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Education Crisis



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250 Fils

Uniting Against Corruption, a multi-stakeholder approach

By Sheikha Suhaila Fahad Al-Sabah
Managing Editor

International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD), marked annually on 9 December, seeks to raise awareness on the critical need to prevent corruption, promote transparency, and strengthen democratic institutions. Besides highlighting the challenges posed by corruption, the day also provides an opportunity to reflect on the crucial role of anti-corruption in promoting peace, security and development.

The 2023 IACD commemorates the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). The day, which is being celebrated this year under the tagline of 'United Against Corruption', draws focus on the fact that tackling



corruption is the right and responsibility of everyone, and that collective action is needed to stamp out corruption from every walk of life.

The day underscores the importance of engaging multiple stakeholders, including governments, businesses and civil society,

as well as empowering communities and individuals in the fight to end corruption, and ensure the sustainable development of nations, and the wellbeing of people everywhere. As the world commemorates this milestone day, we reflect on the pervasive influence of corruption

on economic, political, and social development of nations, and on the well-being of people.

Corruption stymies economic, political and social development of nations and societies. Economic growth is hindered by corruption in development projects that enable bureaucratic hurdles which require bribes to overcome. Corruption also discourages local and foreign direct investment, makes the business environment less open and competitive, and prevents small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that form the backbone of most economies by raising the 'start-up costs' they need to operate successfully.

Corruption also corrodes the foundation of political life and democratic institutions by distorting electoral processes, perverting the rule of law and enabling systemic quagmires

Global community leaders unite for a 1.5°C Plan at COP28

As COP28 enters its second week, over 800 leaders of subnational governments, industry, civil society, and other stakeholders in climate change have addressed a letter to COP28 President Sultan Al Jaber to support the delivery of a 1.5°C-aligned outcome at the ongoing UN climate conference in the United Arab Emirates. Among the 800 signatories are 300+ CEOs, 30+ financiers, 240+ NGOs, 70+ scientists, as well as mayors, governors, investors, Indigenous peoples, health professionals, young people, faith leaders, and athletes.

Mary Robinson, Ayisha Siddiq, Rebecca Solnit, Andrew Steer, Gunther Tallinger, Halla Tómasdóttir, Adair Turner, and many more. The letter reads:

Dear COP28 President Sultan Al Jaber,

We are pleased to deliver a letter, signed by 800+ signatories from across the world, on the 1.5°C plan at COP28, because later is too late.

As we enter the final days of COP28, we are at a tipping point. The world and its people need the strongest possible outcome to keep 1.5 degrees within reach. But delivering on this historic task requires us to act like a team.

The signals of transformation across sectors and society are all around us. At the same time, the climate emergency is biting harder than ever. It is up to us to seize this opportunity — because what is achieved here in Dubai must mark a legacy moment which determines the fate of our future generations.

We — CEOs, mayors, governors, investors, indigenous peoples, health professionals, philanthropists, young people, faith leaders, NGOs, scientists, athletes and more — stand in courage and resolve with the COP28 President and all Parties in bringing us together behind a rapid response plan to the Global Stocktake.

To reach this positive tipping point, we know we need the following:

- An orderly phase out of all fossil fuels in a just and equitable way, in line with a 1.5C trajectory, whilst ensuring the tripling of global renewable energy capacity by 2030 from 2022 levels and the doubling of energy efficiency.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Signatories to the letter include among others: Yvonne Aquiri Sawyerr, Marc Benioff, Richard Branson, Jesper Brodin, Christiana Figueres, Jacinda Arden, Andrew Forrest, Jane Goodall, Sadiq Khan, Anne Hidalgo, Rachel Kyte, Mo Ibrahim, Guilherme Leal, Vanessa Nakate, Gina McCarthy, Juan Carlos Mora, Hiro Mizuno, Sanda Ojiambo, Manuel Pulgar Vidal, Luc Remont, Johan Rockström,

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GCC Summit approves unified tourist visa



The 44th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit held last week in the Qatari capital Doha, approved among others the unified Gulf tourist visa, which will grant travelers entry to all six countries in the GCC bloc with one visa.

Announcing the new decision, Saudi

Arabia's Minister of Tourism, Ahmed bin Aqeel Al-Khatib, stated that the GCC leaders had instructed their respective Ministers of Interior to take appropriate measures for implementation of the new visa scheme. Describing the decision as historic, Al-Khatib said that the step demonstrates the commitment of GCC states to strengthening cooperation and deepening ties in tourism and other fields.

He added that adoption of the unified Gulf tourist visa aligns with the ongoing development and progress experienced by the GCC countries in various sectors, and that the move will enhance the global standing of the Gulf countries as an attractive tourist destination. Al-Khatib explained that the unified tourist visa would facilitate the movement of tourists and visitors between member states,

thereby boosting the role of tourism as a driver of economic growth and creating new investment opportunities in the tourism sector for each country.

He indicated that the Saudi Ministry of Tourism is committed to cooperating with its counterparts in other GCC countries to ensure the smooth implementation and coordination of this initiative, so as to serve the tourism and economic sectors in the region. It is noteworthy that the unified visa system is one of the outcomes from the milestone adoption of the Gulf Strategy for Tourism by the GCC tourism ministers at their meeting in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia in November of last year.

Speaking earlier about the unified Gulf visa, the UAE Minister of Economy, Abdullah bin Touq, said the focus of the scheme is on attracting tourists and encouraging

them to stay in the Gulf countries for longer periods, thus promoting economic integration within the region.

He added that the unified visa scheme aims to increase inbound tourist spending at an annual growth rate of 8 percent. Travel industry data shows that tourism revenue, which is projected to reach around US\$97 billion by the end of 2023 — a growth of 12.8 percent compared to 2022 — is expected to \$188 billion by 2030.

The approval of the unified Gulf tourist visa underscores the commitment of the GCC countries to advancing regional tourism and positioning the Gulf as an attractive destination for international visitors. It is expected to stimulate economic growth, enhance cooperation, and contribute to the overall development of the region's tourism sector.



UNESCO includes Ramadan Iftar as cultural heritage

In a historic decision, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced last week the inclusion of social and cultural traditions

associated with the Ramadan Iftar on its list of intangible heritage. The decision to include Iftar, the traditional meal which marks the end of the daily fast during the holy month of Ramadan, as an intangible heritage, came following a request submitted in this regard by Azerbaijan, Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkey.

The Intergovernmental Committee on the UN Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at their meeting last week in Kasane in northern Botswana, decided to include iftar among the intangible heritage of humanity. A statement by UNESCO announcing the decision noted that Muslims gather around the iftar table during Ramadan to eat it in a community spirit, which strengthens the bonds of connection between family members and society as a whole, and enhances charitable works, solidarity and ways of social exchange.

The organization pointed out that "family members usually pass this practice on to each other over the generations."

Catholic Church in Kuwait marks 75th anniversary of establishment

Catholic Church in Kuwait is marking the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the first Catholic church built in the Gulf region, with the Catholic community in the country about to conclude their year-long celebrations of the 75th Jubilee of the Church of Our Lady of Arabia, the first Catholic church to be built on Kuwaiti soil, and the 'mother church' of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, which also includes Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

The Diamond Jubilee celebrations, which kicked off on 11 December 2022, came to a close this year on the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on 8 December. A solemn liturgy presided over by Bishop Aldo Berardi, the Apostolic Vicar of the Vicariate, was held to mark the event at the Catholic Church on Friday.

The liturgy was consecrated by the Apostolic Nuncio of Kuwait, Archbishop Eugene Martin Nugent, the Custos of Arabia, Father Michael Fernandes OFM, along with all the priests ministering in Kuwait, in attendance of church representatives of Qatar and Bahrain.

Speaking on the occasion, Bishop Berardi said that celebrations to mark the event were low-key because of the ongoing war in the Holy Land, and in compliance with the government's decision to cancel all celebrations in solidarity with the Palestinian people suffering the war in Gaza. The Church



of Our Lady of Arabia was originally located in an old power plant in Ahmadi, which had been transformed into a small chapel dedicated to Mother Mary in 1948. Then, in 1952, the Kuwait Oil Company granted permission to build a new church in the city, and on 8 September 1955, the first foundation stone blessed by Pope Pius XII was laid. The new church was consecrated to Our Lady of Arabia in April 1956.

Kuwait was the first member of the Gulf Cooperation Council to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See in 1968. However, the Apostolic Nunciature was established in the country only in 2000 to strengthen ties and promote interreligious dialogue.

LuLu Group sends relief aid to Gaza

First batch of aid consists of 50 tons of food & essentials



Leading retail conglomerate, LuLu Group has lent a compassionate hand to the people of Gaza, sending much needed relief materials. The first batch of aid consists of 50 tonnes of food products and other essentials such as medicines and hygiene products were handed over the Egypt Red Crescent authorities in Cairo, today.

Dr. Rami El Nasser, Chief Executive Officer of the Egypt Red Crescent received the aid from Lulu Egypt and Bahrain Director Juzer Rupawala, Regional Director Husefa Qureshi, and LuLu Egypt Manager Hatim Sayeed. The Red Crescent authorities will deliver these items in Arish town through the Al Rafah border.

Dr. Rami El Nasser welcomed the initiative and expressed his gratitude to LuLu Group and its Chairman Yusuff Ali for this timely support for the people of Palestine.

LuLu Group is also a key partner of UAE's "Tarahum for Gaza" relief campaign, and

has set up special aid centers at various Lulu hypermarkets to collect & send various aid materials in association with Emirates Red Crescent.

Lulu Group is closely working with other Gulf countries based Humanitarian agencies for similar initiatives. Recently Lulu Group Bahrain had donated BD25000 (approx. Dhs. 250,000) to the Royal Humanitarian Foundation in support of the Bahrain National Campaign.



PAM allows three categories to transfer from Article 17 to 18

Last month the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) issued a decision prohibiting the transfer of workers from the government sector (Article 17 visa) to the private sector (Article 18) visa. However, an amendment to this rule notified last week makes clear that three categories of workers are exempt from this transfer ban. They include:

Husbands and children of Kuwaiti women, and wives of Kuwaiti men: This exception is made to accommodate the family ties and support the stability of Kuwaiti families.

Palestinian document holders: Palestinian citizens holding valid documentation are allowed to transfer from the government sector to the private sector. This provision aims to provide opportunities for Palestinian residents to explore employment in various sectors.

University graduates under the age of 60: Individuals with a university qualification, who have not yet reached the age of 60, are permitted to transfer to the private sector.



However, this is subject to the condition that their profession aligns with their qualifications and the nature of the roles they previously held within the government agency. It is worth noting that the decision comes as part of the Public Authority for Manpower's efforts to regulate the labor market and ensure a balanced workforce distribution between the government and private sectors.



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Christian Church Holds Prayer Service for Peace in the Holy Lands



By Reaven D'Souza
Executive Managing Editor

A Prayer for Peace in the Holy Lands was held on 07 December by the Apostolic Nuncio in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, His Grace Archbishop Eugene Martin Nugent, and the Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia His Excellency Bishop Aldo Berardi in the Holy Family Co-Cathedral in Kuwait City.

The specially held ecumenical prayer service saw the various heads of the Christian churches in the country come together and pray for peace, urging good sense to prevail in the Holy Lands.

Several diplomats also attended the service and joined the church in praying for peace, and also for the wellbeing of the people of Gaza. People from all faiths attended the prayer service and took part in the ceremonies in praying for peace in the region.

Archbishop Nugent spoke eloquently on the ongoing barbaric acts of violence being perpetrated on the population and the loss of innocent civilian lives, including that of women and children. He called for the mindless destruction of human life and property to stop.

"War is ravaging the Holy Lands with untold pain and suffering. We have all been affected by the killings in Israel on October 7th and the subsequent kidnappings which traumatized Israelis. While not all who were killed or kidnapped were Israelis, the Hamas attack has shaken Israel as it is considered to be the biggest single loss of life in one day since the Shoah," Archbishop Nugent stated.

He pointed out that the Hamas attack on Israel was followed about two weeks later by the Israeli counter-attack on Gaza that has unleashed a humanitarian disaster of epic proportions. Over 17,000 Palestinians have been killed to date; 65 percent of whom are women and children. The images that we have been seeing on our TV screens of what is happening in Gaza are unbearable. The deaths of innocent children, women and the

elderly are truly shocking.

He added that the population of two million people in Gaza have been deprived of fuel, water, food and medicine for almost two months now. A mass displacement of 1.8 million people with nowhere to find refuge. Hospitals, houses, schools, churches, and mosques have been destroyed.

"Since the war started, we have heard numerous political statements from both sides and from the international community and apart from a truce that lasted a week, the war continues with huge loss of life. We are not here



His Grace Archbishop Eugene Martin Nugent

this evening to add to this list of statements or to condemn one side or the other. That is not what this pulpit is for. Rather, we are here, first and foremost as people of religion to gather in prayer. We are here as representatives of the Christian Churches in Kuwait, as people of faith who seek to join our hands in prayer, beseeching the Lord to restore peace to the beloved Holy Land," said the archbishop.

He went on to stress, "Our faith tells us that where there is death and despair, the Almighty can bring peace and hope, where there is darkness, he can bring light. This is why we are here. As Christians we believe in the power of prayer. We believe in the power of prayer to turn the hearts of leaders away from the logic of war and so-called military solutions, to the ways of dialogue,

reconciliation, and peace. For God everything is possible. Nothing is impossible to God. Even though the situation is dire, we must hope that peace is possible. We must 'hope against hope' as Saint Paul says."

The archbishop added, "I think it is true to say that every person seeks peace. I think it is equally true to say that the vast majority of people reject terrorism from whatever side it springs. But true peace and security can never be based on fear, violence, and injustice. Conflicts disfigure the bonds between peoples and between States, with



civilians always bearing the brunt of the suffering. How many children are forced to take part, directly or indirectly, in fighting, and bear the scars? As Pope Francis has said, 'No war is worth the tears of children'."

"At this moment there is immense suffering in the Holy Lands. There is immense pain. We feel that pain. We cannot ignore it. We feel it in the depths of our being. From these depths we raise up our voices in prayer together with Muslims and Jews; with men and women of goodwill the world over who earnestly seek an end to this conflict that has caused so much bloodshed down the years," said the archbishop fervently.

He continued, "This evening we are reflecting and praying for peace in the Holy Lands, even as we remember Ukraine and the other parts of the

world where wars are raging. We are praying for peace through the lens of the Beatitudes which we have just read. The Beatitudes, as you know, are the basic charter of the teaching of Jesus. In reflecting on this teaching, we find guidance in our prayer for peace.

"The beatitudes highlight the call for reconciliation and dialogue; difficult and challenging as this may seem amid the din of war. As leaders of the Christian Churches, we urge all individuals not to despair or be resigned to war, but to actively work towards peace. The Church

teaches us that, while one cannot ignore the historical and deep-rooted tensions of this conflict, one should look beyond them for the good of future generations, by embracing our common humanity, extending the hand of friendship, putting aside animosity, and pursuing the path of righteousness. I am convinced that, with goodwill on all sides, Israel and Palestine can pave the way for a more peaceful coexistence in the Holy Lands."

In conclusion, Archbishop Nugent said, "Let us pray for the Palestinian people; let us pray for the Israeli people. Pray for wisdom, for justice, for reconciliation, for hope so that peace may come to the Holy Lands. Let each one of us remain in silent prayer for two minutes — each one praying for peace in the Land of Our Lord and in our very troubled world."

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Kuwaiti visitors among largest regional spenders in Britain

According to latest data from 'VisitBritain', the national tourism agency responsible for marketing Britain worldwide, Kuwaiti visitors to the UK are the third highest spenders from the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bloc. In first place among spenders from GCC states are visitors from Saudi Arabia, followed by the travelers from the United Arab Emirates.

Kuwaitis spent around GBP305 million during their stay in the United Kingdom in 2022, down from a peak in 2017, when Kuwaitis visiting Britain spent over GBP575 million. The data shows that London has

become less attractive for shopping since the abolition of the tax-free shopping system in January 2021.

While canceling the tax-free system, the British government had indicated that the move would bring in an estimated GBP2 billion in revenue for the exchequer. But critics of the move say that this figure is grossly exaggerated and that the canceling of the tax-free shopping system has led to a loss of about two million visitors to the country annually.

Meanwhile, spending by American visitors to the United Kingdom in 2022 rose 101 percent from its levels in 2019. On the



other hand, spending by visitors from the GCC states in 2022 was only 65 percent of what they were in 2019. However, forecasts by VisitBritain indicate that spending by

visitors from Gulf countries in Britain will return to 2019 levels and exceed them by 2025.

The organization is working with the local tourism market to boost the number of visitors from the Gulf, and it hopes that plans such as the electronic travel authorization plan will encourage more tourists to visit Britain. The visa plan, which costs GBP10, allows multiple visits to Britain over a period of two years. The plan, which was first implemented among GCC countries in Qatar, is expected to be rolled out to the other five GCC states and Jordan from 1 February 2024.



US Ambassador presents credentials to the Foreign Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al Sabah, extended a warm welcome to the newly appointed Ambassador of the United States, H.E. Karen Hideko Sasahara.

Accepting the credentials of Ambassador Sasahara at the General Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 7 December, Foreign

Minister Sheikh Salem extended his best wishes to the ambassador for a successful tenure in her diplomatic responsibilities. He also expressed hopes for continuous progress and prosperity in the longstanding and close bilateral relations between Kuwait and the United States.

Electricity demand to outstrip supply from next year

Increased demand for electricity and water during peak summer months, which has in previous years stretched the utility supply limits of the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy (MEW) is likely to be further exacerbated in the coming years.

According to latest engineering estimations, the annual surge in current consumption is projected to escalate by 4.8 percent annually. Consequently, the country could witness an electricity deficit in the summer of 2024, when demand during peak summer months is expected to reach 17,753 megawatts against a production of 17,477 megawatts.

The deficit is expected to increase in 2025, with total production reaching 18,077 megawatts, while consumption is anticipated to peak at 18,605 megawatts. The electricity deficit is expected to peak in the summer of 2026, when production could rise to 18,357 megawatts, while consumption is expected to surge to 19,498 megawatts.

Given this scenario, the MEW is reportedly



seeking urgent solutions to avert this impending crisis. Among the measures being contemplated by the ministry are purchasing or exchanging energy with the Gulf Electrical interconnection Network, as well as implementing a comprehensive rationalization plan across all sectors. The ministry is also said to be expediting procedures and eliminating obstacles hindering projects aimed at enhancing production capacity.

Over 60 percent of prison inmates sentenced for drug offenses

A new report from the government notes that over 60 percent of inmates at state prisons are serving sentences for drug-related offenses, including for using and trafficking drugs.

According to statistics from the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, over the past decade over 25,000 individuals have been convicted in more than 19,000 drug-related cases.

The report underscores that drug-related crimes contribute significantly to the overall crime rate, as official medical reports demonstrate the correlation between criminal activities and the abuse of various narcotics affecting mental perception. Out of every 100 cases examined by security services, 70 are found to be linked to drug offenses.

Under the directives of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, relevant agencies have approved an advanced plan to combat drug smugglers and safeguard the country from their threats. As part of the plan, an ongoing security campaign is underway to thwart drug trafficking and apprehend drug peddlers and users.

The new strategy also includes international coordination and cooperation aimed at disrupting smuggling operations targeting Kuwait, implementing stringent procedures and modern scrutinizing mechanisms at ports, and intensifying efforts to apprehend drug traffickers within the country.

International coordination efforts have led to the apprehension of smuggling gangs planning to use Kuwait as a transit station for promoting various drugs. Notably, 64 expatriates were arrested with drugs in the



past two months and face deportation.

In 2023, drug seizures reached a 15-year high, with notable incidents such as the confiscation of 800 kilograms of various drugs and approximately 1.5 million psychotropic pills within a three-month period from August to October 2023. A thwarted attempt to smuggle 800 kilograms of hashish from Lebanon to Kuwait was also reported.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior, through its various sectors, has also successfully arrested numerous suspects in various drug cases, with 6,150 kilograms of various drugs and 763 psychotropic pills seized in a single day in August.

First Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled has emphasized Kuwait's robust efforts in combating drug trafficking, citing unprecedented seizures in the past two years. He underscores the nefarious intentions of drug smuggling gangs aiming to undermine the capabilities of youth in Kuwait and in other countries in the region, by creating a market for drug trade in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.



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New initiative aims to improve services in governorates

In a proactive measure aimed to enhance services and address deficiencies in the government's work programs in various regions, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, has assigned governors in the respective governorates to specific tasks related to services. In order to closely monitor the progress achieved, each governor is also mandated to provide bi-monthly reports on the accomplishments in their respective areas.

Under this initiative, Sheikh Al-Khaled has instructed the governors to assemble teams to identify shortcomings in the services offered by the state in each region

of their governorate. These teams will be responsible for compiling weekly reports, along with photographs, highlighting issues related to service provision by government agencies.

Furthermore, he has directed all relevant government agencies, including the Ministry of Works, the Ministry of Electricity and Water, and the Municipality, to hold weekly meetings to discuss the observations made in reports by the governors. The performance of these government agencies will also be closely monitored and actions will be taken accordingly. Emphasizing the urgency and importance of this matter, Sheikh Al-Khaled

stressed the need for a semi-monthly report to be submitted to his office. He believes that activating the role of the governorates is crucial to contribute to the developmental and social renaissance of the country. This approach also aligns with the provisions of the government's Decree 21/1992, which highlights the significant role of governorates in implementing government plans and fostering economic and social development that serves the citizens, regardless of gender.

In particular, the initiative aims to tackle the long-standing issues faced by citizens in various governorates. By closely monitoring the performance of government agencies,



Sheikh Al-Khaled hopes to bring about positive changes and improve the overall quality of services and efficiency of their delivery to the people.

Korean Movie Night 2023 spotlights country's culture

Embassy of the Republic of Korea in collaboration with the Korean Film Council and Kuwait National Cinema Company held a two-day festival of Korean cinema under the banner of 'Korean Movie Night 2023' at the Cinescape, Al-Muhallab Mall



in Hawally on 5 and 6 December. The event celebrated the increasing interest in Korean culture in Kuwait as well as globally, catalyzed by the rising popularity of K-pop, K-food, the Korean language, and, most notably, Korean dramas and films worldwide.

In his address to the gathering at the event, Ambassador of South Korea

H.E. Chung Byung-ha spoke about the global appeal of Korean dramas and films, attributing their success to compelling and unique narratives. He elaborated that these storylines are rooted in the rich history of Korea, echoing the nation's journey of overcoming challenges and achieving rapid development from being a war-stricken, impoverished country to a developed nation. This history is intricately woven into the storytelling, reflecting the introspection and aspirations of the Korean people.

Highlighting the close cultural resonance with Kuwait, Ambassador Chung pointed to the significant presence of Korean dramas on Netflix Kuwait. He also noted a remarkable increase from 17 dramas in the weekly top 10 rankings in 2022 to 26 in 2023, signifying a surge in their popularity.

This year's Korean Movie Night 2023 showcased the Korean movie 'Concrete Utopia,' which has drawn public attention by winning Best Director and Best Actor awards at the prestigious Korean Film Festival

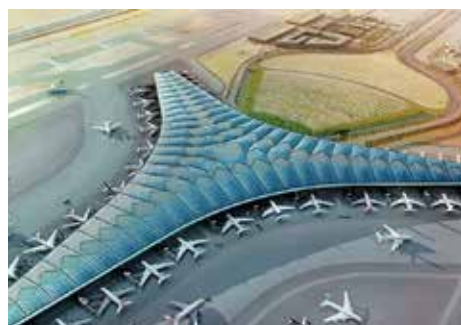
this year. 'Concrete Utopia' is a film that underlines the resilience of humanity in the face of adversity. Despite being set in an evident disaster and apocalyptic situation, the film includes the paradoxical word 'Utopia' in its title and explores themes such as human nature, coexistence, and hope, resonating deeply with viewers



Work completion at T2 first phase reaches over 70 percent

Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced last week that the completion rate of the first package of the new passenger terminal project (T2) at Kuwait International Airport (KIA) has reached 72.64 percent. The Acting Director General of Civil Aviation, Saad Al-Otaibi, also revealed that the completion rate of the second package stands at 68.1 percent as of the end of November.

Al-Otaibi emphasized the ongoing development projects at KIA aims to modernize the infrastructure of the air transport sector in the country. He expressed gratitude for the cooperation among relevant government



agencies, and highlighted the government's prioritization of the new passenger building project. He noted that His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is closely monitoring the progress of the project.

Recently, a meeting chaired by Dr. Jassim Al-Astad, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Acting Minister of Public Works, was

held to determine the necessary requirements to expedite the project's progress. Representatives from various ministries and authorities were present, including the Ministries of Interior, Public Works, Electricity and Water, the General Fire Force, Kuwait Municipality, the Public Authority for Manpower, Civil Aviation, and the Government Performance Monitoring Agency.

Al-Otaibi praised the Ministry of Public Works team overseeing the project and commended the collaboration and cooperation of all involved government agencies in overcoming obstacles and challenges. The airport development projects consist of three packages. The first package includes the passenger terminal, the central station, and connectivity with service tunnels. The second package encompasses parking lots, service buildings, and roads leading to the new passenger terminal (T2). The third package focuses on aircraft parking lots and taxiways.

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Thought “ for the week

Justice is never
advanced in the taking
of a human life.

– Coretta Scott King
American author and activist

Integrating expatriates in Kuwaiti residential areas

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Housing expatriate bachelors in Kuwaiti residential areas has been a contentious topic of discussion among citizens due to the overcrowding in these areas.

Kuwaitis have urged government planners to relocate these expatriates to other residential areas to avoid overcrowding and also im-



Kuwaiti engineer
Hamad Al-Shammari

prove living conditions in the area particularly related to hygiene.

Providing a contrary view, a Kuwaiti engineer Hamad Al-Shammari has called for resolving the issue through a practical approach rather than an emotional one by integrating foreign



residents into Kuwaiti residential areas, rather than banning them from living in the area. He suggested that the government allocate certain areas within the residential area to expatriates working in the area to ensure their comfort as well as their proximity to work.

He pointed out that this would help in reducing traffic congestion as well as solve overcrowding and hygiene conditions in the neighborhood restricted for citizens. He also noted that this would ensure migrant worker rights and help in efforts to avoid their marginalization

in society by achieving social inclusion and creating a healthy environment of coexistence.

Al-Shammari said that he had presented his proposal to the former Minister of Municipality, Abdulaziz Al-Mujil, and to members and committees of the Municipal Council, and to the Lawyers' Association. He highlighted that to achieve a successful implementation of the proposal, it would require integration between the areas

Cooperative Society, the workforce, and the Kuwait Municipality.

South African Ambassador seeks to boost business with LuLu Hypermarket

Ambassador of South Africa, H.E. Manelisi Genge paid a visit to the head office of LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait on 4 December. During his visit, Ambassador Genge engaged in productive discussions with the Director of LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait, Mohamed Haris, and other top management officials of the hypermarket. The talks centered on ways to boost business collaborations, with particular emphasis on importing more South African product ranges into the Kuwaiti market for the upcoming year 2024.

Expressing gratitude for the opportunity to visit the retail giant, the South African envoy acknowledged LuLu's prominence in the Kuwaiti retail landscape and its contribution to the region's economic growth.

In addition to these discussions, the Ambassador highlighted that as part of the strategic initiatives for 2024, a South African business delegation is expected to visit LuLu Hypermarkets across Kuwait to further strengthen the partnership between South Africa and Kuwait by providing an on-the-ground understanding of the market dynamics and consumer preferences in the country. Both parties also expressed a keen interest in further exploring business opportunities that aim to enhance trade relations and strengthen economic ties between South Africa and Kuwait.

LuLu Hypermarket currently imports and stocks more than 70 well-known South African brands, including



food and non-food items. The hypermarket also has a dedicated sourcing office for various products from the region, conveniently located in South Africa's port city of Cape Town.



RECIPE

Sarson Ka Saag



Sarson ka saag (Mustard Greens Curry) is a traditional Indian dish prepared during the cold winter months in North India. This one-pot saag recipe combines superbly with cornmeal bread, but it also goes well with other Indian breads such as chapati, naan, or paratha.

Total time: 45 minutes

Serving: 4 people

Ingredients:

- 1/2 kg mustard leaves
- 250g bathua (pigweed greens)
- 250g spinach
- 4 green chili
- 1 large onion
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 50g cornmeal (maize flour)
- 10 cloves garlic
- 5cm piece ginger
- 2 tbsp mustard oil
- 2 tbsp clarified butter (ghee)
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/4 tsp asafoetida
- 1 cup water

Instructions:

- Rinse all the leafy vegetables in running water
- Finely chop all the leaves.
- Pressure cook the leafy greens with garlic, ginger, and green chilies
- Add some water. Close the lid and put on medium flame to cook for half an hour
- Allow the cooker to cool down
- Remove the pressure cooked items and place in a blender with 50 grams of cornmeal and churn for 30 seconds
- Mixture should remain a little lumpy.

For preparing the tempering (tadka):

- Heat ghee and mustard oil in a deep-frying pan.
- Once the ghee melts, add the cumin seeds, asafoetida, finely chopped garlic, onions. Saute till brown and add the red chili powder and turmeric
- Add the tempering to the saag blend, add salt to taste and blend well
- Cook the mixture for 5 minutes, switch off heat, cover and set aside for the flavors to infuse the dish thoroughly
- Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and add a dollop of butter on top
- Serve hot with cornmeal bread.



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



Chef Chhaya Thakker

Kazakh Ambassador lauds relations with Kuwait



Ambassador of Kazakhstan H.E. Azamat Berdybay lauded the robust and profound bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Kuwait, and emphasized that the excellence and development of these relations across diverse fields, were a model for international relationships.

Speaking at a media conference last week, the Kazakh ambassador noted that the ongoing political cooperation was a crucial factor in the sustained development of bilateral ties. "Regular political consultations between the two countries address prominent regional and international issues, with mutual support exchanged at both bilateral and multilateral levels in international forums," said the envoy.

He also underscored Kuwait's significance as a reliable friend and distinguished trade partner of Kazakhstan and highlighted the purposeful

and fruitful talks held between his country's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, and Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad during their meeting in Jeddah last July.

Ambassador Berdybay also stated that the talks between the two leaders focused on supporting and developing bilateral economic, trade, and investment cooperation. He expressed confidence in the outcomes of that meeting, and anticipated a strong impetus for further collaboration benefiting both nations.

Stressing that the trade volume between the two countries, which reached around US\$4 million in 2023, was on the increase, the Kazakh ambassador also commended the rise in Kuwaiti tourism to Kazakhstan, noting that approximately 14,000 travelers from Kuwait visited his country in the current year. Alongside ambassadors from Tajikistan, Russia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan,



Armenia, and various media representatives, Ambassador Berdybay lauded the robust and profound bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and the State of Kuwait. He emphasized on the excellence and development of these relations across diverse fields, hailing them as a model for international relationships, reports Al-Rai daily.

During the conference, Ambassador Berdybay also elaborated on Kazakhstan's political, economic, and social reform programs announced by President Tokayev.

He explained that the presidential reforms aim to promote democracy, freedoms, political participation, and the establishment of a new Kazakh state based on justice and equality.

Additionally, he shared Kazakhstan's aspirations to expand port facilities on the Caspian Sea. Additionally, the ambassador also highlighted the significance of a coordinated water policy, using

advanced technologies for water management in the Central Asian region. He identified three key areas contributing to Kazakhstan's economic growth and fostering cooperation with the international community, including the State of Kuwait. Ambassador Berdybay pointed out that his country seeks to expand port facilities on the Caspian Sea and develop a joint strategy with partner countries to attract investments and technological partnerships. Kazakhstan also plans to develop a coordinated water strategy, in cooperation with countries of the Central Asian region, by using advanced technologies to provide water to the region.

He also indicated that the pillars of economic growth in Kazakhstan would open new and broad horizons for further deepening cooperation with the international community, including with Kuwait.



Al Muzaini Exchange Company renews partnership with KCC

Al Muzaini Exchange announced last week that the company has signed a three-year sponsorship deal with Kuwait Cricket Club (KCC) that grants the company the rights to be the main sponsor of the Kuwait Women's National cricket team and the official sleeve sponsor of the Kuwait Men's National Cricket Team for the years 2024, 2025 and 2026.



Board President of KCC, Haider Farman and General Manager of Al Muzaini Exchange, Hugh Fernandes signed the partnership deal on 5 December at the Sulaibiya Cricket Ground. The signing ceremony was held in the presence of key players from the Kuwait National men's and women's team, the head coach and coaching staff, esteemed members of management and top officials from Al Muzaini Exchange

and Kuwait Cricket Club. The new three-year sponsorship between Al Muzaini Exchange and KCC follows a highly successful and fruitful engagement between the two entities in the previous year, said Director-General of the KCC Board, Sajid Ashraf.

For his part, Mr. Fernandes said that the number one exchange company in Kuwait is proud to be a part of the journey of KCC and believes that the possibilities are limitless as Kuwait Cricket keeps taking rapid strides towards becoming a quality associate cricket nation.

He added, "This is an incredible moment for us, to be a part of the Kuwait National Cricket dream has always been something we wanted and when the opportunity presented itself, we were ecstatic. I believe that it won't be long before we see the country participate in major tournaments with millions around the globe watching and being entertained by the extremely talented players of Kuwait.

"Moreover, we are immensely happy and proud to be the main sponsor of the Kuwait National Women's cricket team. Al Muzaini Company believes in the power of young women and know that they are capable of incredible achievements.

Al Muzaini looks forward to having a great relationship with Kuwait Cricket and shall actively participate in activities associated with the growth of cricket," he concluded.

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Gender Equality Day at COP28

Climate change has a greater impact on those sections of the population, in all countries, that are most reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods and/or who have the least capacity to respond to natural hazards, such as droughts, landslides, floods and hurricanes.

Women and young girls in particular face higher risks and greater burdens from the impacts of climate change in situations of poverty, and the majority of the world's poor are women. Women's unequal participation in decision-making processes and in labor markets exacerbate existing inequalities and often prevent women from fully contributing to climate-related planning, policy-making and implementation.

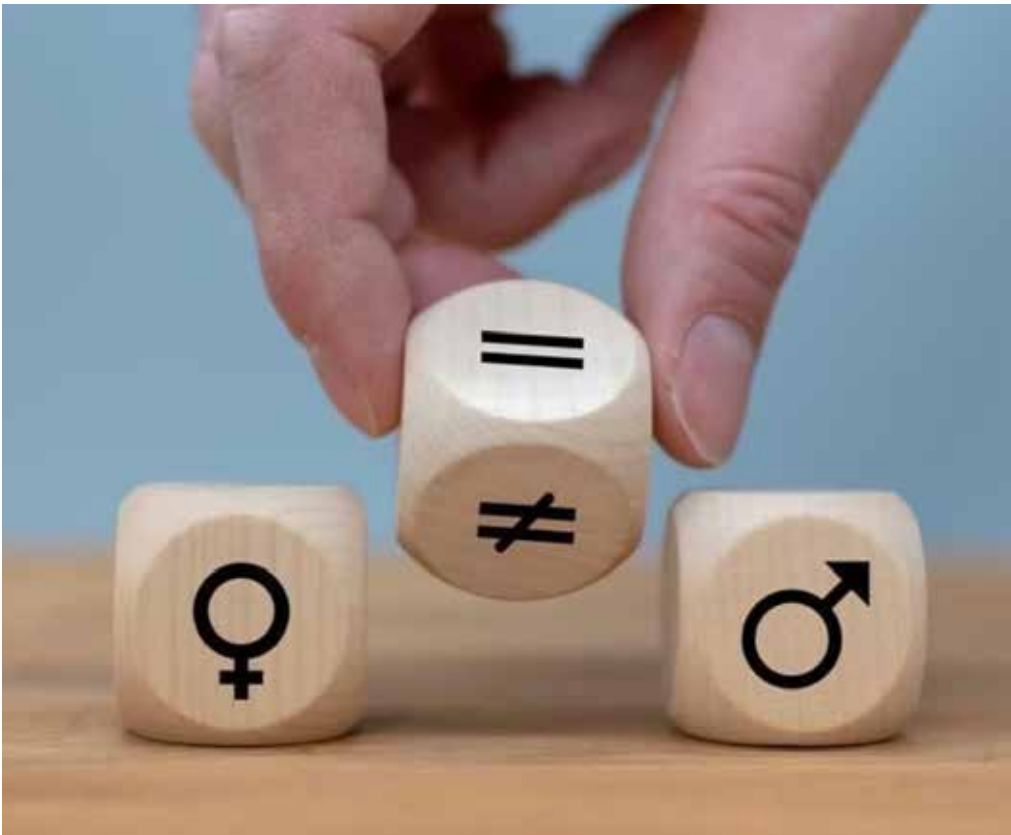
Yet, women can and do play a critical role in response to climate change due to their local knowledge of and leadership in, for example, sustainable resource management, or in leading sustainable practices at the household and community level. Women's participation at the political level has also resulted in greater responsiveness to citizen's needs, often increasing cooperation across party and ethnic lines and delivering more sustainable peace.

At the local level, women's inclusion at the leadership level has led to improved outcomes of climate related projects and policies. On the contrary, if policies or projects are implemented without women's meaningful participation it can increase existing inequalities and decrease effectiveness. The unequal impact of climate change on marginalized groups and the importance of gender-responsive climate action is widely acknowledged.

Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have recognized the importance of involving women and men equally in UNFCCC processes and in the development and implementation of national climate policies that are gender-responsive, by establishing a dedicated agenda item under the Convention addressing issues of gender and climate change and by including overarching text in the Paris Agreement.

The gender agenda aims to amplify women-led climate solutions, showcasing women and girls as pivotal climate leaders. The agenda calls for increased finance flows to women in regions most impacted by climate change. The goal is not only to empower women but to recognize that gender-responsive climate initiatives are a smart, effective strategy for tackling climate issues. The gender agenda is highlighted at annual climate conferences through the Gender Equality Day that is dedicated to raising awareness on the importance of gender-responsive climate policy and action as well as highlighting women's contribution and leadership in climate action.

Statistics underscore the significance of gender in climate action. For instance, companies with more female board directors are 21 percent more likely to have set emission reduction targets, according to the



World Economic Forum. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank suggest that investing in gender equality could reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by up to 15 percent by 2050.

Moreover, increasing women's representation in national parliaments leads to more stringent climate change policies and lower emissions. Surveys by the Pew Research Centre indicate that a higher percentage of women perceive climate change as a serious

threat and are more active in reducing their climate footprint compared to men.

By mid-century, it is predicted that climate change could push up to 158 million more women and girls into poverty globally (16 million more than the total number of men and boys). To ensure climate finance appropriately serves the needs of women and girls, particularly those in climate vulnerable regions, it is critical to address the current gender data gap to further understand how women are impacted by climate change.

During COP28's Gender Equality Day on 4

December, the COP28 Presidency convened a series of discussions among ministers, the private sector, civil society and Indigenous Peoples on how to advance gender-equality through a just and inclusive transition. The dialogues were supported by the UNFCCC and led by UN Climate Change High-Level Champion for COP28 Razan Al Mubarak, to ensure a gender-responsive just transition in support of the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

“The climate crisis will have far-reaching implications for global stability, security, and sustainable development, affecting not only migrants’ countries of origin but also transit and destination countries.”

financial support.

The high-level dialogue culminated in the announcement of a new COP28 Gender-Responsive Just Transitions & Climate Action Partnership from the COP28 Presidency, which was endorsed by over 60 Parties. The Partnership includes a package of commitments, including actions on data, finance, and equal opportunities. Implementation will be reviewed at a second convening at COP31.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), 1.2 billion jobs, representing 40 percent of the global labor force, are at risk due to global warming and environmental degradation. Women are expected to be most severely affected due to their high representation in sectors particularly susceptible to climate change.

The transition to a low-carbon and sustainable economy will lead to both the elimination and transformation of some jobs, as well as the creation of new roles. Ministers and high-level officials have therefore agreed on a series of commitments to support women's economic empowerment and ensure women's livelihoods are protected during this transition.

Razan Al Mubarak said: “Climate change is not gender neutral — it impacts women and girls disproportionately. Already, the climate crisis amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses a serious threat to women's livelihoods, health and wellbeing. To deliver a just transition, we must reform the architecture of the global financial system and ensure finance flows to the regions and the people who need it the most. But we must also invest in women's economic empowerment to ensure no one is left behind.”

The new partnership builds on objectives previously outlined in the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan, which set out activities under five key priority areas to advance understanding of gender-responsive climate action. In particular, the new COP28 Gender-Responsive Just Transitions and Climate Action Partnership centers around three core pillars: better quality data, including gender-disaggregated data, crucial for informed decision-making in finance and resource allocation in transition planning; more effective finance flows to regions most impacted by climate change; and education, skills and capacity building to support individual engagement in transitions.

UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous said: “The rights of women and girls must be at the center of climate action, including here at COP28. We must ensure that women have a seat at the decision-making table. We must strengthen inclusive decision-making so that the voices of feminists, youth, indigenous and other grassroots movements can be heard loud and clear from local to the global level.”

Outcomes from the Gender Equality Day dialogues at COP28 included a common understanding of opportunities and gaps in financing the development and implementation of gender-responsive just transitions and climate action.

We stand in courage and resolve with the COP28 President and all Parties in bringing us together behind a rapid response plan to the Global Stocktake.

To reach this positive tipping point, we need the following →

Response 1

An orderly phase out of all fossil fuels in a just and equitable way, in line with a 1.5C trajectory - whilst ensuring the tripling of global renewable energy capacity by 2030 from 2022 levels and the doubling of energy efficiency.

Response 2

The enabling environment to scale up and shift public and private finance, with developed countries taking the lead in action and support; putting a price on carbon and tripling investments for renewable energy.

Response 3

The halt and reversal of deforestation and land degradation as well as biodiversity and other ecosystem loss by 2030; ensure resilient food systems and deliver a strong global goal on adaptation.



COP28
UAE

United Nations
Climate Change



Gordon Brown and Yasmine Sherif

Gordon Brown, a former prime minister of the United Kingdom, is the UN Special Envoy for Global Education and Chair of the Education Cannot Wait High-Level Steering Group.

Yasmine Sherif is the Executive Director of Education Cannot Wait, the global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises.

Climate Crisis is an Education Crisis

“The one international language the world understands” wrote Eglantyne Jebb, founder of Save the Children, “is the cry of a child,” and the evidence is accumulating that children are not only the innocent victims of conflict whose pleas need to be heard, but also the most vulnerable victims of climate change. The climate crisis is an education crisis. Right here, right now, climate change is robbing millions of children and adolescents of their right to learn, their right to play and their right to feel safe and secure.

“

At the ongoing Climate Talks in Dubai (COP28), followed by the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva, we must connect the dots between climate action and education action. It is our investment in our people, our planet and our future.

”

In Pakistan deadly floods destroyed or damaged over 26,000 schools last year. This exposed over 600,000 adolescent girls to higher risks of school dropout, gender-based violence, and child marriage. In Ethiopia, girls like Mellion are going hungry and risk dropping out of school forever as a result of the ongoing drought.

While the climate crisis threatens the rights of every person on the planet, those who are enduring the brunt of its impact are the most vulnerable girls and boys already living in protracted crises settings due to armed conflicts, forced displacement and other crises. For them and their communities, climate change is already a daunting reality that can mean the difference between life and

death, between war and peace, between the chance to learn or not.

Today, there are more than 224 million crisis-impacted children worldwide who urgently need education support. New analysis by Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises, hosted by UNICEF, has found that 62 million of these children have been impacted by climate hazards such as droughts, floods, cyclones and other extreme weather events since 2020. That is close to the total populations of several G7 nations such as the United Kingdom, France or Italy.

While these children have contributed least to the issue of climate change, they have the most to lose. Furthermore, over the last ten years, 31 million school-aged children have been displaced by the climate crisis, with 13 million in the last three years alone.

The climate crisis poses a real and present threat to global security, economic prosperity and the very fabric of our societies. Climate impacts could cost the world economy US\$7.9 trillion by 2050, according to the World Bank, and could force up to 216 million people to move within their own countries by 2050.

Cyclones, typhoons, floods and droughts are increasing in severity and intensity. The number of disasters driven, in part, by climate change has increased five-fold in the past 50 years. Climate hazards are driving displacement directly, but also driving competition over scarce resources and threatening fragile peace in many parts of the world. Over 70 percent of refugees and internally displaced people on the move due to conflict and violence originally came from climate change hotspots.

Taken together, these intersecting crises of climate change, displacement and conflict are having a profound effect on education opportunities for millions of children and adolescents around the world.

At the ongoing Climate Talks in Dubai (COP28), followed by the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva, we must connect the dots between climate action and education action. It is our investment in our people, our planet and our future.

To rise to this challenge, ECW is calling on donors, the private sector and other key partners to urgently mobilize US\$150 million in additional resources. This is an important contribution towards ECW's overall resource

mobilization target of US\$1.5 billion toward the Fund's 2023-2026 strategic plan.

We all know that education has a sound return on investment. Long-term investments in human capital, including education, skills training and overall health and well-being, offer 10 times more return on investment than investments in physical capital. By investing in education today, we are investing in economic and social prosperity tomorrow, we are investing in an end to displacement and hunger, we are investing in a better world and children's futures.

The climate crisis threatens to end human civilization as we know it today. Now is our time to address this issue head on, and education plays a key role. By ensuring learning continuity for the most vulnerable children — and connecting quality education with climate action — we can equip an entire generation of climate stewards with the skills to adapt to the changing environment and pave the way to a better future.

In the eye of the storm, we are calling on new and existing donors to stand with us. We are appealing to you to act: right here, right now. Will you take up this challenge?

Global Climate Finance Framework Principles Making Finance Available, Accessible, Affordable



UNHCR acknowledges Kuwait's role in helping refugees

Kuwait's support for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reached an impressive \$20 million during the current fiscal year, disclosed Nisreen Rubaian the country representative of UNHCR.

Rubaian pointed at the series of crises that unfolded throughout the year, from earthquakes in Syria, Turkey, and Morocco to the crisis in Sudan, floods in Libya, and the ongoing war in Gaza. Despite these challenges, she emphasized Kuwait's impressive contributions to humanitarian aid asserting that "Kuwait is one of the biggest supporters of humanitarian issues in the world."

The UNHCR held a luncheon to thank the local media for their support and cooperation extended to the UNHCR offices locally as well as internationally. Rubaian acknowledged the good work journalists were doing locally and helping bring about an awareness in the plight of refugees around the world.

She explained how Kuwait provided generous



support to the United Nations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

to confront these crises and conduct relief efforts throughout 2023. She extended gratitude to

the private sector and the local humanitarian organizations along with the government for their significant contributions and positive engagement in responding to these emergencies.

Rubaian underscored the enduring strategic partnership between UNHCR and Kuwait, both in the governmental and private sectors. This, she noted, reflected Kuwait's deeply rooted charitable and humanitarian approach, not only at the state level but also within the Kuwaiti society across all facets. This reinforces Kuwait's role as a pioneering force for humanitarian and charitable initiatives on regional and global scales. She appreciated Kuwait's recent announcement of its voluntary annual donation of one million dollars from the beginning of 2024 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees through the donor conference held in Geneva.

Rubaian also shed light on overlooked crises such as the Rohingya refugee crisis, expressing hope for active participation from Kuwait and other nations in the upcoming Global Refugee Forum scheduled for the middle of this month.

Uniting Against Corruption, a multi-stakeholder approach

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that prevent or discourage capable individuals from competing on an equal footing with better organized but less efficient parochial politicians. In addition, corruption has a pernicious impact on the social environment by encouraging and sustaining explicit and implicit forms of inequality, discrimination and human rights challenges.

Kuwait, which signed on to the UNCAC at its adoption in 2003 and ratified the convention in 2007, has struggled to combat corruption, which has been a major hurdle to development over the years.

The 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), the annual barometer of corruption worldwide published by Transparency International, placed Kuwait in 77th position out of 180 countries, with a score of 42 out of a possible score of 100. The latest CPI on Kuwait marked a drop in both scoring and ranking, with the country falling by one score from the 43 it achieved a year earlier, and dropping four positions from the 73rd rank it occupied in 2021.

Kuwait's relatively low ranking and scoring on the various matrices used to analyze and form the CPI have been attributed to several factors, including a lack of transparency and accountability, weak institutions, and a culture of impunity. The absence of effective monitoring and inability to hold those in power to account for their actions against the common good, has led to various forms of corruption being rampant in the country in the past.

A common form of corruption in Kuwait is bribery, with bribes in cash or kind being paid to public sector officials in order to obtain permits, licenses, win contracts, or to overcome bureaucratic hurdles. But bribery is not limited to the public sector, businesses in the private sector have also been known to entice government officials with lucrative monetary and other benefits to avoid regulatory scrutiny or to gain approval for shoddily constructed public projects. Firms have also been implicated in the illegal trade of selling visas to bring in workers for non-existent work projects.

Embezzlement of public funds is another form of corruption, the presence of which was brought to light in recent years with the discovery of billions of dinars being siphoned off from public institutions and from state purchases of defense ware. Other forms of

corruption prevalent in the country include nepotism, cronyism and money laundering.

The lack of oversight and accountability allows public sector officials to practice nepotism by doling out jobs or promotions to relatives and friends irrespective of whether they are qualified for the job or not. Similarly, the practice of cronyism allows public sector officials to award contracts or favors to friends, political supporters or business associates, often at a cost to the state in the form of poor quality work output.

More than a lack of intention on the part of the government to fight corruption, or the absence of anti-corruption policies and entities to combat corruption, it has been the inability of the authorities to effectively implement enacted policies and laws that have led to the widespread diffusion of corruption in the country. Moreover, the entities mandated to monitor public sector probity are not equipped with the means and legal measures to effectively undertake their mandated responsibilities.

Critics point out that while petty corruption offenses are regularly punished, a fully independent mechanism to detect and prevent systemic corruption, and prosecute well-connected individuals is still lacking in the country. They also note that anti-corruption legislation may also be abused to target corruption critics and whistleblowers.

Corruption has a number of negative consequences for Kuwait.

It discourages investment, hinders economic growth, and undermines the rule of law. Investors are reluctant to put money in a country where they are not sure that they will be treated fairly. It also leads to a decline in the quality of public services, as resources are diverted from essential services to the pockets of corrupt officials.

In order to address and root-out corruption in public life the government has been taking several comprehensive proactive measures, including increasing transparency and accountability in government institutions, reducing the concentration of power, and strengthening the rule of the law and its application equally to everyone. The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) has also been provided with more resources and leeway in tackling public-sector corruption, including greater protection being afforded to corruption whistle-blowers.

Last week, the head of Kuwait Anti-

Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim announced that around 99.6 percent of public sector officials who come under the Authority's financial disclosure regulations have submitted their documents, reflecting the country's improved anti-corruption protocols. He added that Nazaha has succeeded in implementing and improving laws that would help Kuwait to better counter corruption, promote transparency and crack down on corruption.

The world is today confronted by multiple challenges, including the climate crisis, conflicts, humanitarian emergencies, and human rights violations. Intertwined in most of these challenges is the pervasive influence of corruption that affects all countries. Corruption undermines nearly all aspects of a country's development that it is impossible to contemplate a nation's progress without eradicating corruption.

Most times the links between corruption and development may be apparent, but sometimes they could also be opaque. A case in point is the connection between corruption and climate change. Most people would find it difficult to envision any link between these seemingly unrelated phenomena, but a look at the roster of attendees at climate change gatherings provides a cue to this nexus.

The increasing presence of the fossil fuel industry representatives at the annual high profile climate gatherings — the Conference of Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) — organized with express aim of combating climate change by eliminating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, especially those arising from the burning of fossil fuels is in itself quite suspicious.

The fact that many of the recent COP gatherings have in their final communique avoided mentioning the role of fossil fuels in GHG emissions, and failed to articulate a time-bound plan to eliminate the use of fossil fuels, is incriminating evidence of the corrupting influence of the fossil fuel industry, and their increasing role in directing outcomes of climate conferences. An apt analogy would be a cabal of arsonists organizing a conference to fight forest fires.

The incongruous presence of fossil fuel industry representatives at climate gathering reached a new high at the ongoing 28th session of the Conference of Parties (COP28) currently underway in the United Arab Emirates.

Since the seminal Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015, anti-corruption

activists, advocacy groups, the United Nations entities concerned with , development, human rights, and other stakeholders have continuously called to stop undue influence from polluters and oil rich countries in climate talks. A surge in climate corruption cases on a global level also threatens credibility and trust in COP talks and other climate policy frameworks and institutions.

Despite these reservations, the quadrupling of fossil fuel representatives since last year's COP conference in Egypt when there were around 600 individuals linked to the fossil fuel industry, highlights the rising influence of the industry in determining the outcomes of global climate conferences. Continuing the production and use of fossil fuels so as to ensure short-term economic gains for a handful of fossil fuel producers, at the expense of the long-term sustainability of the planet and the welfare of all species on Earth, including fossil-fuel producers, can at best be termed sheer foolhardiness.

Global community leaders unite for a 1.5°C Plan at COP28

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

- The enabling environment to scale up and shift public and private finance, with developed countries taking the lead in action and support; putting a price on carbon and tripling investments for renewable energy
- The halt and reversal of deforestation and land degradation as well as biodiversity and other ecosystem loss by 2030 and safeguarding the territories of indigenous peoples; ensuring resilient food systems; and delivering a strong global goal on adaptation

These outcomes must be supported by the implementation and ratcheting of Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans that align with the 1.5C and incorporate multi-stakeholder efforts within them, well before COP30 in 2025.

Later is too late.



Indulgence and Well-being A Journey Through **Zulal Wellness Spa** by Chiva Som in Qatar

By Nourah Khan
Travel Writer
The Times Kuwait

In the current global scenario where transforming one's lifestyle and unhealthy habits are considered impractical and unfeasible, one must realize that while they might be quite challenging or time consuming, there is always room for attaining them and having a doable and everlasting change. These changes may be made via various means; therapy sessions, getting inspiration from a personality or person, finding solace at a place, etc. One such transformation could be found by experiencing what the Zulal Wellness Spa in Qatar has to offer.

Located at the northern tip of Qatar-The Land of Eternal Sunshine, the Zulal Wellness Resort is a coastal home that welcomes visitors all over the world to enjoy a wide range of natural treatments for those seeking wellbeing from a physical issue to a psychological stability. It is the first integrated health resort in the Middle East and the spa adds a new dimension that opens doors to a world of luxury. It is considered the largest health resort in Qatar, and provides innovative services and treatments based on the principles of Islamic and Arab medical sciences that have been passed down through generations.

The Zulal Wellness Resort was established by Chiva-Som, a resort that is a global leader in the field of luxury, launched from Thailand and has created an exclusive, transformative experience for living life in a new way that is based on respect for the forces of nature and promotes the release of the natural energies of guests at the all-inclusive resort.

The term "Zulal" means pure natural water and has been adopted to express the properties of water; Zulal Resort- a nature found in the desert. In the heart of the desert, an hour and a half drive from Hamad International Airport, away from the noise of the city, the unique experience begins with Zulal Spa. Upon initial arrival, the guests receive a personal consultation with a health and wellness consultant to design a unique program that matches their health goals. Here, the guests will be able to communicate with a unique group of professionals who will provide them with the best services and support throughout their health and wellness journey at the resort.

The All-Inclusive Getaway Retreat includes personal health and wellness consultations to customize your treatments to suit guests' health goals, three healthy meals daily, and various physical and recreational activities, including a gym, hydrothermal area, sauna and steam room,



a Himalayan salt room, as well as other daily spa treatments such as full body, scalp and foot massages. In addition, the guests will receive personal treatments, fitness training, and physical therapy during their stay to ensure maximum health benefits.

By offering guests a wide range of luxurious amenities, The Zulal Health Spa sets new standards in luxury. This haven of tranquility seamlessly blends luxurious amenities, holistic treatments derived from the principles of Arab Islamic medicine and invigorating fitness programs in order to provide a truly rejuvenating experience. From elegantly designed relaxation lounges to private suites decorated with the finest furnishings, every detail is designed to enhance the feeling of luxury. The spa's tranquil atmosphere and world-class facilities create an oasis of calmness, inviting guests to relax and escape the hassles of everyday life.

The guests are treated to a selection of therapeutic treatments that harmonize body, mind and spirit. Expert therapists draw on

ancient healing traditions and modern wellness techniques, ensuring a personalized experience tailored to individual needs. From rejuvenating massages to holistic beauty rituals, every treatment is a journey towards balance and vitality.

Being the current day novel touristic destination in Qatar and the largest spa facility, the Zulal Wellness Resort extends over an area of 280,000 square meters offering two distinct experiences: "Zulal Serenity" for individual guests, and "Zulal Discovery" for families, both of which allow visitors to enjoy a wide range of natural treatments that are based on the principles of Arab and Islamic medical sciences that have been passed down through generations, using original local ingredients.

While the Zulal Family Health Resort gives all family members the opportunity to enjoy therapeutic services through a group of health and fitness activities necessary for them to become part of their daily lifestyle, the Zulal Health Resort provides individual guests with a unique

opportunity to obtain personal therapeutic services based on the main principles of treatment according to the Islamic approach.

The integrated and comprehensive services and treatments at Zulal Wellness Resort focus on dealing with chronic diseases and promoting health through proper nutrition, fasting, detoxification, and the use of medicinal herbs. Moreover, the resort addresses the health needs of the modern society through digital detox programs for families and individuals alike, inviting them to focus on each other or delve into themselves. Guests can also relax with the resort's wide range of indoor and outdoor facilities which includes, outdoor pools and lagoons, elegant restaurants and a test kitchen, health and wellness centers, fitness center, Pilates studio, physiotherapy room, beauty treatment center, and a ballroom to host special occasions and events.

The Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som was designed, aiming to support guests in reorganizing their healthy habits, replenishing their diminished batteries and reconnecting with nature.

The Zulal Spa is not just an ordinary spa; It is a destination where luxury and wellness meet to create an unparalleled experience for those wanderers who are in their journey to find sources to transform their lifestyle and unhealthy habits and lead a healthy life or the pinnacle of tranquility.

Noura Khan, a travel influencer and content creator, is a Kuwaiti national, holds a degree in law from Kuwait University and has worked as a journalist prior to taking up a position in the government. In 2018 she started blogging on travel and visited more than 57 countries since. She has more than 97k followers on her blog post @nourajtraveller is well appreciated for content and travel information. Noura writes exclusively for The Times Kuwait on her travel visits.



RIDING THE ROVOS RAIL

Luxurious Train

Journeys Across Africa

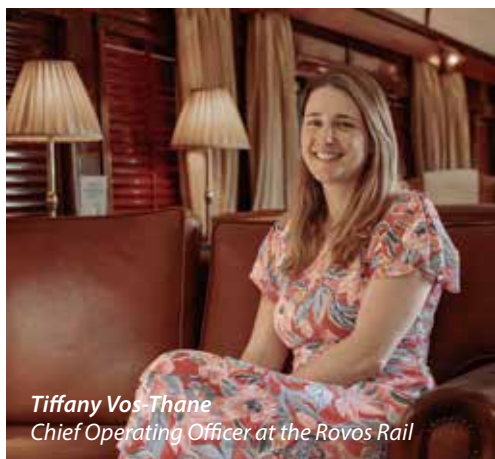


By Hermoine Macura-Noble
Special to The Times Kuwait

Africa is a land of diverse landscapes, vibrant cultures, and captivating wildlife, so exploring this stunning part of the world can be a dream come true for any traveler. For those seeking a touch of old-world luxury and nostalgia, the Rovos Rail offers a variety of unforgettable journeys across this fascinating continent.

Established in 1989, the Rovos Rail offers beautifully rebuilt trains that carry a maximum of 72 passengers in 36 superbly appointed suites. It is hard to believe this luxurious vintage train service, which pampers guests with the charm of a bygone era combined with today's modern amenities, started as a small family business. Tiffany Vos-Thane, Chief Operating Officer at the Rovos Rail, explains how her father, Rohan Vos, made his dream a reality.

"My dad was in the auto industry for many years, and at around 40 years old, he got passionate about steam locomotion and immersed himself in the train world. An explorer at heart, his initial plan was to educate us and show us South Africa. My siblings and I grew up on the trains... they have been a part of my life since I was three years old."



Tiffany Vos-Thane
Chief Operating Officer at the Rovos Rail

The allure of train travel has endured for generations, captivating the imagination of adventurers and romantics, which is why the power couple behind the Rovos Rail, Rohan and Anthea Vos, initially planned to appeal to the five-star luxury space of train travel while also putting their stamp on it by designing the coaches from the inside out.

"The Rovos Rail carriages look completely different from other luxury trains worldwide. They are spacious, private, and comfortable. Our service is also amiable and warm... We strive to get to know our guests," adds Vos-Thane.

The gentle sway of the train, the clackety-clack of wheels on the tracks, and the soothing rhythm of the journey create an atmosphere of relaxation and serenity. The absence of airport crowds, security lines, and baggage checks makes for a stress-free and tranquil travel experience.

Offering 11 journeys across Africa, the most popular short journey is the Pretoria to Victoria Falls route. The journey begins as soon as you step onto the platform at Capital Park Station in Pretoria, where you are immediately transported back in time. The train's polished brass, gleaming woodwork, and vintage carriages evoke the romance of a golden age of travel. The Rovos Rail is often called the 'Pride of Africa,' and as

you embark on your journey, you will quickly discover why.

The Pretoria to Victoria Falls itinerary travels through the Warmbaths and Nylstroom, which the Voortrekkers christened as the source of the Nile River as the river happened to be north-flowing. By sunrise, travelers are crossing the Tropic of Capricorn, followed by a lovely four course lunch on board the train as it passes over the Limpopo River, made famous in Rudyard Kipling's Just so Stories. The journey also includes a visit to Matobo National Park to see Bushman caves and the grave of Cecil John Rhodes, as well as a game drive with expert guides in Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe.

Covering an expanse of approximately 14,651 square kilometers, Hwange ranks as Zimbabwe's largest national park and one of Africa's largest game reserves. The park's diverse landscapes range from teak forests and savannas to grassy plains and waterholes, offering a variety of habitats for an impressive array of wildlife. Visitors can meet the famous Big Five - lions, elephants, buffalos, leopards, and rhinos.

In addition to the Big Five, Hwange is a sanctuary for over 100 other species of mammals, including cheetahs, wild dogs, hyenas, zebras, giraffes, and numerous antelope species. Birdwatchers will be delighted by the park's more than 400 bird species, including raptors, colorful bee-eaters, and various waterfowl. The 5-day journey concludes at the incomparable Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe.

Other creative rail journeys include the Golf Safari and the Namibia Safari; however, the Dar Es Salaam journey attracts the most international rail enthusiasts. "Our most popular long journey is the Dar es Salaam train, which is a 16-day trip across five countries. It has the best reputation and has already sold out until 2025. A historian travels with the train and brings each destination to life. On that journey, guests become like family," explains Vos-Thane.

The Rovos Rail offers a variety of accommodation options, all beautifully restored to their original grandeur. The pullman suites provide cozy and comfortable compartments, while the deluxe suites offer more space and elegance. The royal suites have a private lounge and full-sized bathtubs for ultimate opulence.

Gulf travelers will be glad to know that the Rovos plans to introduce vacuum toilets to save on water and a bathroom upgrade that will include a bidet feature by 2025.

"Luxury for us is about privacy and comfort, which means only using the best quality. Both my parents were adamant about using only South African products. My mum knew that would be an important part of our story. Everything you experience on the train is from South Africa and is hand-picked by my mother, who is always looking at ways to elevate the Rovos experience," says Vos-Thane.

One of the other highlights of any Rovos journey is the superb dining experience. The onboard chefs are renowned for their culinary expertise, as are the onboard staff for their impeccable service. Travelers enjoy a mix of international and South African flavors, all expertly paired with a selection of regional wines. Meals are served in the dining car, and the dress code is formal for dinner, adding to the sense of refinement and glamor.

"Over the years, we have worked with incredible chefs to ensure the menus are seasonal and representative of the countries we travel through. If you are traveling through parts of Zimbabwe, you get to experience the local cuisine... We also offer halal dishes upon request and can easily source halal products," explains Vos-Thane.

When guests book with the Rovos Rail directly, they can easily avail of the unique VIP butler service, where the Rovos team curates the

entire experience for you at a premium price. As more people turn to their bucket list trips post-pandemic, the Rovos rise to the challenges of designing exquisite charters for guests looking to spend time with loved ones. The team even developed a 7-star service charter earlier this year for members of a royal family. "We've had plenty of proposals and weddings on board the train, and many people also choose to celebrate their anniversaries on board the Rovos," gushes Vos-Thane.

The Rovos Rail is not merely a mode of transport but a time machine that transports you to an era of refined travel, where attention to detail, opulent surroundings, and impeccable service are paramount.

For those who seek a unique and unparalleled travel experience, the Rovos Rail stands as a testament to the grandeur of the past, combined with the beauty of the present. The extraordinary rail journeys are not just a trip; they are an adventure of a lifetime, a voyage through history, and a reminder that some dreams are worth chasing.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Nature as Infrastructure



Erik Berglöv

Chief Economist at the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

For millennia, natural infrastructure, such as river systems, wetlands, coastal plains, sand dunes, and forests, supported the development of human civilization. In fact, our ability to harness such infrastructure, for everything from food and drinking water to storm-surge protection and flood mitigation, has been central to our success as a species. And it will prove vital to our future survival.

Technological advances propelled the evolution of infrastructure. Green turned to gray, with concrete, cable, and steel delivering energy, communications, and transportation, and, with them, unprecedented growth and development. But while rapid modernization produced once-unimaginable prosperity, it has had grave unintended consequences, not least the degradation of the environment and greenhouse-gas emissions that are jeopardizing our very existence.

The question now is how to meet urgent environmental goals — reducing emissions and protecting and restoring nature and biodiversity — while enabling developing economies to fulfill their legitimate growth aspirations. The answer, as a recent report from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank suggests, may well begin with an explicit acknowledgement of nature as infrastructure.

Viewing nature as infrastructure is transformative, because it forces us to think in a more systemic way. As we pursue growth and development, we must not only avoid



of biodiversity that we will comprehend nature's full potential, and our impact on it.

This knowledge is very site-specific, and acquiring it will require contributions from scientists and local populations. The good news is that there are already models for such collaboration. The massive Sanbei reforestation project, aimed at preventing two large deserts from merging in Northern China, was a flawed endeavor at the start, with only single tree types planted. But, over the course of two decades, deeper knowledge of the local environment and the participation of local communities transformed it into a success.

Governance and incentives are also crucial to protect and nurture natural infrastructure. In Indonesia, mangroves have long protected communities, particularly poorer households, from deadly tidal floods, but they are being depleted in regions with weaker state capacity. In Egypt, by contrast, efforts to restore mangroves have been aided by revenues from eco-tourism and beekeeping, which produces honey and supports the delivery of vital pollination services.

The nature-as-infrastructure approach demands that we assess what nature can deliver before considering gray solutions, and it can help countries close their infrastructure gaps in truly sustainable ways. But gray infrastructure will always be necessary for growth and development. This demands that we design it better, to minimize its impact on nature. For example, renewable-energy infrastructure has a large ecological footprint, and road infrastructure fragments and damages ecosystems. Solutions like co-locating infrastructure on brown sites and providing auxiliary infrastructure (such as wildlife highway crossings, green urban spaces, and nature-restoration offsets) can help mitigate these effects.

Of course, financing might pose a challenge. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, agreed a year ago, assumes that \$598-824 billion per year will be needed by 2030 to close the biodiversity funding gap. Such sums, needed to protect and then begin to restore nature, can be generated only by valuing nature properly and creating markets that will mobilize private and institutional capital.

To this end, 'nature as infrastructure' must be developed as an asset class, using new tools and financial instruments. At the micro level, this will require better pricing of nature's services; for example, through usage charges or permits and taxes for damaging activities — and adaptive local regulations. Micro-level policies can support the development of other financial instruments and, eventually, markets — for performance-linked bonds, policy-based lending, debt-for-nature swaps, and nature credits, to name a few — to channel

more finance into nature. Lessons from carbon markets should be heeded, to avoid repeating past mistakes.

Special attention must be paid to low-income economies, many of which are highly vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation but have rich natural endowments that should be valued properly. Multilateral development banks can catalyze the nature-as-infrastructure approach,

ensuring that it is incorporated into all aspects of their operations. Ultimately, this approach should also guide individual infrastructure projects and national growth strategies.

The consequences of the infrastructure decisions we make today will be felt for decades to come. Only by committing to invest in green, and to build gray better, can we ensure we lay the groundwork for a fairer, more sustainable, and inclusive global economy.

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Viewing nature as infrastructure is transformative, as it forces us to think in a more systemic way. As we pursue growth and development, we must not only avoid damaging nature; we must also strengthen and enrich it.

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damaging nature; we must also strengthen and enrich it through 'nature-positive' investments — all while tapping its vast potential to deliver essential services.

Biologists already do this when they benchmark how to restore degraded land. But now economists must get on board and enhance their tools for capturing the value and complexity of natural capital. Biodiversity, for example, covers not just the number of species, but also their genetic diversity and diversity of functions. Yet another dimension of biodiversity is the complex evolutionary history of species — when they were separated on the 'tree of life'. It is only by deepening our understanding

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Global South's Debt Crisis Is Thwarting Climate Ambition



María Fernanda Espinosa and Rishikesh Ram Bhandary

María Fernanda Espinosa, a former president of the UN General Assembly, is Executive Director of Global Women Leaders Voices and Co-Chair of the Debt Relief for a Green and Inclusive Recovery Project.

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This year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), currently underway in Dubai, will be decisive for the Loss and Damage Fund established at COP27, because governments must agree on how the new fund will be operationalized and financed. But equally important is the first global stocktake (GST), which will assess countries' progress toward achieving the goals of the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

A preliminary report on the GST, released in October, is underwhelming, while the most recent World Energy Outlook from the International Energy Agency found that global carbon dioxide levels have yet to peak. This implies that if we want to achieve our climate targets, we must fast-track the clean-energy transition and urgently slash greenhouse-gas emissions. But while this will undoubtedly require closing the massive climate financing gap, policymakers must overcome widespread sovereign-debt distress.

The Debt Relief for a Green and Inclusive Recovery Project, using data from the UN Development Programme and the International Monetary Fund, estimates that 69 countries need immediate debt relief, of which 61 have at least \$812 billion in debt that must be restructured across all creditor classes. Moreover, an IMF working paper calculated that only seven of 29 low-income countries that submitted estimates of their adaptation needs had sufficient fiscal space to meet those needs and achieve their emissions-reduction targets, also known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs). With debt-service costs set to increase in 2024, many countries will spend more on interest payments than on health or education.

As long as the debt crisis in the Global South grinds on, many emerging-market and developing economies will be unable to invest in gender-sensitive low-carbon development. This, in turn, would make these countries more vulnerable to climate shocks and fiscal instability, and would also foreclose the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5° Celsius, the target set by the Paris climate agreement.

To address the debt-climate nexus at COP28 and beyond, policymakers should focus on



three objectives: a more inclusive and efficient debt-restructuring process; more concessional finance; and expansion of the size and remit of multilateral development banks (MDBs).

For starters, the G20's Common Framework must be reformed to ensure that all climate-vulnerable countries, including middle-income countries, are eligible for debt treatment. While the Common Framework has started providing relief, recent debt-restructuring deals have been modest in scope and came at the cost of protracted negotiations that only exacerbated the problem. Future deals must ensure significant relief measures that

climate vulnerability has been found to drive up the cost of debt and restrict access to financing.

But there is ample room to scale up concessional finance. From 2021 to 2022, low-cost project-level debt and grants accounted for only 11% of total climate finance, according to the Climate Policy Initiative. The World Bank, as part of its 'Evolution Roadmap' initiative, has indicated that it will expand concessional lending beyond the poorest countries to fund necessary climate investments. Other MDBs should emulate this approach, and their shareholders should inject more capital to

boards, outline how a fresh injection of funds will enable them to provide low-cost finance to developing countries and make bolder bets on transformational investments.

In addition to increasing their lending capacity, MDBs must reform the debt architecture. For example, the World Bank has advanced a debt-pause clause in new and existing lending agreements that permits 45 small islands and states facing qualifying events to postpone their interest and principal payments. But loans of all borrowing countries should include such a clause. It would also be in the interest of MDB shareholders to improve the debt-restructuring process: an extended debt crisis simply means that MDBs will need to provide concessional finance for a longer period, given that it is tied to debt indicators.

The GST at COP28 is sure to find that the world is falling far short of the Paris agreement's targets. Accelerated action, across climate finance, global policy coordination, and renewable-energy deployment, is needed, but high levels of debt stand in the way. Tellingly, Egypt, the host of last year's COP, explicitly noted in its revised NDC that debt-service payments were limiting the country's climate ambition.

G20 governments and international financial institutions must acknowledge that a severe debt overhang could worsen the climate crisis. Mobilizing financial resources on an unprecedented scale, while important, should be complemented by measures to address heavy sovereign-debt burdens. One hopes that by forcing policymakers to confront the world's dangerously slow progress toward net-zero emissions at COP28, the GST will generate the political will and trust necessary to tackle the interlocking problems of debt distress and global warming.

“ To address the debt-climate nexus, policymakers should focus on three objectives: a more inclusive debt-restructuring process; more concessional finance; and expansion of the size and remit of multilateral development banks (MDBs). ”

enable countries to kickstart economic growth and achieve climate goals, rather than merely returning them to previous levels of austerity or helping them stave off the next crisis.

Second, the need for more concessional finance has never been clearer. In October, at the annual meetings of the World Bank and the IMF in Marrakesh, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva noted that interest rates were in a “higher-for-longer era.” This comes at the same time that countries must accelerate the deployment of renewables, which are highly sensitive to the cost of capital. Moreover,

facilitate it, so that governments can access affordable financing that does not crowd out other priorities.

Moreover, MDBs must become bigger and better-equipped to supply the low-cost, long-term finance that climate-vulnerable countries need. While the World Bank has taken a step in this direction by implementing balance-sheet-optimization measures to increase the scale of its lending by \$50 billion over the next ten years, it is not enough. Other MDBs should devise concrete plans for capital increases and, when presenting it to their



Dental conditions that reveal other health risks

Oral health can provide an early indication of a broad range of health conditions but these signs are often missed by primary care physicians. A new report from the United States Preventive Services Task Force on primary care and prevention found that regular dental screenings at primary care facilities tend to overlook many dental conditions.

The new finding is worrisome not only to the health authorities but also to individual patients, as some of these medical conditions are not only indicative of poor oral health but could also be an early-warning sign of other medical concerns.

Given the heavy workload on many primary care physicians, it is understandable that they do not find time to examine oral health in greater detail. Even when they do check the mouth, it is more likely they are looking at the throat area rather than examining dental health. Dentists are urging primary care doctors to pay closer attention to signs of illness that may show up in the mouth first, or to refer the patient to a professional dentist at the earliest signs of oral concern.

Dentists point out that treating gum and other oral diseases early on, as well as maintaining good oral health habits can not only improve dental health but also could prove to be beneficial from an overall health perspective. Some of the key conditions that dentists would like primary care physicians to pay greater attention to during regular checkups, in order to treat dental diseases early on, as well as to help detect other associated diseases, include:

Diabetes: The oral health realm can leave a distinct imprint of type 2 diabetes (T2D) that dental professionals are trained to watch for. For example, gum disease, which is marked by inflamed, bleeding gums, can be an early sign of T2D. People with diabetes may also have a dry mouth, stemming from reduced production of saliva, leading to discomfort, a hard time swallowing, and a higher risk of dental infections.

On average, around 43 percent of people with diabetes have dry mouth.



Another sign that can show up in the mouth is oral thrush, a fungal infection in the mouth. Although it is not contagious and is usually treated with antifungal medication, oral thrush, also called oral candidiasis, which appear as creamy white lesions on the tongue or inner cheeks, could be a sign of reduced immunity and also of uncontrolled diabetes.

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD): Intestinal illnesses like Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis have long been recognized for their effect on the overall health of individuals. However, a lesser-known aspect of these disorders is their potential to show up in the mouth, presenting a unique set of challenges for both patients and health care providers. Some people with IBD have painful ulcers in the mouth that are commonly known as canker sores, or as aphthous stomatitis by doctors. These oral symptoms not only add to discomfort for those with IBD, but also can show that a disease is present.

These ulcers are typically seen on the soft tissues lining the mouth, such as the inner cheeks, lips, and tongue. IBD and oral ulcers come with inflammation. The body's immune response can result in an overproduction of cytokines — small proteins that are crucial in controlling the

growth and activity of other immune system cells and blood cells — that trigger a cascade of proinflammatory events that could lead to formation of painful ulcers.

Heart disease: The mouth may be an unexpected place to find early signs of heart and blood vessel diseases, but new research now shows that gum diseases and other oral symptoms could be an early sign of heart related issues. The connection lies in the inflammatory nature of both conditions; chronic heart disease may add to an inflammatory response that, in turn, worsens gum inflammation and leads to more severe issues with the teeth and gums.

Symptoms such as bleeding gums, persistent bad breath, and gum swelling can serve as early warning signs. People with gum disease are also at a higher risk of having issues with their heart and blood vessels, and bacteria in the mouth can enter other areas of the body, including the heart.

Osteoporosis: Osteoporosis, a bone disease that leads to fractures and

disability, often goes unnoticed until the condition leads to injury. But research shows it can affect the teeth in noticeable ways, including tooth loss and gum disease. Moreover, some of the medications prescribed for osteoporosis, such as bisphosphonate drugs, can cause dental issues such as dry mouth and tooth decay. This is something that doctors may not be aware of when prescribing these medications.

Oral cancer: Symptoms of oral cancer that may be visible during a primary health care visit include a sore on the lip or in the mouth, white or reddish patches on the inside of the mouth, loose teeth, or a lump inside the mouth.

Experts are now recommending a biopsy anytime a doctor finds a white patch in the mouth that the patient has not had before and which persists for over two to three weeks. Human papillomavirus (HPV) — a common virus infection that may cause cancers later in life — has been linked to oral cancers, including oropharyngeal cancer found in the throat.

Compared with other cancers, oral and pharyngeal cancer has one of the poorest five-year survival rates: only 52 percent of people diagnosed with oral cancer survive five years, while only 35 percent of oral cancer is detected at the earliest stage. Doctors point out that most oral cancer patients are diagnosed at an advanced stage of the disease, which accounts for the higher mortality figures.

It is also worth underlining that while some health issues may show up in the mouth, the problems go both ways: Poor oral hygiene can lead to negative health outcomes. Going to the dentist regularly, brushing at least twice a day, flossing at least once a day, all of these things can contribute to not only better oral health but also greater overall health.



Have an itch, blame the bacteria

Itchy skin, or as the medical community labels it, pruritus, is an irritating sensation that makes you want to scratch. As you rub or scratch the area, it gets itchier. And the more it itches, the more you scratch. Breaking this itch-scratch cycle can be difficult. Itchy skin is often caused by dry skin and is common in older adults, as skin tends to become drier with age.

However, itchiness is not limited to the elderly; if the itching is over the whole body it could be the symptom of an underlying illness, such as liver disease, kidney disease, anemia, diabetes, thyroid problems and certain cancers. Itchy skin could also be caused by eczema (dermatitis), psoriasis, scabies, parasites, burns, scars, allergic reactions, insect bites and hives.

Scientists at Harvard Medical School in the United States have a new theory on what causes the sensation of itching, and their

latest laboratory experiments point toward potentially effective treatments for people who have itchy skin, especially for those suffering from itchiness due to dermatitis, which refers to a group of conditions that cause inflammation — eczema is a form of dermatitis.

In a study published in October, researchers reported that directly exposing the skin of mice to the common bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus* (S. aureus) triggered the nervous system to send signals from the skin to the brain. Lab experiments were also conducted using human cells. S. aureus is a common bacteria, with nearly a third of the global population carrying the bacteria in their nose or skin.

The previously held theory was that itchiness stemmed from inflammation caused by skin conditions. However, the new study identifies an entirely novel mechanism behind the 'itch'. The study shows that in people who have eczema or dermatitis, the balance of microorganisms that keeps skin healthy is disrupted, potentially making them more susceptible to S. aureus. The mice that were exposed to S. aureus developed intensifying itchiness for several days, and they also developed an itch-scratch cycle that eventually resulted in damage to sites beyond the itch.

A bonus finding from the study was that the researchers were able to block the nervous system's process that results in the itching sensation by using a medication that is usually prescribed to help people who have problems with blood clots. This incidental discovery suggests that the same medication could also be repurposed as an anti-itch treatment. The researchers now plan to explore whether other microbes beyond S. aureus can trigger an itch in people.

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Celebrating the 75th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights

This Sunday, 10 December, marks the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the most significant international legal document on human rights — the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

A milestone document in the history of human rights, the UDHR was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948, as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations.

The declaration, with all its 30 articles, is the basis of all laws bearing on human rights, with its first article stating that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another within a spirit of brotherhood.

Kuwait, as part of the international order, adopted several texts and articles in its 1962 constitution that comply with the UDHR and related international charters. It has even adopted a set of pieces of legislation, laws, and arrangements that reflect the country's observation of international commitments in the human rights domain.

In this regard, Chairman of the National Diwan of Human Rights, Jassem Al-Mubarak, stressed the importance of the UDHR in affording protection to all people from human rights violations, as well as in spotlighting and addressing relevant challenges.

Speaking to the state news agency, he said the international community needs an executive will to apply relevant conventions to what is going on in the Gaza Strip, lamenting that the UDHR, human rights conventions

and the United Nations (UN) Charter are not observed due to double standards.

He condemned the Israeli occupation's aggression on the Palestinian territory as a genocide and war crime against humanity right under the nose of the international community.

He added that human rights are the basic rights and freedoms of all people regardless of any other considerations such as gender, race, religion, language, political opinion, national and social origin, or economic or social situation.

In this context, Kuwait has approved and endorsed a set of international agreements and conventions targeting the elimination of racial discrimination with all its forms and manifestations, he remarked.

Kuwait has consequently enacted a package of laws, legislation and policies pertinent to these international conventions, and has always cooperated with international human rights agencies in order to promote and protect human rights in the country.

Furthermore, Kuwait has always been keen on implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted by the United Nations in September 2015, and are mainly based on the UN Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and human rights treaties and conventions.

Kuwait's new development vision is primarily meant to create an encouraging infrastructure and legislative business environment, while adhering to human development regulations that establish values and safeguards the society's identity and ensures justice, political



Chairman of the National Diwan of Human Rights Jassem Al-Mubarak

participation and freedoms.

Kuwait also established a permanent national committee for compiling reports and following up on human rights recommendations, chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and comprising all state bodies.

Furthermore the country created a National Diwan of Human Rights, as an independent body supervised by the cabinet, which aims to promote and protect human rights, and disseminates respect of public and private freedoms as per the constitution and international agreements endorsed by Kuwait.

At the international level, Kuwait has emerged as a peace-loving country that defends civilians' rights, and hosts summits and

conferences with a view to supporting needy and affected countries. This has thus earned Kuwait a distinguished status in its relations with the UN, which, consequently, picked Kuwait as a humanitarian hub and the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a humanitarian leader.

In the same context, during its non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council between 2018 and 2019, Kuwait did its utmost in the field of human rights, mainly including Resolution 2401 adopted on 24 February 2018, regarding a ceasefire in Syria and access to humanitarian aid, along with Resolution 2440 that defined a mechanism for delivering relief aid to Syria. The UNSC also adopted Resolution 2417, which was tabled by Kuwait, the Netherlands, Sweden and Cote d'Ivoire, condemning the starving of civilians as a war tactic and illegal denial of humanitarian access to the civilian population.

As part of its unwavering support for the Palestinian cause and defending the legitimate rights of Palestinians, Kuwait submitted a draft resolution aiming at providing international protection for the Palestinian people, but it was vetoed. In another achievement, the UN General Assembly reelected Kuwait as a member of the Human Rights Council between 2024 and 2028, which comprises 47 member states. Kuwait was first elected to this post during the period from 2011 to 2014, with membership in this post mainly based on a state's contribution to promoting and protecting human rights and voluntary undertakings and commitments.




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