of privatization rife among Kuwaitis

Despite the government's best attempts to encourage privatization of public sector entities and the push for public-private-partnership in mega infrastructure projects, the skepticism towards privatization among Kuwaitis is high, and is widely shared among those working in both the private and public sector.

Over the past month, discussions in the local economic arena, be it in parliamentary or in union settings or through various communication channels, have centered around government ownership and management of various sectors.

These discussions often center around questions of the ability and capacity of the private sector to effectively manage and enhance the services currently provided by sectors that could potentially be privatized.

Three key topics have dominated these conversations — firstly, the concerns of several National Assembly representatives regarding the privatization of Kuwait Airways Company; secondly, Oil Minister Saad Al-Barrak's acknowledgment of the challenges associated with involving the private sector as a strategic partner in the petrochemical refining project at the Al-Zour complex; and thirdly, the establishment of the Kuwait Warehousing Company by the state (through the Public Authority for Investment) as a competitor to privately-owned and managed warehouse and logistics services companies specializing in the same areas of business.

The prevailing skepticism serves as a starting point to analyze why most Kuwaitis lack confidence in the private sector and resist privatizing government-owned entities, despite ongoing complaints



about government administration. This is particularly noteworthy since successful models worldwide often involve private, non-governmental companies and projects.

Economic analysts and industry experts say that this lack of confidence in the private sector and privatization can be attributed mainly to two primary factors — Predominance of the public sector in the economy, and the lack of positive private sector models.

Official data from the Central Bureau of Statistics reveals that the public sector employs 83.9 percent of Kuwaiti workers, while Kuwaitis in the private sector make up only 16.1 percent. Essential services such as healthcare, education, housing, infrastructure, and even food services are largely provided by the government sector. Even when these services deteriorate, there is reluctance to change providers, or encourage privatization of these sectors, for fear of monopolistic practices that

have tainted the image of privatization.

Moreover, the very few examples of successful privatization processes have contributed to public skepticism. The failure of specialized state institutions like the Public-Private Partnership Authority and the technical body for privatization projects to establish effective privatization models in less complex sectors has also hindered confidence-building. Furthermore, the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises, despite its substantial capital, has failed to create a thriving market for youth projects. This has led to a lack of trust

among Kuwaiti youth in private work and the private sector.

These factors undermine the goal of fostering public support for the private sector and improving the business environment. Additionally, the private sector also bears some responsibility for these issues. It has not been actively encouraged to serve as a viable alternative to government ownership or administration, particularly in terms of its fiscal contributions to the state. Tax revenues from the private sector are minimal, and only a small percentage of the Kuwaiti workforce is employed therein. To change this, there is a need to enhance the business environment, promote opportunities based on transparent governance standards, and reduce the sector's reliance on government spending and tenders. Currently, the private sector is heavily dependent on state contracts, making it appear rentier and overly reliant on public funds.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that involves both the public and private sectors. Building trust in the private sector, improving its contribution to the economy, and encouraging its independence from government spending are essential steps towards fostering a more balanced and vibrant economic landscape in Kuwait.

A mutually cherished relationship that grows stronger each year

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to the lives of ordinary citizens in the BRICS countries, as well as worldwide. He also highlighted that during the recent BRICS summit, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed new areas of cooperation between the five countries in the fields of space, education, technology and skills.

Ambassador Swaika added, "The highlight of this year's summit was the decision to accept six new members to the BRICS family — Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and Argentina. India has always fully supported the expansion of the BRICS membership, and our country has always believed that bringing in new members will strengthen the BRICS as an organization and provide new impetus to our collective endeavors. Such a move would further strengthen the trust of many countries in a multipolar world order. Although many countries have expressed interest in joining the BRICS, I am not aware of Kuwait's application to join the BRICS."

Ambassador Swaika then elaborated on the G20 Summit that is being held this week in New Delhi, and on India's year of G20 presidency in 2022-23. He affirmed that his country, which is hosting the G20 summit on 9 and 10 September in New Delhi, has always upheld a global vision of 'One Land, One Family, One Future', in line with the ancient Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', or the 'World is one Family', which is the theme of G20 agenda under India's presidency. In line with this global perspective, India is keen to integrate the priorities of the Global South into the G20 agenda.

"India's vision for its G20 chairmanship is ambitious, decisive, inclusive and democratic, and apart from the current G20 countries, India has invited a number of developing countries from its immediate neighborhood and beyond to participate in the Summit. Inclusiveness was achieved not only in terms of participation in the Summit, but more importantly in terms of mainstreaming the priorities of the Global South into the G20 agenda.

In this context, India organized the Global Voice of the South Summit in January this year with the participation of 125 countries to understand their priorities that can be reflected in the G20 agenda. India also

suggested that the African Union should be invited as a new member to the G20 grouping.

"India has also ensured that the G20 does not remain within the confines of formal meetings, but that its essence passes to the common man. Our country has tried to make the G20 gathering, a 'People's G20' — with more than 60 cities in all 28 states and eight union territories hosting G20 related events and meetings with participation of international delegations."

Away from multilateral engagements, the ambassador turned to cooperation with Kuwait in the realm of space explorations. "Our space sector has made tremendous gains over the years and has shown that these technologies and capabilities are not exclusive to a few countries. Over the past few years, India has launched 381 foreign satellites for 34 countries, Kuwait also successfully launched the KuwaitSat-1 satellite earlier this year, a delegation from the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research had visited ISRO's facilities in Bengaluru in 2019, and there is also a memorandum of understanding between ISRO and KISR on bilateral cooperation in the fields of exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes, and I feel that the space sector is a promising area of cooperation between our two countries."

He pointed out that the successful Indian lunar mission Chandrayaan-3 and the solar mission Aditya L1 carried out by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) last month have not only made India proud, but the entire global community proud, and we deeply appreciate the congratulatory messages from the entire Kuwaiti leadership on the success of these projects."

Regarding the recruitment of manpower from India in Kuwait, Ambassador Swaika stated that at present there were no hurdles in this respect. He explained that the two countries signed a bilateral memorandum of understanding on domestic workers in June 2021 to protect the rights and activate the legal obligations of both the employer and the employee. "By proper implementation of this memorandum by both sides, including the employer and the employee, solutions to most work-related problems can be provided," said the Indian envoy while concluding the interview.



MAK fostering better understanding with Kuwait

By Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Malaysian Association Kuwait (MAK) is a non-governmental, non-political, and non-profit organization with the objectives of bringing together the Malaysian community in Kuwait. We hold regular educational, social, cultural, and economic activities, aimed to promote the interests of our members, and to foster better understanding and cooperation between Malaysia and Kuwait, said Megat Badrul Hisham, the president of MAK.

He was speaking during a live interview held last week with Morning Talk Asia host and The Times Kuwait journalist Ricky Laxa. Elaborating on the Association and the Malaysian community in Kuwait, Hisham said that there are currently around 500 Malaysians in Kuwait working in selected sectors such as oil, gas, banks, aviation, and that MAK has existed for the past 20 years serving the community. He added that during the pandemic, the association's number had dropped substantially but that over the past several months the numbers have regained in numbers.

"Sometimes smaller in number is better as camaraderie is stronger and closer," said Hisham, adding that some of the projects organized by the group included sports

activities, family gatherings, and food festivals, as well as activities such as treasure hunts and more for children. As school resumes, several members of the organization will be returning to Kuwait and among activities on our pipeline are bowling competition, sports, and BBQ. In January MAK will organize a golf tournament and March will be the Bazaar and food Exhibition," revealed Hisham.

Primary Activities of MAK include organizing functions for its members, with the members of other associations, both foreign and domestic, as well as with Kuwait authorities and with Malaysian educational, social, cultural, and economic delegations visiting Kuwait. The association also organizes seminars and dialogues on relevant educational, social, cultural, and economic topics of interest to members.

The association also strives to create and maintain a good image of Malaysia and Malaysians in Kuwait and to protect the reputation and standing of Malaysia among citizens of Kuwait. To raise funds through various lawful means, to meet the operational costs of MAK and to support appropriate charitable, educational, social, cultural, or economic organizations and to undertake such other activities as may from time to time be permitted under the laws of Kuwait.

Kuwait expresses sorrow on devastating earthquake in Morocco

In a cable of condolence to King Mohammad VI of Morocco, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, expressed heartfelt condolences on the devastating earthquake that hit the kingdom. His Highness wished for the speedy recovery of those injured and prayed for the souls of those that passed away.

Similar cable of condolences were sent by His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to their counterparts in the Moroccan leadership.

More than 820 people have died and 672 were injured after a powerful earthquake struck central Morocco, just after 11pm local time on Friday according to the country's interior ministry.

The 6.8-magnitude quake struck 72 km southwest of tourist hotspot Marrakesh at a relatively shallow depth of 18.5 km, according to the US Geological Survey. The Moroccan Geophysical Centre said the quake struck in the Ighil area of the High Atlas with a magnitude of 7.2.

Strong tremors were also felt in the coastal cities of Rabat, Casablanca and Essaouira, sending people rushing into the streets. Many of the deaths were said to be in hard-

to-reach mountain areas. Social media sites showed scenes of panic among the public amid damaged buildings and rubble-strewn streets.

Media reports quoted residents of Marrakech, the nearest big city to the epicenter, saying that some buildings had collapsed in the old city, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and local television showed pictures of a fallen mosque minaret with rubble lying on smashed cars. It also sent debris flying into narrow alleyways and items tumbling off shelves, according to video posted on social media.

One resident of the mountain village of Asni near the epicenter, said most houses



there were damaged. "Our neighbors are under the rubble and people are working hard to rescue them using available means in the village," he said.

Conference on Iraqi invasion to be held in Doha, Qatar

Marking the 20-year anniversary of the war that changed the world, Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) is set to host the much-anticipated 'The Invasion of Iraq: Regional Reflections' conference from 4 to 16 September at the Four Seasons Hotel in Doha. Joining an array of scholars, experts, and policymakers at the international gathering, media figures will lend their unique insights and perspectives in discussions on Iraq's tumultuous past, and uncertain future.

Convened by GU-Q's Dean, Dr. Safwan Masri, and the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) at GU-Q, this public conference on the lasting implications of the 2003 Iraq War will merge journalism and academia for a multifaceted perspective that is both comprehensive and enriching. "The participation of media experts enhances the conference's relevance and depth. Their vantage point as observers and communicators bridges the gap between academic analysis and real-world understanding, serving to expand broader public engagement," said Associate Director for Research at CIRS, Zahra Babar.

The conference boasts an array of thought-provoking panels exploring the ongoing political, economic, and social upheaval in the region. An opening panel on the impact of the Iraq war on global diplomacy will feature Laila Al Shaikhli, Iraqi anchor and presenter on Al Jazeera.

MSNBC news show host Ayman Mohyeldin will offer a series of interviews over breakfast on the current, media, political, and youth activism landscape in Iraq. Prominent media personalities featured will include Othman Al-Mukhtar of Arab News Qatar, Mina Al-Oraibi of the National, UAE, and Rasha Al-Aqeedi, Middle East Deputy Editor at New Lines Magazine. The conference panel on "The Emergence of D'aesh" will see Rasha Al-Aqeedi and Othman Al-Mukhtar exploring the origins and enduring implications of transnational terrorism.

Mina Al-Oraibi will also speak on a panel examining Iraq's complex web of relationships with its neighbors.



Samia Nakhoul, Middle East Editor at Thomson Reuters, will speak on the 'Arab Spring Connections' panel, bridging Iraq's experiences with broader regional movements.

Live Arabic translation will be available for the panels. More information and a full list of conference panelists and upcoming conferences in the Hiwaraat Conference Series are available on the official conference website at hiwaraat.qatar.georgetown.edu.



Over 500 surgeries conducted by Kuwaiti doctors in Ethiopia

Kuwaiti surgeons have conducted 500 surgeries for the impoverished in Ethiopia as part of a medical mission aimed at providing medical care for the poor in this African country. Director General of Direct Aid Society Dr. Abdullah Al-Sumait said in a media statement last week. The surgeries were conducted as part of the Surgical Al-Amal (hope) Camp, organized in collaboration with the Kuwaiti Surgical Hope Team that groups consultants of eight specialties in surgical treatment, said Dr. Al-Sumait. He added that cooperation with the Kuwaiti Surgical Hope Team led by Dr. Hisham Burizk, which dates back to 13 years, aims to promote medical sciences in countries and regions in need of such knowledge, and aid patients who cannot afford high costs of medical treatment.

Up to 43 people took part in the medical expedition including 21 doctors, a number of technicians and medics. Kuwaiti Ambassador to Ethiopia Abdulaziz Al-Harbi attended the camp inauguration, along with Ethiopian Minister of Health Dr. Lia Tadesse Gebremedhin in the capital Addis Ababa. Up to 289 surgeries were conducted in the first three days of the mission.

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Increasing number of visitors from Kuwait to Spain

Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Miguel Moro Aguilar, said that an increasing number of visitors from Kuwait were visiting Spain in recent years. He pointed out that from January to August of this year, the consular section at the Embassy had received 22,860 visa applications from Kuwaiti citizens and residents of Kuwait.

The Spanish envoy added, the number of visas granted to Kuwaitis does not

represent the exact number of visas saying many more Kuwaiti tourists actually visited his country since many of them hold long-term visas, reports Al-Rai daily.

Ambassador Aguilar added that the summer of this year was wonderful in terms of the number of Kuwaiti tourists, and the full year numbers expected to reach more than 65,000, to places throughout Spain and not just in the Costa del Sol region.

He noted that the new Kuwait Airways



flights to Barcelona that starts from 30 October will contribute to increasing the frequency of tourists, along with flights to Madrid, which began operations more than a year ago and are working very well.

He suggested that Kuwaitis continue to explore Spain in the broader sense — shopping, sports, health, nature, cultural or gourmet tourism, as Spain has more to offer Kuwaitis than they can imagine.

Functional literacy in a changing world

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

constitution which makes education a fundamental right of citizens. Even before the country's independence in 1961, the government had initiated adult education programs for men in 1958, and extended this to women in 1963. At the time of independence there were only around 45,000 students enrolled in Kuwait's educational system. A drive to improve enrollment in primary classes, buttressed in 1965 by a law that made education compulsory for children aged between 6 and 14, led to rapid increase in primary enrollment.

The government's sustained and concerted efforts to enhance literacy over the years has resulted in the current high adult literacy rate. UNESCO defines basic literacy as the percentage of the population of a given age group that can read and write. It is typically measured based on the ability to comprehend a short simple statement on everyday life. But, this minimal requirement to claim literacy is not indicative of an educated public.

Many people consider literacy and education as synonyms, and the two terms tend to be often used interchangeably. Although they imply similarity, the two are not the same. Literacy is a measure of the basic ability to read and write that allows people to access information, communicate with others, and generally participate in society. Education is a more comprehensive measure of literacy assessed on a continuum in which multiple proficiency levels are determined.

The broader, more holistic concept of education involves the process of acquiring knowledge and skills, as well as values, morals, habits, and beliefs throughout life. This lifelong process can take place in formal settings, such as schools, and in informal settings, such as in homes and workplaces through interaction and input from family, friends and coworkers.

A country's high literacy rate is only an indication of the existence of an effective primary education system and literacy programs that enable a large proportion of the population to acquire the ability to read and write. Literacy is, however, important in that it enables people to continue their learning process, thereby facilitating their intellectual growth, and enhancing their contribution to the socio-economic and cultural development of society.

Without continuing their learning process, people end up being literate, but functionally illiterate. Functional illiteracy is defined as having basic reading and writing skills that are inadequate to manage daily living and employment tasks in today's highly competitive and demanding world. Being educated enables a person to acquire the functional literacy that not only allows them to read, write and use numbers, but also to gain proficiency in a larger set of modern skills.

For example, literacy is needed to enable a person to read and share news with others

using a smartphone or computer. But only an educated and functionally literate person will be able to analyze and ascertain the veracity of the news, comprehend its explicit and implicit meanings, form their own opinion, and then make a decision on whether the news is worth sharing with others.

At over 96 percent the adult literacy rate in Kuwait is high relative to both regional (79%) and global (86%) rates. But this basic definition of literacy — the ability to read and write — is no longer valid or sufficient in a 21st-century world. The importance of functional literacy in a rapidly evolving work environment, where the impact of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) is already making itself felt, cannot be over-emphasized.

The first industrial revolution used steam power to mechanize production. The second used electric power to create mass production. The third used electronics and information technology to automate production. The



fourth industrial revolution is increasingly using disruptive technologies and trends such as the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, virtual reality (VR) and generative artificial intelligence to change the way we live and work.

In the earlier 'revolutions', it was relatively easy to master the various skills and applications within the workplace, and for people to use and apply the technologies in their daily lives. The 4IR is much more complex and has the potential to be unprecedented in its pervasiveness. Young people entering this highly competitive and rapidly evolving marketplace, will need a matrix of embedded skills and understandings to make sense of, and to use, 4IR technologies in their daily lives.

While increasing literacy rates is an important goal for many countries, in a changing work environment and in the knowledge economy of today this should no longer be the primary goal of learning. Instead, the emphasis should be on developing functionally literate, digitally savvy

individuals with job-specific skills, as well as endowed with the abilities of critical thinking, problem-solving and effective communication.

These skills will be essential to enable individuals to participate fully and contribute effectively in a 4IR world of tomorrow, as well as to develop the human capital that can continue to catalyze the growth and progress of nations in today's knowledge economy. In its recent publication titled, 'Unlocking Human Capital Potential in Kuwait as Global Actor in the Knowledge Economy', the United Nations Kuwait Office pointed out that in the new global knowledge economy, nearly 67 percent of global wealth is generated from human capital accumulation.

However, in Kuwait, the contributing share of human capital to wealth is estimated at merely 24 percent. The report attributed Kuwait's underperformance in terms of Human Capital Index, relative to nations with similar income, to the country's weak 'human capital generating

the World Economic Forum in 2022.

In addition, Kuwait has not significantly benefited from its high level of access to ICT infrastructure, mainly due to ineffective ICT regulatory governance. The country is also far behind other regional countries in promoting Research and Development (R&D) spending, with the result that Kuwait's performance record in patent applications remains the worst among GCC countries. This suggests that Kuwait is suffering from the 'No investment (R&D) No Return (Patent)' principle.

To their credit, government's at the helm in recent years have expressed commitment to enhancing educational outcomes in the country. Addressing the 'Transforming Education Summit' held at the UN in New York last September, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, noted that Kuwait was cultivating the skills of its youth in order to enable them to lead the country in future, as well as investing in education and scientific research as these were critical in the age of digital transformations sweeping the world. Pointing out that Kuwait gave precedence to developing human resources and the country allocates 12 percent of its domestic spending to develop education, the premier said the country was keen on investing in human and financial resources to ensure an adequate educational output, in line with the UN's sustainable goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Also, in August last year, the Council of Ministers decided to set up a ministerial committee on education, headed by the then Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Ali Al-Mudhaf. The committee was tasked to examine all issues pertaining to educational outcomes, and to supervise and follow-up on developing mechanisms for linking educational outcomes with market needs, as well as raising efficiency of school curricula and skills of teachers.

Improving educational outcomes in a country where a quarter of the population comprises children below the age of 15, and a further 15 percent of the demographic are in the age group 15-24, should be a priority for Kuwait's policy- and decision-makers. However, it is not clear if recent political upheavals, the formation of new cabinet and parliament in June, and changing priorities for the new government, have led to the education reform plans being put on hold, or scrapped like so many other short-lived grandiose plans and policies in the past.

Investing in the health and education of youth, and providing them with the right skill sets and upskilling opportunities that enable them to meet labor market needs, engage in productive work, and contribute to the country's growth and development, are too important to be left to the vagaries of political instability or to changes in government priorities.

Orlando

The city that takes you back to childhood



By Nourah Khan
Travel Writer
The Times Kuwait

The city that captures the hearts of millions of tourists every year, Orlando with its enchanting theme parks, vibrant entertainment options, and year-round sunny weather has become a top destination for travelers seeking fun, adventure, and unforgettable experiences.

Orlando's tourism scene offers a unique blend of enchantment, excitement, and education. With its world-class theme parks, diverse entertainment options, and captivating natural attractions, it is no wonder that this city continues to be a top choice for travelers. Whether you are a family looking for a magical Disney experience, an adventure seeker eager to conquer thrilling rides, or a nature enthusiast interested in exploring Florida's wildlife, Orlando has something for everyone. So pack your bags, and let us fly together to Orlando, 'The City Beautiful'.

I have so far visited Orlando four times, and on each visit I enjoy the tourist destinations and parks and feel amazed by what Disneyland and Universal Studios have to offer, as if I am seeing them for the first time.



Walt Disney World Resort is perhaps the most iconic attraction in Orlando, drawing visitors from across the globe. This magical wonderland consists of four major theme parks: Magic Kingdom, EPCOT, Disney's Hollywood Studios, and Disney's Animal Kingdom. From meeting beloved Disney characters to enjoying thrilling rides and spectacular parades, Disney World offers a one-of-a-kind experience that leaves visitors with lasting memories.

In my opinion, Orlando deserves at least ten days, and you should devote a full day to each of the Disney parks and each of the Universal Studio parks in order to enjoy it well. Let your childhood return and go enjoy all the games that suit all ages at Disney Parks. And, if you like action games and fast-paced adventures more, then I think Universal Studios will suit you better, specifically the second park called Adventure Island, because it is full of fast trains.

The Universal Orlando Resort is another gem



in Orlando's crown. Comprising two major theme parks, Universal Studios Florida and Universal's Islands of Adventure, this destination is a haven for movie and theme park enthusiasts. The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, a part of both parks, is a particular highlight, allowing fans to immerse themselves in the magical world created by J.K. Rowling.

For those fascinated by marine life, SeaWorld Orlando is a must-visit. This aquatic theme park features awe-inspiring shows featuring dolphins,



killer whales, and other marine creatures. It is also home to thrilling rides like Mako and Kraken, making it a well-rounded attraction for families.

There are many factors you should take into consideration before choosing when to fly to Orlando, for example, the weather, vacation, and all-inclusive savings on hotel and flight prices. Orlando has a humid subtropical climate that differs from Miami and other parts of Florida. The best month to travel to Orlando is February, the



end of May, and June. During these months, you can get great discounts and good offers on hotels and flights because tourism in Orlando at these times is less crowded.

The city of Orlando is an American city that is considered one of the most important cities in the state of Florida. It is considered one of the centers that occupies a very important economic and touristic position due to its warm tropical climate throughout the year. It also receives more than 51 million tourists annually, and its international airport is considered one of the busiest airports in the world. This is also because it is characterized by its picturesque nature and the abundance of recreational resorts that attract the world to it economically and touristically.

If you ask me about my favorite state in America, I will tell you immediately that it is Florida, specifically Orlando, although I have visited many other states, but what I found in Orlando makes me decide to repeat the visit every time.



I feel that it is an excellent family destination. You will feel a strange feeling of comfort and familiarity everywhere, even driving the car and the wide and comfortable streets. By the way, I strongly advise renting a car and not relying on public transportation and taxis.

Among the other activities that you enjoy are swan feedings and picnics under the shade of palm trees at Lake Eola Park, a 43-acre downtown oasis in Orlando. There you will find a farmers' market held on Sunday morning, and you can also enjoy free concerts held on the park's terraces on many occasions.

Shows are also held at the Black Hammock Adventures amusement complex on Lake Jesup, where free alligator and bird shows are always held. And do not forget to visit the Disney Boardwalk, a quarter-mile promenade of exquisite dining, unique shops and exciting nightlife. The area is also filled with roaming musicians competing with each other to provide free entertainment for the night. The area is located near most of the Disney hotels in Orlando.

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

Seven Beauty Products

You Need to Try Now



By Hermoine Macura-Noble
Special to The Times Kuwait

It is time to refresh your beauty routine to keep up with the sunny days, beach vacations, and outdoor adventures. As temperatures rise, your skincare and makeup needs change, requiring products that can handle the heat and keep you looking fabulous. To help you achieve that effortless summer glow, here is a curated list of beauty products you need now.

Sunscreen: The most crucial step in your summer beauty routine is sun protection. A broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30 is a must-have. Look for a lightweight, non-comedogenic formula that provides both UVA and UVB protection. A good sunscreen for all skin types is the 'Ultra Sheer' dry-touch sunscreen lotion from Neutrogena, which offers broad spectrum SPF 55 with UVA/UVB protection.

Tinted Moisturizer or BB cream: Swap out heavy foundations for a lighter alternative like a tinted moisturizer or BB cream. These products provide hydration and light coverage, allowing your skin to breathe while evening out your complexion. A great choice for all skin tones in the Gulf weather conditions is Argan's multi-tone BB cream, which is infused with organic argan oil.

Hydrating Mist: Stay refreshed and hydrated with a facial mist that contains ingredients like aloe vera or rosewater to soothe and nourish your skin. A good toner is packed with ingredients that offer a brightening antidote to fatigued complexions. Morning Mist from Tropic offers a soothing toning essence made of avocado milk, aloe vera juice and tiger grass extract.



Cream Bronzer: A bronzer can make or break your look which is why it is important to find the right formula, finish and shade. Considering how many excellent options currently exist, it was difficult to pick only one, but Nudestix's cream bronzer is certainly a strong contender for the top pick. Further building on its range of beloved bronzing sticks, Nudestix has now introduced a variety of new shades with Bondi Belle being a favourite for a day to night look.

Body Scrub: Time in the sun means it is time to show off some skin in your chic swimwear and breezy dresses. To maintain a healthy and luminous glow for the season, it is vital to



exfoliate dry and dull skin with a good body scrub. Treat yourself to a relaxing exfoliation experience with the Rose Revival Scrub from '& Other Stories'.



This product has nourishing and anti-ageing properties to remove dead skin cells and impurities thoroughly and rejuvenate the skin to help you achieve that enviable summer glow.



Shower Oil: Clean, smooth and soft skin are coveted in the Gulf which is why shower oils can be a great addition to your self-care routine. A great choice here is 'Ritual of Karma Shower Oil' by Rituals, which transforms upon contact with water from a nourishing oil to a silky soft foam for a luxurious cleansing experience. Wash away dirt, oil and impurities to reveal beautifully soft skin,

while reinforcing your skin's natural moisture barrier. The foaming oil releases the sweet, floral aroma of holy lotus and organic white tea to uplift the senses.

Finishing touch: In the Gulf a common saying is "we smell before we look," which is why your scent is truly the finishing touch to your routine. A summer scent that lasts is Acqua di Parma's Zafferano, a subtle fragrance that features saffron and citrus notes such as orange blossom, jasmine sambac, and geranium. The woody and amber notes of tonka bean and vanilla soften the dusky accents of saffron, creating an intriguing and unexpected harmony for both men and women.

Summer beauty is all about embracing a natural, radiant look while protecting your skin

from the sun's harsh rays. The above beauty products are your essential companions for the season. Whether you are lounging by the pool, strolling on the beach, or enjoying outdoor festivities, these products will help you stay gorgeous and confident all summer long. So, stock up on these summer beauty essentials and make the most of the sunny days ahead.

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





EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Democracy Must Prevail in the Sahel



Josep Borrell

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is Vice President of the European Commission for a Stronger Europe in the World.

Some events are more memorable than others and serve as landmarks for a term in office. I will always remember attending a ceremony in Paris, in December 2019, to honor 13 French soldiers who had died in Mali. It was my first official act as High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

I also will remember my visit to Niger in July. I witnessed the tangible results of EU-Niger cooperation with the inauguration of the Gorou Banda solar power plant near Niamey. In Agadez, I also saw hundreds of social housing units built with EU support. Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum's ambitious vision and actions offered real hope in a region that had fallen prey to authoritarian drift. That is why, shortly after my visit, the military coup on July 26 was a shock for me.

After a discussion with my European counterparts, in the presence of the Nigerian minister of foreign affairs and the president of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I would like to share a few thoughts on the situation in Niger and the Sahel.

We must maintain unwavering support for Bazoum, the democratically elected president, for "as long as it takes," demanding a return to constitutional order in Niger. The future of democracy across the region is at stake. The democracy that the people of Niger want, the one that ECOWAS is promoting, and the one that the EU is defending around the world.

Our support for ECOWAS also must not waver. There is no room for secondary arrangements or parallel mediation channels. As Europeans, we have long supported the search for "African

solutions to African problems." At a time when ECOWAS is taking an unprecedented firm and consequential stand, we must follow up our words with action.

In addition to defending its democratic values, the EU also has a major interest in seeing Niger return to the path of constitutional order. Another Sahelian country falling into the hands of a military junta would have far-reaching negative consequences for Europe in terms of security, migration flows, and the geopolitical balance of power. It is a mistake to believe that military juntas can effectively combat terrorist

movements or human trafficking. The best bulwarks against such threats are democratic states with the ambition, will, and means to create new opportunities for their people.

Certainly, EU policy toward the Sahel has not been as successful as we had hoped in recent years. We have sometimes been too focused on the security dimension alone, and our efforts to help strengthen the rule of law and provide basic services have not been sufficient or visible enough. The 'strategic patience' we have shown toward the military juntas in the region has also not had any concrete results

other than encouraging new vocations.

Despite this necessary self-criticism, we must not forget that Europe's roadmap in the Sahel in recent years has been a Sahelian one. We have committed our soldiers, our money, and our political capital to the region because Sahelian countries asked us to do so.

What can we do now? We can suspend our budgetary support for, and security cooperation with, Niger; work toward the adoption of sanctions; and show solidarity in response to the unjustified expulsion of the ambassador of one of our member states. However, we also must go further. Since it would not be reasonable to keep doing the same thing and expect a different result, we must adopt a different approach.

Security cooperation, the issuing of visas, and economic development programs must be reconsidered, and we must move quickly in deciding what needs to change — both with respect to Niger and other countries across the Sahel. We will need to hold this showdown with the military juntas without falling into the traps set by regimes that rely principally on manipulation and disinformation. With little results to show for their anti-terrorism or economic-development efforts, the region's juntas have found these to be their most effective tools. The Sahel is a test for the entire EU. No one should be pleased by the difficulties that France is encountering in the region. It has become a convenient scapegoat for juntas looking to manufacture national cohesion while concealing their own failures and abuses. But France is not the problem in the Sahel; the military juntas are, because they lack both the means to fight terrorism effectively, and the ambition to improve their people's daily lives and future prospects.

Those who rejoice, in Europe or elsewhere, at the difficulties encountered by Europeans in the Sahel do not fully appreciate what is at stake. We will all pay a high price if we fail to remain coherent and united. Only a united Europe can influence the course of events. The coming weeks will tell whether we are up to the task of responding to expectations in this strategic region.



“The EU policy toward the Sahel has not been as successful as we had hoped in recent years. We have sometimes been too focused on the security dimension, while efforts to provide basic services were not sufficient or visible.”

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Climate Action Lessons from COVID-19



Ifeanyi M. Nsofor

A Senior New Voices Fellow at the Aspen Institute, is a Senior Atlantic Fellow for Health Equity at George Washington University and an Innovation Fellow at PandemicTech.

It is official: July was the hottest month on record. Global warming is happening, and its costs continue to mount. The World Meteorological Organization recently noted that extreme weather, climate and water-related events caused 11,778 reported disasters between 1970 and 2021, with just over 2 million deaths and US\$ 4.3 trillion in economic losses.

Like a pandemic, climate change affects everyone, everywhere. In Canada, the Northwest Territories' capital, Yellowknife, was recently evacuated, as hundreds of wildfires scorched the region, while the United States faces a resurgence of mosquito-borne infectious diseases such as malaria, West Nile virus, and dengue fever. In parts of Asia, severe monsoon rains have caused floods and destroyed livelihoods. In Malawi, two destructive storms compounded a protracted cholera outbreak that claimed more than 1,600 lives. The list goes on.

But the effects are not distributed evenly: nine in ten deaths and 60 percent of economic losses from climate shocks and extreme weather are in developing countries. I have seen firsthand the devastating impact of landslides in Nanka, my hometown in southeastern Nigeria. Over the years, the increase in gully erosion has wiped out homesteads, destroyed farmlands, and contributed to rising food insecurity.

The disastrous consequences of climate change are reminiscent of the COVID-19

pandemic, which killed more than six million people, destroyed businesses and livelihoods, and ravaged the world economy. In fact, the global response to COVID-19 — now an ongoing health issue, rather than an emergency — holds important lessons for mitigating global warming.

For starters, climate change constitutes what the World Health Organization calls a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) and should be treated as such. Global warming certainly meets the WHO's typical definition of a PHEIC — an extraordinary event which is determined to constitute a

to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, but the initiative, which was conceived with a colonial mindset, fell far short of this ideal.

The IPCC has made the same mistake: only a small percentage of the authors of its reports are from Africa. As I have argued elsewhere, leaders from Africa, which bears a disproportionate burden of the effects of climate change and contributed the least to the global emissions that are driving it, must be at the center of decision-making processes.

Third, governments must take steps to counter misinformation and disinformation. Falsehoods ran rampant during the pandemic, resulting

share for global response efforts. During the pandemic, wealthy countries were encouraged to provide financing to help low- and middle-income countries access COVID-19 vaccinations, tests, and medicines, with mixed results.

Similarly, wealthy countries bear a moral responsibility to provide climate aid to poorer countries, owing to their historical emissions. Last year, the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) took an important step in this direction with the creation of a loss and damage fund for developing countries facing the effects of global warming. But as commendable as this measure was, vulnerable countries must also improve governance and combat corruption to mitigate climate change. For example, \$9 billion worth of gold is smuggled out of Nigeria annually. The government could have invested that lost revenue in environmental projects, like preventing landslides in Nanka.

Lastly, hoarding is futile when tackling crises that are truly global in scope. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries in the Global North exacerbated inequity by stockpiling personal protective equipment, tests, vaccines, and therapeutics, and by clinging to intellectual-property protections. Yet infectious diseases do not respect borders; nor does climate change. Every country in the world is experiencing its devastating consequences, albeit in different forms.

Addressing climate change requires viewing and understanding the global community as one entity. My tribe in Nigeria, the Igbo, has a phrase that underscores the importance of acting collectively: *lgwèbù íké*. It means "we are stronger together when we are united." The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the necessity of an equitable model of global governance if we are to have any hope of bequeathing a healthy planet to future generations.

“ With nearly five billion users worldwide, social-media platforms accelerated the spread of fake COVID-19 claims. But policymakers and academics could also use them to set the facts straight. ”

public health risk to other states through the international spread of disease and to potentially require a coordinated international response. But the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), rather than the WHO, is better positioned to lead the charge, since it already provides governments with scientific information to develop climate policies.

Second, the Global South must assume a larger climate leadership role. The underrepresentation of African health leaders in the construction of the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility, for example, dealt a major setback to the global pandemic response. Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, together with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and the WHO, had created COVAX

in an infodemic — a surplus of both legitimate and misleading information. With nearly five billion users worldwide, social-media platforms accelerated the spread of fake COVID-19 claims. But policymakers and academics could also use them to set the facts straight.

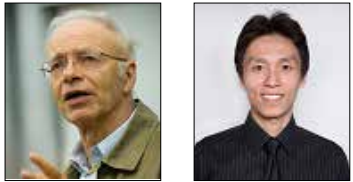
To educate the public about climate change, its consequences, and how to build a greener world, more scientists and other experts should post on social-media platforms and engage with other users. Worryingly, of the users who tweeted regularly about global warming and biodiversity, nearly half had become inactive six months after Elon Musk took over Twitter, now called X, and created more space for false information to flourish.

Fourth, all countries should pay their fair



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Self-Driving Cars and AI Ethics



Peter Singer and Tse Yip Fai

Peter Singer is Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, is Founder of the charity The Life You Can Save and the author, most recently, of *Animal Liberation Now*

Tse Yip Fai is an AI researcher, currently contracted by the Princeton University Center for Human Values to assist Singer with his research in this area.



Last month, California regulators allowed two companies that operate self-driving cars to accept paying customers in San Francisco. The first week did not go well. One car drove itself onto freshly poured concrete in a road construction zone with traffic cones and workers with flags. The car got stuck in the wet concrete, and the company will be paying to repave the road.

In a more serious incident, a passenger in a driverless car was injured in a collision with a fire truck. As a result, the operator agreed to halve the number of driverless vehicles it operated in San Francisco.

The decision to permit self-driving cars may usher in a new era of transportation, or it may prove to be a false dawn. Either way, the issues surrounding self-driving cars illustrate many of the ethical questions raised by the impact of artificial intelligence on everyday life.

A world in which most vehicles were fully autonomous would have many advantages. Most private cars spend a great deal of time idle. If everyone could call up an autonomous vehicle whenever required, there would be no need to own one's own car, thus saving resources. Moreover, by keeping traffic flowing more smoothly, the widespread use of

away: to date, the Teslas that Musk's company makes have been involved in more than 700 crashes, with 17 fatalities, when operating on Autopilot, their driver assistance mode.

Both companies operating driverless cars in San Francisco claim that their cars are involved in fewer collisions, and especially fewer collisions involving injuries, than human drivers in a comparable driving environment. But the validity of such claims is contested, owing to doubts about the driving environments being compared. Still, even if the latest generation of driverless vehicles is less safe than the average human driver, it could be argued that putting them onto city streets now is justified because doing so will save so many more lives in the long run. Once autonomous vehicles are perfected, we may even restrict human drivers to lower speeds, or prohibit them altogether, because the risk that they pose to other road users, relative to the safer option provided by driverless cars, becomes unacceptable.

Not surprisingly, opposition to 'robo-taxis' has come from taxi drivers — a response familiar from other areas where AI threatens to put people out of work. By enhancing productivity, advocates say, AI will allow us to achieve a better work/life balance. But 'us' will not include anyone who loses their job to AI, unless they are retrained for other work, and unless companies are required to pay their employees a living wage for a shorter work week. Will there be the political will to do that?

Looking further into the future, what if AI becomes so successful that few humans have jobs at all? Will we be able to develop new purposes that will replace the role of work in giving our lives meaning and fulfillment?

AI programming is likely to be another area for regulation. To return to the example of driverless vehicles, consumers in an unregulated market will seek cars that minimize the risk to themselves or their passengers, even if that significantly increases the risk to pedestrians. Yet if all cars were programmed this way, the number of people killed or injured by cars would be higher than if cars were programmed to follow risk-minimization strategies that are impartial between those inside the car and those outside it. Only regulation that requires such impartiality can prevent an outcome resembling the well-known 'tragedy of the commons'.

A more surprising issue raised by driverless cars is that they appear to be less reliable in detecting pedestrians with darker skin than those with lighter skin, and thus may hit disproportionately more dark-skinned pedestrians. One study (published in 2019 and using technology that was state-of-the-art in 2018) suggests that this was because the software was developed and trained in regions

with more light-skinned pedestrians than dark-skinned ones. If that is the case, then once we are aware of such problems, they can and should be fixed.

One important but often overlooked ethical issue raised by autonomous vehicles is whether they should be programmed to avoid hitting animals, and if so, which ones.

All vertebrates, and some invertebrates, are sentient beings, liable to suffer if hit but not killed instantly. Moreover, in many species, the loss of a mate will cause distress, or may lead to dependent offspring starving to death. How we should value the lives and interests of all sentient beings is a question that AI ethics needs to address.

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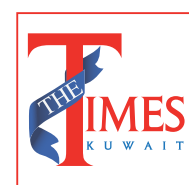
Still, even if the latest generation of driverless vehicles is less safe than the average human driver, it could be argued that putting them onto city streets now is justified because doing so will save so many more lives in the long run.

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driverless cars may also save fuel and time.

But the most important reason for eliminating human drivers is that it could also eliminate the human errors that cause so many traffic accidents, injuries, and deaths. (The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration puts the death toll on US roads last year at 42,795.)

Elon Musk has said that developing fully autonomous vehicles is a moral obligation because it can bring about a "virtually accident-free future." But that future is still some distance



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

A New Financing Pact for Climate-Vulnerable Countries



Ken Ofori-Atta and Axel van Trotsenburg

Ken Ofori-Atta, Minister of Finance for the Republic of Ghana, is Chair of the V20.

Axel van Trotsenburg is Senior Managing Director of Development Policy and Partnerships at the World Bank.

Amid an escalating climate emergency and a global debt crisis, calls for a new “fit for climate” global financial architecture are growing louder throughout the developing world. The urgent need for decisive action has been underscored by Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley’s Bridgetown Initiative, the V20 group of climate-vulnerable countries, and the recent Paris Summit for a New Global Financing Pact. This week’s Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi presented a unique opportunity to promote much-needed measures to support low-income countries in pursuing sustainable growth.

The situation is particularly urgent in Africa. According to recent estimates by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the continent requires \$2.8 trillion in climate financing between 2020 and 2030. But Africa currently receives only 3% of global climate finance, of which just 14% comes from the private sector.

It is worth noting that the continent accounts for 3.8% of global greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions, while the Global North is responsible for 90%.

But even though the world’s most vulnerable countries are bearing the brunt of a crisis they did not create, development-related climate financing has actually decreased, as has overall development aid to Africa. Preliminary 2022 figures show that flows of bilateral official development assistance (ODA) from OECD Development Assistance Committee members to Africa totaled \$34 billion last year, a decline of 7.4% in real terms compared to 2021. Meanwhile,

pays” principle to maritime activities. To reduce GHG emissions and mitigate the worst effects of climate change will require mobilizing financial resources on an unprecedented scale. But the proposals currently circulating among global policymakers lack focus. In the face of the greatest challenge to human survivability, we risk getting trapped, like Sisyphus, in a cycle of futile, incremental actions. In the lead-up to COP28, we must focus on a few essential steps that could spur global climate action and help limit global warming to the internationally agreed target of 1.5° Celsius.

First, we must tackle Africa’s debt problem.

financing for climate-adaptation policies.

Second, ongoing efforts to reform the system of multilateral development banks, including the World Bank’s “Evolution Roadmap” initiative, could enable MDBs to assist developing countries at the speed and scale necessary to meet global development goals and address challenges such as climate change, energy access, and pandemic preparedness. These reforms should also seek to direct resources toward regional lenders such as the AfDB and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Third, significant investments should be redirected toward the green transition, with a particular focus on expanding climate-vulnerable countries’ access to renewable energy. To this end, African governments could initiate regional programs to harness their natural resources to produce clean energy.

Lastly, the International Development Association, the World Bank’s soft-loan facility, has emerged as a crucial tool capable of delivering the level of support Africa requires. The IDA already serves as Africa’s primary source of concessional financing, and African countries account for 75% of IDA commitments totaling \$34.2 billion – or \$25.8 billion – in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023.

Apart from being familiar to and trusted by governments across the continent, the IDA effectively amplifies donor contributions, a particularly valuable feature at a time when donor countries are fiscally constrained. We hope that the G20 and the Paris Summit’s call for an ambitious IDA replenishment will translate into substantial support aimed at addressing the challenges facing beneficiary countries.

Despite the massive challenges ahead, establishing a new climate-ready global financial architecture remains feasible. By working together and ensuring that all countries pay their fair share, the international community could bridge political divides and achieve tangible progress toward ensuring a habitable world. But to do this, we must maintain the current momentum until we reach our goal: enabling climate-vulnerable countries to achieve sustainable, resilient growth.

“With nearly five billion users worldwide, social-media platforms accelerated the spread of fake COVID-19 claims. But policymakers and academics could also use them to set the facts straight.”

total private market assets under management surged to \$11.7 trillion in 2022, having increased at an annual rate of nearly 20% since 2017.

Given the severity and urgency of the climate crisis, the international community must rally to devise and agree on concrete solutions ahead of November’s United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai. To build resilience against inevitable climate shocks, we must fully fund the “loss and damage” fund global leaders agreed to establish at last year’s COP27 in Egypt, agree to double funding for adaptation efforts, and apply the “polluter

The international community must support vulnerable developing countries grappling with debt crises and enable them to invest in climate adaptation, resilience, and sustainable development.

To achieve debt sustainability, developing countries must diversify their economies, negotiate debt-restructuring deals, and ensure transparent and accountable governance. Developed countries and global financial institutions, especially the 550 members of the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, could support these efforts by providing concessional

Thought
for the
week

It's never too late
to be what you
might have been.

– George Eliot

FODMAP and digestive disorders

Certain types of food have been found to be responsible for the digestive discomfort that people feel after having those foods, including feelings of bloatedness, gas formation, abdominal pain, diarrhea constipation, and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Studies show that digestive enzymes, which normally help to break down and digest food in our body, find it difficult to break down certain types of carbohydrates, including starches, sugars and fibers in foods. The undigested carbohydrates then move down to the far end of the intestine, where beneficial bacteria present there ferment them, while also drawing additional fluid into the stomach. The combination of additional fluid and increased gas from the fermentation process can slow digestion, and result in gas, bloating, pain, or diarrhea in people sensitive to these foods.

These indigestible short-chain carbohydrates are collectively known by their acronym, FODMAP, which is short for Fermentable Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides And Polyols. The monosaccharides in the acronym, also called simple sugars, are the simplest forms of sugar and form the building block for all carbohydrates. Examples include glucose, fructose and galactose. Disaccharides, which include simple sugars such as sucrose, lactose and maltose, are formed by combining two monosaccharides. Oligosaccharides in turn are polymers formed from combining multiple monosaccharides, and polyols are organic compounds usually derived from simple sugars.

Although not everyone has a sensitivity to FODMAPs, it is very common among people with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). In people who have digestive disorders, a diet of foods low in FODMAP has brought relief. Studies have shown that 3 out of 4 people with IBS saw fewer symptoms right away with the most relief after a week of eating a low FODMAP diet. A low



FODMAP diet may also help those suffering from food intolerance, which is a common cause of digestive symptoms such as bloating, gas, and abdominal pain.

A low FODMAP diet may also be beneficial for other functional gastrointestinal disorders (FGID), a term that encompasses various digestive concerns. It may also cause positive psychological benefits, as these digestive disturbances are known to cause stress and are strongly linked to mental disorders like anxiety and depression

Common FODMAPs include:

- Fructose: a simple sugar, which is found in table sugar and most added sugars, is also present in many sweet fruits and vegetables, including apples pears, mangoes, watermelon, as well as in honey, agave and high-fructose corn syrup
- Lactose: a carbohydrate found in dairy products like milk, yogurt, custard, icecream
- Fructans: found in many foods, including grains like wheat, spelt, rye and barley, as well as in asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, onions, garlic
- Galactans: found in large amounts in legumes such as beans (including baked

beans), lentils, chickpeas, and soybeans

- Polyols: sugar alcohols like xylitol, sorbitol, maltitol, and mannitol. They are found in some fruits and vegetables and often used as sweeteners

For people wanting to try out a low FODMAP diet, there are a wide variety of healthy and nutritious foods available, including:

- Meats, fish, and eggs are well tolerated by people sensitive to FODMAP, unless high FODMAP ingredients, like wheat or high fructose corn syrup, are added to them.
- All fats and oils, most herbs and spices.
- Nuts and seeds, including peanuts, macadamia nuts, pine nuts, and sesame seeds but not pistachios, almonds, or cashews, which are high in FODMAPs
- Fruits, such as: unripe bananas, cantaloupe, grapefruit, kiwi, lemons, lime, mandarins, melons (except watermelon), oranges, passionfruit, strawberries Sweeteners such as maple syrup and stevia
- Dairy products if they are lactose-free, as well as hard cheeses and aged softer varieties like Brie and Camembert
- Vegetables, such as: alfalfa, bell peppers, bok choy, carrots, celery, chives, cucumbers,

eggplant, ginger, green beans, kale, lettuce, olives, parsnips, potatoes, radishes, spinach, spring onion (only green), squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, water chestnuts, yams, zucchini,

- Grains such as: corn, oats, quinoa, rice, sorghum, tapioca
- Beverages, water, coffee, green, black, or white tea, etc.

Before starting out on a low FODMAP diet remember that the above list is not definitive or exhaustive. Moreover, everyone is different. You may tolerate some foods on the list of foods to avoid while noticing digestive symptoms from foods low in FODMAPs for other reasons. It is not surprising, then, that how much of a food you eat will affect how likely you are to experience symptoms if you have IBS. The individual tolerance to FODMAPs varies.

Since many commonly consumed foods are high in FODMAPs, it is generally recommended to completely eliminate all high FODMAP foods for a few weeks. Eliminating only some high FODMAP foods but not others is unlikely to work. If FODMAPs are the cause of your problems, you may experience relief in as little as a few days. After three weeks, you can reintroduce some of these foods — one at a time. This allows you to determine which food causes your symptoms. If you find that a certain type of food strongly upsets your digestion, you may want to permanently avoid it.

Also keep in mind that many foods that contain FODMAPs are considered very healthy, and some FODMAPs function like healthy prebiotic fibers that support your friendly gut bacteria. So, people who can tolerate these types of carbs should not avoid them. Though a low FODMAP diet may not eliminate all digestive problems, chances are high that it may lead to significant improvements.

Mindful breathing supports mental health

The autonomic nervous system in your body is a network of nerves throughout your body that control unconscious processes that happen without you thinking about them, such as your heart beats and breathing. Your autonomic nervous system is always active, even when you are asleep, and is crucial to your survival.



We generally do not pay any attention to these autonomic activities in our body unless they are a cause for pain or discomfort. However, studies show that by becoming more aware of the functions controlled by your autonomic nervous system, especially your breathing, you can have a greater control over how you feel at any given moment.

Practicing mindful breathing techniques have been shown to alleviate anxiety and stress, and improve overall mental wellbeing and quality of life of people experiencing certain physical or mental health conditions and concerns. Focused breathing is also highly rated by mental health practitioners both for its ability to lower the temperature in emotionally charged situations and to increase a person's receptivity to more demanding mental-health interventions.

Among others, mindful breathing has been found to: Reduce stress and aid in stress-related medical illnesses, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse; and, improve immune response. It also aids in the rehabilitation of patients suffering from Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); Mitigate asthma symptoms, and improve sleep; Alleviate post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); Aid glycemic control in people with type 2 diabetes; Decrease hypertension in adults; and, improve quality of life among patients with cardiovascular disease and cancer.

There are many breathing techniques that can help you achieve mental and physical health benefits, find the one with which you are comfortable and use it consistently. If you are a beginner to deep breathing it is important to start slow, start small, and work your way up as you condition your nervous system.

Diaphragmatic breathing, an easy and popular mindful breathing technique recommended by many health practitioners, involves the following steps:

Lie down on your back, or stand up straight, or sit in a comfortable position. To help you feel these rhythmic in and out breaths, start with one hand resting on your belly, just below the navel, and the other on your ribs, or upper chest, just below the collarbone.

Breathe in slowly as you mentally count to five, feel how your belly softens and expands like a balloon and feel how your ribs expand or chest broadens with the other hand. Hold the breath as you slowly count to seven. As you breathe out slowly count to five and feel how your belly sinks toward your spine and your ribs or chest goes slack.

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G20 leaders adopt Summit Declaration Clinching consensus a win for Indian efforts

The intergovernmental forum comprising 19 sovereign countries and the European Union together known as G20 have adopted an unexpected consensus declaration on the first day of their two-day Summit taking place in the Indian capital New Delhi.

The consensus was surprising given the deep divide over the war in Ukraine, over which Western nations had been pushing for a strong condemnation of Russia in the Leaders' Declaration, while other countries demanded a focus on broader economic issues.

The consensus declaration arrived at on Saturday avoided direct condemnation of Russia for the war in Ukraine but called on all states to refrain from the use of force to seize territory.

Other excerpts from the final declaration include:

On the war in Ukraine: All states must act in a manner consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN charter in its entirety. All states must refrain from threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition against territorial integrity and sovereignty or political independence of any state.

There were different views and assessments of the situation [in Ukraine] Peaceful resolution of conflicts, and efforts to address crises as well as diplomacy and dialogue are critical. Today's era must not be one of war.

The document also called on Russia and Ukraine to ensure immediate and unimpeded deliveries of grain, foodstuffs, and fertilizers/inputs from Russia and Ukraine and emphasized the importance of sustaining global food and energy security

On the global economy, the declaration stated: Will protect the vulnerable, through promoting equitable growth and enhancing macroeconomic and financial stability.

Our finance ministers, central bank governors will discuss taking forward the cryptocurrency roadmap at their meeting in October.

Commit to promoting resilient growth by urgently and effectively addressing debt vulnerabilities in developing countries

On climate change the group said there was a need to accelerate efforts to phasedown



unabated coal power, in line with national circumstances. Will work towards facilitating low-cost financing for developing countries to support their transition to low carbon/ emissions. Will pursue and encourage efforts to triple renewable energy capacity globally through existing targets and policies, in line with national circumstances by 2030 Reiterate use of carbon pricing and non-pricing mechanisms and incentives toward carbon neutrality and net zero. Recognise need for increased global investments to meet our climate goals of the Paris agreement

Calls on parties to set an ambitious, transparent, and trackable New Collective Quantified Goal of climate finance in 2024, from a floor of \$100 billion a year

Regarding global health the group affirmed commitment to strengthening global health architecture and enhancing resilience of health systems, while supporting the development of climate-resilient and low-carbon health systems in collaboration with multilateral development banks.

Beyond the surprise consensual declaration there were several other outcomes from the sidelines of the meeting, including one on developing a shipping and rail transportation corridor linking countries across the Middle

East, South Asia and Europe.

The United States, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the European Union and other G20 partners are set to explore this innovative and ambitious shipping and rail transportation corridor, which is aimed at aiding in the flow of commerce, energy and data from India across the Middle East up to Europe. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) is expected to be announced at a meeting focused on global infrastructure on the sidelines of the G20. The deal will benefit low and middle-income countries in the region, and enable a critical role for the Middle East in global commerce.

On the sidelines of the Summit, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also launched the Global Biofuels Alliance in the presence of US President Joe Biden, President of Brazil Luiz Inacio, President of Argentina, Alberto Fernández and Prime Minister of Italy Giorgia Meloni. The Global Biofuel Alliance is one of the priorities under India's G20 Presidency. Nineteen countries have agreed to stand with India as initiating members of the Global Biofuels Alliance.

Brazil, India, and the United States, as leading biofuel producers and consumers, will work together during the next few months towards

the development of a Global Biofuels Alliance along with other interested countries. This Alliance will be aimed at facilitating cooperation and intensifying the use of sustainable biofuels, including in the transportation sector. It will place emphasis on strengthening markets, facilitating global biofuels trade, developing concrete policy lesson-sharing and providing technical support for national biofuels programs worldwide.

The Alliance will work in collaboration with and complement the relevant existing regional and international agencies as well as initiatives in the bioenergy, bioeconomy, and energy transition fields more broadly, including the Clean Energy Ministerial Biofuture Platform, the Mission Innovation Bioenergy initiatives, and the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP).

The International Energy Agency estimates in a July report that global sustainable biofuel production would need to triple by 2030 to put the world's energy system on track towards net zero emissions by 2050.

India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer, imports about 85 percent of its crude needs and is gradually building capacity to increase its output of biofuels. The country is targeting to become carbon neutral by 2070 and is expanding the use of biofuel in its transport sector. It has advanced the deadline by five years to 2025 for doubling nationwide ethanol blending in gasoline to 20 percent.

Meanwhile, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that the G20 Leaders' Summit Declaration adopted on Saturday focuses on promoting strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth. Addressing a joint press conference, Jaishankar said the Declaration seeks to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goals and has come up with an action plan accordingly.

"It envisages a green development pact for a sustainable future, it endorses high-level principles on lifestyle for sustainable development, voluntary principles of hydrogen, the Chennai principles for a sustainable resilient blue economy and the Deccan principles on food security and nutrition among others," he added.

