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Pope Francis, a legacy of humility, service to humanity

THE TIMES KUWAIT REPORT

Church services have been held around the world over the past few days as the global Christian community of nearly 1.4 billion mourned the passing of Pope Francis, who died in the early hours of Easter Monday, 21 April.



In a statement issued on Monday, the Vatican's camerlengo, or cardinal chamberlain, Cardinal Kevin Farrell, formally announced the

death of the 88-year-old pontiff. The statement said His Holiness the Pope had "returned to the home of the Father", and added, "He taught us to live by the values of the Gospel with fidelity, courage and universal love, especially in favor of the poorest and most marginalized."

Pope Francis died after suffering a stroke and subsequent irreversible heart failure at about 07:35 local time (05:30 UTC), the statement confirmed. The pontiff had for years suffered from respiratory ailments, starting when he was just 21 and had a part of his lungs excised due to cyst formations. Most recently in March, he overcame a bout of life-threatening pneumonia that had confined him to hospital for nearly five weeks.

On Easter Sunday, a frail Pope Francis had appeared in a wheelchair at the balcony of his residence to deliver the traditional Easter address in front of thousands of worshipers gathered at St. Peter's Square below. Less than 24 hours later, Pope Francis was no more. Following his passing, the pontiff's body was moved from the chapel of Domus Sanctae Marthae—the official Vatican guesthouse where the pope had opted to live during his papacy—to the much larger and more ornate St. Peter's Basilica, so mourners from around the world could pay their last respects.

By Friday, when the three-day public viewing came to a close, over a quarter million people had come to offer prayers and pay respects to the popular pontiff. In his final testament, released by the Vatican on Monday, Pope

Francis had made clear that he did not wish to have the elaborate death rites associated with the death of a pontiff, including the use of an embellished coffin and the displaying of his body on a raised platform. He also asked to be buried in Rome's Basilica of St Mary Major with a simple inscription on his tomb saying 'Franciscus'.

Pope Francis will however, like his predeces-

sor, be buried with some items that symbolized his time and achievements as Supreme Pontiff. These include the pallium, a vestment used only by the pontiff and metropolitan archbishops; the rogito, a deed that summarises the highlights of Francis's time as Pope, and bags of silver, gold and copper coins in number equal to the years of his papacy.

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Corporal punishment and school bullying needs to stop

A school principal in Kuwait was recently summoned by the police and made to pledge that students would not be subjected to physical punishment after a young student suffered partial damage to his eardrums from a teacher's slap.



On returning home, the student informed his parents about the incident and said that he was experiencing severe pain and discomfort in the ear.

His parents immediately rushed him to the local clinic, and when the doctor explained to them the potential medical repercussions of the punishment their child suffered, they decided to file a complaint at the police station. The police swiftly responded to the complaint, which then resulted in the dismissal of the teacher and the rendering of an apology by the school.

Physical punishment in schools has been a persistent and widespread issue in Kuwait for several years, with many parents hesitant to report the matter to the authorities for fear of retaliation by the teacher or the school. Even when parents have filed complaints with the school, there have been reports of

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Changing curricula could be the gateway to a smart future

Kuwait makes a major educational shift



By Sheikha Suhaila Al-Sabah
Managing Editor

In a bold step that represents a pivotal shift in the course of education in Kuwait, the Kuwaiti Minister of Education announced the formation of specialised committees to change and develop curricula, within the framework of the comprehensive national plan of Kuwait. The committee will work to modernise the education system and keep pace with global developments, foremost of which is the technological revolution and artificial intelligence.

We hope that this step will not be just an amendment in the content of textbooks, but that the Kuwaiti educational identity will be reformulated, in line with the requirements of the global labor market, and meet the ambitions of new generations. With the explicit orientation towards integration of modern technology, especially artificial intelligence, in educational curricula. We also hope that the concepts of programming, data analysis, and computer languages will be introduced in the early stages of education, in addition to enhancing students' creative and innovative skills.

This approach is a strategic step if it is carried out according to a well-thought out plan to prepare a generation that is competitive regionally and globally, and to create an educational environment that keeps pace with the digital transformations that the world is witnessing. One of our most prominent hopes for this modernization is to improve the quality of education output, by reducing the gap between what students learn in schools and what the labor market needs. The traditional approach, which relies on memorisation and indoctrination, has proven its inability to build competencies capable of innovation and decision-making. Education experts believe that curricula should improve critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, which are



key elements for building a modern knowledge economy in Kuwait.

Kuwait was not the first country to decide to make radical changes in its curricula. It was preceded by countries such as Finland, which today has one of the best education systems in the world, after focussing on developing curricula to be flexible, project-based, and support critical thinking and life skills.

Also in Singapore, the country has revolutionised education by updating its curriculum and linking it to technology, which has contributed to turning it into a global centre for innovation and the digital economy. In Canada, the province of Ontario has redesigned its curriculum to include 21st century skills, such as collaboration, creative thinking, and effective communication, and studies have shown that 82 percent of students have shown improvement in problem-solving skills after the introduction of the new curriculum.

In South Korea, the country has invested more than \$2 billion in modernizing curricula and teacher training over the past decade, helping it lead global rankings in tests such as PISA. As for Estonia, it has transformed from a developing country to one of the most digitally advanced countries, thanks to linking curricula to digital transformation and the adoption of competence-based education, which led to its first place in Europe in educational performance

according to the 2022 PISA report.

Despite the importance of this step, the challenges do not disappear from the scene. The success of change depends on training teachers, providing digital infrastructure, and preparing parents and students for this transformation. It also requires long-term vision and sustainable investment in education. But the opportunities that may result from this modernisation exceed the challenges. Kuwait today stands on the threshold of an educational revolution that may make a difference in its development and economic process, and consolidate its position in the ranks of scientifically advanced countries.

The decision of the Kuwaiti Minister of Education is not just internal reform, but a declaration of intentions towards an education built for the future. Education that takes into account the variables of the times and gives the people of Kuwait the tools of real knowledge. If countries are measured by their success in raising generations capable of creating, Kuwait is moving confidently towards a brighter tomorrow, driven by the will for change and the passion for progress. This step comes within the vision of 'New Kuwait 2035', which seeks to transform Kuwait into a regional financial and commercial centre. This will not be achieved without a flexible educational system, keeping pace with the rapid changes in the world. The development of curricula is not an end in

itself, but a means of preparing national cadres capable of leading development and achieving scientific and technical efficiency internally.

We hope that the new curricula will also focus on national values and Kuwaiti cultural identity, to graduate generations that are proud of their homeland and at the same time have the tools of global competition. Rehabilitating and training teachers to be better able to use technological means and interact with modern teaching methods. Global experiences have proven that the teacher is the backbone of any successful educational system. In this context, expanded training programs must be launched locally and internationally, to qualify teachers to use smart learning technologies, such as augmented reality, e-learning, and educational data analysis, to ensure the effectiveness of the application of the new curricula. The student is no longer a passive recipient, but has become the centre of the educational process. Modern curricula rely on interactive education, as they encourage the student to research, discuss, and experiment, in order to develop his personality and enhance his intellectual independence.

We also hope that extracurricular activities will be promoted and linked to educational courses, to expand students' awareness and provide them with 21st century skills, such as leadership, communication, and flexibility in thinking. Digitalisation will be the vital nerve of this plan. Thanks to the advanced digital infrastructure that Kuwait is promoting, interactive electronic content and smart educational platforms will be provided, allowing the student to learn according to his or her individual abilities, and follow their level moment by moment. This digitisation will contribute to reducing the gap between students and providing equal educational opportunities for all, including people with special needs and residents of remote areas.

In an era in which knowledge has become the real wealth, the step of changing curricula in Kuwait represents a smart investment in the minds of its children. The renaissance begins, from the classrooms and from the pages of books, it draws the features of the next homeland. If Kuwait succeeds in implementing this plan in the way it aspires to, it will undoubtedly become a role model in the region, and puts its foot firmly on the map of the leading countries in education and knowledge.

West Abdullah Al-Mubarak City aims to become next 'Healthy City' in Kuwait

Governor of Farwaniya, Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser, announced last week that the governorate is working to finalize the accreditation of West Abdullah Al-Mubarak City as a 'Healthy City' by the World Health Organization (WHO), so as to include the city in Kuwait's growing network of 'healthy cities'.

Addressing a media briefing during the city's registration event with the WHO's regional network of healthy cities, Al-Nasser confirmed, "We have completed the registration, making West Abdullah Al-Mubarak the third healthy city in Farwaniya Governorate."

Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser expressed his hope



for the establishment of more healthy cities within Farwaniya Governorate, aiming for significant progress in implementing healthy city initiatives across Kuwait and enhancing the quality of life for the region's residents. He emphasized the importance of expanding this initiative to benefit the broader community.

He also extended his gratitude to Dr. Amal Al Yahya, Head of the Healthy Cities Office at the Ministry of Health, and the office's members. He

particularly thanked Faisal Al Bidan, Head of the Coordination Committee for West Abdullah Al Mubarak City, as well as the committee members and the entire team for their dedicated efforts in facilitating the implementation of healthy city standards.

In a statement explaining the stages involved in the 'Healthy City' initiative, Dr. Al-Yahya said that any city wishing to be registered as a 'Healthy City' must first establish a coordinating

committee approved by the regional governor, with a designated office under the name 'Healthy City Office'.

Once these requirements are met, a registration form, detailing the area's demographic and service structure, must be submitted to the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Healthy Cities Network. After reviewing and approving the data, the Ministry of Health submits the form to WHO. At this stage, the city is registered as one seeking accreditation.

Dr. Al Yahya highlighted that achieving accreditation requires meeting WHO's rigorous standards. The Healthy Cities Office then plays a vital role in training, empowering, and facilitating the process. Following this, a self-evaluation is conducted, and a city profile is submitted to WHO for final evaluation, including field visits by a WHO delegation. A city that meets 80 percent or more of the criteria will receive certification as a WHO-accredited healthy city for three years

Kuwait, France discuss strengthening relations in various fields

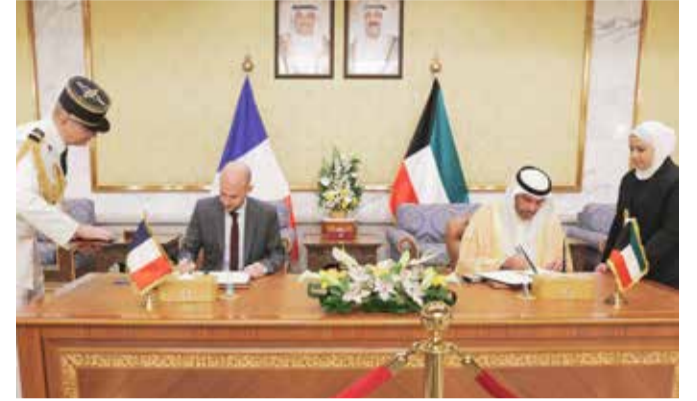
His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah who received visiting French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noel Barrot and his accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace on 24 April. The two sides discussed issues of interest to Kuwait and France.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, His Highness the Crown Prince's Office Chief Jamal Al-Theyab, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs at His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Mazen Al-Issa, Deputy Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs and Minister Plenipotentiary Mohammad Hayati and French Ambassador to Kuwait H.E.Olivier Gauvin, were present at the meeting.

In a separate meeting, Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met with the visiting French Foreign Minister and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, the two sides touched on the close bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and the frameworks for strengthening and developing them in various fields, in addition to discussing regional and international developments.

A number of agreements and memoranda of understanding were signed, reflecting the two friendly countries' determination to strengthen and develop bilateral relations in various fields.

Both sides also discussed the evolving situation in the Middle East. Minister Barrot reaffirmed France's commitment to a ceasefire in Gaza, the release of hostages, saying that France and Saudi Arabia will co-chair an international conference in the summer in support of the two-state solution, the only one



capable of ensuring lasting peace.

Regarding Syria, the Minister reiterated France's commitment to a rigorous political transition that respects Syrian pluralism and addresses collective security challenges, especially the fight against terrorism.

On Lebanon, the Minister expressed France's deep concern over renewed tensions in the south and called on all parties to respect the ceasefire agreement reached in November 2024, to avoid an escalation that could have serious consequences for the entire region. The two ministers also discussed global issues, particularly the protection of oceans

A media statement issued by the French Embassy on the visit

of the French Foreign Minister stated that Minister Barrot lauded the depth of the long-standing friendship between his country and Kuwait in many fields, especially diplomacy, economy, and defense.

He added that these relations, which also include culture, higher education, scientific research, and health, are nourished by close ties embodied in numerous cooperation and exchange projects.

The Minister also congratulated Kuwait on its presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and expressed his wishes to strengthen coordination between the two countries in response to regional crises.

Amendments to Anti Narcotics Law imposes death penalty for violations

Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef announced last week that the committee tasked with addressing procedural loopholes in the Anti-Narcotics Law has completed drafting amendments, which will soon be submitted to the Council of

Ministers for approval. In a statement to local media, Al-Yousef explained that the committee, led by Counselor Mohammed Al-Duaij and involving relevant sectors, aimed to close gaps in the law and tackle the growing drug problem, which has been exacerbated by increasing drug cases, procedural errors,

and the acquittal of many offenders. He pointed out that the Anti-Narcotics Law had not been amended in 42 years, which emphasized the need to amend it to address new criminal activities and methods.

The draft law, which has been sent to the Fatwa and Legislation Department for

final drafting, includes key amendments such as the introduction of the death penalty for drug trafficking and a fine of two million dinars. This penalty applies to those trafficking drugs into prisons, exploiting their position for trafficking, or distributing drugs without compensation.

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ACD can be an alternative platform for cooperation in a world of rising challenges

Secretary General of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Nasser Al Mutairi

The Times Kuwait Report

On the sidelines of the recently concluded Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Turkey, The Times Kuwait spoke with the Secretary General of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Nasser Al Mutairi. We spoke about his vision for the ACD, its strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately, how it can be a force for change in the Asian continent,

Can you give us an understanding of exactly what ACD is? We understand it attempts to foster dialogue and connectivity in the Asian continent, but what does that entail?

Well, ACD is an intergovernmental forum established in 2002 in Thailand, With the aim of enhancing cooperation among member states in all fields, as well as to jointly address global challenges, achieve sustainable development, and work towards further regional integration through dialogue, joint projects. Member states also seek to implement the 'Vision of Asia' which is based on the six pillars which is Connectivity, STI, Culture and tourism, Education and human resource development, food energy and water security and Sustainable development

When you talk about 'Rising to Global challenges', how difficult is this, given that many of the member states have different foreign policies or at least foreign policies that are not similar.

Well, actually, we have a lot of challenges. One of them is the diversity of political systems in member states, which leads to differences in priorities, interests, policy strategies, and economic disparities, as well as in responses to evolving situations and environmental challenges, all of which sometimes hinder full cooperation. We also have another challenge, which is that the decision mechanism in ACD

is based on consensus, which is at times very hard to reach. While member states have varying approaches to international issues such as Palestine, ACD remains a neutral space that fosters dialogue and consensus-building on such matters.

Has there been any sort of fruitful discussion on Gaza, and on how the ACD might play a role in ending the war?

While no formal discussion has taken place yet, there is a growing sense of urgency among member states, and we are fully prepared to support any initiative that promotes peace and humanitarian solutions in the region.

Can you tell us more about the similarities that these countries have, because what is so unique about ACD is that it represents the Asian continent. There are so many differences as you've just alluded to. I mean, there are different religions, different languages, different foreign policies, so what brings these countries together?

Well, I think there are many reasons, but the three main reasons, in my opinion, are: Firstly, in order to meet or address global challenges we need to have cooperation among member states, as individual countries cannot overcome them alone. A collective effort is needed. Secondly, cooperation among member states is essential in order to achieve sustainable development, economic growth, and regional integration. Thirdly, it is vital to promote the idea of 'One Asia' to play an important role on the international stage. Asia possesses a huge potential. It is an economic hub hosting major banks and financial institutions, And it is one of the largest global exporters of goods and services. Also, Asia is helpful in maritime transportation, and rich in natural resources like natural gas. So by



leveraging these potentials, optimizing the workforce, and applying advanced technologies, I believe that Asia can play an important role on the international stage.

You talk about focusing on what the ACD member states have in common, rather than focusing on their difference, and that one of the core tenets of ACD is promoting tolerance, diversity and mutual respect. As a career diplomat, you have lived all over the world and have a wealth of experience interacting with people from different cultures and different backgrounds. Do you see that tolerance is on the rise or on the decline among member states?

Well I believe that tolerance doesn't arise automatically. I mean, it arises with dialogue and cultural exchange. Nowadays, We have good signs about the importance and awareness of tolerance and mutual respect of culture, although cultural and linguistic diversity among member states can make this challenging. One of our principles is to be positive in our thinking. The ACD is promoting cooperation on education and cultural exchange, also promoting cooperation through movies, festivals, tourism and learning languages, education and human resource development. It is very important to accept the culture of another country or another person, and it is not acceptable to impose the values of your culture on others.

ACD has done such important work over the course of the last 20 years. So over the course of the next five or ten years, where do you hope to see the ACD?

First of all, we are seeking to transform this dialogue forum into an organization. There are initiatives in this regard from Kuwait. As an organization, the ACD will have a fixed budget on which it can rely to carry out its functions and pursue its aims. An organizational structure will also bring about more commitment from members and will enable us to engage in cooperative initiatives with other similar organizations.

Besides that, we are working on increasing the visibility of ACD, and there are many options in this regard. Amid the evolving geopolitical, economic, and developmental challenges facing the world today, I believe that organizations such as the ACD can play an important role by providing an alternative platform for cooperation between nations, and serving as a beacon of stability in an increasingly unpredictable global order.

BSK celebrates Festival of Achievements at Class of 2025 graduation

In two inspiring evenings filled with pride, passion, and perseverance, The British School of Kuwait (BSK) held its annual Graduation and Festivals of Achievement 2025 at The Regency Hotel.

While 14 April spotlighted the achievements of Year 11 students, 15 April honored the graduating classes of Years 12 and 13. Each evening had its own special energy, capturing the hopes, dreams, and determination of a new generation ready to make their mark.

These ceremonies were more than just annual traditions; they marked the culmination of a transformative educational journey—one in which minds were sharpened, characters shaped, and aspirations set into motion. Coinciding with the school's 48th anniversary, the events celebrated nearly five decades of educational excellence and were attended by distinguished guests, including ambassadors, dignitaries, educators, and proud families.

Throughout both evenings, heartfelt messages from faculty, parents, and guest speakers echoed across the ballroom, honoring a graduating class whose determination, intellect, and compassion embody hope for a brighter future.

In his keynote address, Advisor at the Amiri Diwan, Sheikh Faisal Al-Hamoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah, congratulated the graduates and



encouraged them to pursue higher academic goals, including master's and doctoral degrees. He praised their efforts, as well as the dedication of their families and teachers, noting the joy reflected in the eyes of proud parents.

Sheikh Faisal also commended student Fatima Al-Shawaf for her heartfelt recitation of the Holy Quran, promising to honor her personally at the Amiri Diwan. Describing BSK as "an esteemed institution with decades of educational expertise," he emphasized that "No country can advance without the power of learning, the pursuit of knowledge, and the vision of its young people—the nucleus of its future."

In her address to the gathering, Ambassador of the United States H.E. Karen Sasahara, congratulated the graduates and encouraged them to remain open to new experiences, embrace discomfort, and let curiosity lead the way.

"Chase your passion, but remember: passion alone is not enough. It must be paired with guidance, strengthened by discipline, and

deepened by commitment," she told the students. Ambassador Sasahara also warmly welcomed those planning to continue their academic journeys at American universities, emphasizing the value placed on students who demonstrate strong academic foundations, global perspectives, and the courage to dream big.

Chairman of BSK, Sadiq Al-Mutawa, expressed pride in the school's growth and commitment to modern, high-quality education. Marking 48 years since its founding, he highlighted the integration of artificial intelligence into the academic ecosystem. "AI is no longer a distant concept; it's now a partner in our creativity, decision-making, and daily work," he noted, while urging graduates to persevere and give back to their communities.

Founder and Director General of BSK, Vera Al-Mutawa, praised the graduates' transformation into confident, capable individuals. "Work hard, but enjoy the journey. Chase success, but not at the expense of kindness," she advised. While

recognizing the role of AI and virtual tools, she reminded students: "Technology can assist you, but it can never replace your creativity."

For his part, Associate Professor at Kuwait University's Health Sciences Center and Visiting Researcher at the Mayo Clinic, Dr. Hamad Yaseen, encouraged students to embrace challenges as the foundation of true resilience.

"Persistence is born not from comfort, but from adversity," he said, urging graduates to keep learning and pursue their passions, not just a paycheck. While technology may shape the future, he reminded them, it is human values that will preserve it.

Principal of BSK, Emma Bowie, praised the graduates for their exceptional achievements and highlighted the school's dedication to preparing students for a world of constant change and limitless opportunity. "In an era driven by AI and rapid innovation, success will depend not just on knowledge, but on contribution," she said.

Mol warns against misuse of power grid for crypto-mining

The Interior Ministry stressed its commitment to providing an opportunity to violators to comply with national laws and urged them to promptly rectify their status, or face stringent legal action, including referral to the competent investigative authorities, in accordance with applicable laws.

Ministry of Interior (Mol) has issued a warning against cryptocurrency mining by individuals and entities, calling it an illegal, unlicensed activity that violates national laws, and endangers the national power-grid.

The ministry explained that blockchain cryptocurrency networks such as Bitcoin use to finalize online transactions. It is referred to as mining because during the finalization process new coins are 'minted' and released into circulation. However, the process also utilizes an excessive amount of power that could potentially strain the national grid and lead to power outages in residential, commercial, and service areas—posing risks to public safety and essential services.

The ministry said that the warning followed coordinated efforts by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, and the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority, as well as the Public Authority for Industry, and the Kuwait Municipality, as part of a joint national initiative to curb illegal practices and reduce their negative impact on the electrical infrastructure.

The Interior Ministry stressed its commitment to providing an opportunity to violators to comply with national laws and urged them to promptly rectify their status, or face stringent legal action, including referral to the competent investigative authorities, in accordance with applicable laws.

The most notable amendments to the law were:

Establishing the Supreme Council for Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, headed by the Prime Minister. The Council will submit a report at the end of each year to His Highness the Amir, informing him of the visions and developments related to the Council's work.

The death penalty for trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic



substances, along with a fine of up to two million dinars, replacing the previous penalty of up to seven years in prison.

The death penalty for anyone trafficking within prisons, with the same penalty imposed on anyone facilitating or contributing to bringing drugs into the prison.

The amendments include the death penalty for any employee exploiting their position to traffic drugs or psychotropic substances, as well as for anyone distributing narcotic or psychotropic substances to two or more people without compensation for consumption or promotion.

The death penalty for anyone requesting a service or benefit in exchange for delivering narcotic or psychotropic substances to another person for use, or based on a promise to do so and a drug and psychotropic substance screening test for those about to get married, driving license applicants, and public job applicants.

Random testing of all military personnel in the Interior Ministry, Defense Ministry, National Guard, and Fire Force for drug and psychotropic substance abuse.

Random testing of all school, institute, and university students to detect drug and psychotropic substance abusers and imprisonment of up to four years for anyone who refuses to undergo the examination without justification, excluding marriage applicants and students.

Tighter penalties for drug use in

prisons, schools, or health clubs. A stricter penalty for any person who

commits a crime of violence or harm while under the influence of drugs or psychotropic substances. Police are granted the right to make immediate arrests in cases of suspected drug use. Imprisonment of three years for anyone who sits with drug users, even without using drugs themselves.

Three years imprisonment for anyone who incites others to use drugs and 15 years imprisonment for anyone who coerces another person or gives them narcotic or psychotropic substances without their knowledge, with the death penalty if a conviction is issued against the victim.

Three years imprisonment for any doctor who prescribes psychotropic substances without medical justification and pharmacies will be fined up to 100,000 dinars for neglecting to safely store psychotropic substances.

A financial reward will be given to those who report or provide information about drug users, while a fine will be imposed on anyone wearing clothing or carrying publications that promote the use of drugs or psychotropic substances.

All judgments issued in drug cases shall be subject to immediate enforcement.

Ambassador Al-Qahtani represents Kuwait at funeral of Pope Francis



The Ambassador of Kuwait to Italy, HE Nasser Al-Qahtani was among the dignitaries who bid farewell to Pope Francis who has left an enduring mark on the Church and the world with his compassion for the marginalized and his commitment to humility and service.

Pope Francis has emerged as a powerful global advocate for interfaith dialogue, tirelessly promoting understanding, respect, and cooperation among different religious communities. Through historic visits, such as his meeting with Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb and his landmark trip to Iraq, the Pope has emphasized the shared values of peace, compassion, and human dignity across faiths. His efforts, including the signing of the Document on Human Fraternity, highlight his vision of a world where religious differences are a source of enrichment rather than division, and where collaboration between faiths plays a central role in fostering global harmony and protecting human rights.

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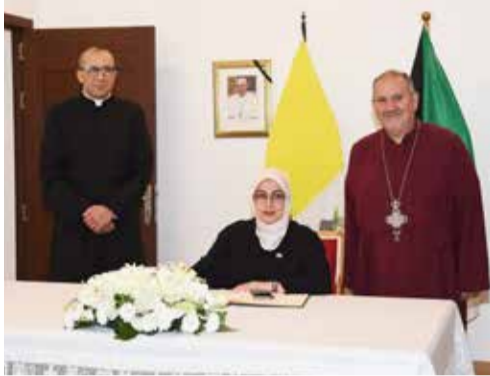
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Diplomats mourn late Pope Francis

Ambassador Bishop Eugene Nugent said, "The world comes together today to honor the profound religious and legislative legacy of Pope Francis," highlighting that he was the first pope from South America, the first Jesuit pope, and the first non-European to hold the papacy in centuries.



In a reflection of the influence wielded on the global stage by the late Pope Francis, a large number of members of the diplomatic corps in Kuwait gathered at the Vatican Embassy to offer their condolences on the passing of the pontiff after his 12-year leadership of the Catholic Church.

Apostolic Nuncio to Kuwait Archbishop Eugene Nugent, the ambassador of the Vatican speaking on the sidelines of the gathering, said, "The world comes together today to honor the profound religious and legislative legacy of Pope Francis." He added that Pope Francis was the first pope from South America, the first Jesuit pope, and the first non-European to hold the papacy in centuries.

He praised Pope Francis for his humility, openness, and dedication to marginalized communities, noting his weekly visits to Rome's prisons and his advocacy for peace in Gaza, the Middle East, and Ukraine. Nugent also emphasized the Pope's efforts to strengthen interfaith dialogue, especially through historic visits to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Iraq, calling his legacy one that will endure for generations.

For his part, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates H.E. Dr. Matar Hamed Al Neyadi, expressed deep sorrow, noting that the world had lost a figure who embodied peace and tolerance. He added, "The Pope was a voice against violence and war, and a man who called



for coexistence."

In the same vein, Ambassador of Oman H.E. Saleh Al Kharousi said, "The world has lost a global figure who strived to establish peace and foster unity among religions, especially between Christianity and Islam." He added that the Pope was imbued with a humanitarian spirit, expressing hope that his successor would continue the path of rapprochement between peoples and faiths."

Speaking at the Vatican embassy, Russian Ambassador H.E. Vladimir Zhelto stated: "We offer our condolences on the passing of Pope Francis," noting, "There is still a long way to go in bridging the gap between the Russian

Orthodox and Catholic Churches, but we are on the path of building bridges and fostering dialogue between the two churches and civilizations."

He added, "We are convinced that the Christian faith, in all its forms, holds lofty human values that unite believers across all Christian denominations. We are also working to build bridges between civilizations and between Islam and Christianity.

We hope to find common ground that will help us achieve lasting peace, regardless of the circumstances, while considering the interests of all parties—not just one. We are seeking solutions that are acceptable to all, without

political concessions."

Iranian Ambassador H.E. Mohammad Totonji, said, "In these difficult global circumstances, the world has lost Pope Francis, one of the most courageous religious figures—he valiantly defended the causes of peoples, especially immigrants, and stood firmly for the Palestinian causes. He condemned the barbaric bombing of innocents in Gaza, called for reforms within the Catholic Church, and rejected the prevailing consumerist culture."

He added that the late Pope had the utmost respect for Iran and all nations rooted in ancient civilizations, and that his passing, at such a sensitive time and as the spiritual leader of millions of followers, is an irreplaceable loss.

In his comments on the occasion, Lebanese Chargé d'Affaires Ahmed Arafa noted, "The Pope was a symbol of humanity, and we cannot forget his moving prayers at the Vatican during the coronavirus pandemic," adding, "Lebanon has lost a great friend who always kept it in his prayers."

Armenian Orthodox Archbishop Bedros Manuelian expressed his sorrow at the passing of the pontiff and said, "The Pope opened a new chapter in the history of the Catholic Church and left a lasting mark on interfaith dialogue with Muslims." Father Bigol Anba Bishoy, pastor of St. Mark's Cathedral in Kuwait, added, "The late Pope was a symbol of love and peace, and a champion of the marginalized."

Pope Francis, a legacy of humility, service to humanity

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Before he took on his papal name of Pope Francis, he was called Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Born on 17 December 1936 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Jorge was the eldest of five children of Mario Bergoglio and Regina Sivori. Mario Bergoglio was an Italian immigrant and an accountant, whose family had fled their native Italy in 1929 to escape fascism. Regina Sivori was born in Buenos Aires to a family of northern Italian origin.

Jorge Bergoglio graduated as a chemist and then went on to work in the food section of Hicketier-Bachmann Laboratory. In 1955, inspired by a local priest he began studies at the Jesuit archdiocesan seminary in Buenos Aires. At the end of three years as a novice in the Society of Jesus, he officially became a Jesuit in 1960, and nine years later was ordained a priest. In 1973 he was named provincial superior of the Society of Jesus in Argentina for a six-year term that ended in 1979.

He spent the next two decades immersing himself in theological studies and research in Argentina and in Europe. In 1992, Bergoglio was named Auxiliary Bishop and six years later became Archbishop. In 2021, Pope John Paul II anointed him as a cardinal and he entered the Church's civil service, the Curia. Following the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI on 28 February 2013, the conclave of cardinals met to choose a successor and elected Cardinal Bergoglio as the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church.

Pope Francis was the first non-European leader of the Church since Syrian-born Pope Gregory III, more than 12 centuries ago in 741. He was also the first Jesuit, and the first Pope of the Roman Catholic church to hail from Latin America. Throughout the 12 years of his papacy, Pope Francis was known for his humility and simple lifestyle, as well as for his commitment to social justice. His progressive approach in the Church's approach to modern social issues and his push for transparency within the Church administration were welcomed by many.

He strongly opposed anti-immigration policies and advocated for the rights of refugees, calling the protection of migrants a "duty of civilization". In his sermons, he often called for social inclusion and criticised governments that failed to pay attention to the poorest in society. "We live in the most unequal part of the world," he said, "which has grown the most, yet reduced misery the least." He was also a critic of trickle-down economics, consumerism, and overdevelopment, and made addressing climate change a leading focus of his papacy.

Prior to being elected as Pope, Francis positioned himself as a compromise candidate by appealing to conservatives with orthodox views on sexual matters while attracting reformers with his liberal stance on social justice. Although the papacy of Pope Francis was marked by many firsts, and he never stopped implementing reforms to the Catholic Church, he remained popular among many



traditionalists for his doctrinal conservatism.

Shortly after becoming Pope, he took part in an anti-abortion march in Rome—calling for rights of the unborn "from the moment of conception". And, although he was supportive of some kind of same-sex unions for gay couples, the Pope did not favor calling it marriage. This, he said, would be "an attempt to destroy God's plan". He also ruled against

ordaining women in the clergy and insisted on celibacy of priests.

On the political front, he called for global peace and humanitarianism. He urged for peace between Israel and Palestinians, signed the Vatican's first treaty with Palestine, and spoke against Israel's military operations in Gaza. As a Latin American, he provided a crucial service as mediator when the US government edged towards historic rapprochement with Cuba in 2015.

There will be some among the faithful who would have preferred a more liberal leader, and critics will point to his perceived weakness in confronting the Church's negative legacy of clerical sexual abuse. But there is no denying that the changes he initiated in Church administration helped tackle corruption, increase transparency, and enhance the Church's historic mission of focusing on the poor. "We need to avoid the spiritual sickness of a Church that is wrapped up in its own world," said the pontiff shortly after his election.

Besides the progressive outlook during his papacy, Pope Francis also anointed over 140 non-European cardinals, changing the composition of the Church's top hierarchy and widening its representation of the laity. It is perhaps this transformation more than anything else that the late Pope would bequeath to his successor—a Church that is much more global in its outlook and far more inclusive in its representation—than the one he inherited in 2013.



BHCK hosts Sustainability Design Challenge 2025

Box Hill College Kuwait (BHCK) burst with creativity and purpose as it hosted the Sustainability Design Challenge 2025, a dynamic student-led event celebrating innovation, culture, and environmental responsibility. In partnership with the United Nations and UNESCO, the challenge brought together students from BHCK and the American International University (AIU) to envision sustainable cultural spaces for the future, marking a powerful tribute to World Creativity and Innovation Day.



Box Hill College Kuwait (BHCK) came alive with energy, purpose, and a deep sense of environmental stewardship as it hosted the Sustainability Design Challenge 2025, a student-driven initiative that reimagined the intersection of culture, creativity, and ecological responsibility.

Held in celebration of the United Nations' World Creativity and Innovation Day, the vibrant event united students, faculty, design professionals, and sustainability advocates under a common vision: to design a new generation of cultural spaces rooted in sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation.

Organized in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Representative and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait, the UNESCO Regional Office for the Gulf States and Yemen, and the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW), the challenge invited student teams from BHCK and the American International University (AIU) to conceptualize a Sustainable Museum—a forward-thinking symbol of cultural preservation and environmental integrity.

The event drew a distinguished audience, including international dignitaries, renowned architects, and industry leaders. Among the esteemed guests were UN Resident Coordinator in Kuwait, Ghada Elthahir; Deputy Director General at PAHW, Eng. Nasser Adel Khuraibet; and Cultural Program Specialist at UNESCO's Gulf Regional Office, Rasul Samadov. Their presence lent global weight and local relevance to the occasion, reinforcing the powerful



role young people can play in sustainable development.

In his remarks, President of BHCK, Prof. Ali Arifa, celebrated the students' achievements, saying: "This challenge reflects Box Hill's unwavering commitment to sustainability and global engagement. It empowers our students to think beyond textbooks and envision solutions that have real-world impact. Events like this turn dreams into action, aligning perfectly with the spirit of the UN Sustainable Development Goals."

In her keynote address Ms. Elthahir echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the transformational power of cultural and creative industries. She said, "This event breathes life into the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. It reminds us that creativity is not

just a spark—it's a force for inclusive growth, sustainability, and identity. The students' visionary projects are powerful reminders of the futures we can shape when imagination and responsibility walk hand in hand."

The event climaxed with an award ceremony, where exceptional teams from the Graphic and Interior Design programs were recognized for their outstanding contributions. Their museum concepts—sustainable, smart, and socially mindful—were a testament to both design excellence and deep ecological thinking.

Head of the School of Design and Applied Arts at BHCK, Reem Al Zamel, noted: "This challenge is more than an academic exercise—it's a pedagogical commitment to infuse the UN SDGs directly into our students' journey. By tackling real-world challenges, we prepare them to be changemakers."

A compelling panel discussion explored the evolving dimensions of sustainability across architecture, education, business, and environmental policy. Panelists—including Eng. Dena Al-Nashie, Ms. Elisa Albendea Solis of IKEA, Ms. Savannah Al-Qahtani, and others—offered insights into how design, consumer behavior, and cross-sector collaboration can help build more resilient communities and greener futures.

Chair of BHCK's Training and Consulting Committee, Bassem Alkassem, summed it up powerfully: "Sustainability is no longer a choice—it's a mindset. At Box Hill, we're nurturing future leaders who understand their role in preserving the planet." As the lights dimmed and the last applause faded, one thing was clear: this was more than a design competition. It was a spark—igniting hope, passion, and purpose in the hearts of a new generation ready to build not just structures, but a sustainable legacy.

The celebration concluded with heartfelt acknowledgments of partners, sponsors, jury members, and faculty, whose guidance and generosity made the challenge a reality. The event was sponsored by leading sustainability-focused organizations including WTE EVN Group, NBK, IKEA, KDD, Residence Inn and Executive Apartments by the Marriott, Al Nasser and Al Nashi United, The Turkish Airlines, the American Business Council Kuwait and academic partners, the American International University; with Al Jarida Newspaper and The Times Kuwait as media partners.





Solemn mass honors life, legacy of Pope Francis

H.E. Archbishop Eugene Martin Nugent added: "Pope Francis was not only a leader of the Catholic Church; he was a moral compass for humanity, and a beacon of hope in troubled times."



In a deeply moving ceremony marked by reverence and solemnity, a memorial mass was held on 25 April at the Holy Family Cathedral in Kuwait City to mourn the passing and honor the extraordinary life of His Holiness Pope Francis, the 266th Bishop of Rome and spiritual leader of over 1.4 billion Catholics worldwide.

The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by the Apostolic Nuncio to Kuwait, H.E. Archbishop Eugene Martin Nugent, who was joined by members of the clergy, the diplomatic corps, and a large and diverse assembly of faithful parishioners and well-wishers from across the country. Archbishop Nugent paid tribute to Pope Francis as a shepherd of unparalleled humility, wisdom, and

compassion. He described the late pontiff as "a tireless advocate for the marginalized, a voice for peace in a divided world, and a humble servant of God whose heart beat for the poor, the forgotten, and the displaced." Recalling the Pope's tireless efforts to promote dialogue among religions, his deep concern for the environment, and his call for mercy and reconciliation in all aspects of life, the Archbishop added: "Pope Francis was not only a leader of the Catholic Church; he was a moral compass for humanity, and a beacon of hope in troubled times."

The cathedral resounded with hymns of mourning and thanksgiving, as congregants united in prayerful reflection, celebrating the life of a pontiff who changed the face of

modern papacy—one grounded in simplicity, inclusiveness, and a radical love for all.

Following the memorial mass, a condolence gathering was held at the Holy Family Hall, where mourners had the opportunity to sign a special book of condolences. The book, filled with heartfelt tributes and personal messages of gratitude, will be respectfully delivered to the Apostolic Nunciature to be forwarded to the Holy See.

The commemorative service was not only an expression of collective sorrow but also a solemn celebration of a spiritual giant whose enduring message of fraternity, humility, and peace will continue to echo in the hearts of millions across the globe.

Corporal punishment and school bullying needs to stop

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

school principals either ignoring the issue and forcing parents to seek recourse through the law. The child protection law in Kuwait guarantees the child all basic rights, including: The right of the child to life, survival, and development in a cohesive and solidarity-based family environment, and to enjoy various preventive measures, such as protection from all forms of violence, harm, or physical, moral, sexual, or other abuses.

Another issue of growing concern to parents with school-going children is the prevalence of bullying in schools. Many parents struggle to address the issue effectively and this has led to serious negative impact on the mental well-being and learning of affected students.

Despite some schools launching anti-bullying campaigns and having a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying, this has not deterred school bullies. The thought of their child being bullied in school is a nightmare for many parents who are at odds on how to deal with the issue. The Ministry of Education has now stepped up supervision on private schools who have not seriously addressed these issues in the past.

Sources at the Ministry of Education have stressed that the Kuwaiti law strictly prohibits corporal punishment for any reason in schools.

Parents can file a complaint with several agencies, including the school administration, student affairs, and the school's educational

district. The source added that the ministry periodically conducts awareness campaigns in schools to raise awareness of the laws and regulations in force in Kuwait. These laws apply equally to all private and public schools in Kuwait. If a parent files a complaint regarding their child being subjected to corporal punishment or bullying, an immediate investigation is launched by the ministry and all necessary measures are taken.

Has your child been subjected to physical harm or abuse in school, or is he or she a victim of bullying? If so, please send us a mail

at editor@timeskuwait.com

Meanwhile, a horrendous case of child abuse in a local primary school has alarmed the community and highlighted urgent concerns about child safety in educational institutions.

A teacher was charged with physically and verbally abusing a 9-year-old student, violating Articles 210, 160, 79/2 of the Kuwait Penal Code, and relevant child protection laws (Law No. 21 of 2015, Article 94).

Initially, the court ruled it lacked jurisdiction and referred the case to another court. Upon

appeal, the ruling was canceled, and the case reconsidered. The accused was sentenced to two years' imprisonment with labor, with bail set at KD1,000 to suspend the sentence. The civil claims for compensation were referred to the competent civil court.

Both the Public Prosecution (seeking a harsher sentence) and the defense (seeking acquittal) appealed. The appeals were formally accepted but rejected on their merits. The judgment confirming the teacher's conviction was upheld, relying on strong witness testimony (from school staff, students, and family) and investigation reports.

Evidence showed that the teacher grabbed the student, hit him with a book, pushed him against a wall, and insulted him in front of classmates. The court confirmed the crimes of physical assault, psychological abuse, public insult and misuse of authority as a public employee (Article 56 of Law No. 31/1970).

Recommendations to strengthen protection of students include:

- Establishing legal support units in schools,
- Introducing legal education into school curricula,
- Documenting and penalizing school violence incidents more strictly,
- Empowering social and psychological counseling units to intervene early.

Untreated aggression in childhood risks escalating into adult violence, underscoring the urgent need to eliminate corporal punishment and bullying in schools



Qatar Airways strategizes to overcome tariff woes

Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, Qatar Airways CEO spoke on Bloomberg Television in an exclusive interview.

By **Joumana Bercetche**
and **Leen Al-Rashdan**

Qatar Airways said it can withstand the shocks from higher tariffs thanks to its stockpile of aircraft spares that might otherwise be harder to source.

The company has built up sufficient inventory, and while there will likely be an impact on air-freight goods stemming from higher import charges, Qatar Airways

operation."

The CEO's comments underpin the tough situation that airlines and planemakers face after President Donald Trump unveiled tariffs with most US trading partners. Airlines are already grappling with higher prices for spare parts and face the specter of tariffs on new aircraft. Travel demand is meanwhile weakening in the US and elsewhere, as passengers absorb the financial hit in the form of rising consumer prices and slumping stock portfolios.

Atlantic Airways Ltd. have said that they've noticed some drop-off on routes across the Atlantic. American Airlines Group Inc. on Thursday withdrew its full-year earnings outlook, saying that unease about the economy is making it difficult to forecast how the year will play out.

Al-Meer said that even if costs rise for Qatar Airways, it won't pass these on in the form of higher ticket prices to customers. The carrier already faces additional costs due to a diverse fleet that includes both Boeing Co. and Airbus SE aircraft, adding complexity in areas like maintenance or training. Al-Meer hinted at a possible focus on just Airbus A320-family aircraft for the single-aisle fleet, meaning that the Boeing 737 planes on lease would be phased out.

Bloomberg reported in December that the airline was considering dropping a Boeing narrowbody order that it had placed at a time when it was stuck in a dispute with Airbus that briefly deprived it of its A320 purchase agreement.

Now that the airline has mended ties with the European planemaker, it plans to focus on one type of narrowbody, and Al-Meer said "you know where our narrowbody strategy is going" as he pointed to the existing order of almost 60 A321neos from Airbus.

The carrier is also working on a large widebody purchase that it plans to announce in coming weeks, according to the CEO. The deal would further solidify the Middle East as a major source of business for the two planemakers, as airlines expand and renew their fleets and locations like Saudi Arabia spend billions to transform



will "absorb and adapt with any changes," Chief Executive Officer Badr Al-Meer said in an interview in Doha. Passenger demand is also sufficiently robust to keep ticket prices steady, he said.

"If I tell you tariffs are not impacting us, I will not be honest with you," Al-Meer told Bloomberg TV. "Of course, it will have an impact on our supply chain, on our cargo

Al-Meer said the airline continues to enjoy strong sales on its US routes despite the uncertainty stoked by Trump's policies, with the trend set to continue in coming months. That sentiment has been echoed by Emirates, the world's largest long-haul airline, which also said this week that it has not experienced a slowdown.

Conversely, carriers including Virgin



into tourism destinations.

Qatar Airways is now the second-largest airline in the region behind Emirates, and the company has built its long-range fleet around the Boeing 777 and 787 models, as well as the Airbus A350 and older A330 aircraft. The airline has also ordered Boeing's new 777X model, though that aircraft is long-delayed and won't enter service with Qatar before next year.

Given the delay, Qatar plans to put its upgraded Q-Suite business-class suite on board its A350s rather than wait for the Boeing planes to arrive, Al-Meer said. It's a strategy also deployed by other carriers that have touched up the cabins of existing aircraft to make up for the wait for new planes.

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NCCAL to cooperate with CEFREPA in preserving archeological sites

National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL), in cooperation with the French Center for Research in the Arabian Peninsula (CEFREPA) organized a conference titled: 'Archaeology and Architecture: Between Modern Technology and National Identity' at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on 20 April..

In his inaugural address at the three-day event, Secretary-General of NCCAL Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar, said that this conference highlights the importance of properly preserving historical and archaeological sites.

He added, "We in Kuwait are in the process of developing these sites to become attractive cultural tourism destinations. We are working to develop them properly, sustainably, and at a high level so that we can register them in the World Heritage Sites list, thus achieving sustainable financial and cultural returns."

On a similar note, Ambassador of France H.E. Olivier Gauvin expressed his pleasure at participating in the cultural event, stressing that the cooperation between NCCAL and CEFREPA institutions reflects the depth of the friendship between the two countries. He also highlighted French partnership with the NCCAL on numerous archaeological projects, including excavations on Failaka Island and the preservation of the Hellenistic castle.

In addition, he noted that a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed with the World Heritage Fund on providing joint



support to a specialized training program on the study of historic buildings in Kuwait with the aim of preparing these buildings for nomination to the World Heritage Sites List.

The ambassador emphasized the continued cooperation by French and Kuwaiti cultural entities in the fields of research and heritage preservation, praising the efforts of all teams



working in this field.

For his part, Director of CEFREPA Dr. Makram Abbas said that this important conference coincides with the selection of Kuwait as the Arab Capital of Culture and Media 2025, which gives the event a symbolic and cultural dimension. He also pointed to ongoing cooperation with NCCAL in various fields such as archaeological excavations, heritage conservation, scientific publishing, training of specialists, and data measurement, in addition to cultural initiatives, including work to nominate the Failaka site for inclusion on the World Heritage List.

He added that the cooperation also includes the humanities, the study of manuscript heritage, and related issues of preservation, processing, and access to knowledge, stressing that these efforts pave the way for a deeper expansion of cultural activities.

Addressing the conference, Associate Professor and Assistant Dean of Planning, Consulting, and Training at the College of Architecture, and Director of the three-day conference, Dr. Aseel Al-Ragam said that preserving architectural heritage in Kuwait and the region requires collaboration across multiple disciplines, especially in light of rapid urban transformations. She further noted that the conference includes several sessions focusing on ancient architecture and the best methods for its preservation.

Royal Retreats: Luxe Destinations

Where Elegance Reigns Supreme



By **Hermoine Macura-Noble**
Special to *The Times Kuwait*

In a time when high-end travel is more accessible than ever, a handful of extraordinary hotels still manage to rise above the rest—offering luxury and a taste of royal living. These majestic getaways are more than accommodations; they are immersive escapes into the worlds of heritage, craftsmanship, and impeccable hospitality.

At the top of the list is Morocco's national treasure, the Royal Mansour in Marrakech. Commissioned by King Mohammed VI, the hotel features 53 private riads—multi-level residences with their own courtyards, plunge pools, and rooftop terraces. Every detail, from the intricate zellige tilework to hand-carved cedar wood panels, is the product of traditional craftsmanship, showcasing the unmatched skill of local artisans.

Beyond its stunning architecture, the Royal Mansour offers an experience steeped in luxury and discretion. A unique system of underground tunnels allows staff to move unseen, preserving the privacy of each guest and adding an air of mystique to every stay. The hotel's world-class spa, set around a serene atrium, offers traditional hammam rituals and treatments using native Moroccan ingredients like argan oil and rose water.

In the glittering oasis of Dubai, where architectural marvels touch the sky, and luxury is a lifestyle, there exists a sanctuary that whispers of old-world Arabian elegance, the One&Only Royal Mirage. Nestled along a private stretch of Jumeirah Beach, this iconic resort is more than a place to stay; it is a destination in its own right, where grandeur, grace, and tranquility blend into an unforgettable escape.



As Heiko Schreiner, general manager at the One&Only Royal Mirage explains, the property features exquisite gardens, palm-lined pathways, and tranquil courtyards, evoking the spirit of a sultan's palace.

"What truly sets the One&Only Royal Mirage apart is its sense of place, a resort deeply rooted in Arabian culture yet cosmopolitan in its refinement. Unlike many modern properties, we are spread over 65 acres of gardens, fountains, and beachfront, creating a rare sense of space and seclusion in the heart of Dubai... This balance of grandeur and grace, of design and discretion, defines us."

Dining at the Royal Mirage is a culinary voyage that spans continents while staying



rooted in the essence of Arabia. From beachfront elegance at Drift, where Mediterranean flavors meet sea breezes and skyline views, to Asian delights at Eauzone, every meal celebrates taste and ambiance. "Dining at the One&Only Royal Mirage is integral to the guest journey. It's where culture, creativity, and connection come together. We focus on storytelling through food, blending regional authenticity with global sophistication. Beyond the cuisine, every detail, the architecture, lighting, music, and service, is curated to enhance the sensory experience and transport our guests," adds Schreiner.

The hotel also presents an exquisite selection of facial treatments tailored to rejuvenate the skin and elevate the senses at its luxurious spa. Renowned for its results-driven approach to skincare, the Carita Facial is just one treatment that is perfectly aligned with each guest's

gilded accents that transport guests to a more refined era.

Dining at the Ritz is a theatrical affair. The Michelin-starred L'Espadon serves haute cuisine under the creative direction of visionary chefs, while Bar Hemingway—a nod to the author who made it his Parisian haunt—offers a more intimate experience. Beyond the velvet drapes



and crystal chandeliers, the true magic of the Ritz Paris lies in its atmosphere. It is where time slows down; service is an art, and each guest, be they royalty or traveler, is treated with the same reverence.

Last but not least is the Taj Lake Palace in Udaipur, India. Floating like a dream in the middle of Lake Pichola, the Taj Lake Palace is a restored 18th-century marble palace originally built by Maharana Jagat Singh II. Accessible only

by boat, this ethereal hotel offers uninterrupted views of the Aravalli Mountains, luxury suites with royal décor, and staff trained to deliver traditional Mewari hospitality.

Inside, the palace whispers tales of royalty through intricate carvings, hand-painted murals, and gleaming crystal chandeliers. Each of the 83 rooms and suites is a story unto itself—some with stained glass windows, others with balconies that open directly onto the lake, offering unobstructed views of Udaipur's other iconic landmarks, such as the City Palace and Jag Mandir.

Dining here is as regal as the surroundings. At Neel Kamal, guests are treated to royal Rajasthani cuisine in a setting that mimics a 200-year-old palace dining room, while at Bhairo, the rooftop restaurant offers European fine-dining under the stars. But the essence of the Taj Lake Palace is not just in its marble or menus, it lies in the way time slows within its walls. Whether a leisurely spa treatment using ancient Indian wellness techniques or a private boat ride at sunset, every moment here feels sacred. It is no surprise that this palace has been a favorite among honeymooners, dignitaries, and dreamers worldwide.

Hermoine Macura-Noble

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





My Sky-High Stay at Tempo by Hilton Times Square

By Nourah Khan
Travel Writer
The Times Kuwait

There are moments in travel that feel like a dream—when the world outside your window becomes a living stage, and you are watching it all unfold from your own private perch in the sky. That is exactly how I felt during my stay at Tempo by Hilton Times Square, in a corner suite soaring above one of the most iconic intersections in the world.



you are never far from the city's most iconic landmarks.

I stayed in one of the hotel's corner suites overlooking Times Square, and the contrast between the buzz outside and the tranquility inside was simply magical. The décor was sophisticated and soothing: walls in soft greys and taupes, warm wood accents, crisp white linens, and subtle touches of gold that glittered as the city lights reflected off the windows.

The suite was intuitively designed—a plush king-sized bed, a stylish seating nook in front of the floor-to-ceiling glass, and modern lighting fixtures that created the perfect ambiance whether morning or night. Abstract artwork offered a quiet nod to the city's creative spirit without overwhelming the space.

The true showstopper, of course, was the view. From sunrise to midnight, I watched Times Square dance with color and

energy from the comfort of my own quiet sanctuary—a front-row seat to New York's eternal performance.

While the city outside offers endless dining options, I appreciated the grab-and-go café inside the hotel, where I could pick up fresh salads, sandwiches, or a warm latte before heading out. The vibe was sleek yet casual, ideal for modern travelers on the move.

What truly surprised me was the convenience of a small supermarket located inside the hotel. It is stocked with essentials, snacks, and even personal items—a hidden gem that made my stay incredibly convenient, especially after a long day out.

What makes a hotel memorable is not just the view or the amenities, it is how it makes you feel. At Tempo by Hilton Times Square, I felt connected to the energy of the city while enjoying the comfort of retreating into my own serene space. It gave me New York, in its fullest, brightest, and most beautiful form, without sacrificing peace or personal space.

For those looking to stay where the action is, without being overwhelmed by it, this hotel strikes the perfect balance. Whether you are capturing content, exploring landmarks, or simply soaking in the skyline, Tempo by Hilton Times Square offers an unforgettable place to pause, recharge, and watch the city that never sleeps from your own private window to the world.

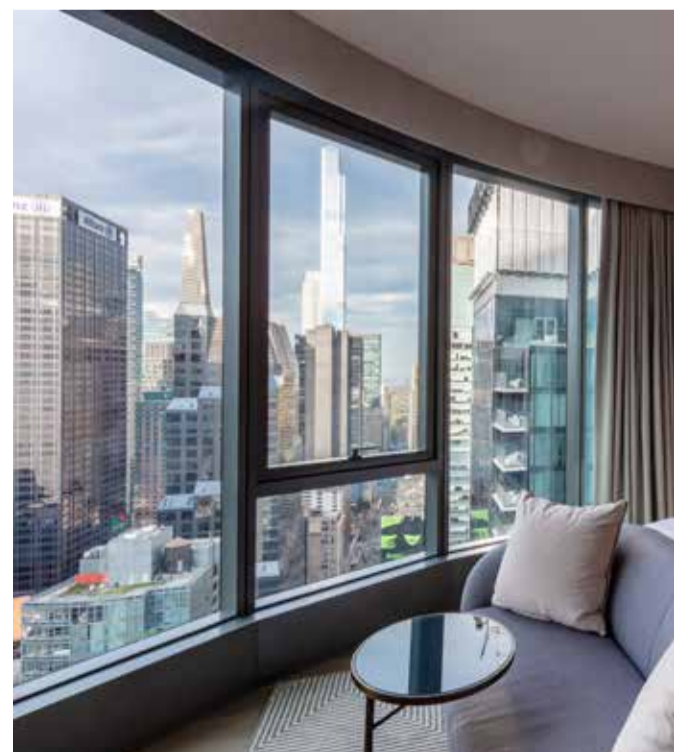
Noura Khan, a travel influencer and content creator, is a Kuwaiti national, holds a degree in law from Kuwait University and has worked as a journalist prior to taking up a position in the government. In 2018 she started blogging on travel and visited more than 57 countries since. She has more than 105k 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.



This was not just a hotel stay. It was a cinematic experience—one that brought together the bold energy of New York City with the calming refinement of modern luxury.

Tempo by Hilton Times Square is built into the TSX Broadway Tower, placing you directly above the legendary lights of Times Square. The location is more than convenient—it is immersive. From the moment I stepped outside the hotel, I was surrounded by Broadway theaters, flagship fashion houses, and the magnetic pulse of Manhattan.

But even more impressive is how much of New York you can explore on foot from here. Central Park, Bryant Park, The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Rockefeller Center, and the elegance of Fifth Avenue are all within a comfortable walking distance. For first-time visitors or seasoned travelers alike, staying here means



A Society Without Charity Is Doomed to Failure



Timothy Radcliffe

The first Englishman to be elected Master of the worldwide Dominican Order in its 800-year-history, was created Cardinal by Pope Francis on December 9, 2024.

Every Easter, Christians remember how at the Last Supper, on the eve of Jesus's crucifixion, hope seemed to be lost. Most of Jesus's closest friends were about to deny and desert him. All that lay ahead was torture and a hideous death. But in this moment of despair, Jesus made himself a gift for all, giving bread to the disciples and saying, "This is my body given for you." This act of hope extended into Easter morning, when life triumphed over death, love over hatred, and divine giving over human grasping.

As we mourn the death of Pope Francis, our hope following this Easter Sunday is that even the smallest acts of kindness can bear fruit beyond our imagining. Let's remember that when faced with 5,000 hungry people, all the disciples could muster were five loaves of bread and a couple of fish. But it was enough to feed everyone, with the blessing of the Lord of the harvest.

Our world is plagued by poverty and violence – problems that seem impossible to solve – at a time when the postwar global order is in danger of collapse. Christian charities – Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, Samaritan's Purse, and Jesuit Refugee Service come to mind, among many others – are playing an admirable role in helping alleviate this suffering. When so many people have no hope for the future, these charities' efforts in the United States and globally are fundamental to our faith.



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Pope Francis devoted his life to serving the poor and tackling injustice. His final Easter "Urbi et Orbi" message is worth reflecting on: "I appeal to all those in positions of political responsibility in our world not to yield to the logic of fear which only leads to isolation from others, but rather to use the resources available to help the needy, to fight hunger, and to encourage initiatives that promote development."

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That role will become even more important in the coming years, as major economies cut their foreign-aid budgets, inflicting profound damage on vulnerable people, each one made in the image of God. Boston University's new digital tracking initiative estimates that the near-total freeze on US foreign-aid funding and programming since January has already resulted in the deaths of more than 68,000 adults and more than 142,000 children.

Judaism and Islam also insist that charitable

giving is essential to a life of faith, rather than an optional extra. The word "charity" comes from the Latin *caritas*, which means "love." In that sense, charities express what is fundamental to our human dignity: the ability to give freely and to receive gifts without shame.

True, some aid can be patronizing and humiliating, imprisoning people in a culture of dependence. But this is not how most of these charities work. Instead, they recognize that the most vulnerable and fragile among

us bear witness to oft-forgotten aspects of human dignity: resilience, solidarity, mutual dependence, trust in God and each other, and gratitude. Jesus says that whoever reaches out to "one of the least of these" gives to him.

To turn away from the poorest is to reject God. Above all, aid sustains family life, especially the women and children whom it should be unthinkable to abandon. Nikolai Berdyaev, the Russian existentialist philosopher, wrote: "Bread for myself is a material question; bread for my neighbor is a spiritual question." For Christians, the ultimate act of giving is shown in Christ's shedding of his blood on the cross. For all of us, whether religious or not, charity is life-giving blood, which circulates in the body of society, nourishing life with its kindness.

Given this, recent reports in Reuters, Bloomberg, the New York Times, and the Financial Times that the US government may impose new curbs on charitable giving are profoundly worrying. The ability of charities, funders, and philanthropies to operate and deliver support unhindered in the US and globally is vital not only to those who benefit from aid, but also to those who give it. A society in which charitable giving is deliberately restricted would be doomed to poverty itself, both financial and moral.

Pope Francis devoted his life to serving the poor and tackling injustice. His final Easter "Urbi et Orbi" message is worth reflecting on: "I appeal to all those in positions of political responsibility in our world not to yield to the logic of fear which only leads to isolation from others, but rather to use the resources available to help the needy, to fight hunger, and to encourage initiatives that promote development."

Hope, faith, and charity are the foundational virtues of Christianity. Although many of us were running low on hope this Easter, our faith remains strong, as must our common commitment to charity.



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EXCLUSIVE TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

Climate Action Requires Debt Relief



Vera Songwe, Moritz Kraemer

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Today's global economic turmoil is not just about trade. As G20 finance ministers gather in Washington this week during the annual spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has warned that growing economic uncertainty and financial market stress pose serious threats to developing countries.

The danger is particularly acute for highly indebted economies, which are now facing weaker growth prospects and reduced financial support from the United States and other donor countries. In February, the IMF estimated that nearly half of the lowest-income countries were at risk of debt distress, at which point they may no longer be able to meet their debt obligations. That number is expected to rise as conditions continue to deteriorate.

Compounding the crisis, the world's poorest countries, especially small island developing states, are highly vulnerable to climate change and biodiversity loss. Extreme weather events like hurricanes, droughts, and floods can wipe out critical infrastructure and cripple agricultural production in an instant, while slower-onset changes like rising temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns require continuous and costly adaptation measures.

The debt and climate crises are closely intertwined. As more public funds are diverted toward disaster relief and recovery, fewer

several steps that emerging and developing economies can take to break free from the debt-climate trap and move toward a virtuous cycle of low-carbon, climate-resilient, and nature-positive growth.

First, climate and nature considerations must be integrated into macroeconomic and fiscal analyses. This is especially critical in the debt sustainability frameworks used by the IMF and World Bank to assess developing countries' fiscal health. Although both institutions have made some progress in recent years, much more needs to be done to ensure that these frameworks fully account for climate-related risks.

Equally important, such assessments must recognize not only the risks posed by climate change but also the economic benefits of investing in resilience. Their value, especially their potential to fuel medium-term growth and reduce a country's financial risks, must be properly reflected in economic and financial models to encourage governments to act.

Second, many developing countries need assistance in reducing their debt burdens. Some are already in debt distress, while others suffer from liquidity problems. Our report proposes new mechanisms for restructuring and refinancing debt in return for investments in climate adaptation and conservation projects that promote sustainable growth. Borrower countries, major global creditors, the IMF, and multilateral development banks (MDBs) must all champion such solutions.

Third, proven approaches to addressing debt, nature, and climate risks must be scaled up. These include contingency clauses in debt contracts that suspend repayments during natural disasters and various forms of sustainability-linked finance. While debt-for-climate and debt-for-nature swaps are not yet scalable due to a lack of standardization, they have already delivered vital funding for environmental initiatives, demonstrating their value and warranting greater support.

More broadly, MDBs must significantly boost lending to support low-carbon, climate-resilient, and nature-positive growth. While discussions on much-needed recapitalization are ongoing, optimizing MDB balance sheets remains the most effective way to stretch scarce public resources and accelerate sustainable development.

Lastly, our report calls for the development of new financing instruments aimed at mobilizing private capital for climate mitigation and adaptation. For example, we propose establishing a Finance Facility against Climate Change (F2C2)—a special-purpose vehicle designed to issue green bonds backed by future donor commitments. The proceeds would be directed primarily toward climate-mitigation investments in developing countries. If successful, the F2C2 could unlock up to \$1 trillion in private financing.

We also propose a new kind of equity-

like instrument to finance climate-resilient infrastructure. Investments in sea walls, flood defenses, and similar systems can significantly reduce the costs of disaster relief and recovery. As the primary beneficiaries, insurance companies must work together with MDBs to develop an instrument capable of translating these savings into returns for investors.

These are all practical, actionable proposals.

When combined with technical assistance and policy support, they could significantly improve the growth prospects of developing countries grappling with debt and climate risks. Making debt management both fiscally and environmentally sustainable is not only feasible but also essential to safeguarding global growth, which is in the interest of all countries, not just the poorest.

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In our final report, we outline several steps that emerging and developing economies can take to break free from the debt-climate trap and move toward a virtuous cycle of low-carbon, climate-resilient, and nature-positive growth.

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resources are available for climate adaptation, nature conservation, and long-term investment. This, in turn, increases vulnerability, weakens growth prospects, and drives up borrowing costs, shrinking fiscal space even further. The result is a self-reinforcing, vicious circle.

But it does not have to be this way. Over the past year, we have co-chaired the Expert Review on Debt, Nature, and Climate—an initiative launched by the governments of Colombia, Kenya, France, and Germany. In our final report, 'Healthy Debt on a Healthy Planet', we outline



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Citrus fruits improve gut biome, lowers depression risk

The medical community is only beginning to scratch the surface of knowledge on the gut microbiome, and the potential for new findings into the inter-relationship between human health and the microbiota within our bodies remains immense.

Clinical depression is a mental health disorder that impacts a person's mood and sense of self, and involves a depressed state of mind or loss of pleasure or interest in activities for an extended period of time. Depression can happen to anyone, anywhere and at any time, due to actual problems, or perceived problems, at home, work, or at school.

Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) show that an estimated 280 million people around the world live with depression, with 4 percent of men and 6 percent of women affected. Other grim WHO data on depression reveals that globally, more than 10 percent of pregnant women and women who have just given birth experience depression, and that annually more than 700 000 people die due to suicide following depression.

Although there are known, effective treatments for mental disorders, more than 75 percent of people in low- and middle-income countries receive no treatment, due to a lack of investment in mental health care, absence of trained healthcare providers, and social stigma associated with mental disorders. There are a number of risk factors for depression, including family history, hormonal changes, other chronic diseases, and constant stress.

Symptoms usually extend for over two weeks or more at a stretch and include feeling sad, irritable, a sense of emptiness, excessive guilt or low self-worth, poor concentration, sense of hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, disrupted sleep, loss of appetite or weight, feeling tired or lack of energy. Studies on depression in the past have shown that certain lifestyle interventions can help lower a person's risk of developing this condition. These include physical activity,



proper sleep, stress management, and eating a healthy diet.

Researchers at Harvard Medical School in the United States exploring the role of gut microbiome on depression have now found that including oranges and other citrus foods in the diet could help decrease depression risk. For this study, researchers analyzed data from more than 32,000 middle-aged women who had participated in the US-based 'Nurses' Health Study II'. Between 2003 to 2017, questionnaires were periodically sent to study participants to ask them about their diet and depression status.

By using DNA sequencing results from stool samples that had previously been collected by

participants, the Harvard researchers found a correlation between eating citrus fruits and an abundance of 15 species in the gut microbiome, including a bacterium (*Faecalibacterium prausnitzii*), known to be beneficial to the body as it helps lower inflammation and support the immune system.

The bacterium has also been associated with helping with gastrointestinal diseases such as irritable bowel disease (IBD), as well as obesity, and even type 2 diabetes. Additionally, scientists found a lower amount of *F. prausnitzii* in the microbiome of study participants with depression. Eating even a single medium orange a day was found to lower the risk of developing depression by about 20 percent.

The beneficial effect on depression seems to be specific to citrus fruits, as eating other individual fruits such as apples or bananas did not show any relationship between intake of these fruits and risk of depression. Scientists further validated their findings in men by analyzing data from participants in the Men's Lifestyle Validation Study, which also showed a decrease of *F. prausnitzii* in the microbiomes correlated to depression.

Researchers believe *F. prausnitzii* may help with depression by influencing levels of the neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine. These neurotransmitters regulate how food passes through the digestive tract, but they can also travel to the brain, where they have been found to elevate mood. Recent research has shown intriguing links between the gut microbiome, brain health, and mood. The new study offers a possible explanation for how eating oranges might lower future risk for depression and certainly supports the old adage: 'You are what you eat'.

Prevention strategies that work against depression can have an important impact on public health since untreated or inadequately treated depression increases a person's risk of death, not just from suicide but also from medical comorbidities,

The microbiome's influence on mental health is gaining traction among medical researchers at universities worldwide. Clinical evidence has also established that the gut microbiome does regulate many aspects of the body, from the immune system to the brain.

Experts reviewing the new findings said that the absence of particular strains of various bacteria or excessive bacteria that might regulate brain function and depression and other psycho-neurologic issues, is not surprising. The ability to treat or prevent depression through natural and simple interventions such as through the diet, is certainly much more welcome than relying on various medications that are either too expensive or not readily available to people in many parts of the world.

It is important for researchers to continue to find new ways of preventing depression, especially through more in-depth studies on the impact of gut microbiome on human health. For the next steps in their research, researchers would like to see a larger patient population, and with much more refinement in terms of bacterial species and the genetic makeup of the individuals that seem to respond to this type of natural therapy or intervention.

The medical community is only beginning to scratch the surface of knowledge on the gut microbiome, and the potential for new findings into the inter-relationship between human health and the microbiota within our bodies remains immense.

Handheld device provides faster, accurate TB diagnosis

Despite being a preventable and curable disease, Tuberculosis (TB) is the world's most deadly infectious disease, infecting an estimated 10 million people and killing over 1.5 million every year. Caused by the bacteria known as *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (Mtb) TB is also the leading cause of death of people with HIV and also a major contributor to antimicrobial resistance.

The current resurgence of TB cases in many countries, largely through recent disruptions in healthcare services, underscores the urgent need for effective, accessible diagnostic tools. Traditional diagnostic methods such as sputum smear microscopy, and more modern molecular tests and imaging techniques are often either too slow or less accurate, or more expensive to be deployed.

Now researchers at Tulane University in the United States have developed a first-of-its-kind handheld diagnostic device that can deliver rapid, accurate, and cost-effective tuberculosis diagnoses in under an hour. The device could prove especially beneficial to people in resource-limited low-income countries where health care facilities, qualified

technicians and lab equipment are not readily available or easily accessible. Over 90 percent of new TB cases occur in low- and middle-income countries.

The small hand-held, battery-operated new device, no larger than a smartphone, is the first such equipment capable of detecting *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (Mtb) DNA in saliva, in addition to its presence in blood and sputum samples. Saliva is easier to obtain than blood or sputum, and the ability to non-invasively obtain samples that yield accurate results is critical for successfully testing children.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 1 million children fall ill with TB each year and more than half go undiagnosed or unreported. In addition, an estimated total of 4.2 million TB cases were undiagnosed or unreported in 2021, largely due to limitations and costs of testing in areas with high disease burden.

Availability of a cost-effective, simple test such as the one developed by Tulane researchers is needed to not only treat patients in low-income countries where TB is a critical



public health concern, but also to prevent the spread of this deadly disease around the world. Current testing devices are larger, expensive and require either extensive on-site technology or shipment of samples to a laboratory elsewhere.

The LIT test is designed to offer a low-cost TB testing solution, with each device costing less than \$800 and less than \$3 per test. In

comparison, another commonly used TB testing device costs at least \$19,000 and the cost per test is around \$100 in certain countries. In the study, the LIT device demonstrated high accuracy in testing blood samples from children, outperforming the more expensive machine—81 percent sensitivity compared to 68 percent—and meeting the WHO criteria for TB diagnostics.

Blood serum-based testing—which utilizes the liquid part of drawn blood after coagulation—is particularly important in children and patients living with HIV who often cannot produce sputum. The LIT assay results suggest that blood samples could be used to monitor TB treatment progress, as they closely align with the improvement in patient symptoms.

The new system also reduces the expertise and equipment required for TB diagnosis which is essential for point-of-care application. Additionally, saliva-based testing for TB is particularly exciting because it can be easily obtained in all patients and can be used for portable testing without the need for blood draw.



RECIPE

Vegetable Hakka Noodles

A colorful, Indo-Chinese stir-fry dish packed with vibrant veggies, aromatic sauces, and wok-tossed noodles—perfect for lunch, dinner, or parties. These Indo-Chinese vegetable noodles are a crowd pleaser and incredibly easy and quick to make, as well as kid-friendly, making them perfect for a busy weeknight meal and for kids' lunchboxes too.

Highly customizable, you can choose your choice of noodles, veggies, and sauces to make them. You can also stir-fry protein like chicken, prawns, tofu, or paneer and throw them in for added nutrition.

Total Time: 25 minutes
Servings: 3 to 4



Ingredients:

- 200g Hakka noodles (made from unleavened, refined wheat flour)
- 2-3 tbsp oil, preferably sesame or any neutral oil
- 5-6 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tsp ginger, finely chopped
- 1 green chili, chopped (optional)
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 1 to 1.5 bell pepper cut in julienne
- 1 small carrot, (julienned)
- 1 cup cabbage, thinly sliced
- 2 spring onions, finely chopped
- For Sauce Mix:
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp red chili sauce
- 1 tsp green chili sauce (optional for added spiciness)
- 1 tsp vinegar
- 1 tsp tomato ketchup
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- Salt, to taste
- MSG, a pinch (optional)

Instructions:

- Boil 6-7 cups of water in a large pan. Add the noodles and cook as per packet instructions until al dente. Drain and rinse under cold water. Toss with 1 tsp oil to prevent sticking. Set aside
- Meanwhile, in a small bowl, mix soy sauce, chili sauces, vinegar, ketchup, pepper, and salt. Set aside.
- Heat oil in a wok or pan over high flame. Add chopped garlic, ginger, and green chili. Stir-fry for a few seconds.
- Add onions and white parts of spring onion. Sauté for 1 minute.



- Add capsicum, carrots, and cabbage. Stir-fry for 2-3 minutes on high flame until slightly tender yet crunchy.
- Toss in the cooked noodles. Pour the prepared sauce over them. Stir well to coat everything evenly. Cook for another 2 minutes, tossing continuously.
- Turn off the heat and garnish with chopped spring onion greens. Serve

hot on their own or pair them with your favorite gravy dishes.



Chef Chhaya Thakker

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

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