



Foreign teachers warned on private tuition

MPs call for canceling law ratifying price hikes

The government's reported plans to gradually cut subsidies, so as to remove them totally by 2020, hit a snag this week in Parliament with members calling for a rollback of earlier subsidy cuts that had been approved by the previous parliament.

Like its other oil producing Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) neighbors, low oil prices in recent years have adversely affected Kuwait's fiscal accounts and the country posted its first budget deficit in 16 years of KD4.6 billion in fiscal year 2015/16.

Public subsidies account for nearly five percent of Kuwait's spending and totaled over US\$3 billion in 2016. Despite the profligacy in providing utilities and other essentials at highly subsidized rates, the government had been reluctant to introduce much needed subsidy reforms and was



the last among GCC countries to implement fuel price hikes.

However persisting lower oil prices in last couple of years and runaway expenses that led to budget deficits

prompted the government to do a rethink on cutting subsidies and streamlining expenses. It was earlier reported that a committee set up by the finance ministry to review

subsidies and other social support schemes had recommended the removal of all subsidies by 2020, though the ministry of finance denied such reports.

In January 2015, prodded by fiscal pressures, the government lifted subsidies on diesel and kerosene price by more than threefold from 55 fils a liter to 170 fils a liter. However, barely a month later, following price increases in the market and political opposition, Kuwait National Petroleum Corporation (KNPC), the state's arm for downstream oil operations, lowered the price of these two commodities to 110 fils per liter.

The authorities made another attempt to cut fuel subsidies by imposing new tariffs on petrol in September. The fuel price hikes, ranging from 40 to 80 percent based on the grade of petrol used,

caused severe public dissent and eventually led to the dissolution of the parliament.

The new parliament, with a strong contingent of opposition candidates who now make up nearly half the elected members in parliament, has vowed to restrict the government's ability to impose new fees on citizens and cut subsidies.

On Tuesday, Safa al-Hashem, a spokesperson for the National Assembly's financial and economic committee, said members of parliament had proposed cancelling a law passed by the previous assembly which ratified a rise in electricity and water tariffs. MPs also proposed a measure confirming the right of the National Assembly to regulate and approve any move by the government to impose fees.

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Expatriate issue sparks deep rift in public domain and online

Fierce debate among the public, in the media and on online social media platforms, have arisen following calls by some lawmakers to drastically cull the number of expatriates in the country. Following cursory statements against expatriates by some parliamentarians, the public space has been riven with comments by those who support a quick and dramatic reduction of the number of expatriates in the country and those who favor a more tempered approach.

around 4.4 million are foreigners.

Last week, Safa Al Hashem, the lone female lawmaker in parliament painted a drastic picture of expatriates and outlined what the state should do to reduce the number of foreigners in the country. She called for making expatriates pay heavy taxes for using services rendered by the state. "Foreigners are recruited to meet the shortfall in jobs that locals cannot fill, except in Kuwait where expats are hired to block citizens from taking up jobs," she said.



With the recent election of parliamentarians who more often than not speak to their constituencies from the podium of parliament, the National Assembly has been the venue for airing several popular but controversial issues.

The topic of the high numbers of expatriates in Kuwait has been raked up quite aggressively with several lawmakers repeatedly highlighting the need to address the demographic imbalance in Kuwait, where 70 percent of the total population of

"We need to impose taxes on expatriates in the context of limiting their numbers. There are taxes and even high fees in every Arab country. Taxes should be imposed in return for the services the country is providing for the huge numbers of foreigners that have compounded the terrible imbalance of demographics in Kuwait," she was quoted by local media as having said.

The government should charge foreigners for using electricity, water and should make them pay all kinds of

taxes, she added, arguing that "these actions constitute a way to resolve imbalances in the demographics of Kuwait." Al Hashem called on the government to act without delay and rejected the statement by the labor and social development minister that solving the issue of the high numbers of expatriates needed at least 15 years.

However, while the reaction to Al Hashem's statements was rather muted, Kuwaiti social media platforms went into overdrive after MP Abdul Karim Al Kandari said that public action was urgently needed to deal with the "settlement" of foreigners in Kuwait. "What is happening is settlement," he argued.

Although the lawmaker, who sought a special debate in parliament on foreigners, said Kuwaitis were not against expatriates and considered them as their dear brothers who assisted them in building the nation, the reference to them as "colonists" provoked an outcry in the community.

"It is wrong to refer to expatriates as settlers and solutions to the demographic imbalance should be found without accusing foreigners or abusing them by lawmakers to achieve political mileage," social and religious scholars were quoted as saying in the media and online.

"Such labels are likely to increase tension and hatred between citizens and expatriates, and Kuwait does not want either since it is the state of humanity and its Amir is a decorated global humanitarian leader. Statements should not be inconsistent with Kuwait's constitution or with the international conventions and should at the same time take into account the interests of the citizens," they added.

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Businesses 'best allies' to fight climate change and poverty

Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called for a new generation of partnerships with the business community to reduce the effects of climate change and combat poverty.

In his address the Secretary-General underlined the importance of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, noting that conditions for an inclusive and sustainable development are a main method of preventing crises and conflicts.

Guterres said: "The best allies of all those that want to make sure that the Paris Agreement is implemented, the best allies today in the world are probably in the business sector and it is very important to fully mobilize them." He expressed that partnerships with businesses will help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - which, when fully implemented, would see returns on investments of \$30 billion per year.

Such partnerships will be mutually beneficial, generating investment for the private sector but also enabling the private sector

"to play an absolutely essential role in making sure that those goals are effectively achieved."

He spoke particularly on the "alignment of the core business of the private sector with the strategic goals of the international community." He asserted that



only the private sector will be able to provide the necessary innovation, capacity, products and services to develop new areas in the economy.

He added that only the private sector will be able to create enough jobs to stabilize societies. Clear dialogue and strong partnership between governments, international organizations and the private sector is the only way to allow modern advances to facilitate "fantastic increase in the well-being of people" and prevent them from turning into "a nightmare for mankind."



ASEAN: One vision, one identity, one community

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has managed to successfully survive for 50 years and will celebrate its golden anniversary in 2017. In many ways, ASEAN is a political miracle that over the last five decades has faced and overcome significant challenges. But, like any institution, ASEAN's success has been the result of its unique circumstances and, as circumstances change, so too will its future.

For more than a century, Southeast Asia has been riddled with racial animosities, ideological conflicts, border skirmishes and full-blown wars that Western colonial powers leveraged to further divide people and societies and eventually managing to turn citizens of these nations into mere subjects of British, Dutch and French empires. Despite the end of World War II and the withdrawal of Japanese forces that had occupied all of Southeast Asia, peace did not prevail in the region. The problems left behind by history and exacerbated by the Colonial rule, including territorial disputes and distrust, continued to divide Southeast Asians.

In 1949, when the headquarters of the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East was moved from Shanghai to Bangkok and in 1954, when the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), was setup in Bangkok, many believed that a semblance of regionalism was finally arriving in Southeast Asia.

However, initial indigenous efforts at forming regional organizations aimed at furthering political and economic cooperation were short-lived, including the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), that brought together Federation of Malaya (comprising Singapore), the Philippines and Thailand in 1961, folded in less than two years; Maphilindo, which was formed by the Federation of Malaya, the Philippines, and Indonesia, also lasted for only about one month in the summer of 1963. It was scuttled by the eruption of border clashes in the Konfrontasi (Confrontation) between Indonesia and Malaya.

In 1966, the end of Konfrontasi created the right circumstances and a new opportunity for a few regional visionary leaders to press for mutual cooperation so that Southeast Asian countries could get to know one another better, begin to work together for common regional interest, and coexist in peace. It was this convivial atmosphere that led to the formation of ASEAN.

The foreign ministers of five Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand gathered in Bangkok and officially established the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) through their declaration of 8 August, 1967. The declaration noted that one of the first purposes of the newly founded organization would be to 'accelerate the economic growth, social progress, and cultural development in the region through joint endeavor.'

At the birth of ASEAN, the Vietnam War was escalating. Two members, the Philippines and Thailand, took an active role in supporting South Vietnam and the United States in the fighting against North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, including sending troops and opening their air and naval bases to US forces. This in turn led



to the intensification of communist insurgency with Chinese support both in the Philippines and Thailand. At that time, Beijing supported North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, and vehemently attacked ASEAN as just a 'front organization' set up by the United States to contain communist China.

Circumstances began to change in 1972 with the historic meeting in Beijing between then US President Richard Nixon and Chinese leader Mao Zedong. The meeting was instrumental in bringing to an end the Vietnam War in 1976. The end of the Vietnam War also marked the end of strategic rivalry between the US and China, which has prompted them to compete for influence over smaller countries in the region for over two decades, and helped usher in a new regional, strategic and political order.

All this is very relevant to the question of ASEAN's future today. After 40 years, the era of uncontested US primacy appears to be coming to an end. In 1972, China acquiesced to US leadership in Asia in return for recognition of China's communist government and access to Western finance, markets and technology to support

China's growth.

Now, as China's economy seems poised to overtake that of the US, Beijing wants to revise the rules and seeks a bigger regional leadership role. Unless the two nations can find a way to accommodate each other's conflicting aims, escalating rivalry is inevitable. Indeed, it is already happening in Asia today. As rivalry grows between Washington and Beijing, each once again seeks to maximize its own influence among ASEAN members and minimize that of its rival. While Washington generally uses carrots, Beijing has mostly used sticks but the aim is essentially the same. As China and the US become more strategically active in the area, ASEAN's solidarity will be harder to sustain.

Despite its immense geographic, demographic, economic, religious, ethnic and linguistic diversities and disparities, in the intervening years since its inception, for 50 years ASEAN has been able to successfully promote economic, social and political engagement among its member states, whose numbers have doubled from its original five nations.

Vietnam, which was initially seen as an

aggressive outlier in the region, was subsequently admitted to ASEAN in July 1995, becoming its seventh member. Earlier, Brunei Darussalam had joined ASEAN in January 1984, one week after gaining independence from Britain. The ASEAN membership expanded further to include Laos and Myanmar in July 1997. The admission of Cambodia into ASEAN, which was postponed following a failed coup attempt in Phnom Penh in early July 1997, was admitted in April 1999. In March 2011, Timor-Leste submitted its formal application, which still remains under consideration, for the ASEAN membership.

The vast diversities among ASEAN states make it imperative for its members to make decisions by consultation and consensus based on sovereign equality. As such, there is no voting in the organization and members take turns in chairing ASEAN for a calendar year.

In the early 1990s ASEAN ventured into establishing a free trade area to attract more foreign direct investment (FDI) and create more jobs. ASEAN has also completed FTA agreements with China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, and New Zealand in its continuing efforts to enhance economic competitiveness in the wake of the economic rise of China and subsequent economic opening of India.

The ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) has now developed into the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) with a wide-ranging and comprehensive cooperation agenda aimed at making ASEAN a highly integrated regional market and regional production base. The AEC constitutes one of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. The other two are the ASEAN Political-Security Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.

ASEAN leaders announced the formal realization of the ASEAN Community at the end of 2015, and community-building in ASEAN is continuing under a new road-map toward 2025 based on the common aspiration 'One Vision, One Identity, and One Community'.

The survival of ASEAN successfully for five decades is truly a political miracle. Behind the 50-year success-story of ASEAN is no doubt the statesmanship and visionary leadership of its founding fathers including the likes of former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and former Indonesian President Suharto. These men had the foresight to see how much their countries stood to gain by cooperation, and how much they had to lose from rivalry.

In this context it is worth remembering how far this regional cooperation and collaboration was from being true in the 1960s - and how far it is from being true in so many other parts of the world today - to see how remarkable the 50-year achievements of ASEAN has been and how crucial it is for it continue in the years ahead.

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World Economic Forum and East African Community

The 47th edition of the World Economic Forum, which was held in Davos, Switzerland from 17 - 20 January under the banner of 'A responsible and responsive leadership', focused on improving global cooperation and collaboration.

In this era of social media, it is clear that more people can bring their views and opinions to the front and hence the call for leaders to be responsive and responsible. The communication

chance to look at economic growth trends and compare with other parts of the world to improve for the better.

Despite the economic growth experience on the continent and region, in particular, in recent years, it has not had much effect on job creation and has further widened inequality gaps, a crucial 'broken ligament' in the society that calls for urgent watch out, said Elsie Kanza, the head of Africa at WEF.

She said by engaging investors

barriers. "We can do better as a region to improve intra-regional trade by eliminating trade barriers and making cross-border trade more effective," she said.

Other conversations at the forum important to the region, Ms. Kanza said, were diversifying the economy beyond the current sectors to create more jobs, increase value of commodities, and reduce vulnerabilities of global economic shocks.

"There is also need to improve the agriculture sector to enhance production and value. Being one of the highest employing sectors, we can do more to increase value of products and exports," she said.

The EAC bloc should consider stepping up economic integration, especially in financial markets, to deepen access to finance and inclusion. "The region can do better in infrastructure for integration, education to deliver better skills, technological readiness and digital literacy," Kanza said of areas the bloc should seek to learn from the forum.

While it was encouraging that on regional level, efforts and campaigns such as a visa-free Africa were being advanced to enable free movement of goods and services across the continent, further economic integration was essential to make the region attractive for foreign investments.

The EAC stood a chance to attract more foreign direct investments as investors are attracted by larger markets rather than small and fragmented national markets.

Multi-billion dollar support for transforming African economies

A global coalition of donors pledged to support the structural transformation of African economies and the African Development Bank's High Five priorities by agreeing on US\$7.06 billion over the next three years for development projects and programs in the 38 lower income African countries supported by the African Development Fund (ADF).



"We are appreciative of the support of the donors of the African Development Fund, especially in the difficult global economic environment," said the President of the African Development Bank Group, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina.

"I also appreciate the strong support of our donors for the vision, direction and ongoing reforms of the Bank Group to deliver greater developmental impacts for Africa. The African Development Fund will continue to play a significant role to build resilience for the economies of low income countries in Africa, especially those experiencing

conditions of fragility or vulnerability," added Adesina.

The ADF is the concessional window of the African Development Bank Group, which contributes to poverty reduction and economic and social development in low-income African countries. The funding will support the five key priorities of the African Development Bank Group: Light up and Power Africa, Feed Africa, Industrialize Africa, Integrate Africa, and Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa. In addition, it will address four critical cross-cutting areas: fragility, governance, climate change and gender.

The ADF will shift more resources to support the private sector in the region, even as it helps countries dealing with fragility to address their most pressing developmental challenges. The increased resources devoted to these countries reflect their strong need for concessional funding.

Recognizing the private sector's key role in the transformation of African economies, the Fund will also allocate over \$280 million to the Private Sector Credit Enhancement Facility. This Facility will leverage approximately \$840 million of private sector financing, of which at least 50 percent will be in higher risk countries. The Fund will continue to promote financial instruments that crowd in resources from the private sector, such as financial guarantee products.



and interaction on this platform betters both parties in shedding light on the issues at hand.

However, the main focus of deliberations at the World Economic Forum (WEF) was increased cooperation and partnerships to reinvigorate economic growth, which has stagnated in the recent past due to the prevailing unfavorable circumstances in the world's economy.

For the East African Community (EAC) the global forum presented a

and multinationals at the forum, the region was identifying models for a better improved business environment and ecosystem, which could see more firms enter the EAC market. Leveraging benefits of integration is important to maintaining growth and spurring more entrepreneurs.

Although intra-regional trade is still significantly low compared to other parts across the world, Ms. Kanza said efforts across the bloc have significantly reduced non-tariff

Ghana to review \$918 million IMF deal



Ghana's new government is planning to review its US\$918 million program with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as it seeks more funds for its spending plans.

The three-year program, signed by the previous government in April 2015, imposes strict targets for revenue collection and spending.

It aims to reduce inflation, the public debt and the budget deficit and restore rapid growth to Ghana's economy. However, newly elected

President Nana Akufo-Addo has promised to cut taxes, a proposal which is likely to set the country on a collision course with the IMF.

Economists say the Fund cannot change its overall program objectives but interim targets can be modified in the light of performance between each IMF review. As a result, the new government could negotiate less onerous conditions if it finds that targets set for the end of 2016 were not met.

In an indication that this may happen, the new government says the budget deficit stood at around 8 percent at the end of 2016, higher than the 5.3 percent targeted under the program.

Analysts say the Bank of Ghana will likely cut benchmark interest rates by 50 basis points to 25 percent in the next monetary policy review because of the fiscal deficit overshoot and recent pressure on the cedi currency. The government is also aiming at restoring central bank financing of the deficit.

Africa50 to develop solar power in Nigeria

Africa50, the infrastructure fund for Africa, has signed a joint development agreement (JDA) for an 80 MW solar photovoltaic independent power project in Nigeria. The project, near Dutse in Jigawa state, will be co-developed with Scatec Solar, a Norwegian integrated independent solar power producer, and Norfund, the Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries.

Africa50 is an infrastructure fund owned by African governments, the African Development Bank and institutional investors, with the mission of mobilizing long term savings from within and outside Africa, as well as private sector funding to promote infrastructure development in Africa.

The project includes the construction of a dedicated 132 kV overhead transmission line that will connect the plant to the Dutse substation. The electricity will be sold to NBET, Nigeria's bulk purchaser of electricity, under a 20-year power purchase agreement. Under the JDA, Africa50, Scatec Solar, and Norfund commit their resources



and funding to complete the development phase of the project and prepare it for financial close.

Benefiting from excellent irradiation, the plant will help to alleviate Nigeria's significant power deficit and diversify the country's energy mix. This will improve energy security and provide more reliable electricity to businesses and households, contributing to Nigeria's sustainable economic growth and greenhouse gas emission reduction objectives.

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Breaking the WHO's glass ceiling



Peter A. Singer and Jill W. Sheffield
Peter A. Singer is Chief Executive Officer of Grand Challenges Canada. Jill W. Sheffield is an independent consultant and longtime advocate for women's health and rights.

This year, the World Health Organization will elect a new Director-General. Last September, WHO member states nominated six candidates for the position: Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Flavia Bustreo, Philippe Douste-Blazy, David Nabarro, Sania Nishtar, and Miklós Szócska. On January 25, the WHO Executive Board will shortlist three candidates; and in May, the World Health Assembly will elect one of those candidates to succeed Margaret Chan.

All of the candidates have presented a vision for how they would lead the organization, and we personally know and admire several of them. But, ultimately, we believe that Ghebreyesus is the most qualified person for the job. Our endorsement is based on three considerations that are important in any hiring process, and especially for a position such as this: the candidate's past achievements, leadership style, and the diversity that he or she brings to the table.

With respect to the first consideration, Ghebreyesus has a proven track record of success. As



Ethiopia's health minister from 2005 to 2012, he championed the interests of all of the country's citizens, and strengthened primary-care services. He created 3,500 health centers and 16,000 health posts, and dramatically expanded the health-care workforce by building more medical schools and deploying more 38,000 community-based health extension workers.

Ghebreyesus's efforts now serve as a model that other countries seek to emulate as they try to achieve universal health coverage for their citizens. He is the only candidate who has achieved such results at a national level. Ghebreyesus is also a longtime

champion and advocate of gender equality and the rights of women and girls. In fact, his efforts to strengthen Ethiopia's health system played a crucial role in more than doubling the percentage of Ethiopian women with access to contraception, and in reducing maternal mortality by 75 percent.

When Ghebreyesus was Ethiopia's foreign minister from 2012 to 2016, he gained extensive diplomatic experience, not least by leading negotiations for the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the international community's plan to finance the United Nations Sustainable Development

Goals. This same knack for diplomacy is now needed to bring WHO member states together for cooperative action on collective health challenges.

Ghebreyesus's leadership style is also perfectly suited for this role: he speaks last, and encourages others to share their views. He also knows how to spot and nurture talent, and how to bring the best out of the people around him. He would undoubtedly boost organizational morale and motivate the staff to deliver maximum value and efficiency – to the benefit of all member states and their citizens. And while he is a receptive listener, he is also decisive, which is an attribute

for the leader of the world's foremost health institution, especially during global public-health emergencies.

Then there is Ghebreyesus's extensive leadership experience within global health institutions. As Board Chair of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria between 2009 and 2011, and as Chair of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership between 2007 and 2009, Ghebreyesus pushed through sweeping changes that dramatically improved both organizations' operations. What's more, he helped them raise record-breaking financial commitments from donors: \$11.7 billion for the Global Fund, and \$3 billion for Roll Back Malaria.

This is precisely the kind of experience and expertise that the WHO needs in today's global health environment, and it explains why the African Union has officially endorsed Ghebreyesus's candidacy. Amazingly, in its almost 70-year history, the WHO has never had a Director-General from Africa. This fact alone is not a reason to pick a candidate; but in Ghebreyesus's case, his direct experience working in developing countries makes him uniquely qualified to tackle our toughest global health problems, which tend to hit developing countries the hardest.

It is time to break the WHO's African-leadership glass ceiling. Sustainable development is truly achievable only when leaders of global institutions are from the communities most affected by those institutions' work.

Ghebreyesus's candidacy presents the WHO with an historic opportunity, which its Executive Board should seize on January 25.



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A New Year's Development Resolution



Kaushik Basu, François Bourguignon, Justin Yifu Lin, and Joseph E. Stiglitz



The United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union and the United States' election of Donald Trump as its next president have laid bare developed-country citizens' dissatisfaction with globalization. Rightly or wrongly, they blame globalization – or, at least, how it has been managed – for stagnating incomes, rising unemployment, and growing insecurity.

Developing-country citizens have been expressing similar feelings for much longer. Though globalization has brought many benefits to the developing world, many object to the neoliberal economics that has guided its management. In particular, the so-called Washington Consensus, which calls for unfettered liberalization and privatization, and macroeconomic policies that focus on inflation, rather than employment and growth, have attracted much criticism over the years. Is it time to revise the conventional economic wisdom?

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) thought it was a question worth considering. So it invited 13 economists from around the world (including the authors – four former chief economists of the World Bank) to do just that.

We concluded that some of the ideas underlying traditional development economics may indeed have helped to create some of the economic challenges the world faces. In particular, it is now evident that simply maintaining balanced national budgets and controlling inflation, while leaving the market to do the rest, does not automatically generate

sustained and inclusive growth. With that in mind, we identified eight broad principles that should guide development policy.

First, GDP growth should be viewed as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Growth matters mostly because it provides the resources needed to bolster various dimensions of human wellbeing: employment, sustainable consumption, housing, health, education, and security.

Second, economic policy must actively promote inclusive development. Rather than expect the development tide to lift all boats, policymakers should ensure that no group is left behind. They must tackle, head-on, the deprivations – from unemployment to inadequate access to health care or education – that cause so much harm to the poor.

Beyond the moral imperative, such an approach would help to maintain economic performance, which can be threatened by excessive income inequality, via social tensions, political turbulence, and even violent conflict. Indeed, some of the recent political tumult – including Brexit and Trump's victory – has been driven partly by excessive inequality.

Third, environmental sustainability is not an option. At the national

level, income growth that comes at the cost of environmental damage is unsustainable, and therefore unacceptable. At the global level, climate change is a threat to health, livelihoods, and habitats. It is imperative that climate-change mitigation and adaptation policies be an integral part of development policy, not an addendum, at both the national and international levels.

Fourth, there needs to be balance among market, state, and community. Markets are fundamentally social institutions, and they require regulation to allocate resources efficiently. In the last quarter-century, under-regulated markets have been the root cause of many adverse economic outcomes, including the 2008 financial crisis and untenable levels of inequality.

For markets and non-market actors alike, the state is indispensable to effective regulation. Civil-society institutions, for their part, are essential to ensure that the state functions efficiently and fairly.

Fifth, macroeconomic stability demands policy flexibility. Traditional policy advice fetishized a balanced budget – sometimes to the detriment of macroeconomic stability. A better approach would regard fiscal and external balances as medium-run constraints. That way, fiscal stimulus, such as public investment, can help to invigorate sluggish economies and lay the groundwork for longer-term growth.

The key is to ensure that public debt and inflationary pressures are well managed during the good times. Sixth, the impact of technological change on inequality demands special attention. Recent technological advances have displaced labor, increasing capital's share in income and, thus, the level of inequality. After all, automation enables companies to spend less on wages, thereby boosting shareholders' returns.

Unfortunately, what is fundamentally a labor-versus-capital problem has often been portrayed as a labor-versus-labor problem, with some in advanced economies claiming that developing countries are taking their jobs. This has contributed to the rejection of trade openness and calls for protectionism. What is really needed, however, is action to enhance human capital; to adapt and improve income-redistribution instruments; and to promote equality in market incomes, including by boosting workers' bargaining power.

Seventh, social norms, values, and mindsets affect economic performance. An economy works better when there is trust among people. Social norms can also help to curb corruption and encourage fair practices. Civil society and governments should therefore promote conducive values and norms.

Eighth, the international community has an important role to play. Global forces and national policies create externalities that

constrain policy options. Perhaps the most talked-about recent example is the impact of advanced-country monetary policies on capital flows into and out of emerging economies. Other examples include migration restrictions, trade policies, and regulations on tax havens.

Only international institutions can manage the externalities created by such policies. The key to ensuring that they do so fairly and effectively is to amplify the voice of developing countries within them.

As 2016 comes to an end, so should the old modes of economic thinking that have produced so much economic hardship and fueled so much tumult. Past economic development, together with advances in economic thinking have provided us with a wealth of insight into what works and what does not. That knowledge should be at the core of the new approach to development that the world needs.

Kaushik Basu, a former chief economist of the World Bank, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University. François Bourguignon, a former chief economist of the World Bank, is Professor Emeritus of Economics at the Paris School of Economics. Justin Yifu Lin, a former chief economist of the World Bank, is a professor at Peking University. Joseph E. Stiglitz, a former chief economist of the World Bank, is University Professor at Columbia University.

Expatriate issue sparks deep rift in public domain and online

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, real estate agents and investors warned against making scathing statements against foreigners or imposing various taxes on them and hiking their living costs. "If the latest statements about expatriates materialize, we will have a grave issue since 90 percent of the flats in Kuwait are rented by foreigners," said Abdul Rahman Al Habib, the

head of the real estate agents union. On Sunday, a health official observed that the health ministry simply cannot do away with the expatriates working in the health sector, and that includes doctors, nurses, technicians as well as administrators and accountants and legal experts. The official pointedly added that Kuwaitis represent only six percent of the 22,000 nurses – male or female – working in the country.

MPs call for canceling law ratifying price hikes

Continued from Page 1

The government however has the leeway to work its way around budget deficits and can afford to drag its feet on subsidy reforms, mainly because it has huge foreign assets, which are among the largest for any sovereign wealth fund and is favored with a low debt to GDP ratio. Moreover, although the 2016/17 budget envisions a deficit of KD9.7 billion, this does not paint a true picture as it

understates Kuwait's fiscal balance. In its annual budget, the government regularly posts the amount it moves to its Fund for Future Generations (FFG) as an expense, and it also does not include the billions it earns from its investments as an income.

Adding these two items at an assumed average oil price of \$40 per barrel leads to a small surplus of KD700 million, or 1.9 percent of GDP, but clearly not a deficit for the current fiscal year.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

World Order 2.0



Richard N. Haass

President of the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of the new book, *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*, from which this article is adapted.

For nearly four centuries, since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 ended the Thirty Years' War in Europe, the concept of sovereignty – the right of countries to an independent existence and autonomy – has formed the core of the international order. And for good reason: as we have seen in century after century, including the current one, a world in which borders are forcibly violated is a world of instability and conflict.

But, in a globalized world, a global operating system premised solely on respect for sovereignty – call it World Order 1.0 – has become increasingly inadequate. Little stays local anymore. Just about anyone and anything, from tourists, terrorists, and refugees to e-mails, diseases, dollars, and greenhouse gases, can reach almost anywhere. The result is that what goes on inside a country can no longer be the concern of that country alone. Today's realities call for an updated operating system – World Order 2.0 – based on 'sovereign obligation', the notion that sovereign states have not just rights but also obligations to others.

A new international order will also require an expanded set of norms and arrangements, beginning with an agreed-upon basis for statehood. Existing governments would agree to consider bids for statehood only in cases where there was a historical justification, a compelling rationale, and popular support, and where the proposed new entity is viable.

World Order 2.0 must also include prohibitions on carrying out or in any way supporting terrorism. More controversially, it must include strengthened norms proscribing the spread or use of weapons of mass destruction. As it stands, while the world tends to agree on constraining proliferation by limiting countries' access to the relevant technology and material, the consensus often breaks down once proliferation has occurred. This should become a topic of discussion at bilateral and multilateral meetings, not because it would lead to a formal agreement, but because it would focus attention on applying stringent sanctions or undertaking military action, which could then reduce the odds of proliferation.

Another essential element of a new international order is cooperation on climate change, which may be the quintessential manifestation of globalization, because all countries are exposed to its effects, regardless of their contribution to it. The 2015 Paris climate agreement, in which governments agreed to limit their emissions and to provide resources to help poorer countries adapt, was a step in the right direction. Progress on this front must continue.

Cyberspace is the newest domain of international activity characterized by both cooperation and conflict. The goal in this area should be to create international arrangements that encourage benign uses of cyberspace and



discourage malign uses. Governments would have to act consistently within this regime as part of their sovereign obligations – or face sanctions or retaliation.

Global health presents a different set of challenges. In a globalized world, an outbreak of infectious disease in one country could quickly evolve into a serious threat to health elsewhere, as has happened in recent years with SARS, Ebola, and Zika. Fortunately, the notion of sovereign obligation is already advanced in this sphere: countries are responsible for trying to detect infectious disease outbreaks, responding appropriately, and notifying others around the world. When it comes to refugees, there is no substitute for effective local action aimed at preventing situations that generate large refugee flows in the first place. In principle, this is an argument for humanitarian intervention in selective situations.

But translating this principle into practice will remain difficult, given divergent political agendas and the high costs of effective intervention. Even without a consensus, however, there is a strong case for increasing funding for refugees, ensuring their humane treatment, and setting fair quotas for their resettlement. Trade agreements are, by definition, pacts of reciprocal sovereign obligations regarding tariff and nontariff barriers. When a party believes that obligations are not being met, it has recourse to arbitration through the World Trade Organization.

But things are less clear when it comes to government subsidies or currency manipulation. The challenge, therefore, is to define appropriate sovereign

obligations in these areas in future trade pacts, and to create mechanisms to hold governments accountable. Establishing the concept of sovereign obligations as a pillar of the international order will take decades of consultations and negotiations – and even then, its acceptance and impact will be uneven. Progress will come only voluntarily, from countries themselves, rather than from any top-down edict. Realistically, it will be difficult to forge agreement on what specific sovereign obligations states have and how they should be enforced.

Complicating matters further, US President Donald Trump's administration has espoused an "America first" doctrine that is largely

inconsistent with what is being suggested here. If this remains the US approach, progress toward building the sort of order that today's interconnected world demands will come about only if other major powers push it – or it will have to wait for Trump's successor.

Such an approach, however, would be second best, and it would leave the United States and

the rest of the world worse off. Now is the time to begin the necessary conversations. Globalization is here to stay. Moving toward a new international order that incorporates sovereign obligation is the best way to cope. World Order 2.0, predicated on sovereign obligation, is certainly an ambitious project – but one born of realism, not idealism.

“When it comes to refugees, there is no substitute for effective local action aimed at preventing situations that generate large refugee flows in the first place.”

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Expats suffer as dispute over priorities delays health documents

BSK celebrates Burns Night



Students from the British School of Kuwait (BSK) were delighted to be invited to support the International Women's Group (IWG) January meeting where an interactive presentation on Scotland was delivered by Alexia Lodge, wife of the British Ambassador to Kuwait. January is a special month in the Scottish calendar as the famous poet, Robbie Burns, is commemorated at Burns Night events, which includes poetry, speeches, songs and other traditions.

BSK's Middle Department Choir performed some well-known songs such as Loch Lomond and Ye Banks and Ye Braise. The program featured a sword dance performed by Teodor Bejancu from The British Academy of International Arts (BAIA). An array of cultural treats from Scotland was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

Various centers of the Public Services Company, which is responsible for issuing health insurance for expatriates, have been experiencing congestion lately to the extent that expatriates are forced to line up outside the buildings for a long time starting from the early hours of every day.

The crisis remains critical as Ministry of Health and the company has been blaming each another. The company claims that the ministry has demanded it to close the office of express transactions for 'VIP' companies which have been paying double the fees for health insurance cards in the past 14 years, which is KD 2 instead of KD 1 that is paid in the first-floor offices in Jabriya area.

Assistant Undersecretary for Financial Affairs at Ministry of Health Mohammed Al-Azmi affirmed that the ministry did not order the suspension of any service or closing down of any registration centers that serve



expatriates. In a statement to the daily, Al-Azmi explained that the company should be informed, through a letter signed by the Minister of Health, about the ministry's unwillingness to renew the contract at least six months before the contract expires.

This is as per the terms and conditions of the contract signed between the ministry and the Public Services Company, so that the company is aware in advance about the non-renewal of the contract.

Regarding the center in Jabriya, Al-Azmi said it is within the provision of the contract and must not be closed without the ministry's knowledge, affirming that the move taken by the ministry is legal and within its rights and authority. He revealed that the

relation between the ministry and the company dates back to 14 years or more.

Al-Azmi indicated that the ministry may sign a new contract with the Public Services Company or with another company following the expiry of the current contract until the Government Insurance Company resumes its operations in which the government has a 24 percent equity stake and citizens have 50 percent.

He insisted that the reports released so far in this regard are not logical especially most of the statements issued by a source from the company who did not disclose the identity of the official who is accusing the ministry of hindering the operation of the insurance offices.

NSH - A paragon of team work



Knowledge, development and sharing are integral to NSH, and support for these values is fundamental to the sustainable development of our business. NSH strongly believes that an educated society translates into an innovative skilled workforce and our goal is to build a knowledge based society within NSH Campuses and to add value to social development.

This value centric CSR initiative is one of the long term strategies of NSH and targets the overall development of members so as to make a difference in their learning experience. NSH believes that partnering in implementing this wonderful initiative is an inspiring force that has been acknowledged among others by the CEO of KNPC who awarded the company with the Best Employee Welfare Award - 2016.

The level of employees' happiness is the level of NSH's move towards better performance. From the employees' point of view, it is a land of welfare measures. Employee

engagement leads to a dedicated workplace approach resulting in the right condition for all the members of the organization to give their best each day. NSH is not an exemption. Proactive spirit, coupled with fuller involvement and facing challenges bring the success. The committed workforce makes several celebrations of successful completion of works that become the good sign of how this deeply etching team offers more

of their capability and potential thus landing memorable recognitions.

Team work coupled with "no compromise in safety and quality" is the platform that carries NSH forward, and is realized through on-the-job and off-the-job activities. The proven proactive spirit, full involvement and overcoming challenges through innovative solutions bring success. The timely advice of the veterans with zest adds more feathers in our

employees' cap. It is no surprise therefore that NSH remains the single largest employer in the Middle East, accommodating close to 90,000 members, the majority of them being from India. The work force also enjoys after-work activities, such as icebreaking evenings filled with fun and enthusiasm. Thanks to the moral support of the Indian Embassy in Kuwait, NSH also maintains the value of being a socially responsible

corporation by conducting programs such as UNO's International Day against Drug Abuse, World Heart Day, Master Brain Quiz, Beach Cleaning Activities, National Essay Contest for students, Parents of Pride, Employee engagement programs, Employees' Talent Show, celebrating the cultural events and several others. The talents shown so far are only a tip of an iceberg, and there is a long way to go, says NSH Vice President Sabu.



Foreign teachers warned on private tuition

Undersecretary of Ministry of Education Haitham Al-Atari insisted that legal measures will be taken against expatriate teachers who offer private tuitions to students without the approval of the ministry. These legal measures include termination of the teacher's contract. In a statement to KUNA on Monday, Al-Atari affirmed the genuine keenness of the ministry to ban the phenomenon of private tuitions which violates the laws and regulations. He revealed that expatriate employees are barred from taking up jobs other than their professional occupation without official permission, adding, "Those who break these regulations will face disciplinary measures." Kuwait's educational authorities have been regularly issuing warnings against private tutoring in order to curb this growing phenomenon which



has grave social and economic implications. The reason behind the growth of this phenomenon is the fear among students that they will not pass their examinations without the help of private tutors. Parents, due to their keenness for the educational success of their children, send the latter to private tutors, ensuring their children are part of small study groups if they cannot have access to individual tutoring. Gazi Al-Rashidi, a professor at Kuwait University warned against the booming business of private tuitions,

indicating that it now involves all stages of formal education — from high schools to universities — and is causing a deplorable social and economic situation in the country. He revealed, "Tutors are making a fortune of about KD 500 a day or KD 15,000 a month, as each student now pays up to KD 150 for one hour of private tuitions." "This has created a new culture. Today, several university teachers are booking tables in restaurants and high-class cafes in Kuwait City to offer private courses. Most of these

courses cost KD 150 per hour and tutors spend six hours a day to give private lessons, thereby making KD 900 a day. In one case, a teacher made KD 1,000 per day by offering private tuitions. By continuing to do this, he can become a millionaire within two years," Al-Rashidi added. However, he warned that this leads to extremely heavy financial burden on families. Al-Rashidi said, "During exam days, families have to put aside more than KD 800 to finance private courses. The tuitions are not limited to science subjects. This phenomenon is now turning into a general culture in Kuwait, as parents seem helpless and authorities are maintaining silence." He lamented that private tuitions is in fact a black market where parents and students are forced to access in order to secure educational success, adding, "Teachers are taking

full advantage of the situation, seeking to make easy gains in the shortest time possible. All this is a clear indication of the deficiencies in the educational system of Kuwait." Al-Rashidi stressed that the social and economic impacts of this phenomenon are too significant to be ignored, stressing the need to "stop this hemorrhage and prevent education from becoming a way for teachers to make easy money by selling the illusion of success of students and compromise their future." According to the Central Statistics Bureau, there are 30,915 non-Kuwaiti employees in the Ministry of Education, including 17,110 women and 13,805 men, as of 2015. This figure is the highest in any of the state ministries. Ministry of Health is in second place with a total of 29,814 expatriate employees.



ICSK organizes mega carnival

The Indian Community School, Kuwait (ICSK) conducted the 14th mega carnival on Friday, 20 January at Senior branch in Salmiya. The ICSK carnival was inaugurated by the Ambassador of India to Kuwait H.E. Sunil Jain, who was the Chief Guest on the occasion. The ICSK Senior campus was completely transformed with stalls, offering a vast assortment of interesting games for all age-groups. The variety

of food stalls brought the nostalgia of traditional food treats for the expatriates. The ICSK children from all the branches were given a wonderful opportunity to showcase their talents, and the toddler fashion show was undoubtedly popular. The community enjoyed the various cultural events such as Jhankar dance, magic show, flash mob, DG dance group, karate demonstration, and more.



Aman Exchange, your guide to easy and simple money remittance

At any social event of NRI's in the Gulf, when talk turns to the economy and prospects of going forward, a discussion point of interest to all participants is the rupee rate vis a vis local currencies. Since most GCC currencies are pegged to the US Dollar with the exception of the Kuwaiti Dinar, which is linked to a basket of currencies, the strength of the dollar does determine the amount an NRI sends home most of the time. In January 2016 the rupee was at 66.92. In comparison today, the rupee is at 67.90, which shows the rupee has held its ground while most currencies weakened against the dollar. The Indian economy, easily withstood the payout of the \$20 billion outflow of FCNR deposits, which in any other emerging market, would have made a big impact on the exchange rates. Post demonetization, again the rupee held its ground and although it touched 68.86 against the mighty dollar, it bounced back and is currently at 68.00 levels. With a forex kitty of over 360 billion dollars, and the petro dollar (India's biggest forex outflow) off from its lofty levels in the past, the RBI is sitting pretty strong and unless extraordinary events occur, the humble rupee will continue to be your stable companion. - Contributed by AMAN EXCHANGE CO. WLL.



Aman Exchange is one of the fastest growing exchange companies in Kuwait today. Within an year of operations, the company has established 13 branches, making it the first exchange company in Kuwait to expand at this rate. The Aman success story is based on the

experience of its senior management, comprising of Mr. Adel Yousef Al Muzaini and Mr. E.D.Titus. Both of them come with over 25 years' experience in the Exchange house business, and are well known in the Kuwait market for their past experience in setting up and managing leading exchange companies. They head a strong team of hand-picked professionals with experience in all aspects of the money exchange business. Today, Aman commands a reputation for very competitive rates and lower remittance costs. Customers also have the option to ask the company to monitor a particular rate for a currency and inform them when the target rate is reached so they can decide to make their money transactions. All of these advantages, backed by a strong customer service set up and correspondent banking tie ups all over the world, means discerning customers in Kuwait are increasingly heading to Aman Exchange for all their money remittance needs.

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Widespread 'wasta' used for overseas healthcare

Recent statistics of State Audit Bureau (SAB) indicate that 6456 citizens received overseas treatment from January 2014 to January 2015 via 'wasta' and interference of some MPs and other personalities. It called for relevant steps to avoid the repetition of such incidents, while limiting the phenomenon of favoritism.

In response to the observations of SAB, Ministry of Health said overseas treatment is a completely technical issue determined after health check by the relevant committee.

However, SAB indicated many cases referred to the technical committee were rejected more than once before their approval, which confirms the interference of some influential people in changing previous decisions of the committee.

It pointed out that many cases were referred directly to the committee with signatures of the Minister of Health and the Undersecretary of Health. This reveals the extent of inequity in the issue of sending patients for treatment abroad that led to suspicions of embezzlement and forgeries in documents.

Meanwhile, the ministry stressed that patients are given more than one chance with the technical committee, indicating patients have the right to go for another checkup even if the initial request is rejected, because the supreme committee may have a different opinion.

Report indicated reservations on the part of some health offices that rejected

advance payments since the process prevents supervision and audit of hospital receipts and impedes financial monitoring. It stressed the importance of limiting dealings with the hospitals that accept financial guarantee and avoid hospitals that require advance payment.

In response, Ministry of Health said the technical committee has considered the recommendations of the medical offices taking into account the quality of medical services offered to patients to facilitate their recover.

It suggested the development of an integrated automatic system connecting different directorates of the Health Ministry with the adoption of TPP system that connects concerned directorates with the Overseas Treatment Directorate and other health offices abroad, indicating the ministry is waiting for response of the Ministry of Finance and approval of necessary budget for that purpose.

ICSK Seniors pay homage to their motherland



On 16 January, the students of the Indian Community School (ICSK) Senior branch expressed their patriotism towards their motherland, India through a spectacular presentation. They spoke eloquently on their allegiance towards their country.

In the powerpoint presentation the students highlighted Kafi Azami's poem 'Kar chale hum fida', which portrays the sacrifice of the soldiers who lost their lives while protecting the nation.

The display helped in arousing the nationalistic fervor of the students under the able guidance of the teachers.



KIHSE to feature distinguished guest speakers

The second 'Kuwait International Health, Safety and Environment Conference and Exhibition' (KIHSE), which is an initiative by the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries, will take place on 15 - 16 February, 2017 in the Regency Hotel and Conference Center in Kuwait City. It will be held under the main theme 'Meeting the Challenges Ahead'.

The organizing committee has recently announced that Minister of Electricity and Water/Minister of Oil for Kuwait H.E. Essam Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq, will be welcoming Minister of Oil and Gas of Oman H.E. Mohammed Hamad Al-Rumhy, as a key participant at the event.

The attendance of both Ministers reinforces the huge importance of HSE awareness in Kuwait and the GCC region and they join an increasing number of internationally renowned experts who have committed to give their insight and support the regions efforts to develop a culture of commitment to health, safety and environment awareness.

Leading the confirmed speakers list are:

H.E. Mr Essam Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq, Minister of Electricity and Water/Minister of Oil, State of Kuwait;
H.E. Mohammed Hamad Al-Rumhy, Minister of Oil and Gas, Sultanate of Oman;
Nizar M. Al-Adsani, Chief Executive Officer, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation;
Mohammad Husain, President and CEO, EQUATE;
John Raine, Vice President, QHSE, Weatherford, Houston, USA;
Dr. Steven Flynn, Former Head of Group Safety & Operational Risk, BP, London, UK;
Dr. Brent Pasula, Senior Vice President, HSSE, Petrofac, Dubai, UAE;
Sergey Peresypkin, Director HSE, Baker Hughes, Dubai, UAE;
Dr. Eamonn Naughton, Group Head of Operational Risk, Process Safety Engineering & HSE, BP UK;
Justin Hughes, Managing Director, Mission Excellence.

Alongside the conference, which features plenary sessions and 3 distinct tracks focusing specifically on health, safety and the environment, the exhibition is attracting an increasing number of specialized companies who will be showcasing their latest products and services at the event.

Participants are expected to include, in addition to KPC and its subsidiaries, many international and regional oil and gas companies, regional national oil companies, HSE consultants and suppliers; oil and gas service providers, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions.

KIHSE is an initiative by KPC, and is organized in collaboration with Global Events Partners Ltd (GEP), a major UK-based event management company affiliated to the dmg::events network.

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Population imbalance tied to large number of expat workers

Secretariat General of Higher Council for Planning and Development has attributed part of the population imbalance problem to the arrival of a large number of expatriate workers for execution of mega developmental projects in the country.

It stressed that the reform process should focus on bringing to Kuwait only those who can add value to the country.

Statistics of the Secretariat General for Planning affirms that the

policy for population structure which it has put in place aims at reducing the rate of increase in number of expatriates from 3.5 percent, which is the annual average rate between the years 2010 and 2014, to about 2.4 percent during the development plan period until it reaches 2.2 percent by 2020.

This means the growth rate will be reduced by half. Based on the needs of the second development plan, the estimated increase of labor force will be about 68,317 individuals per year until 2020.

The secretariat said the reason behind the increase in the number of expatriates compared to citizens during the years between 2010 and 2014 is the increase in dependence of



labor market especially the private sector on expatriate workers.

The secretariat has prepared

specific measures to restore the population balance in favor of national labor force such as allotting

maximum period of residence for expatriate workers and increasing the period of residence based on educational qualifications.

The measures also include reducing the number of marginal and unskilled workers and placing restrictions on bringing domestic workers. There will be also restrictions on monitoring and evaluating workers necessarily required by companies and projects.

Those implicated in visa trading will be punished. In the same context, Secretary General of Higher Council for Planning and Development Dr. Khaled Mahdi affirmed that the population structure has a strategic priority as it contributes to the economic model that Kuwait has adopted.

CRIME

Kuwait to pay slain victim's kin KD 90,000 in blood money

The Cassation Court presided over by consultant Khalid Al-Muzaini has overturned the verdict of the Court of Appeals and ordered a Kuwaiti who had mistakenly killed a compatriot to pay blood money to the victim's family.

The verdict also compels the insurance company to pay the amount. The plaintiffs (heirs of the Kuwaiti's) had filed a case against the insurance company and the Kuwaiti to pay KD90,000 compensation for the victim.

Over 100 kilos of 'spoilt' fish seized, eateries get citations

During a crackdown to ensure the validity of foodstuffs sold to customers by restaurants, stores and central markets, the Markets and Foodstuffs sector of the Municipality has confiscated 140 kilos of fish unfit for human consumption and issued 39 citations for various reasons.

Some of the citations were issued against employees handling the foodstuffs because they did not carry the health certificates. Director of follow-up services of at the Municipality Eman Al-Kandari has stressed of the keenness of Municipality inspectors to apply the laws strictly.

Bomb found on Abdali Road detonated

A bomb that was discovered on an open ground alongside Abdali Road was dealt with, without resulting in any casualties. According to security sources, when the Operations Room of Ministry of Interior received information about a strange object on an open ground alongside Abdali Road, securitymen rushed to the location to discover it is a bomb that is part of the remnants of the Iraqi invasion in Kuwait.

Man taken into custody for setting friend on fire

Personnel from the General Department for Criminal Investigation have referred an unidentified person to the Public Prosecution for allegedly attempting to set fire to his bedoun friend. It has been reported the suspect posted a clip on the social networking website. In the clip he is seen setting fire to his friend and this angered his followers on Twitter. In the meantime, police are looking for the bedoun who carries the citizenship of the Dominican Republic. During interrogation, the friend said it was a joke and that both of them had agreed to take part in the 'act'.

Imposter nabbed for impersonation and swindling

Personnel from e-Crimes Department have arrested a 22-year-old Kuwaiti for impersonating a well-known artiste and swindling people by breaking into the artiste's social media account. The artiste, whose identity has not been disclosed, has filed a complaint with General Department for Criminal Evidences accusing the suspect of stealing his account and attempting to swindle his followers. Following the complaint police put the account operator under surveillance and caught him. During interrogation he said to have admitted to using a new apparatus which he brought into the country from overseas to steal the accounts of important personalities.



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Seven prisoners executed by Kuwait

Kuwait has executed seven prisoners for the first time since 2013, including a member of the ruling royal family.

They were hanged at the central prison, according to a statement carried by state news agency.

The executed prisoners included nationals from the Philippines, Egypt, Ethiopia and Bangladesh.

They were convicted of a variety of capital offences including murder, attempted murder, kidnapping and rape.

The convicts were allowed final visits on Tuesday by relatives in the cases of the Kuwaitis and by representatives

from their diplomatic missions for the foreigners.

Among the executed prisoners was Nusra al-Enezi, a Kuwait national, who was convicted of setting fire to a tent during a wedding party for her husband, who was marrying a second wife. The blaze killed more than 50 people.

The Bangladeshi, Mohammad Shaha Mohammad, was sentenced to death in 2009 for kidnapping, rape and theft in Jahra. The Filipina, Jakatia Pawa, was convicted in 2008 of premeditated murder while the Ethiopian was also convicted of murder in 2008.

One Egyptian, Sayyed Radhi Jumaa, was convicted in 2008 for premeditated murder while the other Egyptian, Sameer Taha Abdul Majed, was sentenced to death in 2009 for murder and theft.

Vietnam refinery up and running in July - KPI

Kuwait's Vietnam Refinery will begin operating in July with a capacity of 2,000 barrels per day (BPD), CEO of Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) Bakheet Al-Rashidi said on Wednesday.

In a statement to the press on the sidelines of the third Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Energy Strategy Forum, Al-Rashidi noted that KPI is currently testing the refinery's equipment before activating the main units. Moreover, he added that

the project is part of the company's efforts to look into lucrative investments to boost its revenue and lure the global refining industry to do business with the company. On the status of KPI, Al-Rashidi said that the company is a powerhouse in Europe, where it distributes around 450,000 BPD.

The forum will feature discussions over developments in the global market and its effects on Gulf nations, while aiming to promote regional investment in the energy sector.

IKEA recalls MYSINGS beach chair due to risks

According to the law number 39/2014 and in coordination with the Consumer Protection Department of the Ministry of Commerce, IKEA urges customers who have bought a MYSINGSÖ beach chair before February 2017 to bring it back to the IKEA store for replacement or a full refund.

After washing the fabric seat it is possible to re-assemble the chair incorrectly, leading to risks of falls or finger entrapments. IKEA has received five incident reports in which MYSINGSÖ beach chair collapsed during use due to incorrect re-assembly. All five reports included injuries to fingers. The reported injuries happened in

Finland, Germany, USA, Denmark and Australia. Safe products are a top priority at IKEA and all our products shall comply with international and national legislation as well as relevant standards. MYSINGSÖ beach chair has gone through relevant mechanical, fabric and chemical tests with approved results.

Upon receiving the incident reports, a full investigation was initiated. This led to an improved re-design to further mitigate the risks of incorrect re-assembly and injuries. The updated chair is planned to be available in IKEA stores from February 2017. Proof of purchase (receipt) is not required for a replacement or a full refund.



ILF conducts legal seminar and bids farewell to Adv. Mili

Indian Lawyers' Forum (ILF), the association of Indian Law Graduates and lawyers in Kuwait conducted an in-house legal seminar and get together on 20 January at Farwaniya, to bid farewell to its member Advocate (Mrs.) Mili, who is leaving Kuwait for good.

Adv. Mili hailing from Kannur, Kerala was an active and prominent member of Indian Lawyers' Forum right from her arrival in Kuwait. Being a lawyer with a practicing background, her sharing of professional knowledge and experience have been an asset to the forum and its activities.

The function was presided over by the President of Indian Lawyers' Forum, Adv. Thomas Panicker. In his address the president acknowledged

the contributions of Mrs. Mili to the Forum.

In the legal discussion followed, the subject was presented by Adv. (Mrs.) Mini. 'Rent Law and Labour Laws of Kuwait' were the main subjects for discussion. Adv. Thomas Stephen and other Advocates also participated in the legal discussion.

President Thomas Panicker presented a memento on behalf of the forum to Adv. Mili and wished her all success in her career and life ahead. Mrs. Mili in her speech remarked that his tenure as Indian Lawyers' Forum member was eventful and enjoyable. She extended her thanks to all the forum members and assured her continued services to the Forum and its activities in future.

BSK U15 Girls' football team claims first place



The Under 15 Girls' Football Team at The British School of Kuwait (BSK) finished top of the table after round one of the winter school football league, winning all their games.

BSK beat The English Academy 4-0, The New English School 2-1, The English School of Fahaheel 4-1, and The Kuwait English School 1-0. The girls worked well together, with an outstanding performance from Shareefa AL-Mesaed upfront. Shareefa was the top goal scorer of the day, creating many one on one attacks and opening up the other teams' defenders.

Other goal scorers were Georgia Ainger, who scored 3 goals, and Siobhan Eagles and Gabriela Pickard scoring 2 each. Mame Diarra Mbacke made some great saves to keep the girls on their winning streak, as well as Andrea Dick and Azeezan AL-Azemi did well to put in important tackles from defense.



TSK organizes child parent bonding event

The Sunshine Kindergarten (TSK) in Salwa is proud to be part to be part of British International for Education (BIE) which has a reputation through its schools, notably The British School of Kuwait (BSK), for delivering the best of British education for almost 4 decades in Kuwait. The highest priority to all TSK team members is to ensure children are happy, confident and independent learners. To achieve this, its partnership with parents is paramount.

TSK held its own Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) parent workshop on Tuesday, 17 January, which was attended by numerous parents and family members of the TSK children from Crèche. The exciting fun-filled session allowed parents to experience the wonderful activities on offer throughout a normal school day.

Bhavans swarmed by spell-tacular bees



The grand finale of the fourth edition of Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan's Spell Bee, a spell-the-word contest, ended successfully at Indian Educational School (IES) Kuwait in the most magnificent manner on 21 January. The school auditorium was filled with 'linguists', who witnessed the spellers being tested on complex words in four rounds. Grant Butler, the Country Director, the British Council Kuwait was the chief guest of the day.

The audience in the auditorium and the many thousands glued to the live stream were fascinated by the competitors' grasp of language. After 3 hours of brain testing, the winners in each category were declared by the vice principal of primary and kindergarten Lalitha Premkumar with

two spellers in category 5 tied at the last juncture.

The winners are as follows: Category 1: Manani, Bahrain Indian School Bahrain (1st place), Rayan Abdulla Hashik, Indian Educational School Kuwait (2nd place) and Vihaan Malpani, Modern International School Oman (3rd place). Category 2: Rahul Wavare, British School of Kuwait (1st place), Sunish Sunil Bayalan, Bahrain Indian School Bahrain (2nd place) and Evin Jeston, Private International English School, Abu Dhabi, UAE (3rd place). Category 3: Fawaz Ahmed, Private International English School Abu Dhabi, UAE (1st place), Steve Chalil Biju, Bahrain Indian School Bahrain (2nd place), Rajvi Anishkumar Shah, Modern International



School Oman (2nd place) and Darrel Jovan, Indian English Academy School Kuwait (2nd place).

Category 4: Karthik Sudheer, Indian Educational School Kuwait (1st place), Abhay Lejith, Private International English School Abu Dhabi, UAE (2nd place) and Anushka Unnit Mankodi, Modern International School Oman (3rd place). Category 5: Shevins Kosseril Kunjumon, Indian Educational School Kuwait (1st place), Sumaiya Asif Sayed, Indian Educational School Kuwait (1st place) and Theres Rosa Sajan, United Indian School Kuwait (2nd place). Prize money Rs. 50,000, Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 5000 were presented to the winners and runners up in all the five categories.

India and the UAE: Envisioning a partnership for the future

The deep and abiding relationship between India and the United Arab Emirates received a further boost this week, with visit of His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces to attend India's 68th Republic Day celebrations as Chief Guest.

Shaikh Mohammad Al Nahyan who arrived in India on Tuesday at the head of a high-level delegation was received by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The invitation to the UAE leader to attend this year's Republic Day celebrations underlines how close ties between the two neighborly nations and their leaders have become in recent years, especially since the visit to UAE in 2015 by Prime Minister Modi, and the reciprocal visit in February 2016 by Shaikh Mohammad to New Delhi. Over the nearly five decades since the two countries began diplomatic relations, and even much earlier when the seafaring traders began the enduring commercial and

cultural ties between the two regions, the people of India and the UAE have enjoyed strong and cordial relations. Today, India is the largest trading partner of the UAE, and the UAE is the third largest trade partner of India, following China and the United States. The volume of bilateral trade between the two countries in 2015 was to the tune of US\$50 billion. In addition, the UAE is also the biggest Arab investor in India, accounting for more than 80 percent of investments from Arab countries in India.

In recent years, bilateral relations between the two countries has transformed from commercial and diplomatic ties to take on the shape of what has been referred to as a 'comprehensive strategic partnership'. One of the aims of this new partnership is on the security front to confront the security threats that afflict multiple states in the region. On Wednesday, Shaikh Mohammad and Prime Minister Modi issued a joint statement reiterating that India and the UAE are committed to building a modern



strategic partnership based on the two countries' shared values of religious tolerance and the importance of building open, multi-cultural societies that are respectful of differences related to faith.

The communiqué continued, "Our countries have decided to intensify our defense cooperation, expanding the scope of our training programs, increasing our joint exercises and

exploring opportunities for co-production of defense materials. The presence of a contingent from the UAE Air Force in Delhi, marching down Rajpath in step with their Indian counterparts as part of the Republic Day parade, is a powerful visual symbol of cooperation."

The statement noted, "As a major exporter of crude oil, the UAE has been a reliable partner in India's quest

for energy security. But we are also looking beyond fossil fuels at the world that we want to bequeath to future generations. The UAE's decision to establish MASDAR was a trend-setter for the world, and India has set up extremely ambitious targets for the share of renewable energy in its own energy-mix. The UAE plans to join the Indo-French initiative to establish an International Solar Alliance and India is an ardent advocate and partner of the Abu Dhabi based International Renewable Energy Agency, IRENA.

Today, we are moving towards a deeper, stronger and more intense engagement with each other. This rests on a strategic vision shared by us and on the extensive network of personal and people to people contacts between us.

"We are confident that we have created strong and robust platforms and mechanisms to take our relationship to new heights. India and the UAE are determined to fulfill the promise of our partnership for our people and our region," concluded the joint statement.

Late King's Royal Rainmaking Project continues to benefit population in Thailand

Water scarcity is one of the most pressing issues facing our world today. The United Nations estimates that more than 40 percent of the global population live in conditions where there is shortage of water. In most of the agrarian countries where agriculture represents a significant source of GDP, the need for water consumption in the sector has inflated to more than 80 percent of the overall demand.

In Thailand, farming activities take up almost 70 percent of total land use. This requires a high amount of water supply, mostly for the agro-industrial sector. The result is a sporadic dry spell throughout the country. Coupled with high levels of deforestation over decades, the lack of rainfall intensifies aridity, especially during the dry season.

Having shown interest in science and technology at a young age before enrolling in the Faculty of Science at the University of Lausanne, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej employed his knowledge based on his vision to improve the living conditions of the people, especially for disadvantaged farmers who continue to suffer from shortages of water. In 1955,



during a visit to the most remote areas in Thailand's northeastern provinces, His Majesty observed how weather conditions were cloudy, yet not producing any precipitation. The incident marked the beginning of artificial rain making, acknowledged by Thais as the 'Royal Rainmaking Project'. His Majesty had realized the feasibility of this project after conducting a series of relevant research on meteorology and weather modification.

The first experiment was conducted on 1 July 1969 under the supervision of His Majesty, with Mom Rajawongse (M.R.) Debariddhi Devakula, an expert in agricultural engineering, as an

assistant. With the initial result being a success, in 2003 His Majesty was granted a patent from the European Patent Office for weather modification through the Royal Rainmaking technology.

Ever since the invention was introduced, it has gone through a series of transformations, enabling transfers of technological expertise and attracting cooperation from different actors with a common hope to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the artificial rainmaking process. The project later evolved into the Bureau of Royal Rainmaking and Agricultural Aviation under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. The establishment

manifests the technology's success and practicality in alleviating the water resource management crisis in Thailand.

The success of artificial rainmaking drew global attention and brought in requests for knowledge sharing from several Asian countries. The calling has been pronounced as far as the Middle East, where farmers suffer from arid climates and extremely long periods of dry season. Jordan, experiencing a range of 20-200 millimetres of rain annually, has so far been the only country eligible for the operation due to its uniquely disadvantaged geography and climate conditions. The operation is expected to ease the side impact of climate change suffered by the country, which causes a decrease in precipitation from 15 to 60 percent per year.

Since its birth in 1969, the Royal Rainmaking project continues to alleviate drought problem in Thailand's rural area enabling farmers to harvest without disruption. The Royal Rainmaking Project was made possible through His Majesty's persistent efforts, talent, skill and most importantly, a sincere and genuine regard for his people and country.



GCC countries rank high in \$26.9 billion remittances to Philippines

Overseas remittances to the Philippines reached \$26.9 billion in January to November 2016 period, growing 5.1 percent year-on-year, according to official figures. The majority of these remittances come from Gulf countries - the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar - and the United States, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the central bank, said.

Remittances from overseas Filipinos reached \$2.4 billion in November 2016, rising 18.4 percent from the year-ago level. Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando M. Tetangco, Jr., said the increase in personal remittances was driven by the 7.8 percent expansion in transfers from land-based workers with work contracts of one year or more to reach \$20.9 billion.

By country source, the bulk of cash remittances came from the US, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Japan, Qatar, Kuwait, Hong Kong, and Germany. Combined remittances from these countries accounted for more than 80 percent of the total cash remittances in the first 11 months of 2016, the bank said.

The World Bank estimated in October last year that weak global growth is likely to slow down remittances to developing countries, adding inflows from Filipinos abroad will reach the slowest pace in 10 years.

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Clean homes help control asthma in kids

Many things in the home contribute to asthma symptoms and attacks in children, says a new study. Though dust mites and mold top the list, there are a whole bunch of other causative agents in homes, including furry pets, smoke, cockroaches and airborne fragrances and chemicals.

While infections are also cause for asthma in kids, the new study, which limited itself to environmental causes of asthma, showed that reducing indoor allergens and pollutants can help control children's asthma, reducing their need for medication.

Asthma is a chronic condition that inflames and narrows airways in the lung that lead to wheezing, tightening in the chest, shortness of breath, coughing and in general making breathing difficult.

The makeup of children's airways may leave them especially vulnerable to environmental



allergens and pollutants. Also, many kids spend time on the floor where allergens collect, the report authors noted.

The first step to controlling asthma is to learn what causes it. Allergy testing through either a blood test or an allergist's skin test can provide some vital answers. After identifying the environmental culprits, appropriate measures can be taken.

Dust mite allergy, which is a problem for as many as 6 out of 10 kids with asthma, can be helped by removing carpeting and stuffed toys, the report noted.

Vacuuming with a HEPA filter, encasing your child's mattress and box spring in allergy-proof covers, and regularly washing bedding in hot water are also recommended for controlling dust mites.

If your child is allergic to cats, another common trigger for asthma, then there is no other alternative than to find the cat a different home. "The allergen that the pet produces is airborne and very sticky, and so even when you try to isolate the pet, you don't really have any improvement in the child's asthma," the researchers stated.

Indoor pollutants can also trigger asthma in some kids. The study showed that smoking, even of electronic cigarettes, is the major contributor

to indoor pollution. Giving up smoking, or at least banning it inside the house is key to removing this allergen from the house.

Parents should talk with their pediatrician about possible environmental triggers if the child is using asthma medication or experiencing symptoms several times a week.

Other highlights from the new study show that about half of children with asthma are sensitive to mold. Two-thirds of kids with persistent asthma are allergic to cats and dogs.

Cockroach and mouse droppings are also common allergy-asthma triggers. Concentrations of mouse allergens in poor urban homes can be 1,000 times higher than those found in suburban homes.

Gas stoves and other gas appliances can also play a role in some asthma flare-ups. Chemicals in air fresheners and cleaning agents often irritate airways and lead to asthma attacks.



Insight into why hair turns gray as we age

A team of European scientists have finally solved a mystery that has perplexed humans throughout the ages: why our hair turns gray as we age.

Latest research on this topic reveals that going gray is caused by a massive build-up of hydrogen peroxide due to wear and tear of our hair follicles. The peroxide winds up blocking the normal synthesis of melanin, our hair's natural pigment. Hydrogen peroxide is a key ingredient in bleaches and in hair dyes that people regularly use to change the color of their hair. All of our hair cells make a tiny bit of hydrogen peroxide, but as we get older, this little bit becomes a lot. We bleach our hair pigment from within, and our hair turns gray and then white.

The researchers made this discovery by examining cell cultures of human hair follicles. They found that the build-up of hydrogen peroxide was caused by a reduction of an enzyme that breaks up hydrogen peroxide into water and oxygen. They also discovered that hair follicles could not repair the damage caused by the hydrogen peroxide because of low levels of enzymes MSR-A and B that normally serve this function.

Further complicating matters, the high levels of hydrogen peroxide and low levels of MSR-A and B, disrupt the formation of another enzyme, tyrosinase, which is essential to the production of melanin in hair follicles. Melanin is the pigment responsible for hair color, skin color, and eye color. The researchers speculate that a similar breakdown in the skin could be the root cause of vitiligo.

Computer program to help ease ringing in the ears

People suffering from tinnitus, the sensation of constant ringing in the ears, could find relief from an online program that trains the brain, says a new study.

According to a medical definition, tinnitus is the perception of sound when no actual external noise is present. People with tinnitus can have poorer working memory, deficiencies in attention, and



slower mental processing speeds and reaction times. However, an internet-based program to improve mental acuity appeared to help them deal with the bothersome ear noise, researchers said.

"Fifty percent of the patients in the study reported improvements in memory, attention and ability to deal with tinnitus," said researchers behind the study at Washington University School of Medicine in the US.

While it is referred to as "ringing in the ears," tinnitus can cause many different perceptions of sound, including buzzing, hissing, whistling, swooshing and clicking. Tinnitus can be temporary or ongoing. Millions of people experience tinnitus, often to a debilitating degree.

The Brain Fitness Program-Tinnitus from the company Posit Science, is a mental training program designed to use the brain's ability to improve thinking and memory skills, the researchers said. The program is made up of 11 interactive training exercises, including simple sound stimuli, continuous speech and visual stimuli. The goal is to get people to stop paying attention to their tinnitus and let it fade into the background. The researchers assessed the benefit of the program using brain scans and tests of memory and attention. These were done at the start of the study, and again eight weeks later. Brain scans of those who underwent the treatment showed changes in the areas responsible for attention and mental control.

Half of those who completed the online program said they felt there were improvements in their tinnitus as well as improvements in memory, attention and concentration, compared with patients who didn't use the program.

While the program needs to be refined to make it more effective and more studies need to be done to replicate these findings, the researchers said. They added, "This is an important study that once again demonstrates the considerable benefits of these safe and noninvasive measures that can be provided to potentially improve the lives of people suffering from chronic and bothersome tinnitus."



Too much sitting, sedentary lifestyle, ages you faster

A new study into ageing reveals that people tend to age faster if they sit too much and follow sedentary lifestyles.

Researchers at the University of California, who assessed nearly 1,500 older women who were aged 64 to 95, found those who sat most of the day and got little exercise had cells that were biologically older by eight years than the women's actual age. "Our study found cells age faster with a sedentary lifestyle. Chronological age doesn't always match biological age," the researchers said.

Though the study does not establish a cause-and-effect relationship between accelerated aging and lack of exercise, yet the researchers noted that "discussions about the benefits of exercise should start when we are young, and physical activity should continue to be part of our daily lives as we get older, even at 80 years old."

Specifically, the researchers found that women who sat for more than 10 hours a day and got less than 40 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily had shorter telomeres — the caps at the end of DNA strands that protect chromosomes from deterioration.

Telomeres naturally shorten with age, but health and lifestyle factors such as smoking and obesity can accelerate the process. Shortened telomeres are linked with heart disease, diabetes and cancer, the researchers explained in background notes.

The researchers also found that women who exercised for at least 30 minutes a day did not have shorter telomere length even if they tended to sit longer. The team behind the study plans to conduct more studies in the future to examine the link between exercise and telomere length in younger adults and in men.



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Robots taking over oil rigs

The Iron Roughneck, made by National Oilwell Varco Inc., automates the repetitive and dangerous task of connecting hundreds of segments of oil drilling pipes as they are pushed down deep ocean water and into oil-bearing rock. The machine has also cut to two from three the need for unskilled labor.

As the global oil industry begins to climb out of a collapse that took 440,000 jobs, anywhere from a third to half may never come back. A combination of more efficient drilling rigs and increased automation is reducing the need for field hands.

Energy companies, which rely on large, complex equipment for drilling and maintaining oil wells, are particularly well-positioned to benefit from automation. Previously workers who had to rely on a toolbox full of wrenches and tube-benders to do a job can now rely on a laptop as their main tool.

During the oil-boom years, companies were too busy pumping oil and gas to worry about head count. The two-and-a-half-year downturn gave executives time to rethink the mix of human labor and automated machinery in the oil fields. The oil industry is acutely aware of the heavy reliance on manpower, after the world's four largest oil-service companies spent \$3.12 billion in severance costs during the past two years.

More robotic drilling ultimately means lower labor costs, being more competitive and having fewer workers near some



of the most dangerous tasks. Rigs have gotten so much more efficient that the shale industry can now use about half as many people as it did at the height of the boom in 2014 to suck the same amount of oil out of the ground.

The impact of technology extends well beyond the wellhead. That means an engineer can design an oil well at his desk. With the press of a button, an automated system would identify the equipment needed from a supplier, create a 3D model and send instructions for building it out into the field.

Google committed to Voice, launches new update

Google just announced the new and improved Google Voice that the company teased a few weeks ago. Updated versions of Voice will be available for Android, iOS, and on the web. The service has been given a much-needed visual refresh to bring it in line with Google's other apps. According to blog post by Google, "Inbox now has separate tabs for text messages, calls and voicemails. Conversations stay in one continuous thread, so you can easily see all your messages from each of your contacts in one place."

Aside from simply bringing Voice up to date aesthetically, the upgraded app carries over some features that until now were only available for users who had switched to Hangouts for some Voice functions like texting and voicemail. For one, photo MMS is now supported by Google Voice on all platforms and across pretty much all major carriers. Images show up inline in your conversations, and firing off your own is as easy as any other texting app.



That sounds like basic functionality, but MMS has been a longtime sore spot for Voice. No more emails with MMS attachments or other weird workarounds. Group texting has also been added to the main Voice apps. This is another crucially important feature to many people that Google Voice has been bad at until now. With the new update, group conversations are labeled very clearly and should work as you would expect them to.

Voicemail transcriptions are still in there too. Other nice touches include: in-notification replies on Android, 3D Touch support for iPhone, mostly in Messages view, and a user experience that finally feels less like a relic from the early App Store days. Google claims it's committed to preventing Voice from falling into the neglected state it was stuck in previously. The company says users can expect regular updates and new features for the mobile apps and web client, though it offers no estimate on how often they will arrive.

Samsung Galaxy S8 will reportedly ship with desktop dock

Information about the upcoming Galaxy S8 keeps leaking out at a steady pace; first off is the news that the phone will probably launch in late March and begin shipping in April. Other claims include that the new flagship model will include an 'all-screen' design and feature a headphone jack, which squashes earlier rumors that it would be shipping without one.

However, the real standout news coming from the rumor mill is that the S8 will feature a new 'DeX' desk-dock that will turn the phone into an Android-based desktop computer.

Boosting a phone into a 'real computer' is a concept that others, including Microsoft and Motorola, have tried without success before. It therefore remains to be seen what Samsung can do with the concept.

Earlier in the week, Samsung announced the results of its internal investigation into fires caused last year by its flagship Galaxy Note 7 devices. The detailed study, involving more than 700 Samsung engineers as well as external experts, probed all aspects of the failure and found that poorly constructed batteries, and not hardware or software glitches, were to blame for the fires.

The probe results show that flaws in the design and production of the batteries caused the fatal

problems. Though the report did not mention the companies involved in the manufacture of the batteries, and Samsung did not blame them for the fatal failures, it is understood that a Chinese firm and a Samsung subsidiary were involved in manufacturing the batteries.

Samsung accepted that it should have done more to ensure that the batteries could not overheat and cause fires. It has now enlisted a group of external advisors to provide clear and objective perspectives on battery safety and innovation.

The company also announced that it had developed new quality assurance protocols to ensure that it will not have a repeat of the catastrophic issues that plagued it in 2016, when reports of several Galaxy Note 7 devices catching fire or exploding prompted Samsung to issue a global recall of all Note 7 mobiles from the market.

Samsung unveiled its new '8-Point Battery Safety Check', which it said is meant to address any potential problems in future. In addition, Samsung said it will conduct a multilayer safety measures protocol on all its devices that will cover the overall design and materials, as well as device hardware strength and ensure that software algorithms are in place for safer battery charging temperatures.



China aims to build world's first exascale supercomputer

Building supercomputers is a digital arms race, and China is moving quickly to solidify its lead. Last year, the country unveiled the world's fastest supercomputer, the Sunway TaihuLight (above). This year, according to state news agency Xinhua, the government has set its sights on completing the world's first prototype exascale computer.

So what exactly is an exascale computer? The power of supercomputers is commonly measured in FLOPS or 'floating point operations per second'. The greater the number of FLOPS a computer can calculate, the more powerful it is.

Right now, the fastest supercomputers in the world can make quadrillions — or thousands of trillions — calculations each second. Using the standard system of metric measurement, a quadrillion is referred to using the prefix 'peta'. So, the speed of these computers is calculated in petaflops, and computers operating at this level are referred to as petascale machines. Following this system of prefixes, the next step up from 'peta' is 'exa' — meaning a quintillion or a billion billion. A computer that can compute this number of calculations each second is measured in exaflops and is said to be an exascale machine.



The prototype computer will be ready before the end of the year, said Zhang Ting, an engineer at the country's National Supercomputer Center, but the finished product won't be operational for several years more. "A complete computing system of the exascale supercomputer and its applications can only be expected in 2020," said Zhang. As of last June, China has more supercomputers in the world's 'Top 500' list than the US — 167 compared to 165. (The US has more machines in the top 10 though; five to China's two.) These systems are used for a number of tasks, ranging from life sciences to national defense.

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