



Mohammed Al Mohanna
Art with a Cause

THE TIMES

KUWAIT'S PREMIER WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE



Building Bricks
An interview with architect Rajpal Tyagi

Black marketers profit from maid shortage

Staff Report

In most Kuwaiti households the daily chores of cooking and cleaning increase dramatically during the holy month of Ramadan, when

offices that supply domestic helpers are geared to meet this traditional demand. However, this year, there is a difference. Limited availability has led to a huge demand for domestic staff, and accordingly the price for available

by Ministry of Interior for those illegally residing in the country to rectify their residence status, or leave the country without paying due fines, resulted in an exodus of many unemployed maids and other marginal workers from the country. The absence of such workers, who would normally be available to fill the demand gap during the month of Ramadan, has aggravated the supply scenario.

Another factor causing a dearth of maids in the market is the ongoing spat between Kuwait and the Philippines. Recently, the Philippine ambassador to Kuwait was designated as persona non-grata and expelled from the country. In apparent retaliation, the Philippines has banned its nationals from being deployed to Kuwait. More than 60 percent of the Filipinos in Kuwait are engaged in domestic services. The huge demand and scant supply has led to offices supplying domestic workers significantly hiking

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entertaining relatives and friends after Iftar with lavish spreads of food and drinks have become the norm. This usually results in a surge in demand for domestic helpers ahead of the holy month, and most

maids in the market have gone up, which in turn has spurred a lucrative black-market in household workers.

The shortage of domestic helpers this year stems largely from two factors. The recent amnesty offered



Dwindling expatriate families lead to more empty apartments

Staff Report

Government policies and economic belt-tightening among many companies have combined to increase the number of expatriate families leaving the country from a slow trickle earlier, to a steady flow now. Many people who were waiting for schools to close, are now packing-off families

back to their home countries, and vacating their apartments to move to shared bachelor accommodations.

According to the Kuwait Real-Estate Union, there are currently 49,130 empty apartment flats in Kuwait and 26,466 new ones are under construction. More than 75,000 units need to be 'absorbed'

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Mohammed Al Mohanna

Art with a Cause



By Nourah Amer Al-Oseimi
Exclusive to The Times, Kuwait

Known for our business savvy and covert sense of entitlement, very little attention is paid to the creative forces that lie within so many young Kuwaitis. An example of such a force is Mohammed Al Mohanna, 30, who found himself immersed in the arts and creative forms of expression since the young age of 8.

Mohammed entered Let's Coffee, our meeting spot, with his rucksack that included a plethora of stolen pens and samples of his distinct work. He joked about his unconscious tendency to pick up pens whenever he saw them laying around, so he can use them to draw later.

"I'm not crazy, people are not just interested in the artwork, they're interested in your story. Especially in Kuwait. You need to be smart in how you represent yourself."

I began asking Mohammed an obligatory set of questions that most artists detested hearing, having answered them countless times already - "When did your journey begin as an artist?" "What inspires you to create?" He was the ultimate team player, nonetheless, and explained to me his early inspirations as well as his home life and childhood. He spoke nostalgically about his family's old house in Mishref, where most of his artistic roots were founded. "I was too attached to the house, and I still am. I go to Mishref every week because there are so many connections I need to fit."

As Mohammed continued to describe his inspirations, ranging from Disney cartoons to Japanese culture, I sensed that nostalgia was a key driver and major theme behind all his works. "I feel everything, the bricks, the grass, [the house], it made me."

Cloudicorn, largely considered his signature character and shaped like a cloud with a horn, materialized in 2014.

Mohammed developed a full backstory to this character as well as each of his creations. "Art shouldn't always be in a frame, it's more challenging to sell your art in a different way, and this is the creative economy that is currently lacking in Kuwait." This mode of thinking was triggered when Gap approached Mohammed to collaborate artistically on their jeans collection three years ago. He knew immediately that he did not want to simply draw or print, he wanted to think outside the box. "I proposed the idea of having patches and there's a story behind every single character and they liked it."



Upon realizing Mohammed's knack for justifying his characters and their existence, I asked him if he enjoys story-telling as well. He told me that every character must have a story and a family, even if it is brief, "if I leave them [without a story], I feel like they're just suspended somewhere."

The Gap collection did really well in both Dubai and Kuwait markets, he was positively surprised when the patches needed to be restocked at The Yard Kuwait. Mohammed's rationale is that customers should have a choice on what goes on to their clothing and so, the patches could be ironed or stitched on. He currently has a wholesale agreement with The Yard Kuwait and other concept stores which he considers "a new challenge" because his art is being transformed into products. "The product will sell the illustration and the illustration will sell the product." I smiled at Mohammed when he said this, as his statement perfectly encapsulated the marriage of art and business and the bounty of value this can create for both artists and customers.

At this point of our conversation, I found myself wondering how Mohammed attracted the attention of big labels and clients. I asked him about the success factors that enabled him to obtain such opportunities to which he responded very simply - "social media, and the support of family and friends".

I wanted to learn more about Mohammed and his professional background prior to pursuing his art professionally. He told me about his experience in a major telecommunications corporation and how it shaped his understanding of marketing and advertising in the digital era. He revealed in all the knowledge he gained during that time which he actively uses to promote himself and his work. If anything, Mohammed wholeheartedly encourages young artists to pursue full-time employment for a few years before starting

their own creative firm - "work somewhere and then start something, you'll learn how to be professional."

A natural question that came about when we were discussing careers is whether artists are given opportunities in Kuwait to pursue their passion full-time and if the job market is responsive to this type of skill-set. Mohammed has a very positive outlook on this and believes that so many businesses have emerged over the past couple of years that are art-centric.

"Everything should have a reason," Mohammed stated as our conversation delved into his creative process. I immediately wanted to know if there is a logic to what artists do. Our predetermined, stereotypical thinking tends to characterize artists as lacking reason and logic. Mohammed dispelled this notion instantly - "I'm not crazy, people are not just interested in the artwork, they're interested in your story. Especially in Kuwait. You need to be smart in how you represent yourself."

Mohammed explained to me how selective he is about the clients he works with and the stores that sell his products. He believes that customers of the brand are an extension of the identity of the brand.



When describing his approach towards his products, I realized more and more how his business experience has influenced him strategically and the successful outcome this has had. Despite appealing to a niche clientele with his products, he believes that there is an opportunity for his work to expand and for his voice to be heard and that this is all part of his larger social responsibility as an artist to create awareness about diversity in the arts.

"I want to stay, and I want to establish my stuff here, we don't have pop art or pop illustration. You can do anything with illustration," Mohammed told me as he explained that his original plans to pursue his art in Japan have drastically changed over the past few years. His renewed sense of pride paired with his unprecedented creativity propelling him towards a more inspired Kuwait.

I asked him if he thought art should be disruptive and controversial, he immediately negated this and said "If you're real, you have a million subjects to talk about. You can do anything in Kuwait." Mohammed believes that true art does not always have to come from a place of controversy.

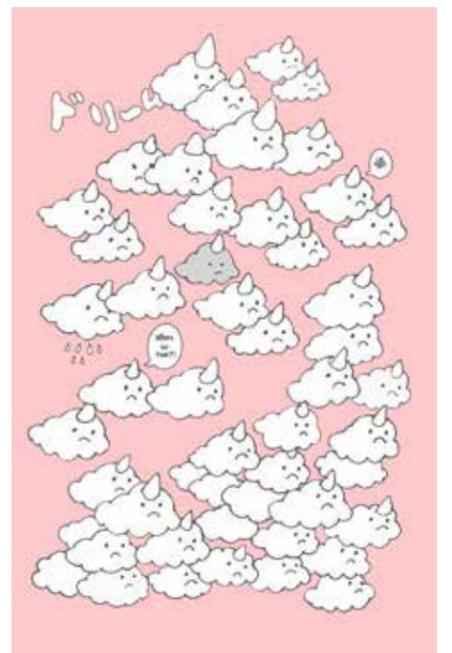
"Artists never stop doing what they're doing, you can't stop doing it if you have passion." He explained his personal ideology when I wanted to know what a real artist is.

At this point, our conversation came to a sudden but necessary stop as we were

distracted by the incredibly cute baby that emerged from the corner of the café resting comfortably in her mother's arms. I reached out to the baby with a huge smile and open arms, I was met with rejection. Instead, she turned her attention to Mohammed who had the kindest smile on his face. He reached into his rucksack and extracted a sample patch of Cloudicorn which he handed to the baby. Her face lit up with joy upon seeing Cloudicorn, proving that art can truly transcend generations.

Upon settling down from our delightful encounter with the baby and her mother, I wanted to know more about the challenges that the art community faces in Kuwait. Mohammed told me how artists are clustered into groups based on the type of art they are doing; however, a larger holistic artist community does not exist. "We're not going to move forward if it stays like this."

As our conversation came to an end, I wanted to learn more about what he is working on now and any advice he may have for up and coming artists. Mohammed told me about a cafe client he is currently collaborating with in Qatar who approached him due to his unique aesthetic. The client wanted Mohammed to introduce whimsical elements to incorporate across the entire brand with a focus on food. "It was one of the best, most exciting projects I've ever done." As part of this project, Mohammed is creating merchandise for the cafe, and I was awed by how his art is now accessible across multiple industries.

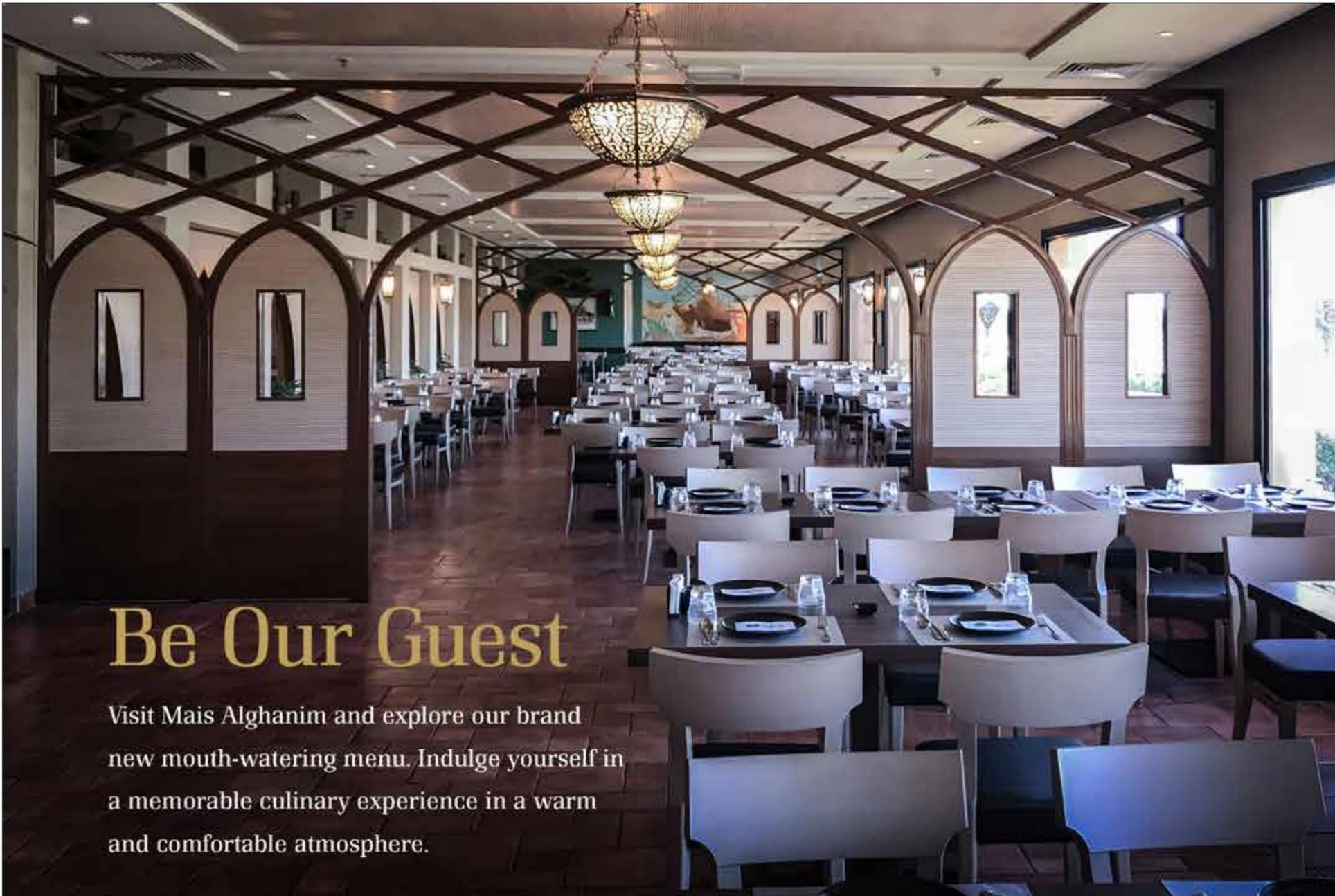


Mohammed took a moment to reflect before sharing the advice he wants to give. "Feel everything around you, grass, plants, everything. Appreciate the place you're in, be grateful and give something back to the country you're born in."

For more information on Mohammed's latest collaboration with the cafe, visit @cueqatar

For more information on Mohammed's work, visit @malmhna

Nourah Al-Oseimi is a 25-year-old Kuwaiti who holds a Master's degree in Business Administration. Nourah has worked in different places such as the Central Bank of Kuwait and the United Nations. She serves as a free-lance contributing writer to the Times Kuwait - Newsmagazine. Her column - Essentially Kuwaiti - will feature an in-depth look on exceptional young Kuwaitis and their efforts towards the realization of a New Kuwait.



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Building Bricks

An interview with architect RAJPAL TYAGI

Staff Report

For over four decades Rajpal Tyagi has witnessed the remarkable architectural transformation of Kuwait, from a compact sparsely populated city of narrow winding roads to its modern reconfiguration with a skyline lined by an exuberant set of landmarks and high-rises, and an ever evolving urban sprawl. He started his career in architecture in Kuwait in the late 1970s just as the country embraced an ethos of modernity, moving away from its vernacular vocabulary to define a new modern State. Today, when he looks upon the city in the glory of its metallic sheen, he counts it a blessing to have played a part in its dynamic growth.



ACHIEVER

Tyagi helms International Interiors as its Managing Director and Partner. He studied architecture at the University of Roorkee, in Northern India, which is today known as Indian Institute of Technology-Roorkee. Always one to pick the road less traveled, he pursued architecture to set himself apart from the bevy of students pursuing degrees in civil, electrical, and mechanical engineering. "Architecture wasn't a very reputed field in India until the Architect's Act was passed in 1972 by the efforts of the late well known Indian Parliamentarian Pilloo Mody who was an architect himself. It brought in new rules and regulations and thrust the profession into the limelight," he shared.

"I always wanted to do something different from what everyone else was doing and architecture gave me the opportunity to create something of my own. In this field, you get to exercise your creativity every day and receive a lot of personal satisfaction whether you've designed something as small as a kitchen or a bedroom, or a macro project like a mall or a multi-storeyed complex," he continued.

Tyagi came to Kuwait in 1978 in search of prosperity and thrived in his career as an architect at three local companies. "Everybody dreams of going abroad and making it big, but without God's blessings nothing is possible. I believe in destiny and that my life is fully controlled and blessed by the Almighty."

During his career he not only witnessed the continuing boom in construction but also the devastation of the Iraqi Invasion in 1990. After coming back to a liberated Kuwait as an architect, he was at the forefront of rebuilding a nation.

"The company I was working for back then wanted me to join them as soon as possible. I was back in Kuwait by May 1991 and we played a significant role in the development and reconstruction of Kuwait."

He believes that Kuwait as we see it today was envisioned in the aftermath of the invasion, and is shaped by the country's desire to adhere to local traditions while allowing space for its growing global aspirations. There were also big changes in construction technology not only in terms of construction materials but also in the methods used that fashioned the new city.

Revealing his favorite buildings in Kuwait, he said, "From the pre-invasion era, the Kuwait Fund building in Sharq is one of my favorites. It is not a very tall structure but architecturally it's very valuable for its proportions and overall aesthetics. Today, the Avenues mall is a significant architectural structure in Kuwait."

Tyagi always had a passion for interior design and construction and

took the leap to start his own business in the 1990s. Since then his projects have included over 200 bank branches, over 350 restaurants, more than a 100 offices, and similar numbers in retail outlets. He lists the offices of HSBC Bank, Schlumberger, Emirates, and The French and German Embassies, as some of his signature projects, along with Bulgari, Van Cleef & Arpels in luxury stores.

But most remarkable of it all is the role he played in the interior design of the most iconic building of the country, the Kuwait Towers. "I am very proud of the fact that I, along with my company and colleagues, were involved in the interior design of the Kuwait Towers on three separate occasions. We were first involved in the interior design before the invasion, then just after the invasion, and in its most recent redesign two years ago. We are very happy with the results. It is a very unique structure that is instantly recognizable as a symbol of Kuwait. So it was a real pleasure to be associated with this project."

He describes the challenges of working on the landmark, "From the outside,

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The mantra for entrepreneurial success is that you should be able to deliver whatever you take on. It is difficult to get a new project or business but it is even more difficult to deliver. If somebody can deliver a project there is a lot of opportunity even today.

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you can't really tell what it holds. It has restaurants, a coffee shop, a viewing tower, a lounge and a cinema. It is a very challenging design because the shape of the building is a sphere. All your circulation and space planning revolves around a circle which is not the easiest shape to handle as it looks the same from all angles. Also, its volume keeps changing, approaching it from a 3m height is very different from approaching it from a 6m height. Another challenge was to incorporate safety elements such as emergency exits that were not installed previously."

Tyagi has a simple secret for success, "Client satisfaction is my aim and motto. Every client comes in with certain expectations, if we understand those and fulfill them, he goes back happy and satisfied. Our strength is that most of our clients have given us repeated projects." He draws attention to the long standing business relationship with the Mughal Mahal group of restaurants, "Mughal Mahal are pioneers in the restaurant

industry. I have to acknowledge and express my gratitude to them for giving me my first break when I started my own firm. Since then, we have designed and built ten restaurants for them in Kuwait and one in Beirut, Lebanon."

Tyagi believes in leading from the front in all aspects of his life and is actively involved in the community, including in spiritual groups and gatherings, the Indian Veteran Cricket Club, and the Indian Business Council, among others. "I believe that if you can contribute to society in any way, you must."

Over the years he has promoted India in many different ways, from taking Kuwaiti families to India to showcase the country's rich culture and hospitality, to facilitating medical treatments for Kuwaitis in Indian hospitals with the help of the Indian Embassy, or introducing delegations of leading Indian companies to key players in Kuwait. Dispelling the myth of a passed golden age of opportunity, Tyagi shares that chances and breaks are still available in the Kuwaiti market for enterprising entrepreneurs today. "The mantra for entrepreneurial success is that you should be able to deliver whatever you take on. It is difficult to get a new project or business but it is even more difficult to deliver. If somebody can deliver a project there is a lot of opportunity even today."

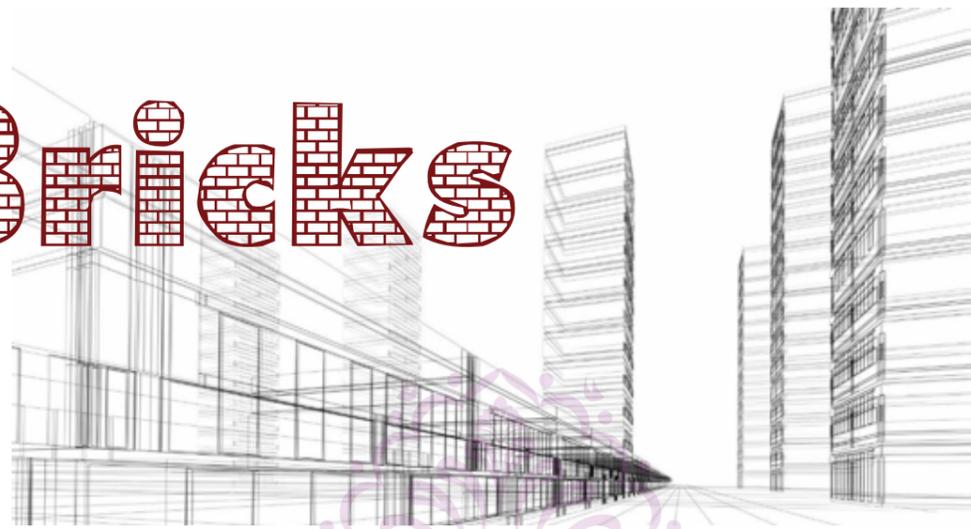
Tyagi appreciates many aspects of his life here in Kuwait but draws attention to the gift of time, "In Kuwait, most people get some time for themselves. I have time for hobbies and leisure in Kuwait even though I put in 10 hours of work a day. In most other large cities in the world, the commute eats up a large chunk of time, lengthening the work day and leaving little time for family, hobbies and passions."

He advises young architects to diligently learn the trade and offer more than the expected requirement to employers in order to carve a special corner or niche for themselves, "What I see is that today's generation work according to the clock while they should be working by the target or the deadline."

His greatest pride, and what Tyagi treasures the most, are the accomplishments of his daughters. He beams with pride when saying, "I am very family-oriented, we have two daughters and I'm very proud that we were able to provide them good education. One daughter has completed her Electrical Engineering degree from IIT Delhi and has an MBA from the London Business School. She is currently working in Singapore. The other daughter has studied in the US for her Undergraduate and Graduate degrees in Computer Science and works as a independent consultant in New York."

He also acknowledges the support and sacrifice of his wife, "When you are active in society, it consumes a lot of your time, and since time is limited, some of it gets taken from the family."

They have sacrificed and supported me, they are my backbone and my inspiration, and without their support I could not have achieved whatever I have achieved in Kuwait, however big or small."





South African embassy celebrates Freedom Day

Ambassador of South Africa H E Mzolisela Bona held a grand reception at the Salwa Al Sabah Marina Hotel to mark the 24th celebration of the Freedom Day of his country.

Addressing the gathering Ambassador Bona pointed out that Freedom Day was a major milestone in the history of his country. He went on to give an overview of the country's progress during the past 24 years. His Excellency also praised the strong bilateral relations between Kuwait and South Africa and thanked the guest of honour Engineer Jinan Busheri, Minister of State for Housing and Service Affairs for gracing the occasion.



Oncost Cash & Carry in buy-out bid for Gulfmart

Oncost Cash & Carry, Kuwait's first membership-based wholesale store in a retail format, is reported to be in looking to takeover the Gulfmart chain of supermarkets in the country.

Retail analysts believe that the buy-out could see Oncost, belonging to Jassim Al Bahar's IFA Group, increase its synergy through economies of scale. Given Gulfmart's existing large retail footprint in the country, combining the strengths of both operations could lead Oncost to realize greater market share and cost reductions.

Though a spokesman for Oncost declined to confirm or comment on the reported bid for Gulfmart, reliable sources knowledgeable about the ongoing negotiations revealed that Oncost is on the threshold of signing the deal. The multi-

million dollar deal would see full ownership of Gulfmart being transferred to Oncost from its present owners, the UAE-based BMA International.

Gulfmart, which began its operations in Kuwait in 1999, currently has over 16 full-fledged supermarkets spread across Kuwait, including prime locations in Shuwaikh, Salmiya, Fahaheel, Abbasiya, Hawally, Farwaniya, Khaitan, Jahra, Salwa and Abu Halifa.

Meanwhile, Oncost Cash & Carry, which began its operations in 2011, has four centrally-located outlets in Kuwait offering customers the benefits of wholesale shopping in a modern retail environment. Oncost is believed to be on an acquisition spree, as part of its assertive new expansion plans to rapidly increase its retail footprint across the country. Meanwhile, BMA International appears to be

on a dis-acquisition drive with its food business properties. Last year, they sold their Middle-East franchise for Geant, owned by French grocery retailer Casino Guichard-Perrachon, to UAE-based multi-national conglomerate Majid Al-Futtaim.

Though Oncost Cash & Carry is a slightly different shopping format to Gulfmart's

supermarket style of operations, the combined operations could see customers benefiting from added convenience and top-notch services. Oncost's pricing policy has also been constructed to focus on competitive pricing by the unit and wholesale prices by the pack or carton, to pass on substantial savings to its loyal customer base.

IDF elects new office bearers



Indian Doctors Forum (IDF) elected its new office bearers for a term of two years (2018-2020) at an Annual General Body Meeting (AGM), held at Regency Hotel on 27 April.

The meeting commenced with an inauguration ceremony, followed by presentation of medals to winners of table-tennis and children's fancy dress competition. The members also gave a farewell to Dr. Jaitha John, Dr. Bobby Cherian and Dr. Qutub Jamali with mementoes. The CEO Dr. Hasan Khan then announced the results of the election.

The meeting was followed by a singing performance by renowned playback singer Ravindra Prabhu along with IDF artists and a

Bhangra performance by Shaan-E-Punjab troupe. The program ended with dinner.

The newly elected members are:

President: Dr. Surendra Nayak; Vice-Presidents: Dr. Diwakara Chaluvaiyah and Dr. Madhu Gupta; General Secretary Dr. Mohan Ram; Treasurer: Dr. Rajendra C. Mishra; Jt. General Secretary: Dr. Arun Joshi; Jt. Treasurer: Dr. Asit Mohanty; Cultural Secretary: Dr. Antony Sebastian D'cruz; Jt. Cultural Secretary: Dr. Naquib Inamdar; Secretary, Community Services: Dr. Sunny Joseph Varghese; Jt. Secretary, Community Services: Dr. Susovana Sujit Nair; Secretary, Membership: Dr. Shahed Khan Pathan; Web Manager: Dr. Imtiyaz Nawaz; Asst. Web Manager: Dr. Sateesh Tadepilli



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Passion your Way to Success

Something special you do to start your day?

It's more of a mental thing I do. Every day when I wake up I tell myself I'm in Kuwait as a stepping stone for my acting career which gives me the motivation to do my best in everything I do even in my job as an architect because Kuwait wasn't a part of my plans initially. But now that I'm here, I tell myself to make the best of the city in every way I can which would definitely lead me one day to do the only one thing I love, acting.

Why the decision to be an architect?

I actually never knew what to pursue after my high school but when I got back to Egypt to continue my studies after high school somehow something about buildings their shape and how they connect with each other felt artistic, hence I decided to pursue architecture and become an engineer.

When did acting become a passion and how did it all start?

Growing up, during my high school days I always knew acting was what I loved. It has always been a gut feeling that this is what I would be good at but I never thought it could be a fulfilling career.

During my second year in college when I decided architecture was not my thing, I quit college to discover myself and what I wanted but I still wasn't sure acting was my calling. So as you can see I was kind of lost and confused.



Things slowly evolved from there and it's like each opportunity I got connected me to the next and the next.

That's how a director from LA who wanted to shoot his film in Kuwait came to LAPA and I happened to get introduced to him which led me to my next big venture, my first big break, to be a part of his movie. This then later led to my latest opportunity to be a part of a famous Kuwaiti singer's music video.

So it's been an amazing journey, the last two years since I got back.

Tell us about your practice and rehearsal sessions? How do you manage your time?

It's all about time management I believe, and I usually have things planned in my mind a day in advance. This is how my day usually ends. I make a plan which allows me to carry the cloths I need and setup the things I require for each rehearsal I have, as I like to rehearse in character always.

And I always make sure to have a plan to complete any task in the stipulated time so as to keep up with my continuous schedules. It's like a cycle of being an architect to an actor and then back to an architect.

Most memorable memory in Kuwait?

It was on 10 February, 2017, my first professional play in Kuwait. It was a play against violence and what was most memorable was it was definitely a big challenge as we got the script on a Thursday and we had to perform the play on a Friday. It wasn't a big play but that was the sign and start to my professional acting career.

IN CONVERSATION with

AHMED ASHMAWY

By Meryl M

Exclusive to The Times, Kuwait

Passion is key to life and the path to success in your passion is in itself a dream come true. This is Ahmed Ashmawy a passionate actor who is definitely on the road to becoming a successful actor in Kuwait.

Hailing from a family in Egypt, Ahmed grew up in Kuwait and has been in the country since he was 2 years old. He is an architect by profession and has a degree in architecture. But with his true passion being acting, Ahmed believes that even this journey as an architect is part of his road to being an actor.

It is indeed amazing to see such positivity and sheer determination and this is what got The Times Kuwait to talk to Ahmed about his day to day life as an architect and an actor in Kuwait.

One thing you make sure you do during your routine day?

I am always on the hunt for opportunities for my acting career, whether it's a play or acting classes I make sure to spend time every day to look out and find such opportunities in Kuwait. You can say my day never finishes at 5, it actually starts then.

What are some of the challenges you have faced to keep both careers in balance?

I work for a company called Lines in Kuwait with their production department. We are an interior design company for retail shops and houses.

One of the best and most lucky things that I have at Lines is an amazing Manager who also understands my passions after work and is quite supportive of the same.

Often when I have a rehearsal or shoot that could finish only in the morning just before work, I would have to go to work like a zombie which I would say is a big challenge or sometimes I would have to skip work for certain shoots but having an amazing team such as mine usually reduces that challenge quite a bit.

INTERVIEW

THE WHOLE WEEK
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The Netherlands embassy celebrates King's

Ambassador of Netherlands to Kuwait H.E. Frans Poyut held a gala reception last week at his residence to mark the birthday of King Willem Alexander of The Netherlands.

Addressing the invitees, Ambassador Poyut warmly welcomed the guest of honor, Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs, Amal Al Hamad, and pointed to the close and friendly relations between the two countries in all spheres. He added that this year the relations are even more closer, as The Netherlands and Kuwait



are members of the United Nations Security Council, where both countries are collaborating closely for a better world, and relentlessly working to put an end to the human suffering in places like Palestine, Yemen and Syria.

Ambassador Poyut also informed the guests of the initiatives taken by the embassy in Kuwait such as the recently-held Dutch Healthy Food Week, and also the upcoming new theme on water, food and energy.

He highlighted the people to people

contacts saying that in the last three years, visa-applications have doubled as many Kuwaitis were visiting Holland as tourists, and also more youngsters were enrolling in universities there, further cementing lifelong friendships.

In conclusion, he praised the initiative taken by the Kuwaiti embassy in The Hague, together with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to invite eight Kuwaiti and eight Dutch students to sit together in a Diwanya-style setting to share views about the future.

Boomerang - Kuwait's first anti-bullying school outreach program



Alnowair - the first non-profit organization in Kuwait and the GCC committed to driving positive social behavior change - announced a new educational program called 'Boomerang'.

Boomerang is Kuwait's first anti-bullying school outreach program that uses creative drama therapy and kindness habits to help 7000+ students across 14 private schools to rise above bullying.

Sponsored by Zain Kuwait in association with EQUATE Petrochemical Company, Boomerang was officially launched by Founder & CEO of Alnowair, Sheikha Intisar Al Sabah, at the New English School (NES). The launch event saw the staging of two interactive plays by students of year 6 at NES. Prior to their performance, the students participated in four rehearsal workshops to understand the problem of bullying and how to use kindness as an effective strategy through role-playing and practicing acts of kindness.

Speaking on the occasion, Sheikha Intisar said, "Bullying is prevalent in many schools in Kuwait and it can severely affect the academic grades, school attendance, personality development and health of students. Our program is the first of its kind to give bullies, victims and bystanders an opportunity to work together through the creative medium of performing arts to find effective solutions to bullying. Alnowair is always responding to community needs to create positive social behavior change, and I am very proud to see over seven schools joining the program to shape a future generation of confident, compassionate students."



For his part, Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer at Zain Kuwait, Waleed Al Khashti, commented: "We are pleased with the participation of a number of Zain employees in this initiative as mentors and guides to the students during the anti-bullying workshops. Through our partnership with Alnowair, we are committed to support innovative programs such as 'Boomerang', which ultimately contribute to sending a positive image about the Kuwaiti society."

Senior Executive for Corporate Communications & Government Affairs at EQUATE, Dr. Abeer Al-Omar added, "Future generations are a major priority in EQUATE's Sustainability Strategy, as they are a key component of our society and its progress. As they face a number of challenges, such as bullying, the youth deserve and require support from the society as a whole through all possible means, including the Boomerang educational awareness program." The event was a proud moment for the management, staff and students of NES as their students demonstrated a positive message on stage. "The students from NES Year 6 who acted in the play were Stephanie Riyad, Lilian Agha and Haya Kaadan," said New English School Head Teacher Mark Madeley. "We are delighted to partner with Boomerang to continue our tradition of promoting positive values which help students rise above bullying."

Over the next academic year, Boomerang will continue to visit private schools to conduct drama therapy workshops, perform plays and roll out kindness activities.



ACE Hardware - 2018 Ramadan collections now in stores

With Ramadan round the corner, ACE Hardware has launched its 2018 Ramadan collection along with an exciting offer for customers. With every purchase of KD 50 customers get a FREE IFTAR at Radisson Blu Hotel.

Founded in 1924 in the USA, Al Hasawi Group launched the ACE franchise in Kuwait in 1992 with their flagship store in Al Rai. ACE later branched out to Egaila in 2013 and Hawally in 2015.



Catering to the ever-evolving needs of the users, ACE, has provided a range of quality products at affordable prices. From toys for toddlers, bikes and buggies for teenagers and adults, home improvement accessories

and paints for the DIY enthusiasts, durable barbeque units, sports equipment and outdoor furniture for the outdoor lovers to pets and house ware essentials, there is something for everyone.

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Vitamin C and Diabetes

Ask Mira : Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy

You're always hearing about Antioxidants, aren't you?

Antioxidants work by slowing and preventing the oxidative reactions caused by different factors that create free radicals in our body which cause health problems like heart disease and diabetes.

Antioxidants also improve immune function and lower your risk for infections and all sorts of Cancer.

In your body, the antioxidant process is similar to stopping an apple from browning. Once you cut an apple, it begins to brown, but if you dip it in orange juice, which contains vitamin C, it stays white!

Dr. Jacobs says: "Diabetics should maintain a healthy blood sugar control, because that's going to prevent a lot of oxidative stress".

For type- 2 diabetics specifically, the intake of vitamin C as an antioxidant is recommended and scientifically proven. That will decrease your blood sugar levels in a short period of time!



Where can you find vitamin C?

- The first thing to do is to eat more vitamin C-rich fruits and vegetables as these kinds of food are the richest in Vitamin C content.

- Include more broccoli, sprout, tomatoes, cabbage, citrus

fruits like lemon and oranges, strawberries, papaya, mangoes, pineapples, cantaloupe, red peppers, parsley, and potatoes in your daily meal plans.

- You can start your day with a fruit for example. Or maybe add some fruits to your oatmeal so that you get your dose of vitamin C.

- Avoid boiling veggies. This can remove vitamin C. Instead, use steam, sauté or stir-fry.

Thanks for reading,
Until next time...

Dietitian Mira Khattar



Mira is a go-to source for nutrition and wellness and has joined The Times Kuwait team in a new weekly column discussing nutrition and answering queries. You can send in your questions to askmira@timeskuwait.com

Grand Hyper's prestigious 50th showroom in the GCC opens at Souk Al Kabir, Kuwait



In the midst of a splendid display of Indo-Arab cultural festivity, the 50th branch of Grand Hypermarket was officially inaugurated on Friday, 27th April, at Souq Al Kabir in Kuwait City. Offering a cultural feast to the guests were exclusive performances of Punjabi dance, traditional drums from Kerala, and items from other Indian states including Bengal.

The much-awaited 50th branch of Grand Hyper in the GCC was inaugurated by Sheikh Dawood Salman Al Sabah. This also happens to the group's 13th outlet in Kuwait.

Grand Hyper and Regency Group's Dubai Managing Director conducted the first official sales transaction with Dr. Anwar Ameen Jamal Al Dosari in the presence of eminent cultural and community leaders in Kuwait.

Thousands of customers turned up enthusiastically for the inaugural ceremony braving the dusty weather conditions making the event a success. The main highpoint of the new branch is the Food Court as there are no restaurants or eateries in the close vicinity. The Indian and Chinese

cuisines served at the Food Court are sure to be a delicious relief to the many hundreds of employees working in the area.

The retail chain has been catering to both citizens and expatriates with a wide range of products that are much sought-after for their high quality and competitive pricing. Grand Hypermarket achieves this by sourcing the items directly from the source, bypassing middlemen, thus transferring the price benefits to the end consumer. In addition to

the competitive pricing, innumerable prizes are also awaiting customers throughout the year.

Grand Hypermarket provides its customers a wide range of world-class products and brands. Enabling the everyday customer access high quality products for affordable rates is what sets Grand Hypermarket apart from the others. The success of this strategy of putting the consumer first has been proven by the chain's continuous expansion in various parts of the GCC.



Future of Cricket in Kuwait huge

Gibbs

Staff Report

Kuwait Cricket is on an upswing as they see better times ahead after beating Saudi Arabia and qualifying for the next round in the just concluded ICC Twenty20 qualifiers to be held in Australia in 2020.

One man responsible for this historic achievement is the coach Herschelle Gibbs who just in a matter of two months built a winning team that has impressed everyone. Gibbs used his vast international experience and cricketing knowledge to raise the standard of the players and bring a much needed victory that was cherished by the entire cricketing fraternity.

"When I first arrived little over two months I had no idea about any of the players background or competence," Gibbs told The Times, Kuwait in an exclusive chat. Slowly but surely he got around by and in a matter of three weeks choose the final playing 15 for the tournament.

"The first thing I did was to put them on a diet that would shape and



condition their fitness," he disclosed adding that though the period was short the players gave their 100 per cent and he was happy with that.

Gibbs who played for South Africa in his international career and having

broken many batting records during his career brought with him the right amount of professionalism that the Kuwait Cricket team needed.

Pointing out that the team found it hard in the beginning but after a



Sajid Ashraf with Herschelle Gibbs

month they got around it and became more relaxed and started enjoying the game. While the biggest barrier was language, the support staff were very well equipped to address these issues.

When the final 11 was chosen to play the all important match Gibbs said "I choose experience over youth, as we had very little time to prepare and the objective was to get to the next round."

Going forward Gibbs said a new younger team would have to be groomed eventually. He also noted that Kuwait would have to improve its facilities to create more interest in the game so better quality of players are nurtured.

Gibbs pointed at the corporates who he said should get involved and support the game as the potential was huge and so were the benefits. He appreciated the vision of Sajid Ashraf,



the Director General of Kuwait Cricket for the hard work put into developing the sport in the country.

During his 14 year career Gibbs played in all formats of the game including 90 test matches for his country. He was also one of only eight batsmen to score 100's in three consecutive innings.

Having accomplished the task of taking Kuwait to the next round Gibbs is still open to come back to train the squad in the future. His professionalism and preparation has gone down well with the management and players and his contribution to Kuwait Cricket will long be remembered.

ACK engineering students tour Shagaya Renewable Energy Complex



Mechanical and electrical engineering students from the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), along with the Australian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Jonathan Gilbert went on a study tour to the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Shagaya Renewable Energy Complex, on 1 May.

The tour offered an up close look at Kuwait's first 50 MW Concentrated Solar Power plant, the 10 MW Photovoltaic Solar plant, and the 10 MW Wind Farm.

Colum Cantillon, the Project Director of the Australian engineering and global project management firm, WorleyParsons, which is currently working with the KISR, along with KISR representatives, Eng. Waleed Roy and Eng. Waleed Al-Nassar, explained the project assembly process to the students.

Ambassador Gilbert then addressed the students, stressing on the importance of sustainable energy in achieving Kuwait's 2035 vision.

Lulu Celebrate opens to huge crowds



Lulu Celebrate, the exclusive apparel division of regional retail heavyweight Lulu Hypermarket, was inaugurated on 3 May at the Al-Rai outlet by renowned Indian television serial actress, Laya, in the presence of Lulu Kuwait management and a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

To celebrate the occasion, a special promotion on sarees, churidars and lehenga material is being held that allows a shopper to buy one saree or other dress material and purchase the second item at 50 percent discount. Among the sarees on offer during the promotion period are such exclusive sarees such as Kancheepuram, Upada,

Binny Silk, Raw Cotton, Villae Cottons and many more. The saree promotion extends to all Lulu Hypermarket outlets in Kuwait, with the exception of Salmiya and Jahra.

The huge crowds visiting Lulu Hypermarket branches during the

promotion are a further attestation of the strong loyalty that shoppers attach to the Lulu brand. It also underlines shoppers confidence that the brand continues to offer the widest range of high-quality products at the most competitive prices.



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5 & ABOUT

For publication of your announcements, upcoming activities or local events please email us at editor@timeskuwait.com
To publish images kindly send pictures in high resolution.

7 May



Exhibition Form: Contemporary Art Platform will be hosting an exhibition at its location in Shuwaikh, from 7pm. The exhibition will be in collaboration with curator Shahad Bishara and will explore the formal and conceptual representations of the human form. The exhibition will be open until the end of the month. For more information: Visit, www.capkuwait.com.



Exhibition Connections: Contemporary Art Platform is hosting an exhibition at its location in Shuwaikh, from 7pm. The exhibition showcases the art of Ramon Aular. Ramon Aular's work of art reflects the indissoluble bond between his roots and what surrounds him. The exhibition will be open until the end of the month. For further information: Visit, www.capkuwait.com.



Acrylic Painting Workshop: Philippine Embassy will be organizing an Acrylic Painting Workshop at the embassy premises from 1pm to 4pm. The workshop which is open to all Filipinos age 8 years and above, will be held on every Friday of the month. Easel, canvas, paint, brushes and snacks will be provided at the workshop. The fee is set at KD 35. For more information and to register: Call, 99558527.

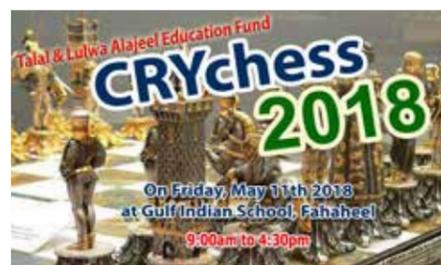
8 May



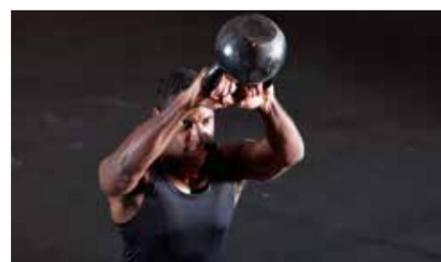
Kuwait Running Club: Al Shaheed Park - Phase 2 will be hosting their weekly race from 7:30pm. The event is free and open to all. For more information: Visit, www.alshaheedpark.com.

Open day for sports and leisure: Talise Fitness will be organizing an open day for sports and leisure at the Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, from 8am to 5pm. The program will include fitness classes such as Zumba, Pilates, yoga, cardio kickboxing and watersports. Slots are limited and prior registration is required. For more information and to register: Call, 22269600.

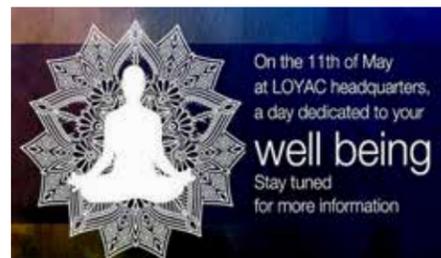
11 May



CRYChess 2018: Friends of CRY Club (FOCC) announces Talal & Lulwa Alajeel Education Fund 'CRYchess 2018' which will be held at the Gulf Indian School (GIS), Fahaheel, from 9am to 4:30pm. Participants can download the registration form from the website, fill and submit it along with their civil id copies to any of the FOCC personnel. The last date for registration is 29 April. Further information and registration form is available on their website. Visit: www.focckuwait.org, or call, 97226589, 97285001, 66204295, 25618471 97990162 66810338.



Spartan Kettlebell Instructor Course: Spartan Gear will be organizing a kettlebell instructor course for adults at the Salmiya Sports Club, from 10am. The workshop will include a combination of kettlebell exercises, bodyweight training and more. Participants aged 18 years above in normal physical condition are welcome to participate. Further information will be available upon registration. To register: Email: abdullah@tfwkuwait.com or call, 50133525.



Kuwait Yoga Meet 2018: Leading youth empowerment NGO's of Kuwait, LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA), Indian socio cultural association Seva Darshan Kuwait and Yogeras will be organizing the Kuwait Yoga Meet - 2018 at LOYAC premises at 7am. The event aims to bring all yoga enthusiasts and organizations in Kuwait on a common platform and offer an enjoyable day-out learning yoga and meditation from

THOUGHT for the Week

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

Coretta scott King
American author and activist

experts. Sessions will commence with a yoga and meditation workshop by Brahmachari Amit, yoga and meditation instructor of Mata Amritanandamayi Ashram (India), for a limited number of pre-registered participants. Experienced yoga trainers will be conducting independent workshops during the day. Free sessions will include demonstrations and presentations by various yoga schools and partner organizations in Kuwait. As a community event, facility will be provided for all to participate and perform the international Common Yoga Protocol (CYP). The evening session will have expert talks by eminent personalities, followed by an Indo-Kuwaiti cultural fusion programs. For more details and timings: Contact, 66404949, 99729076 or Email, kuwaityogameet@gmail.com.



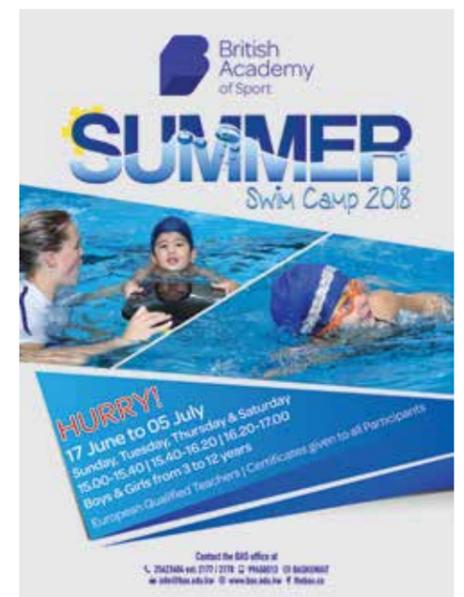
Fusion 2.0: A charity show, Bollywood vs. Tollywood Damaka, Fusion 2.0 will be held at Salmiya Indian Model School, from 6pm to 9pm. The show will feature Tollywood Actor Adhire Abhi, Big Boss contestant Dhanraj, Tollywood Actress Geetanjali and Director and producer Siva Apuroop. Further information on the event will be available upon registration. For more information and to register: Call, 67661540, 99424773.

31 May

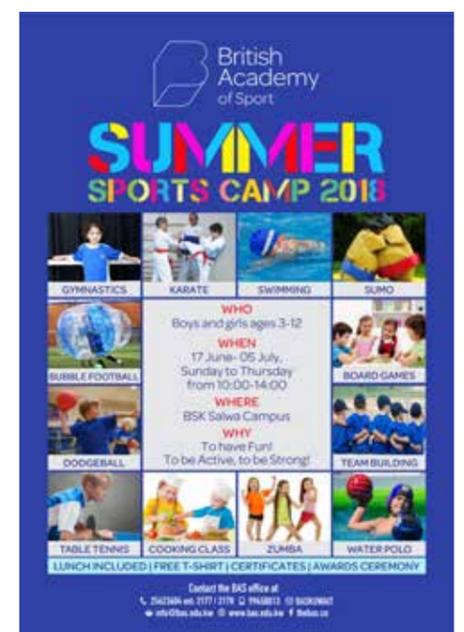


Ramadan Blood Donation Camp 2018: Organized by Kuwait Pakistan Blood Donors, Pakistan English School and College will be organizing a blood donation camp at their location in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh from 8pm to 11:30pm. The camp is free and open to all.

17 June



Summer Swim Camp: British Academy of Sport will be hosting its Summer Swim Camp 2018 from 17 June to 5 July (Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday) at its location. Boys and girls aged 3 to 12 years can register for the camp. The camp will be run by European qualified teachers and certificates will be given to all participants at the end. Further information on timings and fees will be available upon registration. For more information and to register: Call, 99458013, 25623604 ext: 2177/2178 or email, info@bas.edu.kw.



Summer Sports Camp 2018: British Academy of sport will be hosting its Summer Sports Camp 2018, from 17 June to 5 July (Sunday to Thursday), at the BSK Salwa Campus, from 10am to 2pm. The camp will be open to children aged 3 to 12 years. Activities such as gymnastics, karate, swimming, board games, water polo, Zumba, cooking class and more will be a part of the camp. Further information will be available upon registration. For more information and to register: Call, 99458013, 25623604 ext: 2177/2178 or email, info@bas.edu.kw.



Poland embassy celebrates National Day



Ambassador of Poland to Kuwait H.E. Pawal Lechowicz held a reception on 3 May at the Salwa Al Sabah Hall, to celebrate the National Day of Poland commemorating the adoption of the country's constitution.

In his address to the gathering, Ambassador Lechowicz thanked the guest of honor for his presence and praised the excellent bilateral relations between Kuwait and Poland. He pointed out that the Polish Constitution was one of the oldest in the world and also highlighted the great progress and development witnessed by the country today.



LuLu Financial Group commences operations in Hong Kong

Lulu Financial Group, the leading financial services and payments solution brand, started its operations in Hong Kong with the inauguration of their head office in Kowloon.

The branch was inaugurated by Adeb Ahamed, Managing Director, LuLu Financial Group in the presence of Surendran Ammitathody, VP-APAC, other senior officials and dignitaries.

Branded as 'LuLu Money' in Hong Kong, this is LuLu Financial Group's tenth country of operation and second in the APAC region, after Philippines.

Speaking on the occasion, Adeb Ahamed said, "We are extremely delighted to start our operations in Hong Kong. The Asia Pacific region is home to some of the most dynamic economies and Hong Kong is one of the most strategic markets."

'LuLu Money' retail outlets will offer money transfer, retail currency exchange and import and export of currencies. The company is also foraying into the digital space, with an aim to revolutionize the fintech environment in the region. The upcoming 'LuLu Money' app will have features including instant online transactions, payment tracking in real time and payment history, among others.



Mais Alghanim To Go announces weekly raffle draw



Mais Alghanim To Go announced their promotion for the summer season with 'Wanna Watch the World Cup' to enjoy watching the World Cup in mid-June with a bundle of special prizes. Their first winner, Winson Paul, won the raffle draw on 25 April.

The offer which is valid until 12 June, will have its last draw on 13 June at Mais Alghanim To Go located in Creative Design Mall, Shuwaikh.

Promotion prizes include eight Wansa 65" TV 4K UHD. In addition, the winner gets a beIN

receiver with 2018 World Cup subscription. The last draw will include a grand prize of coupons worth KD 300/- with TV and receiver.

The conditions for participation in the weekly draw are, for every KD 15 spent at any branch of the Mais Alghanim To Go, the customer is entitled to a coupon.

This promotion comes in collaboration with the announcement of the new To Go menu which offers delicious dishes and distinctive cuisine

BSK Chamber Choir performs at HM Queen Elizabeth II's birthday

The birthday of HM Queen Elizabeth II was celebrated on 21 April at the Gardens of the British Ambassador's residence. The event was attended by H.E. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs, senior officials of the Diplomatic service, members of the armed forces, and people from a variety of areas of the business community.

British Ambassador, H.E. Michael Davenport MBE invited the Chamber Choir of The British School of Kuwait (BSK) to sing the National Anthems of both Kuwait and The United Kingdom.

Lead by Liz Lomas and accompanied on the piano by Lynne Jones, the choir sang beautifully in both Arabic and English. For the students of BSK, this was a wonderful experience.





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Selimo Thabane from Lesotho enthral audiences

Staff Report

Embassy of the Kingdom of Leotho in partnership with the National Council for Culture Kuwait held a musical performance by the Selimo Thabane Jazz band at the Abdulreda Hussein theatre last week.



The band gave an extraordinary performance and the audience were thrilled with the music of a Lesotho band for the first time in Kuwait.

Lead vocalist and founder of the band Selimo Thabane spoke to The Times, Kuwait about his passion for music and how he fell in love with Afro-jazz in the early nineties that made him take up music as a career.

"I used to listen to an Afro-jazz band my uncle used to sponsor and I loved it so much that I took up singing as a career, my inspiration also came from Bob Marley," he disclosed. The genre of music that the Selimo Thabane play is Manga Jazz - which is a mix of Afro Jazz.

Selimo Thabane became hugely popular

after their album won 5 international awards and their song Khomo won the international song of the year 2017. Hugely popular in his home country Lesotho and also South Africa and Botswana, Selimo Thabane is now gaining international popularity as they will perform soon in London and Europe.

"Our songs are about people and tradition giving an identity and feeling of patriotism," Thabane retorts when asked what the reason was for the popularity.

The performance in Kuwait was yet another milestone for the band that seems to be going places as the audiences loved the fresh, vibrant melodious voice of the band.

'The Divan' supporting the youth vibe of Kuwait



What started as a small book club with just six members back in 2015, is today a local community organization with over 200 members including musicians, writers, artists and thinkers alike. This is 'The Divan' a platform dedicated to supporting local talents and budding artists, and holding free events to showcase their creative abilities to the community in Kuwait.

Their events, which range from poetry nights to Jazz nights and from book-club nights to movie nights, are led by a talented group of young leaders who co-founded 'The Divan' and are very rigorous with their dates and days each event is conducted during a month.

Each co-founder does what they love best; Mohammd Benbader organizes the podcasts and debates; Zainab Mirza organizes the book-club

on the first Tuesday of every month; Mohammd Sallol anchors the Jam Jam nights on every third Saturday, while Samia Sadda is in charge of Poetry nights on every second Thursday. 'The Divan' has become one of the most accepted organizations by the community in Kuwait.

"As you can see there is a hunger for things like this in Kuwait that you could not see three years back," said Mr. Benbader, in an exclusive to the Times Kuwait, behind the bustle of 500 people on 21 April during the season finale of JAM JAM night, one of their most successful events in Kuwait.

He also added that all their events are open for anyone in Kuwait and that all that is needed is to walk in to either Sirdab Lab or Shaheed Park, where most of their events are conducted, with an open heart to enjoy the vibe that Divan has to offer.



Nokia 8 Sirocco, Nokia 7 plus and the new Nokia 6 arrive in Kuwait

HMD Global, the home of Nokia phones, today announces that the Nokia 8 Sirocco, the Nokia 7 plus and the new Nokia 6 are now available to buy from retailers in Kuwait. Unveiled earlier this year at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, the smartphones offer the craftsmanship and reliability you expect from a Nokia phone, and come with a pure, smart, secure and up-to-date Android experience.



Sanmeet Singh Kochhar, General Manager - Middle East, HMD Global, said: "We are delighted to bring to Kuwait three Nokia smartphones that will delight our fans. The Nokia 8 Sirocco is the true embodiment of effortlessly elegant craftsmanship, combining a premium curved glass finish with incredible performance. The Nokia 7 plus is a true hero in



our smartphone range, offering unprecedented design and innovative imaging capabilities. The new Nokia 6 represents our core values - quality phones based on real-life needs. All the three new Nokia smartphones deliver the pure, secure and up-to-date Android One experience endorsed by Google."

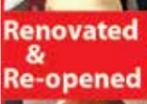


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SIMS opens Sand and Water play area



The Kindergarten section at SIMS recently opened their doors to the new Sand and Water play area.

The Kindergarteners can now have unlimited fun at the newly installed kiddy pool which is large enough to accommodate the kids safely and comfortably. Besides the pool, SIMS also has a new sand pit filled with toys and tools.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

How Press Freedom Is Won



Leon Willems
Director of Free Press Unlimited.

World Press Freedom Day – news producers and consumers pause to reflect on the state of global media. This year, as journalists and government officials gather in Ghana for the event's 25th observance, attention will turn to the myriad pressures and challenges confronting the profession worldwide, and how official and state-sponsored hostility toward the press is threatening democracy.

But these concerns, though certainly valid, are not the entire story. Signs of journalistic resilience are also emerging. So, rather than focusing exclusively on the obstacles journalists around the world are facing, let's mark May 3 by considering the many reasons for optimism.

For starters, while no media market is immune to erosion of press freedom, resistance is possible. Recent events in Europe are illustrative. In Slovakia, public outrage over the politically motivated double murder of an investigative journalist, Ján Kuciak, and his fiancée, Martina Kušnírová, forced Prime Minister Robert Fico to resign, and has his successor, Peter Pellegrini, walking a public-relations tightrope.

Hungary, too, has experienced its own, albeit tamer, version of journalistic pushback. According to a recent study by the European Journalism Center, despite deepening government control over how the media operates, investigative reporting remains active, and "abuses of the taxpayers' money are regularly exposed."

To be sure, the media are under attack like never before, and not only from fake news and polarizing presidents. The slaying of nine journalists in Kabul on April 30, in back-to-back suicide bombings that killed at least 25



people, marked the deadliest day for journalists in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, and added to a grim global tally. According to Reporters Without Borders, more than 1,000 journalists have been murdered around the world in the last 15 years, and only a handful of the perpetrators have been brought to justice.

And yet fresh glimmers of hope are multiplying. Around the world, journalists and their supporters are fighting back in encouraging ways. Consider online censorship. While governments from China to Russia routinely block or filter access to the Internet, half of the world's population is now connected – a 20% increase in only five years.

In Sudan, journalists are using this connectivity to save lives. Last year, when the government refused to inform the public about a devastating cholera outbreak, journalists with Radio Dabanga, working with doctors and nurses, used the WhatsApp messaging service

to share information about prevention and treatment.

Even in a violent and divided country like Somalia, the Internet is being used for good; increased streaming speeds have kept members of the country's sizable diaspora connected with friends and family, and have enabled meaningful dialogue across communities. Legal norms are also moving in the right direction. Between 2011

and 2016, the number of countries with freedom of information laws increased from 90 to 112.

This commitment was deepened last month when the European Union adopted a new law to protect whistle-blowers from prosecution. In a statement, authorities said they hoped the measure would be a boon to investigative journalists by protecting sources who report violations of European law.

Where fewer legal protections are in place, journalists are becoming more creative. In the Philippines, where independent news organizations have become targets of slander by politicians and online trolls, reporters are turning the tables with devastating effect. For example, in a recent series of reports identifying people making threats against the media, the news website Rappler uncovered a network of trolls tied directly to government insiders.

Finally, journalists are working to improve the diversity of their own industry. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, one media organization created a database with the contact details of thousands of female experts who are available for media commentary and analysis. This simple exercise has led to a dramatic increase in the percentage of female experts appearing in the press.

These are just a few of the bright spots we should be highlighting during this year's observance of World Press Freedom Day. Every day, courageous men and women (and sometimes even children) around the world continue to brave the odds to bring us the news. We all benefit from their dedication, and we all have an obligation to honor their successes, not just their sacrifices.

Sitanshu Ranjan Kar takes over as new Director General, PIB

SA H Rizvi

Special to The Times

With an illustrious career behind him, Sitanshu Ranjan Kar, a 1983 batch officer of Indian Information Service, took over as the 27th Director General of Press Information Bureau and as the Principal Spokesperson of the Government of India.

Mr Kar succeeded Mr Frank Noronha, who superannuated after a long and distinguished service at the helm of affair at the PIB. Mr Noronha who endeared himself with his amicable nature and ready to help said in his farewell address that his association with media personnel enriched his professional and made job such a pleasure. In a career spanning nearly 35 years, Mr Kar has worked in key positions in various Media Units of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

After attending the Foundation Course at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie and Orientation Course at Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi, Mr Kar had joined the News Services Division of All India Radio for a short stint before moving to Doordarshan News. He spent nearly 17 years in this medium



and played a substantial role in its growth.

In 1988, he became the first Indian to win the prestigious Visnews Fellowship of London in a world-wide competition and traveled through Europe and North America to experience the cutting-edge technologies being used in the production of television news by leading broadcasters. Mr. Kar joined the Press

Information Bureau in 2003. He anchored the publicity of several key Ministries e.g., Environment & Forests, Rural Development, Human Resource Development, Science & Technology, Atomic Energy and Space before joining the Directorate of Public Relations, Ministry of Defence as the Principal Spokesperson in August 2005. He has the distinction of being the longest serving spokesperson of the Ministry of Defence for over a decade at a stretch.

In December 2015, he was appointed as the Director General of the News Services Division of All India Radio.

Mr Kar had graduated in Humanities from BJB College, Bhubaneswar and secured the First Rank in Political Science Honours in Utkal University. He earned his post-graduate degree in Political Science and M. Phil in Chinese and Japanese Studies from Delhi University.



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Johannesburg

The vibrant heart of South Africa

Johannesburg, affectionately called Jo'burg, Jozi, and E'Goli, the 'city of gold,' is the financial and industrial metropolis of South Africa, built on a rich history of gold mining. The city is rapidly evolving from a crime-tainted safari stopover to a vibrant hub for arts and culture. Cutting-edge contemporary galleries and the new Maboneng Precinct, with its funky restaurants, cafes, and art studios, now rank among the city's top tourist attractions along with the poignant Apartheid Museum and Constitution Hill.



Pretoria: About 55 kilometers from Johannesburg, Pretoria is the administrative capital of South Africa and is worth visiting for its impressive lineup of historical buildings, monuments, and museums. Ablaze with the purple hues of jacarandas in the spring, Pretoria is also a city of beautiful parks and gardens. Highlights of a visit here include the Pretoria National Botanic Garden, the Voortrekker Monument, Freedom Park, the large zoo, and a clutch of peaceful nature reserves within the city limits with diverse wildlife and an abundance of birds.



The Maboneng Precinct: The vibrant Maboneng Precinct is a fantastic example of a successful mixed-use urban renewal project. Once a rather run-down neighborhood, Maboneng, meaning 'place of light,' now fizzes with life. Funky restaurants, cafes, art galleries, shops, hotels, and entertainment venues mix smartly with residential buildings. A top attraction here is the weekly Market on Main with food from all over the continent.



Gold Reef City: At Gold Reef City, eight kilometers from the city

center, visitors are whisked back to the gold rush days through a series of thrilling theme park rides and historical exhibits. This family-friendly attraction hosts reproductions of buildings and businesses from the era, including houses, shops, the Royal Theatre, a hotel, a Chinese laundry, a tailor's workshop, a chemist's shop, a newspaper office, and Johannesburg's first stock exchange.



Constitution Hill: Overlooking the city of Johannesburg, Constitution Hill is a former prison that provides fascinating insight into South Africa's history. At the site, visitors can explore provocative exhibits at the Number Four museum, the Women's Gaol museum, and the Old Fort museum. Together, the precinct was once known as The Fort, and it forged a reputation for its brutal treatment of political prisoners, common criminals, and passive resisters; famous former prisoners include Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi. Today, the old Awaiting Trial building has been transformed into the Constitutional Court of South Africa, a symbol of freedom, which works to protect the rights of all the nation's people.



The Cradle of Humankind: About an hour's drive from Johannesburg, the Cradle of Humankind is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's most productive and important paleo-anthropological areas. One of the top attractions here are the Sterkfontein stalactitic caves, which consist of six linked underground chambers with a lake at a depth of about 40 meters.



Market Theatre: The Market Theatre complex housed in a converted market building, plays a major part in Johannesburg's cultural life. It has four live theater venues where some of the finest productions in South Africa are presented. The complex also includes a bookshop, art and photographic gallery, and restaurants. Kippie's is a popular jazz venue, with music by well-known musicians in the evenings. In the huge parking lot opposite the Market Theatre complex a large flea market is held every

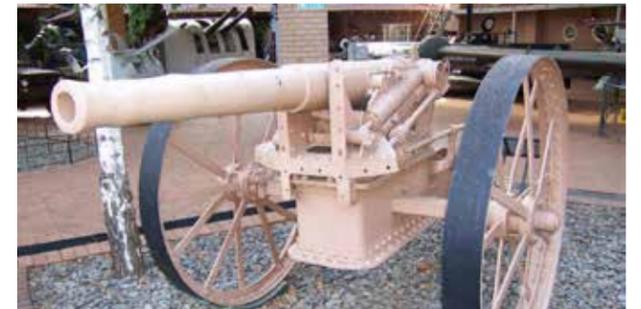
Saturday. Adjoining the Market Theatre, Museum Africa has an impressive ethnological department, with reproductions of the huts, tools, arts and crafts, dress, and toys of South African tribes.



Soweto and the Mandela Museum: Soweto (an abbreviation for Southwestern Townships) lies 20 kilometers southwest of Johannesburg and offers visitors a journey into the soul of the fight for freedom. Guided tours of the townships bring visitors here to meet the residents and see how they live. The tours often include a visit to Mandela House Museum, where Mandela lived with his wife Winnie before he was imprisoned for 27 years, as well as the Hector Pieterse Museum, and Freedom Square, where the Freedom Charter, the ANC's guiding document, was adopted.



The Lindfield Victorian House Museum: Anyone interested in life during the Victorian era will love this 'living museum' and Provincial Heritage Site. The current owner, Katherine Love, who has lived here since 1967, dresses in Victorian clothing, greets visitors, and leads them on a tour through the rooms of this beautifully preserved middle-class Victorian home designed by one of South Africa's most famous architects, Herbert Baker. Along the way, guests can view impressive collections of 19th- and 20th-century furniture, art, and household items and learn fascinating stories about the former residents and how Victorian culture and customs have influenced Johannesburg today.



South African National Museum of Military History: Exactly as its title states, the South African Museum of Military History traces the story of all the country's military conflicts. Highlights here include the World War II fighter planes and bombers as well as exhibits of tanks, ammunition, arms, and medals.

Wits Art Museum: Opened in 2012, this impressive museum hosts a superb collection of African art with many works from South Africa as well as West and Central Africa. The museum is part of the Wits University Cultural Precinct in the trendy area of Braamfontein, which buzzes with students and university professors. Frequent temporary exhibitions infuse a freshness to the exhibits in this modern light-filled space.



Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism

Consolidating efforts at the regional and international levels to counter violent extremism and radicalization was the focus of a two-day high-level conference, which concluded in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan on 4 May. Held under the banner, 'Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism', the conference was organized by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan in co-operation with the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the European Union.

Foreign ministers of Central Asian participating States and Afghanistan, as well as high-level officials from other countries, representatives of regional and international organizations, civil society, research institutions and diplomatic missions accredited to Tajikistan took part in the conference. Terrorism, radicalism and violent extremism are among today's greatest security challenges, feeding instability in many parts of

International Conference in Tajikistan

the world and posing a global challenge that countries cannot tackle on their own. The aim of the high-level conference was to foster a multi-sectoral, comprehensive and effective cooperation between, national, regional and international-level actors in framing response strategies to this global challenge. The conference was organized as part of Tajikistan's ongoing commitment to counter terrorism and violent extremism nationally, regionally and as an international partner.

In his statement to the conference the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon highlighted several issues that could only be solved through international cooperation.

He stated: Currently, millions of people throughout the world have been subject to risks and threats of wars and conflicts, terrorism and

extremism have turned into an unprecedented global threat causing tragic and long-term public, political, and moral consequences.

Given the existing reality, we need to acknowledge the enhancement of regional and global cooperation and partnership for ensuring inclusive stability and security by undertaking joint initiatives on countering terrorism and extremism and elimination of political, military and financial support factors.

In this process, the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its anti-terrorist conventions, the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly resolutions should be the base of our joint counteraction to terrorism and extremism.

The history and harrowing experience of many countries, including Tajikistan, show that only cooperation and joint actions will make it possible to win in the fight against evil forces and global threats. However, sadly so far the international community has no unanimous position on definitions of terrorism and extremism. The global nature of the terrorism and extremism threat seriously requires us to have identical position and define and adopt unified definitions of these two terms. Sadly, today we witness that the strategic standoff has intensified in the world and we clearly notice the signs of secondary expansion of the cold war. This situation undermines the efforts of the international community to counter

the global threats and challenges and negatively impacts the fundamental principles of the world order and system. In the current complicated situation full of contradictions, we need to cooperate, rather than compete and attempt to dominate.

In this context, we are also clearly concerned that the terrorists and extremists misuse the sacred Islam to disseminate their Islamophobic ideas and promote hatred of Muslims. Accordingly, to prevent Islamophobia, we need to expand the environment of trust, tolerance and mutual understanding between the societies and civilizations, which in its turn will increase our possibilities for countering the current threats and challenges. It is impossible to win the terrorism and extremism through military actions only. In this process, we believe it is very important to constantly focus on the social aspects of the growth of this phenomenon. Accordingly, developed countries need to do more to improve the socio-economic conditions in less developed countries.

I would like to emphasize that Tajikistan is the national partner of all countries of the world and international and regional organizations in countering terrorism, extremism and radicalization and other threats and challenges of the time, such as illicit drugs and arm trafficking, organized transnational crimes and cyber-crime.

In conclusion the President said: I believe that the outcomes of this Conference will make it possible to expand our cooperation in the field of joint counteraction to terrorism and extremism and ensure a world free of dangerous phenomena



Black marketers profit from maid shortage

Continued from Page 1

the fees for the limited supply of available workers. Moreover, the price for new recruitment, from the handful of countries that still supply household workers to Kuwait, is said to have skyrocketed in recent months. This has led to a profitable trade in the black-market supply of household workers to Kuwait.

Representatives of foreign domestic supply offices, from countries that have traditionally supplied laborers to Kuwait, are offering to undercut the local domestic services providers and deal directly with customers looking to hire new maids. These representatives are often found near buildings that house local domestic labor offices. They attempt to attract customers even before they enter the building by offering maids from their home-country at prices that most people would find irresistible. They gather details of the customers and contact them for home delivery of domestic workers. According to local media reports, foreign representatives are offering to provide domestic helpers from places such as India for around KD 670, and for a stipulated salary of KD 80 per month for a fresh employee and KD 100 for someone with experience in domestic work.

The representatives claim that the customer would only have to issue the visa, and they would then handle all other work and logistics involved. This would include hiring the helper in India, or elsewhere, clearing the emigration formalities in

the home-country, and getting them to Kuwait, all within a period of one month from issuance of visa.

Many offices that supply domestic workers to the market blame the government for the supply crunch. They cite the numerous stringent conditions being attached to bringing workers from abroad and also the many laws that keep changing every so often, and which lead some workers to abscond from their work place or even attempt or commit suicide in their workplace.

Several citizens indicated they were not concerned with the causes and solutions of the current shortage of maids in the market and were only interested in how soon the domestic helpers would become available at affordable prices. They expressed concern that with Ramadan already here, the problem would become further exacerbated.

The problem of domestic helper shortage is also made more complicated by the fact that domestic offices can currently provide workers only from India, and possibly from Ivory Coast later on.

Many citizens say that Indian workers are not well-versed in cleaning, cooking and washing, and they generally handle only the children for 12 hours per day, but need to be paid KD 100 per day and moreover domestic offices charge KD 990 per Indian domestic helper. It is expected that workers from Ivory Coast will also cost around KD 850 to recruit and will command a monthly salary of over KD 80. Many citizens say that the black-marketeers are the only people who profit under the current scenario.

Dwindling expatriate families lead...

Continued from Page 1

by the domestic property market in the next 4-5 years, says the Secretary-General of Kuwait Real-Estate Union, Ahmad Al-Dewaihees.

Speaking at a recent news conference, Al-Dewaihees disclosed that the rate of occupation of property units in Kuwait amounted to 86.8 percent in the current year. This represents a drop of 8.2 percent as compared to the past five years when occupancy had soared to around 95 percent, said the Secretary-General.

In the meantime, average monthly rent also dropped from KD279 to KD 242, a drop of 13.2 percent, said Al-Dewaihees, citing a report prepared by the Union. On the demand side, the proportion of the expatriates' populace growth, which reached 4.8 percent over the past five years, dropped by two percent in 2017 and is expected to fall by a further 1.5 percent in the coming five years, said Al-Dewaihees. The report prepared by the Kuwait Real-Estate Union included a survey covering a sample of 162,576 apartment flats in 5,695 plots, at 19 locations. It studied 875 plots, including 26,466 under-construction residential units in all districts, in addition to 13,535 built ones, where proportion of new units amounted to 6.6 percent of the promoted plots.

Regarding transactions involving ownership flats, the Secretary-General revealed that such transactions, which exceeded 1,000 in 2007 and 2008, fell sharply following the global economic

crisis that erupted in 2008, dropping to its lowest in 2012. A mild recovery that began in 2013 saw the number of transactions reach 973 by 2015, but then it again fell to register just 671 transactions in 2017, said the Secretary-General.

In its monthly brief on economic activity in the country, the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), the premier commercial lender in the country, reported that though real estate activity was up in February, the prices appeared to soften. Sales during the month stood at KD189 million, up by 22percent year-on-year (y/y) mainly from the strength of sales in the residential (26% y/y) and investment (46% y/y) sectors, while commercial sales remained weak. The report showed that though residential land and home prices were within their

12-month ranges, prices in all sectors were generally softer in February. The exception was the index of investment prices, which slipped to its lowest level in more than four years.

Reiterating the view expressed by the secretary-general of Kuwait Real-Estate Union, the NBK report concluded that the fall in investment prices may reflect oversupply in the investment market (rental units) and lower demand stemming mainly from reduced growth among expatriates.

With more apartments coming to the market in the next five years and expatriates, who account for the bulk of rented apartments, leaving the country, stakeholders in Kuwait's real-estate, including owners, investors and brokers face a challenging period ahead.

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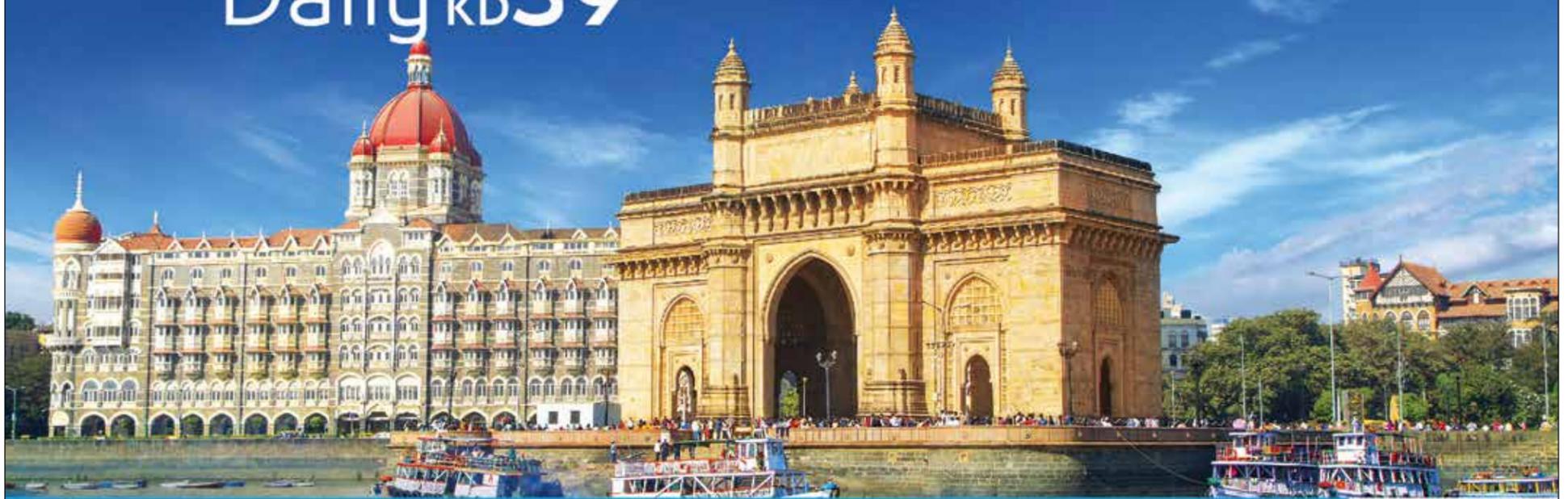
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