



مستشفى رويال حياة  
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## DIPLOMAT

Humanitarian aid  
a soft arm of  
Kuwaiti diplomacy

3

8



## LOCAL

PAM considers residency  
transfer without  
sponsor approval

9

## LOCAL

Expats from  
174 countries  
work in Kuwait



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# UNGA, Fragmented Responses to Integrated Challenges



## THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

The 78th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session currently underway at the UN headquarters in New York, comes at a time of unprecedented setbacks in global progress on multiple fronts. The current UNGA President, Dennis Francis, a diplomat from Trinidad and Tobago, has urged world leaders to use the "unique and truly global platform" of the summit to effectively tackle global challenges.

Stating that the world is confronting multiple challenges ranging from conflicts and climate change to debt, energy and food crises, poverty and famine, the president said these risks were directly impacting the lives,

livelihoods and well-being of billions of people around the world. Pointing out that the world has the capacity to tackle the challenges and achieve 'consequential changes', President Francis said, "What we lack is the will to act by putting aside our differences and bridging divides."

Addressing the integrated challenges confronting the world requires coherent, cohesive and coordinated responses. However, in the absence of unanimity among nations, our responses have been largely fragmented. The 78th session of UNGA is looking to reconcile the differences and reach consensus on the various challenges, so as to deliver peace, progress, prosperity, and sustainability to everyone everywhere.

During the ongoing UNGA world



leaders have been attempting to reach consensus on how best to confront the polycrises affecting the global

community. The delegates have been seeking new and innovative strategies to accelerate action on the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development, and on overcoming issues hampering progress in addressing climate change.

Leaders and their delegates have also been holding high-level meetings aimed at financing development, preventing and preparing for pandemics, introducing universal health coverage, tackling tuberculosis and other health issues, as well as striving to find lasting solutions to some of the most intractable challenges that have so far evaded consensus in the UNGA.

Finding solutions and reaching agreement on the multiple crises facing the global community will also test the legitimacy and credibility of the UNGA, and indicate whether the United Nations continues to remain relevant in an increasingly divided world.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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# Index ranks Kuwait 63rd globally in digital quality of life



An annual study that evaluated countries based on the digital quality of life enjoyed by people living there, ranked Kuwait 63rd out of 121 countries indexed in the study for 2022. The index ranking was based on how a country fared on five core pillars of internet quality, internet affordability, e-security, e-infrastructure, and e-government.

The fifth iteration of the Digital Quality of Life Index (DQL) published annually by Surfshark, a leading provider of cybersecurity services, found Kuwait performed best in internet quality, claiming 26th place, while facing challenges in e-security, ranking 104th. The nation also ranked 35th in internet affordability, 45th in e-infrastructure, and 66th in e-government. In the overall Index, Kuwait lags behind Saudi Arabia (45th) and Qatar (48th). In Asia, Kuwait takes 19th place, with Singapore the leader in the region.

"In many nations, 'digital quality of life' has merged into the broader concept of overall 'quality of life'. There's no other way to look at it now that so many daily activities, including work, education, and leisure, are done online. That's why it's crucial to pinpoint the areas in which a nation's digital quality of life thrives and where attention is needed, which is the precise purpose of the DQL Index", said Gabriele Racaityte-Krasauske, Surfshark's spokeswoman.

Kuwait's internet quality was found to be 21 percent higher than the global average. Fixed internet averages 179 Mbps in Kuwait. To put that into perspective, the world's fastest fixed internet — Singapore's — is 300 Mbps. Meanwhile, the slowest fixed internet in the world — Yemen's — is 11 Mbps. Mobile internet averages 210 Mbps. The fastest mobile internet — the UAE's — is 310 Mbps, while the world's slowest mobile internet — Venezuela's — is 10 Mbps.

Compared to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait's mobile internet is 15 percent faster, while fixed broadband is 63 percent faster. The internet is affordable in Kuwait compared to other countries. Kuwaitis have to work 59 minutes a month to afford fixed broadband internet. While this is less than average, it is 3 times more than in Romania, which has the world's most affordable fixed internet (Romanians have to work 18 minutes a month to afford it). Kuwaitis have to work 1 hour 22 minutes 36 seconds a month to afford mobile internet. This is 5 times more than in Luxembourg, which has the world's most affordable mobile internet (Luxembourgers have to work 16 minutes a month to afford it).

However, it was in e-security that Kuwait tanked to 104th spot in the world. The e-security pillar measures how well a country is

prepared to counter cybercrime, as well as how advanced a country's data protection laws are. In this pillar, Kuwait lags behind Saudi Arabia (42nd) and Qatar (67th). Kuwait is unprepared to fight against cybercrime, the country has no data protection laws.

In terms of e-infrastructure Kuwait ranked 45th among 121 countries. Advanced e-infrastructure makes it easy for people to use the internet for various daily activities, such as working, studying, shopping, etc. This pillar evaluates how high internet penetration is in a given country, as well as its network readiness (readiness to take advantage of Information and Communication Technologies). Kuwait's internet penetration is high (99% — 6th in the

world), and the country ranks 61st in network readiness.

In the e-government pillar, Kuwait was in 66th spot globally, which was on par with the global average. This pillar evaluates how advanced a government's digital services are and the level of Artificial Intelligence (AI) readiness a country demonstrates.

Globally, the internet was found to be more affordable in 2022 than a year earlier. Average cost of fixed internet fell 11 percent from what it was in 2021 — on average, people had to work 42 minutes less a month to afford it than a year earlier. Mobile internet was 26 percent more affordable than in 2021 — with people having to work 41 minutes less to afford it.

## Ministry of Health shuts down 11 medical clinics

The Ministry of Health has shut down 11 medical clinics for violating Law 70/2020, regulating the practice of the medical profession and its supporting professions.

The sources told Al-Rai that the Ministry had received complaints from citizens about some clinics. Accordingly, the technical committees took the necessary measures, and some violations were monitored in some clinics, within the framework of periodic inspection procedures, with

regard to decisions regulating work in the private medical sector, health licenses, and adherence to the ethics of the medical profession and public morals.

The sources pointed to the directives of the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, regarding intensifying periodic inspection campaigns and taking deterrent measures, in accordance with legal procedures, reiterating that there is no room for complacency in everything related to the health and safety of citizens and residents.




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3

# Humanitarian aid a soft arm of Kuwaiti diplomacy



THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Kuwait has for several years now been in the vanguard of global humanitarian work, providing enormous amounts of relief work and emergency assistance to needy people in times of both natural and man-made calamities and crises around the world.

Addressing the media last month on the occasion of World Humanitarian Action Day on 10 August, Deputy Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Anwar Al-Hasawi, said that Kuwait's long record of humanitarian aid for the needy has seen KRCS initiating hundreds of relief programs and campaigns to alleviate the suffering of people from poverty, conflicts and natural disasters.

Most recently, Kuwait has had to deal with two major catastrophes in the second week of September that claimed the lives of over 14,000 people. The first was caused by the powerful earthquake that shook Morocco and spread devastation across a wide swath of the kingdom, rendering entire villages in remote mountainous areas into mounds of rubble. The same week, a second catastrophe erupted when a massive storm and ensuing rainfall caused a dam in Libya's Derna to burst unleashing torrents of water that thrust its way through narrow alleys and streets carrying away everything in its wake, and flooding many populated areas.

As part of Kuwait's relief air bridge for Libya, at least five plane-loads of supplies were dispatched to the stricken country, said Hamad Al-Aoun, the deputy director general of 'Al-Salam' charity. He added that the association had dis-

patched tons of supplies including masks, beds, wheelchairs and other medical accessories. They had to also send huge amounts of detergents and chemical substances to fight viruses, amid fears that Libya might witness an outbreak of epidemics due to rotting dead bodies everywhere, many still submerged in mud or lying drowned, particularly in Derna, the hardest hit region.

For his part, Abdullah Al-Traiji, Chairman of Kuwait Scout Association, declared that the society along with their counterpart associations in Arab countries raised donations to relieve the victims in both Libya and Morocco. Speaking on the same vein, Omar Al-Thuwaini, the general supervisor of the relief campaign, 'Fazaat al-Maghreb,' said 14 Kuwaiti societies joined hands to assist the quake victims in Libya. He indicated that the aid included blankets and food parcels.

Meshari Al-Enezi, an official of 'Al-Najat' charity, said the next phase of the humanitarian operation would be rebuilding houses, schools and medical centers. Moreover, the Kuwaiti embassy in Morocco organized a blood donation campaign for helping the injured.

Since the start of 2023, Kuwait has also established an air bridge sending 16 plane-loads of relief material including tons of medical and food supplies to the Sudanese people.

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that jolted Turkey early this year, the Kuwaiti medical team 'Shifaa' were present to provide medical assistance to victims in the south of the country. The team were already in Turkey when the earthquake struck, as they were attending to the needs of hundreds of thousands of Syrians who escaped war in their home country.

Dr. Husam Bechir, the head of a Kuwaiti team

of surgeons at 'Shifaa', said the group arrived in Hatay, South Turkey, to follow-up on previous missions that had been undertaken by other Kuwaiti doctors with backing from Kuwait Zakat (alms) House. The 'Shifaa' team has a record of executing relief missions in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Gaza and Somalia. Up to 8,500 patients have been treated or given medical aid in these countries, said Dr. Bechir.

On a related note from the region, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Sheikh Abdullah Nouri Charity signed a cooperation agreement for aiding Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The UNHCR acting representative in Kuwait, Maher Ishaqat, said in a statement the accord was the third to be signed with Abdullah Al-Nouri Society, indicating that the two entities have become bonded through a strategic partnership and were involved in joint fund-raising activities for aiding Syrian refugees in winter months.

The charitable hands of Kuwait have stretched across the region reaching Egypt, where Kuwait Office for Charitable Projects delivered 24 fishing boats and tools to limited-income Egyptian fishermen. Up to US\$30,000 had also been granted by the Kuwaiti Al-Najat charity to assist fishermen who depended on ramshackle boats to earn bread.

Over the years, Kuwait has dispatched relief to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who fled to Bangladesh to escape persecution in their home country of Myanmar. In Bangladesh, the refugees were housed in impoverished camps. The Regional Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the Gulf Cooperation Council states, Mamadou Sow, lauded Kuwait for supporting the ICRC's efforts to provide relief

to the Rohingya. For its part, the International Islamic Charity Organization distributed 11,000 livestock sacrificed as part of Eid Al Adha to 440,000 people in 25 countries, a practice it has conducted every year for the past many years. For its part, 'Rahma around the World' launched a project in Palestine's Gaza Strip to aid people with special needs through support from the Kuwaiti Al-Awqaf Secretariat General.

In the aftermath of the fiery blast that rendered Beirut port and nearby residential districts largely heaps of ruins, Kuwait Red Crescent Society renovated and rehabilitated the maternity ward of Al-Makassed Hospital in Beirut. Kuwait had also given aid to other hospitals that were damaged in the explosion that affected wide sections of the Lebanese capital.

Khaled Al-Zaid, the KRCS director of public relations and media, said that Kuwaiti humanitarian aid has over the years helped in shaping a positive image of the State of Kuwait abroad. "Kuwait's humanitarian aid has constituted a soft power of the state's diplomacy. Al-Zaid, who was speaking during the Qatar Red Crescent celebration of International Day for Humanitarian Law in Doha, said the participants in the event discussed a task paper themed 'Media and humanitarian diplomacy', shedding light on Kuwait as an oasis for good deeds.

He added that the name Kuwait has become synonymous with humanitarian deeds worldwide, and Kuwait's generous assistance for people in need everywhere led the United Nations to designate Kuwait as the center for humanitarian action and the late former Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber AlSabah as the leader for humanitarian action.



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# Kuwait rejects Australian proposal to replace live with chilled meat



**K**uwait has reportedly rejected an Australian proposal to discontinue live sheep exports in favor of boxed chilled sheep meat. The controversy, which has been simmering for some time, threatens to strain trade ties between the two nations. Australia is the largest exporter of livestock in the world, and the industry earns over a billion dollars annually.

SheepCentral, an Australian sheep industry publication online, reported last week that Kuwait has voiced its objection to the Australian Federal Government's plan to phase out live sheep exports, saying it will seek live animals from other countries rather

than take more chilled meat from Australia. According to the Australian Financial Review, Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Mohammad Othman Al Aiban, recently wrote to Australia's Federal agriculture minister Murray Watt urging him to reconsider the policy. The pair reportedly had a virtual meeting about Australia filling the live export void with chilled meat, which Kuwait's minister labeled as unrealistic and said the country was at capacity with chilled sheep meat.

Minister Watt responded by asserting that commercial decisions should primarily align with business interests. He clarified that the cessation of live sheep exports would not occur during the current parliamentary term. Instead, the government awaits the recommendations of an independent committee to guide a well-planned transition process.

Over the last decade, the live export industry in Australia has been subject to much political and public scrutiny. Various incidents, documented by undercover animal activists demonstrated widespread animal abuse occurring in overseas abattoirs. There are also various animal welfare concerns expressed by veterinarians, due to the enormous

distance animals are made to travel between Australia and exporting markets such as the Middle East.

However, not everyone in Australia supports this policy shift. The sheep meat industry in particular was understandably against the ban on live sheep. Chairman of the Meat Exporters Council, Mark Harvey-Sutton, criticized the government's approach. He deemed the proposal to replace live sheep with frozen meat as

"arrogant" and emphasized that it was essential to respond to the demands of consumers, particularly in regions like the Middle East, where live sheep are crucial to ensuring food security and meeting consumer preferences.

He urged the Australian government to pay heed to Kuwait's concerns, given its longstanding friendship with Australia and its expressed disappointment with the policy change.

## GU-Q conference envisions a conflict-free future for Iraq

**A** conference on the 2003 invasion of Iraq organized by Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) last week, concluded with reflections on the prospects of shaping a better future for Iraq, its society, and its youth.

The conference held under the title 'The Invasion of Iraq: Regional Reflections' was convened by Dr. Safwan Masri, dean of GU-Q, in collaboration with the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) at GU-Q. Conceived as a platform for diverse voices and community engagement on shared global challenges, the conference encouraged collective and individual perspectives on lessons learned over the past two decades.

Bridging regional and global views, the conference brought together current and former Iraqi ministers, officials, and government advisors, senior diplomats, journalists, authors, and academics from the region, who joined international experts in sharing first-hand experience and knowledge, spanning historical retrospectives and analyses of Iraq's progress and the complex challenges ahead.

Former president of Iraq, Dr. Barham Salih, highlighted the Iraqi people's aspirations for stronger leadership, a strong state, and an accountable government: "We should acknowledge that we have very serious problems in the country — corruption, bad governance, sectarianism. I'm not diminishing those. But... Iraqis want to live in peace and enjoy the resources of the country. They genuinely want to integrate into the region," he said, recalling "...young people came out on the street in 2019 chanting 'Nurid Watan' ('We want a homeland'), and it was the most elegant statement about the dynamics of a society that wants to see a country reformed and that offers them opportunities."

Discussions over the three days created a sense of shared responsibility to usher in positive changes that will offer the Iraqi people, especially the new generation, a better future. Linking discussions on the upheavals and Iraq's democratic transition within the past 20 years with the nation's future, the conference deepened understanding of deeply interconnected national, regional, and global themes.

Speakers discussed the need for economic and infrastructure development, given the country's growing population and high youth unemployment. The role of youth activism, civil society, social mobilization, and the media, led into debates on inclusive governance solutions, climate change, and natural resource management, as well as durable solutions to land degradation and water scarcity.

On the regional front, in-depth panels delved into Iraq's evolving relations with its immediate neighbors, the Arab Spring, and commonalities in the economic and governance challenges facing countries across the Middle East. Beyond regional issues, the transnational challenges posed by the emergence of Da'esh, and the emerging global order, garnered attention. The conference explored the nature of Iraq's future relationship with the US, how the invasion reshaped global diplomatic relations, and its profound impact on democracy in the US, including the ability of the US to exert moral



authority. GU-Q brought to the fore its strong academic leadership, and the university's strong connections in the region attracted eminent experts and partners from within Georgetown's wider network. Highlighting the significance of GU-Q leading such a dialogue, Dean Safwan said: "As we approach the university's twentieth anniversary, Georgetown University in Qatar is reflecting on where we've been, where we are, and where we want to go. Our eyes are focused on the next 20 years."

"In keeping with the intent of the Hiwaraat, the conference has brought together a variety of perspectives, and not always complementary views on difficult and challenging topics. These conversations are not always easy, but they are necessary. Under Hiwaraat we hope to continue providing the space for these sorts of discussions on important regional and global affairs," said Associate Director for Research at CIRS, Zahra Babar. The next conference in GU-Q's Hiwaraat Conference Series will be 'Global Histories and Practices of Islamophobia', which will explore the global, historical, theological, and political dimensions that shape the practices of Islamophobia.



## Royale Hayat Hospital celebrates Healthcare Heroes

**R**oyale Hayat Hospital (RHH) Doctors came together in style at the highly anticipated Doctors Gala Dinner. This elegant affair, held at the prestigious Four Season Hotel, served as a well-deserved recognition and celebration of the tireless efforts and dedication displayed by the hospital's doctors.

The evening commenced with a red carpet reception, where renowned physicians, esteemed medical professionals, and distinguished guests were warmly welcomed. Amidst an atmosphere of sophistication and glamor, attendees had the opportunity to connect, network, and exchange ideas, fostering collaboration within the medical community.

"This event is a testament to the firm commitment of our doctors to provide

exceptional care and make a positive impact on the lives of their patients," said Dr. Sulaiman AlMazeedi. Medical Director Dr. Omar El Khateeb, and Chief Strategic Officer, Dr. Abubakr Elmardi, acknowledged the remarkable achievements and contributions of doctors who have gone above and beyond in their field.

The Doctors Gala Dinner concluded on a high note, with speeches expressing gratitude to all doctors for their selflessness, dedication, and perseverance.

As the evening drew to a close, attendees left with a renewed sense of pride in their profession and a stronger bond within the medical community. The Doctors Gala Dinner truly showcased the exceptional talent, passion, and compassion of doctors at Royale Hayat Hospital.



# Kuwait, Philippines to resolve mutual visa bans

Recent statements from diplomatic circles in Manila and Kuwait indicate that a thaw in the mutual ban, on sending new domestic workers from the Philippines and Kuwait's suspension of new visas for Filipino workers, is on the horizon.

Undersecretary of the Philippine Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Eduardo de Vega, confirmed last week that his country hopes to sit with the Kuwaiti side and discuss the resumption of sending workers. This followed the decision by the Kuwait Juvenile Court to convict the juvenile



accused of killing the Filipina worker, Jolibi Ranara, which subsequently led to both countries banning visas.

In a statement following the court verdict, De Vega said the ruling was a "positive step" in terms of achieving justice for the Ranara family, and stressed his country's recognition of Kuwait's efforts in this regard. He added, "Depending on how our colleagues in the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) feel, I think we can ask Kuwait to resume our talks, so that we can see how we can move forward, and

ultimately be able to lift the suspension on both sides."

Commenting on the position of the Philippine government, Bassam Al-Shammari, a specialist in domestic workers' affairs, considered it "a good gesture to resolve the crisis between the two countries in a way that serves the interests of the two peoples," pointing out that this step is considered the beginning of resolving the problem of the shortage of domestic workers in Kuwait, which contributes to stability and balance in the Kuwaiti labor market.

## 'Discover America' festival promotes Kuwait-US partnership

Charge d Affairs at the United States Embassy in Kuwait, James Holtzneider, highlighted the flourishing partnership between the US and Kuwait. He was speaking at a media briefing on the 'Discover America' festival, a celebration of cultural exchanges and collaboration between the two countries.

He highlighted the longstanding preference of Kuwaiti students for American universities and attributed this choice to the exceptional work of the consular team at the US Embassy in streamlining the visa issuance process. This contributed significantly to Kuwaiti students pursuing higher education in the United States, where they can access world-class institutions and a diverse range of academic opportunities.

He further revealed that the US Embassy facilitated a substantial Kuwaiti delegation of 30 entrepreneurs and business leaders to explore investment opportunities in the United States. This initiative reflected the commitment of both countries to fostering economic cooperation. Furthermore, he announced plans for another delegation to visit the United States in June 2024, reaffirming the intent to bolster trade and investment between the two nations.



Turning to diplomatic engagements, he underlined the importance of US-Kuwait relations, and emphasized the upcoming sixth round of strategic dialogue between the two countries. The dialogue, slated to be hosted by Kuwait, holds significant promise in advancing various facets of the bilateral relationship. He also expressed optimism that this round would materialize before the close of the year.

Concerning the US military exercises taking place in the region, Mr. Holtzneider clarified that these exercises involving 15 warships are routine and conducted in partnership with regional allies. He reassured that the primary focus remains on defense systems to ensure the security and stability of their regional partners.

Regarding concerns about China's expanding role in the region, he clarified that the US is not in confrontation with China. Instead, it seeks adherence to international rules and laws through various international groups, including the G7 and G20. He noted that China remains the second-largest economic partner for the United States and emphasized the focus on positive collaboration.

This press conference offered valuable insights into the multifaceted relations between the two friendly nations, which in addition to defense includes education, economic collaboration, regional stability, and international diplomacy. The United States reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to its regional allies and its role in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East.

## MoI collects millions in dues from expats, Gulf citizens



The Ministry of Interior said approximately 4.77 million dinars have been collected at air and land ports from Gulf nationals and expatriates leaving the country, since the decision was issued two months ago by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled mandating GCC citizens and other

expatriates to settle their dues before leaving the country for whatever reason.

A security source told Al-Qabas daily that the money collected include traffic violations estimated at 1.141 million Kuwaiti dinars over two months, while 2.936 million dinars were collected as electricity and water bills, during the from Sept 1, 2023 to Sept 23, 2023.

## Increase in stroke cases unrelated to coronavirus vaccine

Responding to a query by MP Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf, regarding potential correlations between the anti-coronavirus vaccine and increased risks of blood clots or strokes, Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, clarified that based on analysis by international reference organizations and global data, post-vaccine clots are considered a rare occurrence.

Recent scientific studies indicate that the incidence of blood clotting cases following vaccination is lower

compared to the number of individuals experiencing clotting after contracting the virus. He noted that from 2017 to 2021, a total of 68,964 cases of strokes were recorded, encompassing both fatal and non-fatal incidents. Specifically, there were approximately 10,869 cases in 2020 and 12,475 cases in 2021.

Dr. Al-Awadhi added that numerous factors can contribute to clotting, including obesity, high blood pressure, cholesterol levels, medical and familial history, among others.

He also pointed out that the total count of individuals who received the vaccine from the initial dose on 24 December 2020, to 31 December 2021, stood at 2,782,091, and emphasized that the vaccine administration has continued beyond that date.

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# Kuwait denounces Iraqi court ruling against maritime border



**K**uwait has denounced the recent ruling by the Federal Supreme Court in Iraq regarding the Khor Abdullah Agreement signed between Kuwait and Iraq in 2012.

Announcing this at a press conference in New York, where he is attending the 78th UN General Assembly (UNGA) session, Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah said, "Kuwait denounces the content of the ruling, which included a historical narration full of fallacies. We are surprised and deplore the inclusion in a ruling of a purely technical agreement of a lengthy historical narration of Kuwait extending

from the year 1546 until the year 1990, and here we are, after 30 years and more, hearing the same language from the Iraqi side, and this is "Something we condemn in the strongest terms."

He added that his visit to New York would include meeting with his Gulf counterparts, the foreign ministers of friendly countries, and officials at the United Nations, to express Kuwait's position. "We hope that the Iraqi government will take the necessary steps to address this matter and respect Kuwait's sovereignty, the sanctity of its lands, and the agreement between the two countries."

He voiced Kuwait's strong objection to any attempt to overthrow the ratification of the agreement, which was carried out by the legislative authorities of the two countries and was deposited in the United Nations. He stressed that Kuwait's position was supported and understood by all the officials he met, hoping that the Iraqi

government would "take the necessary steps to address this matter and respect Kuwait's sovereignty, the sanctity of its lands, and the agreement concluded between the two countries."

The Khor Abdullah agreement signed by both countries in 2012, demarcates borders and regulates navigation in the Khor Abdullah region. However, in recent years the agreement had been criticized by some Iraqi politicians, lawmakers and experts who said that the deal removed Khor Abdullah from Iraq's sovereign territory. Khor Abdullah is a narrow waterway that leads in from the Persian Gulf, curving around Kuwait's Bubiyan and Warbah islands on one side and Iraq's Al Faw Peninsula on the other.

In a related note, on 20 September, Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, who are in New York attending the 78th UNGA session, along with the American Secretary of

State, Antony Blinken, affirmed the need for Iraq to adhere to the sovereignty and territorial sanctity of Kuwait, as well as respect all relevant UN resolutions in this regard, especially Resolution 833 regarding demarcation of the Kuwait-Iraq borders.<

In a statement at the end of a ministerial-level meeting, the foreign ministers called for completing the demarcation of the borders beyond the mark 162 and urged Iraq to rapidly settle the 'international legal status', to ensure the treaty that regulates navigation along Khor Abdullah waterway. Furthermore, they renewed their support for the UN Security Council Resolution 2107 (2013) regarding return of all Kuwaitis to their home country including those missing plus the Kuwaiti properties namely the national archive to the UN mission in Iraq. They expressed hope that Iraq would continue cooperating to make progress in the file and called on Iraq and the UN to spare no effort to resolve relevant issues.



## AmCham Kuwait organizes 'Back to Business' event

**A**BCK- AmCham Kuwait held its 'Back to Business' Annual General Meeting at the Grand Hyatt Hotel - Kuwait with attendees eager to learn about AmCham Kuwait's overview since the beginning of the year, and the working of its new disabilities focus group.

The event, which saw attendance by over a hundred AmCham members and non-members, was opened by AmCham's Chairman, Pete Swift who welcomed member companies and friends from across different industries in Kuwait and the GCC region that participated in the event. A special welcome was given to the Chargé d'Affaires at the US Embassy, James Holtsnider and the Embassy's new sections' chiefs, as well as to representatives from the French Embassy and the British Embassy, in addition to Chairman's Club Members, individual members, and special guests from the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped.

Outlining the organization's accomplishments in 2023, Mr. Swift highlighted the growth in membership and the expansion of membership benefits, including exclusive discounts from hotels, retailers, restaurants, and more. He also shared the significant number of events, collaborations, and focus groups that had been organized to promote diversity, inclusion, and economic participation, especially for individuals with disabilities.

The event featured presentations from key figures within AmCham Kuwait, including Dr. Arezou Harraf, vice-chair of AmCham Kuwait, who provided a detailed overview of the organization's 2023 achievements. These achievements included welcoming new corporate and individual members, expanding the benefits program, and organizing a total of 51 events. Dr. Harraf also highlighted the

remarkable growth of AmCham Kuwait's social media presence and its role in promoting member companies.

Representatives from the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped were then also invited to speak about their activities, as AmCham Kuwait has recently launched a disabilities focus group which aims to involve disabled people into the business environment, and train companies on how to hire them and provide them with the necessary support.

The 'Back to Business' event provided a valuable platform for networking and collaboration, reinforcing AmCham Kuwait's mission to advocate for improved business practices, promote trade between Kuwait and the United States, and strengthen the private sector.

An exciting raffle for event participants was then held with the first prize being three vouchers provided by 300 Fahrenheit Restaurant. The second prize included five vouchers from Al-Mufid Pharmaceuticals, redeemable at their pharmacies. The third prize, contributed by Crowne Plaza Hotel, comprised invitations for a lunch or dinner experience at Ribeye for two people and another invitation for a dining experience at Noukhaza Seafood for two people. The fourth prize was a delightful chocolate basket filled with goodies, generously provided by Towell Holding. The fifth prize, sponsored by the Grand Hyatt, offered 2 one-night stay for two, including breakfast for both guests at 'Stambul.

The highlight of the evening was the grand prize, generously offered by our travel and tourism partners, IFA International Travel and Tourism: an economy-class ticket to the United States.

## Former CEO of Kuwait Airways awarded Spanish Civil Merit Award



**A**mbassador of Spain, H.E. Miguel Moro held a reception last week to honor the former CEO of Kuwait Airways Cooperation, Maen Mahmoud Razouqi, with the Spanish Civil Merit Medal. The medal was awarded in recognition of Mr. Razouqi's contribution to strengthening the relationship between the two countries during his tenure as CEO of Kuwait Airways.

Speaking on the occasion Ambassador Moro praised the strong bilateral relations between the two countries in various fields. He added that despite these firm ties, a direct air link between the two countries had been missing for the past 40 years, which resulted in the thousands of Kuwaitis visiting Spain each year for business, travel and leisure activities having to travel via other airlines and countries.

The ambassador pointed out that it was

only during the tenure of Mr. Razouqi as CEO that Kuwait Airways began direct flights from Kuwait to Madrid. Describing Mr. Razouqi as a professional and dedicated person who loves Spain, the ambassador noted that the Madrid-Kuwait flight initiated by the former CEO has become one of the most popular travel destinations, with over 100,000 Kuwaiti tourists visiting Spain this summer.

Awarding the prestigious medal to Mr. Razouqi symbolizes the importance both countries place on strengthening their relationship and promoting mutual understanding and cooperation, said Ambassador Moro. He added that the direct air link between the two countries will undoubtedly boost tourism, business, and cultural exchanges, and will further enhance the cordial relationship and cooperation between Spain and Kuwait.







## Embassy of Nepal marks Constitution and National Day

Ricky Laxa  
Staff Writer

The Embassy of Nepal marked the country's 9th Constitution and National Day during a diplomatic reception held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel last week. Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocol Affairs, Nabeel Rashed Al Dakheel, Ambassador of Tajikistan and Dean of Diplomatic Corps H.E. Zubaydullo Zubaydzoa, and the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. at the Embassy of Nepal, Sujani Rana, officiated the ceremonial cutting of the cake in celebration of the day. Also present on the occasion were members of the diplomatic community in Kuwait and invited guests.



The constitution of Nepal, which includes fundamental principles of democracy, human rights, peace, progress, equality, and equity, was promulgated on 20th September 2015 and replaced the Interim Constitution of 2007. The promulgation of the new constitution has been celebrated every year since then.

The present constitution is the seventh written constitution of Nepal, and it aims to establish socialism through citizen's socioeconomic and cultural rights. It bears special significance, as it was promulgated through the constituent assembly based on 'Jana andolan' II (People's Movement), Comprehensive Peace Accord, and the peace process.

## Kuwaiti women's delegations visit EU institutions

A 12-member delegation from Kuwait comprising women advocating gender empowerment recently visited several European Union (EU) institutions in Brussels and exchanged with EU experts, experiences and learning, as well as best practices to accelerate women's empowerment.

The five-day visit, which took place between 18 and 21 September, focused on enhancing dialogue and networking opportunities between the EU and the visiting Kuwaiti delegation, as well as fostering closer people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. The Kuwaiti participants came from all walks of life, including government, business, media, civil society and academia, sharing a common passion and commitment to enhance women's empowerment in Kuwait.

In Brussels, the Kuwaiti delegation met with senior EU officials from the European Commission, the European Parliament and



the European External Action Service, civil society organizations, as well as students and academics, exchanging best practices and identifying bilateral cooperation opportunities. A dedicated panel discussion was also held at the College of Europe, the oldest postgraduate institute of European studies, on policies that are being introduced to accelerate women's empowerment and inclusion.

Speaking on the importance of the visit, Irina Gusachenko, focal point for Gender Equality at the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Kuwait said: "Women's empowerment is a top priority for the EU and the European Union is delighted to exchange views and

best practices with such an inspiring group of Kuwaiti women. The EU remains committed to promoting dialogue and bilateral cooperation on women empowerment, which is the basis for building strong, innovative, inclusive, and thriving societies."

Commenting on the familiarization visit, Dr. Lubna Al-Kazi, Professor at Kuwait University, founder and director of the Women's Research and Studies Center added: "The trip organized by the EU Kuwait was an excellent way to build bridges of friendship and mutual understanding.

The women leaders were from different sectors in Kuwait and showed the progress

made here in different professions. This visit has helped us to see the best practices of the European Union in women's empowerment, and at the same time it gave us the opportunity to show the work we are doing here."

This visit comes in the context of the EU's Joint Communication on a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf, which aims at enhancing EU's cooperation with the Gulf. This strategy presented concrete proposals to strengthen cooperation on energy, green transition, climate change, trade and economic diversification as well as facilitating people-to-people contacts. Women's empowerment cuts across all of these topics.

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# PAM considers residency transfer without sponsor approval

Acting Deputy Director of the Public Authority for Manpower, responsible for the Protection Sector Affairs Dr. Fahd Murad, has said the Authority is presently evaluating the possibility of allowing expatriate workers to transfer their work permit directly from one employer to another without requiring approval from the original employer.

This transfer would be permitted if it is confirmed that the sponsor has breached the terms and conditions specified in the employment contract or any provisions of Law No. (6/2010) concerning work in the private sector. The transfer between employers would also be conducted without infringing on the legal rights of the original employer, and with due attention paid to maintaining a balanced approach that ensures fairness and equity for all parties involved in the labor



equation. Besides policies to streamline the process of labor transfer between employers, Dr. Murad also elaborated on a number of other ongoing considerations. Regarding potential amendments to the Private Labor Law, Dr. Murad clarified that while no amendments have been made thus far, the

Authority is actively studying various articles of the law and collecting information to assess the need for potential changes while at the same time highlighting the ongoing collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, actively considering feedback from diplomatic missions to safeguard labor rights.

In terms of domestic workers, Dr. Murad highlighted a government policy aimed at diversifying recruitment sources rather than limiting recruitment to a few countries.

He added that the Authority is working on signing new memorandums of understanding with multiple East Asian countries to address citizens' and residents' needs for domestic workers.

Dr Murad also discussed advancements in labor complaint submission procedures, including online complaint submissions, enhancing complaint resolution processes

and reducing delays, as well as the developing an individual worker file to aid in labor disputes and disagreements.

Additionally, plans are in progress, in coordination with relevant authorities, to establish a shelter center for male expatriate workers akin to the existing center for women in the Jleeb area. The objective is to enhance shelter services through collaborative initiatives with the International Labor Organization.

On a related note, Colonel Abdulaziz Al-Kandari, who leads Residency Affairs Investigations at the Ministry of Interior, further disclosed the recent interception of a human trafficking company that illegally brought in over 2,000 expatriate workers, illustrating the prevalent issue of forged official documents in such cases, he said, legal action is being pursued against the offenders.

## UNGA, Fragmented Responses to Integrated Challenges

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In addition, outcomes from the widely watched High Level General Debate segment of UNGA, with its surfeit of speeches by world leaders, will reveal whether countries are prepared to tone down their acerbic rhetoric, defer their strategic interests, and set aside their ideological differences, in order to advance shared global interests.

In his address at the High-Level General Debate on 21 September, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah called on the international community to redouble efforts to bring about peaceful resolution of conflicts, enhance support for humanitarian assistance around the world, and address climate change and its repercussion. He highlighted Kuwait's attempts to contribute and help address these issues through bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the UN and other stakeholders.

However, a significant part of the speech by the premier was devoted to the recent political flareup with Iraq. The Federal Supreme Court in Iraq recently rejected the maritime border protocols and agreements on the Khor Abdullah waterway, signed decades ago by Kuwait and Iraq. His Highness emphasized that Kuwait considers the agreement regulating navigation in Khor Abdullah waterway, and the security swap protocol signed between the two countries valid and effective because of its international legality, and its importance in maintaining security and safety of navigation in the Khor Abdullah waterway.

He noted that the State of Kuwait, "out of its belief in the principle of good neighborliness, has stood by the side of Iraq to develop and restore its regional and international status, so as to achieve the hopes and aspirations of its people". He added that despite this support, "Kuwait was astonished by the Iraqi court's decision, a few days ago, to invalidate the Khor Abdullah agreement signed between the two countries in 2012, and the security swap protocol inked between the Kuwaiti and Iraqi Naval Forces in 2008." He also strongly objected to the historical fallacies and language in the Supreme Court's ruling.

Kuwait's premier urged the Iraqi government to "take concrete, decisive and urgent measures to address the repercussions of the Court's ruling and the historical fallacies mentioned therein in a way that preserves good neighborly relations." He also reiterated Kuwait's call for mutual respect of the security, independence and territorial integrity of both countries, the signed bilateral agreements, and the relevant UN resolutions.

In particular, the prime minister referred to UN Security Council Resolution No. 833 of 1993, which

delineated the land and sea borders between the two sides up to the marine mark No. 162. "We call on the brotherly Republic of Iraq to prove good intentions and complete the meetings of the relevant technical teams to demarcate the borders beyond mark No. 162, in accordance with international laws and conventions. He stressed that meanwhile, "the State of Kuwait reserves its full right to take whatever measures it deems necessary at the legal and international levels to preserve its established legitimate and legal rights in accordance with international resolutions and the international law provisions".

In his address to the UNGA, His Highness the Prime Minister also outlined Kuwait's stance on various global and regional issues, including finding peaceful solutions to the conflicts in Yemen, Sudan and Syria. He renewed Kuwait's support for initiatives undertaken by the UN

and principled stance in support of the Palestinian right to establish an independent state based on the 4th June 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. He also urged for international synergy to confront hate speech and media misinformation targeting Muslims, and called for boosting global dialogue, and spreading the culture of coexistence, tolerance and peace at all levels.

On the contentious issue with Iran over the offshore Durra oil and gas field, the premier asserted that the natural resources in the submerged area adjacent to the Divided Zone between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, belonged solely to the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Pointing out that only Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have full rights to exploit these resources, he categorically rejected any claim of right by any other party to this field.



to resume the political process in Yemen. The premier also called for a cessation of hostilities in Sudan and for all parties to resort to dialogue, and return to peaceful political path. On Syria, His Highness stressed the need to intensify efforts to reach a political solution in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Kuwait's prime minister also used the UN platform to rally support for Kuwait's bid for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council for the 2024-26 period. He noted that Kuwait's membership would seek to meet the aspirations of the developing world, extend bridges of cooperation, and work in a way that helps reach comprehensive and just solutions to human rights issues in accordance with provisions of international law, international humanitarian law and UN resolutions.

In addition, Sheikh Ahmad Al Nawaf reiterated Kuwait's full support to the Palestinian people and their rights, as well as stressed Kuwait's firm

Kuwait's premier also highlighted the 'New Kuwait' vision to transform the country into a financial, commercial and cultural hub. He noted that the initiative provided opportunities to attract foreign investment, drive the country's development, and increase employment for young Kuwaitis. Turning to the issue of climate change, the prime minister reiterated Kuwait's commitment to cut carbon emissions, and meet its earlier pledge to reach carbon neutrality in the oil sector by 2050.

He added, "In light of the deterioration of the environment worldwide, and based on available capabilities, my country has voluntarily and thoughtfully made clear progress to fulfill its obligations, especially in readapting the oil, industrial, and transportation sectors, with the aim of reducing emissions, diversifying energy sources, improving their efficiency, and using alternative and renewable energy."

Tackling climate change and reenergizing the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were key segments during this year's UNGA. Additionally, the 78th UNGA session prioritized global peace, prosperity, progress, and sustainability as outlined by its ungainly long title — 'Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all'.

In line with this theme, the 78th session included a SDG Summit on 18 and 19 September, during which global leaders acknowledged the urgent need to take actions to reverse declines in SDGs. They also committed to accelerate progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda and implement the SDGs by the target year of 2030, as well as revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Alongside the SDG Summit, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres also convened the Climate Ambition Summit on 20 September. In his opening remarks at the Climate Summit, the UN Chief stated: "Climate action is dwarfed by the scale of the challenge. If nothing changes we are heading towards a 2.8 degree temperature rise — towards a dangerous and unstable world." However, he noted, "the future is not fixed. It is for leaders like you to write it.

"We can still limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees. We can still build a world of clear air, green jobs, and affordable clean power for all. The path forward is clear, but global leaders need to take action now," the UN Chief stated. He also urged countries to implement a fair, equitable and just energy transition that ensured renewable energy to all. He called for credible plans to exit coal, end fossil fuel subsidies, and set renewable energy goals in line with the 1.5 degree limit.

Secretary-General Guterres emphasized that achieving the 1.5 degrees goal was fully possible., "We are not talking about a dream. We are talking about something that can be real if we mobilize all our energies to make it happen." Pointing to the Climate Ambition Summit, where several countries, regions, cities, companies, and financial institutions revealed policies that were fully aligned with the 1.5 degrees goal, the UN Chief said, "if these first-doers and first-movers can do it, everybody can do it. We just need to create the right environment and ecosystem."

The 78th session of UNGA also highlighted the need for renewed commitment to multilateralism and for UN member states to undertake coordinated purposive action to promote peace, security and human rights, fight climate change, and accelerate efforts to meet the SDGs, all of which are critical in determining not only our future, but that of generations to come.



# Expats from 174 countries work in Kuwait

**L**atest data from the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) show that, as of the end of June 2023, there were more than 2.43 million foreigners from 174 countries living and working in Kuwait. This marked an increase of around 90,000 workers from the end of December 2022, when it was 2.34 million expat workers.

Other employment figures from the CSB data reveal that the total employees in the country's labor market, including citizens, increased during the first six months of 2023 by about 86,800, bringing their total number at the end of June to about 2.88 million, compared to 2.79 million at the end of December 2022.

The data showed that India came in first place for the total number of workers in Kuwait and accounted for 30.2 percent of the workforce in the local market with 869,800

workers at the end of June 2023, an increase of 35,140 compared to their number at the end of December 2022, which was 834,670.

Egypt came in second place with 483,450 workers, marking a decrease of 808 workers compared to their numbers at the end of December 2022, when it was 484,250. Kuwait ranked third as their numbers reached about 447,060, an increase of 4,417 citizens compared to the end of 2022, when it was 442,640.

The Philippines came in fourth place with about 269,480 at the end of December 2023, an increase of 2,568 from the figure six months previously, when it was 266,910 workers. Bangladesh ranked fifth with 248,920 workers at the end of June 2023, an increase of 7,597, compared to the end of December 2022, when it reached 241,330.

During the same six month period, the



number of domestic workers in Kuwait increased by about 34,850 to reach a total of 788,150 workers by the end of June 2023, compared to their total of 753,290 at the end of December 2022. Indians topped the list of domestic workers with 350,850 workers as of the end of June 2023. Filipinos

came in second place with about 201,400 workers; and in third spot was the Sri Lankan community, which accounted for 102,120 workers. Bangladesh with 81,650 domestic workers, came in fourth place.

The data also showed that the total employment in Kuwait other than domestic workers increased by 52,000 to reach about 2.09 million workers by end of June 2023, compared to the 2.04 million at the end of December 2022.

The CSB data also showed that the average salary of Kuwaiti citizens increased during the first six months of 2023 to reach KD1,557 per month, compared to an average salary of KD1,493 at the end of December 2022. During the same six month period, the average salaries of expatriates rose to KD343 dinars per month compared to the KD338 per month at the end of 2022.



## British Academies host 'Carnival Night'

**T**he British Academies, which groups the sports and arts academies of British School of Kuwait (BSK) hosted its annual cultural extravaganza, the 'British Academies Carnival' on 16 September. The event was a dazzling display of talent, creativity, and culture, featuring a range of activities and performances

that captivated guests and showcased the power of the arts and sports.

The carnival was inaugurated by esteemed dignitaries, including the Ambassador of Vietnam H.E. Ngo Toan Thang, Madam Vera, the founder of BSK, and renowned sports celebrity Raba'a Al Hajeri. Speaking on the occasion,

the dignitaries highlighted the importance of promoting culture, arts, and sports training among young children.

The event served as a platform for students of the British Academies to showcase their talents in sports and arts, including in gymnastics and roller-skating routines, as well as their prowess in piano and ballet performances. The event also included captivating magic and bubble shows, an electrifying LED light dance, and a spectacular dinosaur dance that added a unique touch of fun and creativity to the night.

The British Academies Carnival was made possible through the support and partnership of Al Mulla Exchange and The Diet Care, along

with valued contributions from National Geographic Ultimate Explorer, Below Zero, Dental 8 Clinic, Royale Hayat Hospital, and Dadabhai Travels. Attendees also had the chance to savor a diverse array of food and beverages, and numerous businesses and service providers displayed their offerings, enhancing the overall vibrancy of the Carnival.

The training courses offered at the British Academies provide students with the opportunity to learn, grow, and excel in a range of areas, including sports, arts, and culture. Interested individuals can contact the British Academies office at 25670422 or via mobile at 65924897 to register for these exceptional training courses.

## LuLu Group opens food sourcing, processing, and exporting hub in Italy

**A**bu Dhabi based retail giant LuLu Group last week officially opened its world-class sourcing, food processing, and exporting hub in Italy. Y International Italia, the sourcing division of LuLu Group was inaugurated by Italian Minister of Economic Development, Guido Guidesi, in the presence of Chairman and Managing Director of Lulu Group, Yusuffali MA.

Also present on the occasion were Head of FDI Department of Invitalia (Italian Development Agency), Roberto Rizzardo, Director of Italian Trade Agency, Valerio Soldani, Charge d'affaires at the UAE Embassy in Italy, Naser Al Khaja, Ambassador of Bahrain to Italy, Dr. Nasser Al Balooshi, Chairman of Arab Chamber of Commerce of Italy, Cesare Trevisani, Director of LuLu Group, Mohamed Althaf, Country Head of Lulu Group in Italy, Allesandro Simone, and other officials.

The new hub is expected to further boost the sourcing operations of LuLu Group, not only from Italy but also from nearby European countries, and ensure uninterrupted supply and price stability of food products. The center will primarily focus on sourcing, processing, storing, packaging and exporting of top quality food products from Italy to more than 255 LuLu Hypermarkets spread across GCC countries, Egypt, India, Indonesia and Malaysia.

The focus categories will be varieties of cheeses, chocolates, fruit jams, sweet and puff



pastries, organic pasta, infused extra-virgin olive oil, high quality sea-salt from well-known Italian brands. Apart from packed food the center will also source and export a wide range of fruits and vegetables.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Guidesi expressed his excitement in having LuLu Group's new project in Italy and assured the highest level of support and cooperation that will further enhance trade ties between Italy and the Arab world.

For his part, Mr. Yusuffali said, "As a key partner in the food security sector in the Middle East, it is our ongoing strategy to set up our own sourcing and food processing units around

the world to ensure uninterrupted supply and ensure competitive pricing by eliminating middlemen.

He added, "Italy has some unique cuisines, a vast variety of fruits, vegetables and various commodities and we are working closely with the Italian Trade Agency to boost the export of these products to our hypermarkets. We will also be working closely with all stakeholders to promote the Italian brands by organizing 'Italian Food Festivals' across our hypermarkets."

We will be initially exporting products worth around €50 million and expect to reach €200 million in two years. We are also tying up with farmers cooperative societies to source

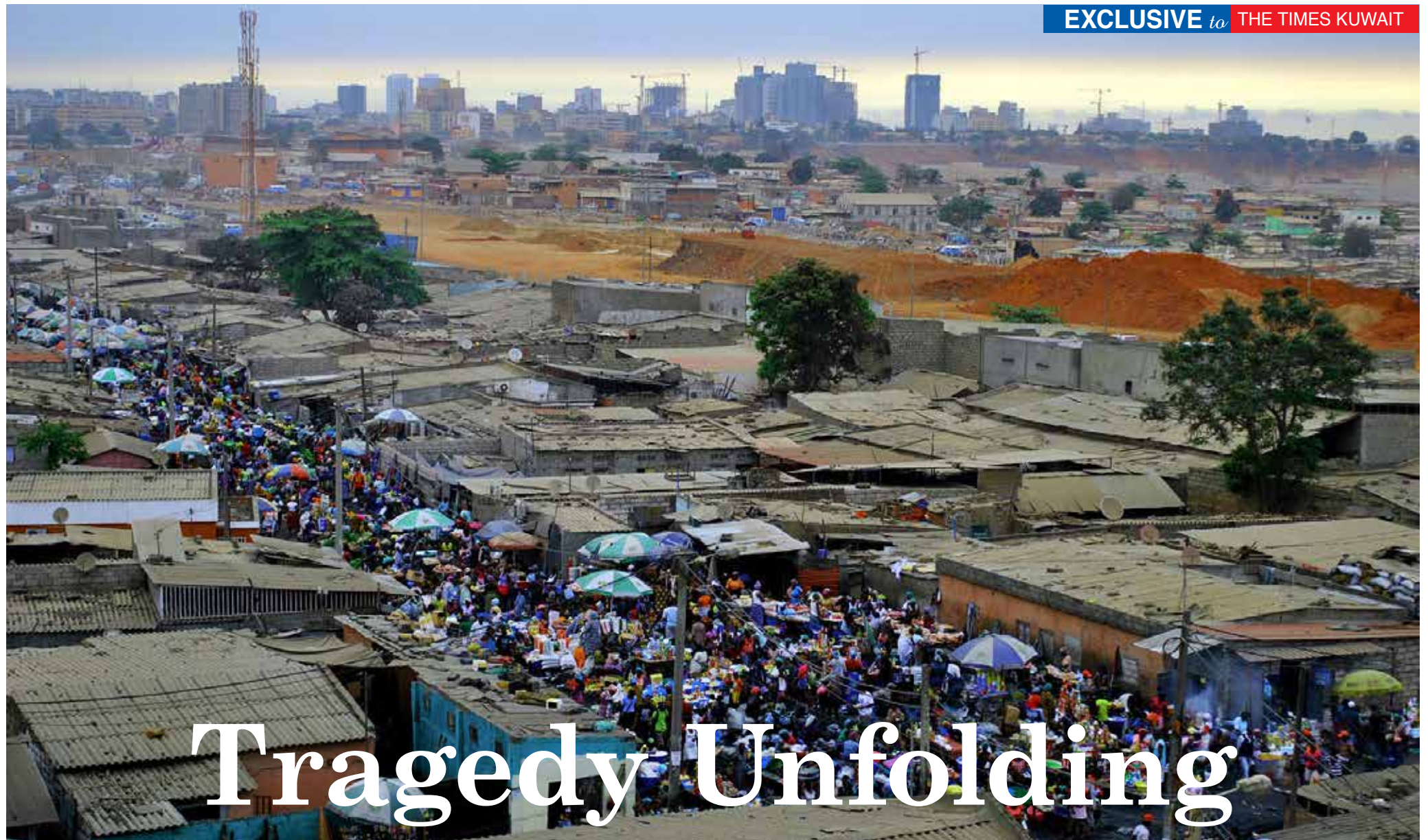
fruits and vegetables, which will surely have a very positive impact on the agricultural sector of Italy. In addition this project will generate significant employment in Italy," added Mr. Yusuffali.

Lulu Group, which has an annual turnover of over US\$8 billion and employs more than 65,000 people from 43 different countries, is ranked as the No.1 retailer in the Middle East & North Africa region, and as one of the Top 50 fastest growing retailers in the world, by multinational financial services company, Deloitte. LuLu Group has similar food processing centers in the UK, USA, Spain, Turkey, Vietnam, Thailand, China, South Africa among others.





EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT



# Tragedy Unfolding in the Poorest Countries



**Indermit Gill and M. Ayhan Kose**

*Indermit Gill is Chief Economist and Senior Vice President for Development Economics at the World Bank.*

*M. Ayhan Kose is Deputy Chief Economist and Director of the Prospects Group at the World Bank.*

The poorest countries are in desperate straits, and the rest of the world is looking the other way. Doing so comes easy, because low-income countries (LICs) matter little to the fate of the world in the near term. At the end of June, the combined GDP of the 28 countries in this group was roughly \$500 billion — a drop in the \$100 trillion ocean that is the global economy. The world's poorest countries are also nobody's ideal export markets: the average annual income is barely \$1,000, and conflict and instability are the norm for about half.

Nonetheless, 700 million people live in these countries, and about half of them are in extreme poverty. Very poor people have long been accustomed to neglect from their own governments, which often have other priorities. For example, they spend about 50 percent more on war and defense than they do on health care. Nearly half their budgets go toward public-sector wages and interest payments on debt, while a mere 3 percent of total government spending across LICs goes to support the most vulnerable citizens. That is one-tenth the average for developing economies more broadly.

It therefore should surprise no one that a human tragedy is now unfolding in these countries. Key indicators of human development in today's LICs are far worse now than they were in the LICs of 2000, before many of the latter had

ascended to middle-income status. For example, maternal mortality is 25 percent higher now, and the share of the population with access to electricity has fallen from 52 percent to barely 40 percent across this cohort. Average life expectancy is now just 62 years, among the lowest rates in the world.

Making matters worse, the odds of these countries getting help from abroad have declined. Wealthier countries have chosen exactly the wrong moment to become less generous. Even before the pandemic, foreign-aid flows to the poorest countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, were slowing. Today, wealthier countries are redirecting more of their foreign-aid budgets to meet the surge of refugees arriving on their own shores. These developments have left few avenues for economic recovery: by the end of 2024, the average income of people in the poorest countries will still be almost 13 percent lower than what had been expected before the pandemic.

“ Poor-country governments have made up the difference by going deeper into debt. Government debt-to-GDP ratios in these economies soared from 36 percent of GDP in 2011 to 67 percent last year — the highest level since 2005. ”

Between 2011 and 2015, grants accounted for about one-third of government revenues in the world's poorest countries; but that share has since dropped to less than one-fifth. Poor-country governments have made up the difference by going deeper into debt, and at punishing interest rates. Government debt-to-GDP ratios in these economies soared from 36 percent of GDP in 2011 to 67 percent last year — the highest level since 2005 (with the exception of 2020). Fourteen LICs are now in debt distress or at high risk of it — more than double the number just eight years ago.

As they gather in New York for the United Nations 2023 SDG Summit, global leaders cannot afford to turn a blind eye to these developments. They must not forget the fundamental promise of the Sustainable Development Goals: 'to reach the furthest behind first'. Even as they remain generous to arriving refugees, wealthier countries should redouble their efforts to end the misery at the source.

That means enlarging the pool of resources available to multilateral development banks, so that they can increase grants and concessional financing for the poorest countries. Greater funding is not just a moral imperative to prevent a disaster in the poorest economies; it is a matter of self-interest for all countries with the means to help. Southern European countries struggling to manage migration flows should know that they will benefit from supporting development in poor countries such as Niger.

Wealthier countries, and all international financial institutions, should move decisively

institutions, for their part, can help crowd in private finance in sectors that offer the promise of both development and profits.

Second, debt restructuring must be accelerated. The Common Framework for Debt Treatment Beyond the DSSI (Debt Service Suspension Initiative) has struggled to deliver relief ever since the G20 announced it nearly three years ago. If finalized, Zambia's debt-restructuring agreement with its creditors will be a welcome development; but it was concluded three months ago, and the country is still waiting for debt relief. The framework's glacial pace, and all the uncertainties that come with it, have deterred too many countries from seeking the relief they so urgently need. It is time to pick up the pace. For many lower-income countries, restoring long-term debt sustainability will depend on debt restructuring. Without it, they will remain paralyzed, unable to attract the private financing they need to tackle the formidable development challenges of this decade — from creating jobs and improving welfare to making the planet more livable.

Finally, we must double down on the reform agenda by ensuring that global initiatives to bolster the poorest countries are complemented by ambitious domestic measures. International financial institutions can make a difference by helping LICs mobilize domestic revenues and improve spending efficiencies and debt management. They can also support governments' efforts to improve institutional frameworks, build human capital, ease impediments to private investment, and harness the potential of digital technology, all of which will boost these countries' long-term growth prospects.

Time is running out. The growing hopelessness among citizens of the poorest countries will feed a vicious cycle that is already underway. Desperate to escape misery at home, many will risk everything to find refuge abroad. The suffering of millions of people in faraway lands is not as far away as it may seem. It is contagious, and it is already spilling over national borders, with unpredictable global consequences.

on three fronts. First, they must increase concessional financing for the poorest countries, with aid going to addressing emerging challenges such as climate change, economic fragility, and pandemics.

Increased aid also will help these countries invest in critical sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure, which will enhance their resilience and growth potential. Aid effectiveness (a major concern for donors) can be improved by strengthening donor coordination and building competent local institutions to select, manage, and monitor projects. International financial



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Protectionism Started the Geopolitical Fire



**Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg**

*A former World Bank Group chief economist and editor-in-chief of the American Economic Review, is Professor of Economics at Yale University.*



It has been puzzling to see many prominent economists decry the Trump administration's tariffs as welfare-reducing protectionism, while approving of the Biden administration's even more drastic steps to reshore, friend-shore, and decouple from China. In a March 2018 Chicago Booth poll of economists, 100 percent of respondents opposed new US tariffs; but then a largely overlapping set of respondents were skeptical of global supply chains when asked in January 2022. Only two respondents (with me being one of them) disagreed that a reliance on foreign inputs had made US industries vulnerable to disruptions.

One exception to this broader pattern is Dani Rodrik, who argued in a recent commentary that the ramifications of geopolitics are much more severe than renewed protectionism. He makes an important point; still, one must remember that protectionism was a major catalyst for today's escalating geopolitical tensions.

The Trump tariffs both reversed a long-term trend toward trade liberalization and imposed real costs on the US economy by raising prices for US consumers and for US firms that use imported intermediate inputs from China. But Trump's policies had little impact on global trade overall. While trade between the United States and China declined, as expected, many other countries'

better than their parents. Surely, there had to be a connection between the two. If China was doing so well, America must be falling behind.

Initially, many criticized this narrative as populist pandering. But it gradually gained traction, and when COVID-19 struck, arguments in favor of protectionism and against China went mainstream. Suddenly, everyone agreed that the pandemic-related supply-chain problems were a result of international trade. Never mind that many of the bottlenecks originated domestically and had nothing to do with global supply chains; or that without imported masks from China, shortages of personal protective equipment would have been worse; or that, despite COVID-19 being the biggest global shock since World War II, the world economy proved quite resilient. The narrative was shifting toward blaming international trade, and particularly trade with China, for every problem in the modern economy. Then came Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine — the final straw. Though the aggressor was Russia, not China, it was now all too easy to imagine what would happen to the global economy if China invaded Taiwan. Concerns about geopolitical risks and national security came to the fore, lending momentum to calls not for just protectionism but for a broader economic decoupling from China.

Again, it is easy to blame the Russian invasion for ushering in a new cold war. But would we be where we are without the resurgent protectionism and calls for supply-chain resilience in recent years? By undermining the belief in international cooperation and pushing the narrative of trade as a zero-sum game, those policies and strategic objectives created some of the preconditions for today's economic warfare.

Whereas trade was presented as a zero-sum game in 2015-16, when Trump was elected, now national welfare is being framed in these terms. The issue is no longer just about tariffs and trade. Those are relevant only to the extent that they can be used to stop China from developing its technological capabilities. The primary concerns now, we are told, are 'de-risking' and national security, rather than America's desire to maintain economic dominance.

But such justifications are problematic. Consider de-risking. It sounds prudent, but is it really about China? Global production of the most advanced semiconductors is concentrated within a single Taiwanese company (TSMC), which certainly does imply a high risk of disruption should the company suffer some shock. But such a shock need not come from a Chinese invasion; it could also take the form of a health crisis, a natural disaster, or even personnel issues. The root problem is not China, but high market

concentration. The same kind of risk would still be salient if the company was based in the US.

While worrying about optimal diversification and de-risking makes sense, casting everything in geopolitical terms does not.

When Trump recently vowed to impose massive new tariffs if re-elected, the international community rushed to condemn such policies. But tariffs matter less now, because the damage

has already been done.

We live in a new era. As I noted in a previous commentary, drawing on work by economic historians, there are eerie parallels between the period leading up to World War II and recent developments in US trade and foreign policy. Protectionism is a problem, not just because of its impact on trade, but also because of its impact on international relations and geopolitics.

“

By undermining the belief in international cooperation and pushing the narrative of trade as a zero-sum game, protectionist policies and strategic objectives created some of the preconditions for today's economic warfare.

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exports — both to the US and to the rest of the world — increased. Trade flows were reallocated, not reduced.

But the belief in the benefits of international trade took a hit, as more people came to regard it as a zero-sum game. The Trump administration pushed the narrative that many of America's longstanding economic problems were due to trade with China. Inequality in the US had risen sharply, and younger generations were not doing as well as their parents. As if that was not bad enough, Chinese children did seem to be doing

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# The Great Debt Conundrum



**Anne O. Krueger**

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The exponential growth of international capital flows, predominantly in the form of debt, has been one of the great development successes of the past 50 years. But while foreign lending has played a pivotal role for developing economies, loans are a two-edged sword. When used judiciously, they can generate high returns, boost GDP growth, and improve the well-being of borrower countries. But if debts accumulate and the debt-servicing burden increases without a commensurate increase in repayment capacity, the consequences can be severe and even disastrous.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, many countries grappled with a dramatic increase in fiscal demands, driven by rising public-health expenditures and a drop in revenues due to reduced economic activity. Highly indebted countries edged closer to the brink of default, and even those with previously sustainable public finances experienced a dangerous surge in their debt burdens.

When debt levels are high and rising, crises can emerge suddenly and worsen quickly. While several governments have taken steps to reduce their elevated debt levels and

introduced reforms to avert potential crises, some countries' debt-servicing costs are so high that meaningful adjustments are politically or economically unfeasible. Under such conditions, skeptical private creditors sell these countries' sovereign bonds at reduced prices and refuse to extend further credit. Once this happens and governments default on their obligations, they find themselves shut out of capital markets. The subsequent economic crisis typically persists until these countries can restructure their existing debts, implement policy reforms, and restore confidence in their creditworthiness.

When a private company fails to meet its obligations, bankruptcy procedures determine the extent of liability write-downs and the allocation of the firm's remaining assets. By

"grace period" on interest payments. Speaking at the inaugural Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi, Ruto suggested that developing countries redirect funds earmarked for debt service toward investments in renewable energy.

But this and other proposals for blanket debt forgiveness or payment moratoria are deeply flawed. Notably, some countries' debts are inherently unsustainable. Even if their debts were suddenly forgiven, these governments would lack the resources necessary to finance major environmental initiatives. Moreover, without an agreed-upon restructuring plan and access to additional resources, essential imports required for production and consumption would be severely restricted, resulting in underutilized capacity and potential economic stagnation.

agreement, all creditors must be subject to the same haircut. Otherwise, some lenders would receive full repayment while others would endure significant write-downs, and they would surely not agree to that.

But China, which has emerged as a major creditor over the past two decades, has refused to join the Paris Club. Instead of taking the same haircut as other creditors, the Chinese government insists on being repaid in full, which would result in preferential treatment for China and exacerbating developing countries' debt-servicing difficulties. Failure to agree has delayed the restructuring process.

Consequently, countries like Sri Lanka and Zambia have endured unnecessary delays in resolving their debt crises, even after reaching agreements with the IMF on essential policy reforms. To prevent significant and avoidable suffering, the international community must establish procedures to ensure timely and fair burden-sharing among creditors.

The developing world's ongoing economic turmoil underscores the urgent need to establish a new debt-restructuring framework. The World Bank recently estimated that 60% or more of low-income countries are heavily indebted and "at high risk of debt distress." Moreover, many middle-income countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Tunisia, also face significant fiscal and debt challenges.

If multiple countries fail to meet their debt-servicing obligations, international creditors will become reluctant to finance other heavily indebted countries, potentially triggering a global debt crisis. Such a scenario would have devastating consequences for low- and middle-income economies and the world economy as a whole. By streamlining and expediting the restructuring process, we can avoid making a bad situation even worse.

“Without an agreed-upon restructuring plan and access to additional resources, essential imports required for production and consumption would be restricted, resulting in underutilized capacity and potential economic stagnation.”

contrast, there is no universally recognized legal mechanism for restructuring sovereign debt. As such, any resolution hinges on a voluntary agreement between debtor governments and their creditors.

Over the past few years, as dozens of low- and middle-income economies found themselves heading toward default, there have been growing calls for debt forgiveness. Kenyan President William Ruto, for example, recently proposed granting African countries a ten-year

Historically, debt-restructuring negotiations have been a protracted, ad hoc process. The International Monetary Fund would collaborate with debtor countries to assess the necessary domestic policy changes and debt adjustments. Meanwhile, sovereign creditors, cooperating through the Paris Club, would consult with private lenders and decide on an appropriate restructuring strategy.

But today's debt landscape presents even greater challenges. To reach a restructuring





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# Fully Replenishing the Green Climate Fund



**Vera Songwe and Mahmoud Mohieldin**

Vera Songwe, Chair of the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility, is a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and Co-Chair of the High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance.

Mahmoud Mohieldin, a former Egyptian minister for investment, is Egypt's High-Level Climate Champion for COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, an executive director at the International Monetary Fund, and Facilitator of the Green Climate Fund's second replenishment process.



When the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was established a little over a decade ago, it was considered a potentially useful tool to support developing countries in the shift to climate-resilient and low-emission development pathways. Today, it is the world's largest climate-dedicated fund, representing a significant share of the war chest for combating global warming. It must be adequately funded to succeed.

To continue financing ambitious climate action, the GCF will need traditional contributors to increase their pledges and new contributors to step forward during its second replenishment round, which is currently underway. It is no exaggeration to say that the GCF's replenishment campaign is a test of the world's commitment to fighting climate change; a successful outcome will help developed countries rebuild trust by showing that they understand the urgency of the crisis and that they can deliver on their commitments.

The two most recent United Nations Climate Change Conferences (COP26 and COP27) have shown that world leaders recognize the importance of limiting global warming to 1.5° Celsius. But the implementation challenge —

rapid advances in green technology. But, when coupled with rising interest rates and finance costs, they will also make it more difficult for the developing countries seeking to benefit from these innovations to attract capital.

Moreover, the total number of green bonds issued by developing countries fell between 2020 and 2022, while those issued in the West increased. And the widening renewables gap between developed and developing countries comes on top of a slowdown in clean-energy investments in 2022. Supply-chain disruptions are further harming emerging-market economies.

The war in Ukraine has also complicated the green transition by derailing some countries' plans to phase out coal power and fossil fuels. Many other countries have revised their net-zero timelines and commitments, while the corporate sector has also revised its targets downward. Perhaps more importantly, owing to record increases in food, fuel, and fertilizer prices (largely a byproduct of the war), interest-rate hikes, and unsustainable debt burdens, many developing countries have depleted their foreign-exchange reserves and lack the fiscal space to pursue their climate goals.

At the same time, climate change is driving ever more extreme and anomalous weather events, from cyclones in Southern Africa and Libya, to typhoons in East Asia and droughts in Latin America. If these events continue apace, an estimated 1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050. Many developing countries are thus increasingly vulnerable to climate-related disasters through no fault of their own and have already started directing domestic resources to adaptation efforts.

The exponential increase in the scale and frequency of extreme weather, and the mounting costs associated with such events, stands in stark contrast to the slow pace of the global response. This incongruence, coupled with a severe lack of financial instruments that do not generate debt, has diminished developing countries' trust in the global financial architecture. While the developed world can spend billions on government subsidies and incentives to encourage the green transition at home, low- and middle-income countries suffer the most from delays in climate mitigation and adaptation globally. Even more unsettling is the flood of investment pouring into the fossil-fuel industry to expand operations globally.

Just Energy Transition Partnerships, launched at COP26, made headlines with the promise to funnel money from wealthy countries to the highest emitters in the developing world. Furthermore, COP27 had a similar impact with the establishment of a 'loss and damage fund' for developing countries facing the effects of climate change, as well as official calls to reform international financial institutions and to scale up funding for the GCF. But they have yet to deliver, and the global climate financing gap continues to

widen as a result. As costs increase exponentially, the developing world is losing hope.

This trend, however, is not irreversible. The developed world and institutions like the GCF can take the initiative in three key areas to restore developing countries' trust and shore up their climate resilience. For starters, developed countries must significantly increase funding for the GCF — the one international institution whose sole responsibility is to fight climate change. The GCF can do much more, especially

by helping to build and implement country programs and adaptation plans, and by enabling the delivery of emissions-reduction projects.

To leapfrog climate technologies, for example, developing countries need financing to adopt scalable adaptation and mitigation strategies. Moreover, investment in technology transfers can transform other sectors and industries, such as agriculture, in addition to fighting climate change.

Likewise, with more capital, the GCF can offer and contribute to cheaper financing for developing countries. That way, they can bolster climate mitigation and adaptation without increasing their debt levels and thus attract more investment. As it becomes widely understood that climate finance is development finance, the GCF could play an important role in increasing the number of debt-for-nature swaps and developing other innovative tools. This includes working with philanthropists and private-sector actors to identify solutions, test them at low cost, and provide guidance on scale. Lastly, the GCF can, through its readiness program, help improve data collection for decision-making purposes.

When it comes to combating global warming, developed countries must fulfill their responsibilities to the rest of the world. The best way to do that is through showing progress in funding the GCF to support its project pipeline and programming capacity. As the past few years have demonstrated, climate change knows no borders, and responding to this existential threat requires mobilizing the world. Anything less would guarantee defeat.

“Climate change is driving ever more extreme and anomalous weather events, from cyclones in Southern Africa and Libya, to typhoons in East Asia. If these events continue, an estimated 1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050.”

highlighted at last year's COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact in Paris in June, and this month's Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi — is delivering the \$2.4 trillion that developing countries will need annually by 2030 to achieve this goal.

The developing world faces fierce headwinds in mitigating and adapting to climate change. During the past year, the United States and the European Union have announced massive subsidies to incentivize domestic clean-energy investments. These policies will likely lead to



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## Thought for the week

“ You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you; none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul.

– Swami Vivekananda

## Greek Yogurt, the latest, coolest trend in yogurts

.....  
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If you have not tried Greek yogurt before, you do not know what you have been missing. This protein-rich dairy product, which is high in many nutrients like vitamin B12, calcium, and selenium, is made by removing most of the excess liquid (whey) from the yogurt by straining it, so you end up with a richer and creamier product.

Removing all the excess liquid increases the nutritional value of the yogurt since it doubles the protein content found in regular yogurt, helping to keep our appetite satisfied until the next meal. It is also perfect for those who want to build muscles.

Greek yogurt is very high in calcium (20% of your daily recommended amount) needed to prevent osteoporosis, and often lower in carbohydrates compared to regular yogurt. The plain Greek yogurt is perfect for people following the keto diet.

Greek yogurt is also an excellent source of probiotics (good bacteria) which is needed to prevent bloating and gas problems, and help in the normal digestion process.

Plain non-fat Greek yogurt has only 60 calories. You can also find fruit flavored ones for those who prefer a fruity taste to their yogurt.

Greek yogurt can work as a natural substitute to many higher-fat ingredients. For example, use it as the base

dressing for your favorite salad. Instead of using the high fat, high calorie sour cream and mayonnaise, try the plain Greek yogurt instead. Also you can use it as a dip for your fresh fruits. Not only is it a delicious way to dip your fruits, but also makes it an extra nutritious snack.

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

### RECIPE

## Sweet Steamed 'Modak'



Modak is a sweet steamed dumpling quite popular in many Indian states, especially during festive seasons. It is also prepared in other south-east Asian countries under different names. For instance, in Malaysia and Singapore it is known as kuih modak, and in Indonesia as Kue modak; in Vietnam as nhân dừa, while a colored variety in Thailand is called khamom kho. A similar delicacy in Japan is referred to as kangidan.

Irrespective of its aliases, this 'bundle of bliss' is generally prepared from grated coconut mixed with sugar or jaggery (solidified, concentrated cane sugar syrup). The mixture is then wrapped in kneaded dough made of rice or wheat flour, and either steamed or fried.

**Total time :** 40 minutes.

**Serving:** 10 to 12 pieces

#### Ingredients:

##### For stuffing:

- 1 cup fresh grated coconut
- ½ cup grated jaggery
- 1 tsp cardamom powder
- ½ tsp nutmeg powder
- 5-6 almond/cashew (chopped)
- 1 tablespoon raisins
- For wrapping:
- 1 cup rice flour
- 1 ¼ cups water
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ghee (clarified butter)



Chef Chhaya Thakker

#### Instructions:

##### For making stuffing:

- Mix together the grated coconut and jaggery in a pan on medium heat
- Cook until the moisture evaporates, then mix in the cardamom, nutmeg powders. Add the chopped almond/cashew, and raisins
- Stir the mixture and cook for a minute
- Transfer the stuffing to a plate and set aside to cool
- For making the dough wrapping:
- Bring water to a boil and add ghee, salt, rice flour and mix quickly to avoid lumps
- Remove from flame and set aside until it cools enough to handle
- Knead the mixture into a smooth, lump-free dough
- Grease hands with a little ghee or oil and pinch out small balls from the dough
- Flatten it evenly to a round shape and place a spoon of stuffing in the center
- Pull the edges to bring it to the center and seal to form a dumpling
- Alternatively, using a dumpling mold eases the shaping process
- Add water to a steamer pot and bring to boil.
- Grease the steamer plate, and arrange the dumplings on it.
- Cover and steam over medium flame until the outer wrapping turns shiny
- Take heed not to overcook or the dumplings could turn out hard
- Serve hot or cold.



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



# Gender difference in symptoms of cardiac arrest

Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of global mortality accounting for around 17 million deaths, or nearly 30 percent of all global mortality. It is estimated that about 40–50 percent of all cardiovascular deaths are the result of sudden cardiac deaths that occur when the heart suddenly stops beating and the flow of blood pumped throughout the body is stopped. Nearly 80 percent of all cardiac arrests are due to an arrhythmia, or abnormal heartbeat, which occurs when the electrical pulses telling the heart to pump blood are disrupted.

The survival rate from sudden cardiac arrest is less than 1 percent worldwide.

Although there are some known signs and symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest, most of the time it occurs without any warning. Researchers at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in the United States have found that half of people experiencing a sudden cardiac arrest also had a telling symptom 24 hours beforehand, but they tend to be ignored. They also found that these warning signs are usually different between men and women.

To clarify, cardiac arrest is different from a heart attack. A heart attack happens when a blockage in an artery stops blood from flowing through the different sections of the heart, but it does not cause the heart to suddenly and completely stop beating as cardiac arrest does. Nevertheless, having a heart attack can increase a person's risk for sudden cardiac arrest. Other cardiovascular diseases, such as coronary artery disease and heart valve disease can also cause sudden cardiac arrest.

Sudden cardiac arrest is a life threatening emergency that requires immediate medical attention. Call your local emergency number if you witness anyone having symptoms of cardiac arrest. Evidence shows early intervention for cardiac arrest, including recognition, use of chest compressions, defibrillation and post-arrest care can help increase the patient's survival rate.



Often, cardiac arrest occurs without any warning signs, with the victim fainting or becoming unconscious in an instant. Other signs of cardiac arrest include: dizziness, chest pain, racing heartbeat, shortness of breath, wheezing, nausea and/or vomiting. However, since many of these warning signs are also associated with other health conditions, patients or their caregivers tend to ignore or misdiagnose these signs.

For their study, the researchers analyzed data from two ongoing studies in the US. The analysis found that 50 percent of people who had a sudden cardiac arrest had experienced at least one telltale symptom 24 hours beforehand, as reported by their caregivers or emergency medical professionals. The signs included shortness of breath, chest pain, excessive sweating, and seizure-like activity, but in many cases these signs were wrongly attributed to other causes.

Researchers behind the new study said they intend to carry out more studies in future to understand which symptoms were most important for sudden cardiac arrest, and to find how the prediction of imminent sudden cardiac arrest could be further improved by adding features, such as the patient's clinical profile and biometric measures to warning symptoms.

The study also found differences in the sudden cardiac arrest warning symptoms between men and women. Researchers found that the most prominent symptom for women 24 hours before cardiac arrest was shortness of breath. For men, chest pain was the preeminent telltale symptom.

This study, as well as increasing evidence from healthcare professionals highlight the urgent need to recognize the importance of always performing clinical research that can evaluate sex differences between conditions. For sudden cardiac arrest, there are already well-established findings that suggest different mechanisms and underpinnings of this condition between the sexes. For example, men are far more likely to suffer sudden cardiac arrest — two-thirds of victims are male — and women tend to present with this condition an average of 8-10 years later in age compared to men.

In advising patients, especially those who are known to have significant heart conditions, healthcare providers can make them aware that women with unexpected shortness of breath have a 3-fold higher risk of an imminent sudden cardiac arrest; and men with unexpected chest pain have a 2-fold increased risk, which necessitates urgent medical care.

There are also gender differences in other cardiovascular diseases, such as a heart attack that could potentially cause cardiac arrest. For instance, women tend to have more atypical presentations of heart attacks. Chest pain is still the most common presentation on both men and women, but women tend to have more of the atypical symptoms such as pain in a different location, shortness of breath, or fatigue.

Recognizing gender-based symptoms are critical to early intervention as certain types of coronary blockages could be opened up percutaneously or bypassed with open heart surgery before the event. There are also many medications that can stabilize coronary plaque such as statins and aspirin, as well as medications such as beta-blockers that help with heart function and prevent arrhythmias that lead to cardiac arrest.

## Pleasing aroma helps improve memory

A new study by neuroscientists at the University of California in the US found that when a pleasant fragrance was wafted through the bedrooms of older adults for two hours every night for six months, memories skyrocketed. Participants in the study were shown to achieve a two-hundred fold increase in their cognitive capacity compared to a control group.

The researchers said their study transforms previously known links between aroma and memory into an easy and affordable, non-invasive technique to strengthen memory and potentially curb dementia in the elderly.

The study involved men and women aged 60 to 85 without memory impairment. All were given a diffuser and seven cartridges, each containing a single and different natural oil. People in the enriched group received full-strength cartridges. Control group participants were given the oils in tiny amounts. Participants put a different cartridge into their diffuser each evening prior to going to bed, and it activated for two hours as they slept.

People in the enriched group showed a 226 percent increase in cognitive performance compared to the control group, as measured by a word list test commonly used to evaluate memory. Imaging of the brain



revealed better integrity in a brain pathway that connects the medial temporal lobe to the prefrontal cortex in the brain. The median temporal lobe is related to important cognitive and emotional functions in the brain, while the prefrontal cortex is largely associated with decision-making processes. Participants also reported sleeping more soundly.

Scientists have long known that the loss of olfactory capacity, or ability to smell, can predict development of nearly 70 neurological and psychiatric diseases. These include Alzheimer's and other dementias, Parkinson's, schizophrenia and alcoholism. Evidence is emerging about a link between smell loss due to COVID and ensuing cognitive decrease.

Researchers have previously found that exposing people with moderate dementia to up to 40 different odors twice a day over a period of time boosted their memories and language skills, eased depression and improved their olfactory capacities. The new study aims to turn this knowledge into an easy and non-invasive dementia-fighting tool.

Over the age of 60, the olfactory sense and cognition starts to fall off sharply. The practicality of the new study arises from the fact that it is not realistic to expect an aged person suffering cognitive impairment to remember to open, take a whiff and close 40 deodorant bottles or more daily. This would be difficult even for those without dementia.

The researchers behind the new study said this is what prompted them to reduce the number of scents to just seven, and expose participants to just one scent daily, rather than the multiple aromas used simultaneously in previous research projects. By making it possible for people to experience the odors while sleeping, we also eliminated the need to set aside time for this during waking hours every day."

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