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# Coronavirus to have big economic impact on Kuwait



## THE TIMES REPORT

Kuwait has so far not been affected with any coronavirus infection and health authorities have reiterated that the country is well prepared to meet any medical exigencies. While the absence of coronavirus infections and the country's preparedness are no doubt welcome news, Kuwait's readiness to face the

deepen their production cuts by a further 500,000 barrels per day from January 2020. Consequently, oil prices ended 2019 on a strong footing and, in fact, recorded its best performance since 2016. However, hopes of a more buoyant global economic growth and higher oil demand in first-quarter of 2020 were dashed in the first week of January with the emergence of a new coronavirus infection in China and its rapid spread to several countries worldwide.



potential economic consequences arising from the infection, in particular, its impact on oil prices, is doubtful.

Fourth-quarter of 2019 witnessed the prevailing global economy gloom abate to a certain extent, with the 'phase one' trade deal between the US and China, and a boost in oil prices from an agreement by Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and several non-OPEC members, to

By the second-week of February, the virus had claimed the lives of over 725 and infected nearly 35,000. Most of those infected are in China and largely confined to the province of Hubei and its capital Wuhan, which was the epicenter of the infection. So far, except for two deaths reported in the Philippines and Hong Kong, all the other fatalities have been in China.

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## Ban on returning Philippine household helpers, a denial of rights and privileges to earn decent wages

RICKY LAXA  
STAFF WRITER

Several household employers in Kuwait called the ban on deployment of Filipino household helpers who are currently on vacation in the Philippines and wish to return to Kuwait, a denial of rights and opportunities for those citizens to earn decent wages. The Times Kuwait recently spoke to some Arab employers and gathered reactions on the effect of the ban not only among employers but also on the workers. Names of interviewees have been changed as per request.

"How will she be able to finance her chemotherapy as she suffers from colon cancer? She could not return to Kuwait due to the ban imposed by the Philippine government among household workers returning from vacation" stated Munirah, a Kuwaiti mother of two and businesswoman. Munirah added that her Filipina household helper has been working for her family for the past 12 years and she had to go on quick vacation to visit her mother who was ill. "My maid has been diagnosed with colon cancer and we have been providing

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



## Mutually accepted conditions included in new contract



## THE TIMES REPORT

Following the signing of an agreement between the Philippines and Kuwait on a standard employment contract for Filipino household service workers in Kuwait, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) has passed a resolution to partially lift the ban on deployment of Filipino workers to Kuwait.

Disclosing this, the Secretary of the Philippines Department of Labor and Employment, Silvestre Bello III, said the resolution by the POEA governing board means that skilled, semi-skilled and professional workers (Kuwait Visa-18) can now be deployed to Kuwait on employment contracts, however the ban on deployment of household service workers (Kuwait Visa-20) will still remain in force.

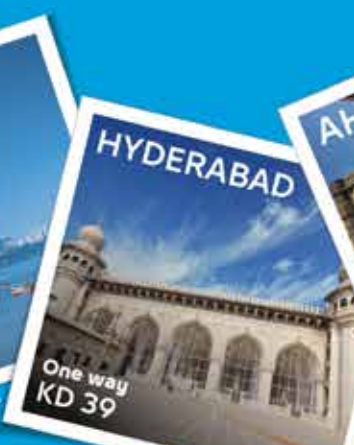
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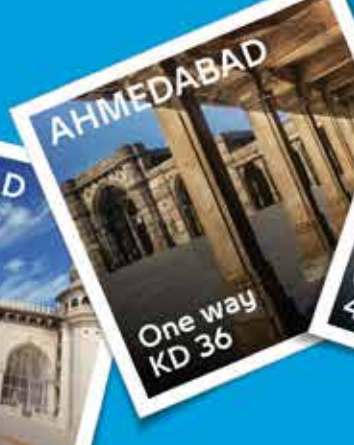
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# Airbus bribery scandal creates jitters in Kuwait

**K**uwait is among a host of countries that are being investigated by prosecutors in multiple countries for allegedly receiving bribes from Airbus, the European planemaker.

On 31 January, Airbus agreed to pay a record US\$4 billion in fine after reaching a plea bargain with prosecutors in the United Kingdom, France and United States over alleged bribery and corruption stretching back at least 15 years.

Investigations have so far revealed bribery in the purchase of aircrafts by Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Indonesia, Taiwan and Ghana, while countries being investigated for the possibility of having received kickbacks in

the purchase of Airbus aircraft include Brazil, China, Japan, Turkey and Kuwait.

As the fallout from the bribery scandal reverberated around the world, heads of those who headed purchases of Airbus in recent years began to roll in many countries. In Malaysia, the CEO and the Chairman of Asia's largest budget airline, AirAsia, agreed to step down so as to facilitate investigations by Malaysian authorities.

In Ghana, accusations of Airbus payments to a relative of a government official in connection with the purchase of military transport planes, has led to a political storm. In Colombia, the national flag carrier Avianca

said it had hired a law firm to investigate its relationship with Airbus and determine if it had been a victim of wrongdoing.

Meanwhile in Sri Lanka, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa ordered a full investigation after the UK's Serious Fraud Office (SFO) reported that Airbus had hired the wife of a Sri Lankan Airline executive as its intermediary in connection with aircraft negotiations. South Korea's national carrier Korean Air and Taiwan's China Airlines declined to comment on allegations of payments to intermediaries over the jet purchases.

Investigators looking into the scandal have reported a global network of agents or

middlemen in transactions across the Airbus Group's business, which was controlled from a cell in Paris where the group had part of its headquarters. The annual budget of this cell was said to be around \$300 million and was allegedly spent to 'facilitate' the purchase of Airbus aircraft over its main rival Boeing.

It will be recalled that national carrier, Kuwait Airways had signed a contract in 2014 for the purchase of 25 aircraft from Airbus, including the narrow-bodied A320 neo aircraft and the long-range wide-bodied A350. Delivery of the new planes began in 2019 after the government gave an financial guarantee endorsing the deal.



## IWG celebrates Kuwait's National and Liberation Days

**O**n the occasion of upcoming Kuwait's National and Liberation Days, the International Women's Group (IWG) held a reception at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on 2 February. The honorary president Sheikha Hanouf Al-Bader Al-Sabah was the special guest at the function, which was attended by wives of the ambassadors to Kuwait, members of the IWG and prominent women in Kuwait society.

In her opening speech, Rima A-Khaldi, wife of the Ambassador of Palestine to Kuwait and Vice President of IWG, congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the people of Kuwait on the occasion of their National and Liberation Days.



For her part, philanthropist, entrepreneur and author Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali pointed out that Kuwait is a small country but is home to more than 100 nationalities living

in peace and security on its land. Praising IWG for its activities, she added, Kuwait enjoys very good relations with countries of the world, which is why representatives

of these countries share the National and Liberation Day celebrations with the Kuwaiti people.

During the ceremony, students of the British School screened a short film titled 'Kuwait is a small country with a big heart', expressing their love to their beloved Kuwait. The event also featured an important part of Kuwaiti heritage through the 'Kuwaiti wedding corner', to highlight the customs of marriages in Kuwait with its joyful and distinctive rituals, and also draw attention to the simplicity of customs and traditions of Kuwaiti people.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the attendees enjoyed a traditional Kuwaiti cuisine.

## Economic impact of coronavirus on Kuwait

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

As the world's second-largest economy and the world's largest importer of oil struggles to contain and overcome the infection, its economy is taking a battering, which in turn is impacting oil imports and global oil prices.

In 2019, China overtook the US to become the world's largest importer of oil, importing a record 506 million metric tonnes, or around 10.2 million barrels per day. The country's energy usage of an average 13.5 million barrels of oil per day, which amounts to nearly 15 percent of global usage, also made China the second largest consumer of oil after the US. More than 75 percent of China's energy needs are met through oil imports, and over 45 percent of these imports come from six countries — Iran, Iraq and the four GCC states of Saudi Arabia, Oman, the UAE and Kuwait. No wonder then, every time China sneezes, oil exporters in the Gulf region catch the flu.

With the spread of coronavirus infection and rising death toll dampening oil demand from China and other countries impacted by the virus, OPEC and its new-found allies (OPEC+) have begun scrambling to hold up oil prices. In an attempt to salvage oil prices that have fallen by about 20 percent over the last month and now hovers around US\$55 per barrel, OPEC's technical committee met at the cartel's headquarters in Vienna on 4 February and recommended an urgent additional 600,000 barrel per day production cut among the group.

In December 2019, the OPEC+ group had

agreed to deepen production cuts by a further 500,000 barrels per day to take total cuts to 1.7 million barrels per day in the first-quarter of 2020, and for a reappraisal of the plan by the end of March. If the new curbs proposed by the technical committee are approved by OPEC+, this would bring total global oil production down by 2.3 million barrels per day since production reductions began in January 2017.

Kuwait Export Crude, which closed the year at \$68.4 per barrel and marked a 31 percent hike year-on-year, has seen its price fall to \$55.4 last week — a drop of nearly 20 percent from its high at the tail-end of 2019. Kuwait, which has generally over-complied with the previous output cut targets, has been set an additional production cut earmark of 55,000 barrels per day starting January. This would see the country's total output fall to 2.67 million barrels per day, and if the technical committee's recommendations are accepted, the country's total production could fall even lower.

In January 2017, OPEC+ began cutting production to deplete global excess oil inventory and to raise prices, but so far, despite compliance by most members to production cut targets, prices have not risen to the extent that the cartel had hoped for. Faced with subdued global demand and continued strong growth in non-OPEC oil supply, especially from the US shale, the oil market is likely to remain well supplied in 2020 and benchmark Brent crude is expected to average \$60 per barrel in 2020, lower than the \$64 averaged in 2019.

The lower production and lower prices are a cause for concern to Kuwait's new cabinet sworn-in in December, with Finance Minister Mariam Al-Aqeel already presenting a draft budget for fiscal year 2020-21 that projected yet another large deficit. The deficit of KD9.2 billion for the upcoming fiscal was higher than the KD8.27 billion deficit in the 2019-20 budget and marks the sixth straight year that Kuwait is being saddled with a deficit. Given the continued absence of a new debt law, the budget shortfall will need to be once again covered from the estimated KD21 billion remaining in General Reserve Fund (GRF), which is now expected to run dry by the next fiscal.

The parliament has been reluctant to pass the debt bill, which would allow the government to borrow on the international market. Instead lawmakers have insisted that the government stem corruption and rein-in expenses. While the government has in recent years been resolutely pursuing anti-corruption measures, and has displayed relative transparency in its transactions, any reforms to the public wage bill, which accounts for the largest chunk of government expenses, has been anathema to parliamentarians.

Unlike many of its neighbors in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bloc, Kuwait has also failed to make any meaningful reforms to rationalize its spendings on generous subsidies to citizens, or to introduce taxes such as a Value Added Tax (VAT) to buttress the State's income. Oil revenue remains the main

source of Kuwait's income, and so economic growth and development in the country are inextricably linked to volatile oil prices on the international market.

Finance Minister Al-Aqeel has said the government "will fight for getting the debt law approved, as the cost of borrowing is less than the cost of withdrawing from the reserves." But, with parliamentary elections scheduled for late this year, lawmakers are unlikely to discuss needed economic reforms that could impact citizens' pockets, or approve the debt law before the 2020-2021 fiscal year, as many parliamentarians see the law as a useful bargaining tool to get the government to toe their line.

In a new report themed 'The Future of Oil and Fiscal Sustainability in the GCC Region, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) opined that with the oil market undergoing fundamental changes, new technologies increasing the supply of oil from old and new sources, and the world gradually moving away from oil amid rising concerns over its environmental implications, the future will pose significant challenges to oil-exporting countries, including those of the GCC.

The report added that with global oil demand expected to peak in the next two decades, some GCC countries have begun reducing their reliance on oil and have been implementing necessary reforms to diversify their economies, as well as their fiscal and external revenues, but some countries are still dawdling with their reforms.





## Indian Doctors Forum conducts Docfest 2020

Indian Doctors Forum (IDF) Kuwait, the premier socio-cultural association of Indian doctors in Kuwait, released the 16th iteration of their annual health guide, IDF Health Guide 2020, and held their 'IDF DOCFEST 2020' under the banner 'Archives of a Medico – The Path Trodden', at the Hotel Regency on 31 January.

Chief guest on the occasion, the Minister of Health Dr. Basel Hamoud Al Hamoud Al Sabah, was represented by the Asst. Undersecretary at the Ministry of Health and the Secretary-General of the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations (KIMS) Dr. Ibrahim Al Hadi, the Guests of Honor were the Ambassador of India H.E. K. Jeeva Sagar and the President of Kuwait Medical Association Dr. Ahmad Thuwaini Al Enizi.

The event was also attended by a galaxy of dignitaries, including the Ambassador of Bangladesh H.E. S. M. Abul Kalam, and, Sheikh Al Dusairi, Dr. Ali Al Mousawi, Dr. Hussain Dashti, Dr. Amal Al Kader, Dr. Salem Al Kandari, Secretary KMA and diplomats. Also present



were senior doctors and department heads from various hospitals and medical faculties in Kuwait, as well as senior Indian business persons and presidents and secretaries of various Indian associations in Kuwait, in addition to representatives of sponsors of the IDF Health Guide 2020.

Dr. Surendra Nayak, President of the IDF, spoke about the activities of IDF and talked about the opportunities in India for Medical Tourism and the rapid strides being made in the country in medical technology, expansion and innovation.



In his inaugural address, Dr. Ibrahim Al Had read a message from Minister Dr. Basel Hamoud Al Hamoud Al Sabah in which the minister expressed his pride in the strong cooperation in the medical field between the two great countries and its deep-rooted historical bonds of human relations.

Ambassador Sagar in his speech praised the dedication and work ethics of Indian doctors and highlighted the selfless and compassionate work done by doctors.

The health guide, entitled 'Medical Innovations' comprises a collection of articles



authored by experts in the various fields of medicine and related specialties. The health guide was officially released by Dr. Ibrahim Al Hadi and the first copy was presented to the Indian ambassador and to Dr. Al Enizi.

The vibrant cultural program was a showcase of dancing, acting and singing talent. The finale of the cultural program came when artists and office bearers of IDF came on stage with flags of Kuwait and India depicting the solidarity between the two great nations.

The event concluded with a sumptuous buffet dinner and raffle draws.

## LuLu Hypermarket distributes prizes to winners of 'Shop at LuLu & Win' promotion



LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, awarded prizes to the winners of its recent 'Shop at LuLu & Win' promotion, which was held in association with Kalyan Jewellers from 20 November, 2019 to 10 January, 2020.

The Regional Director of LuLu Group International, Kuwait, Mr. Mohamed Haris, and the Business Head of Kalyan Jewellers, Mr. Appu Murugesan, presented the six lucky winners of the promotion with 250 grams of gold each.



The prize distribution ceremony, held at the Al Rai outlet of LuLu Hypermarket on 1 February, was witnessed by a large gathering of shoppers, well-wishers and media personnel, as well as top officials of LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait and Kalyan Jewellers Kuwait.

The promotion entitled Shoppers purchasing a minimum of KD10 worth of goods at any LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait during the promotion period were entitled to an e-affle coupon that entered them into the grand draw to pick six winners, with each receiving

250g of gold. With a total of 1.5 kilos of gold on offer as prizes from Kalyan Jewellers, the response to the promotion was overwhelming.

To excite customers further, the promotion offered e-affle coupon holders were also eligible for other prizes from Kalyan Jewellers such as gift vouchers for gold and diamond purchases and zero percent jewelry-making charges during the promotion period. Winners of the 'Shop at LuLu & Win' promotion were picked and their names announced at a grand draw held at the ministry of commerce premises on 14th January, in the presence of ministry officials and senior officers from LuLu Hypermarket and Kalyan Jewellers in Kuwait.

During the prize distribution ceremony, winners of the 'LuLu Travel Fest' promotion were felicitated by Lulu hypermarket officials. The first place winner was presented with a KD 600 worth gift voucher, while the remaining 14 winners each received a KD 100 worth of gift vouchers.

The Promotion held from 5 December, 2019 to 4 January, 2020, shoppers at any Lulu outlet, who purchased a Wagon-R / Beelite / Cortigiani brand of soft or hard trolleys, were entitled to one raffle coupon, which would enter them into a raffle draw.

The 'Shop at LuLu & Win' promotion is part of the hypermarket's continued commitment to interact with their patrons at every retail touch-point.

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# Rafael Nadal wows tennis fans in Kuwait with brilliant performance



Global tennis icon Rafael Nadal made history on Wednesday, 5 February, defeating fellow Spanish star David Ferrer in the inaugural Kuwait Champions Challenge, the first match to be played at the all-new world-class Shaikh Jaber Al Abdullah Al Jaber Al Sabah International Tennis Complex.

The match, which served as the inauguration of the Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait, a partnership between Tamdeen Group, Kuwait's leading mixed-use developer, and Rafa Nadal Academy by Movistar, only the second such facility in the world bearing the 19-time Grand Slam champion's name, and the first outside of his hometown of Mallorca, Spain.

World No. 2 Nadal and former top-ranked ATP star Ferrer played out an intense match, complete with fast-paced action and the occasional trick shot, with Nadal prevailing 6-4, 6-3 after a 90-minute encounter. "This was an incredible experience for me and

hopefully for everyone here," said Nadal after the match. "There was a great crowd out there and for us it is a big night, a very special night."

The match was watched by packed out 1,500 crowd including Sheikh Jaber Al Abdullah Al Jaber Al Sabah, and Sheikh Ahmed Al Jaber Abdullah Al Sabah, President of the Kuwait Tennis Federation (KTF); President of the Arab Tennis Federation and Honorary Chairman of Asian Tennis Federation, distinguished members of Kuwait's diplomatic community and VIPs.

The Kuwait Champions Challenge, the first clash of its kind in the state of Kuwait and d Nadal's Kuwaiti debut, represented an unprecedented opportunity for the packed crowd to get close look at Spaniard's trademark skills, power, lightning movement and winning desire that have made him one of the greatest players in history.

Rafa Nadal Academy has started accepting registrations for memberships ahead of officially opening its doors in April.

## Nadal presents U-16 girls tennis trophy to Indian girl

Legendary tennis star Rafael Nadal who was in Kuwait to inaugurate the Rafael Nadal Tennis Academy at the newly opened Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex located in Al-Zahraa, attended the first tennis competition for young girls organized at the complex.

Young girls from various schools in Kuwait participated in the first-ever Girls Under 16 (U-16) competition held at the tennis complex. Indian school girl Sai Harshita Adivi emerged victorious in the tournament having won all matches against her opponents. The young talent was probably doubly delighted when Mr. Nadal himself presented her with the trophy, to loud applause from the spectators.

Harshita, daughter of Mohini Vimala Kiran and Bala Siva Srikanth Adivi, who works in Kuwait Oil Company, is from west Godavari District in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. She is a Class-9 student of Fahaheel Al Watanieh Indian Private School in Ahmadi.



## Domestic recruitment agencies warned of infringing laws

Owners of domestic labor recruitment agencies need to abide by provisions of Law No. 68/2015 to avoid being penalized and having their offices closed down for periods ranging from three to six months, said the spokesperson for Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) and Director of Public Relations Department, Aseel Al-Mizyad.

She revealed that the director in charge of the domestic labor department at PAM has so far taken administrative measures against five recruitment agencies for violating Article 24 of Labor Law 6/2015.

She explained that a three-month suspension is given to agencies that do not contact PAM when summoned for a violation, while a six-



month closure is meted out if the agency signs employment contracts in violation of the provisions approved by PAM's department of domestic labor.

## Municipality opens WhatsApp account to receive complaints

Acting Director of Public Relations at Kuwait Municipality Mohammed Al-Mutairi disclosed that Kuwait Municipality recently opened a WhatsApp account to interact with the public and to receive their complaints and suggestions related to actions taken, or not taken, by the municipality.

The WhatsApp account is in addition to the hotline and other social networking platforms and website that the Municipality maintains to further its communication with the public.

On an unrelated note, Al-Mutairi also announced that the Municipality is preparing to



decorate the country's main roads and sidewalks in all six governorates with the national flag and other decorations in celebration of the upcoming National and Liberation Days. He said that "the municipality will begin its decoration after His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah raises the national flag to mark the start of celebrations this month.



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Ramesh Advani

Fifty years in Kuwait

# Memories of a Lifetime

RUBAB HASSAN

EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE TIMES KUWAIT

For many aspiring young people success is often defined by money and fame and they spend their lives working to achieve these goals. However, for a handful of people, success is defined by a different metric; they may not have a success story to narrate, fame to flout, or wealth to bequeath, but they live a life of goodness and simplicity. A life of hard work, of loving and caring for their family, of helping their friends and giving to the community; a life of finding happiness and contentment in the day-to-day activities of their very ordinary lives. Often, the legacy such people leave behind is not one of fame or wealth, but the fond memories held in the hearts of people they interact with in life's journey.

One such man who found contentment and happiness in leading an ordinary life is Ramesh Advani. As he prepares to leave Kuwait after spending nearly five decades in the



country, he leaves behind a legacy of sharing and caring for others, which people who came to know and love him will remember for long.

The Times Kuwait had the opportunity recently to sit down for a conversation with Mr. Advani where he reminisced about his five decades leading an ordinary life in Kuwait.

Advani's journey started with a trip to Kuwait in the 1968 when

“I have seen Kuwait go from masbaha (prayer beads) to mobile. The speed at which development has taken place in the country amazes me.”

”



he decided to make a place for himself in this country. Equipped with a razor-sharp focus and energy, Advani soon joined the workforce of Al-Mulla Group, at a time when the company was simply known as Bader Al Mulla & Bros. Here, under the patronage of Indian community stalwarts such as Minoo Patel he grew in his career from store-stock tracker to become the only document coordinator for the group of companies.

He remembers with sadness the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, when Iraqi troops overran Kuwait. Overnight, the prosperous and easy-going life was in turmoil. "In the morning, I was just driving down to buy some vegetables when Iraqi soldiers stopped me; they thought I was a Kuwaiti dressed like an Indian." Ramesh was held at a gunpoint and was asked to get out of his car. "I was scared, but managed to

convince them that I was an Indian by speaking about Indian film personalities," he said with a smile. "It is hard to believe that Bollywood saved me that day. The Iraqis finally let me go with a salute asking me to say 'Salam' to Amitabh Bachchan."

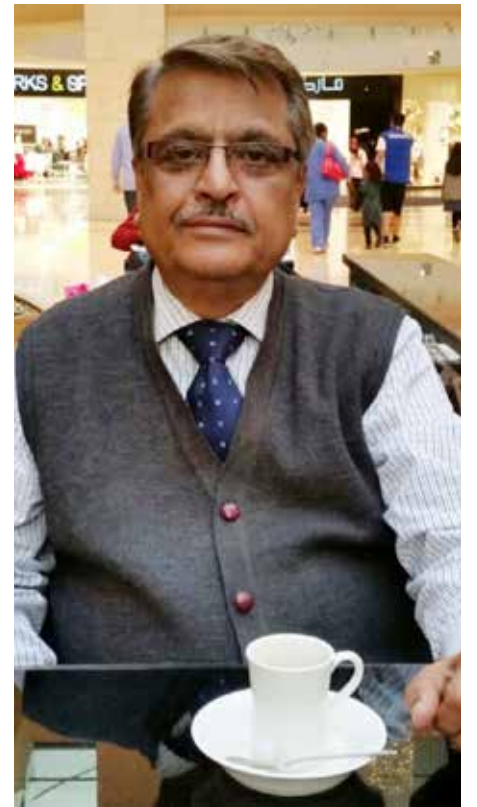
Advani loves Kuwait dearly, for him Kuwait is his first home. "I have seen Kuwait go from masbaha (prayer beads) to mobile. The speed at which development has taken place in the country amazes me. The beautiful skyscrapers and



the vibrant economy have made this country a luxury destination for many. But what makes Kuwait most appealing to me is that Kuwaitis are very friendly."

After 32 years of working with Al Mulla Group, Advani joined the restaurant business with entrepreneur and restaurateur Ravi Kohli.

They started with one restaurant and today they have a chain of nine outlets, including the famous Dawat and Taal restaurants. "Years have come and gone, and today new players such as Talabat and Carriage



are transforming the restaurant business, but the experiences and stories I gathered during my years as a restaurateur are moments that I will cherish forever."

After 50 years in Kuwait, as he bids goodbye to this country, all he would like to humbly say is thanks to everyone who crossed his life and made it memorable, especially to his former bosses in Al Mulla Group, to Mr. Kohli and his sister Neelam Kohli, whom he sees as his mentors, and to his aunt for bringing him to Kuwait in the first place.

He adds that now that the younger generation have come up they should have the opportunity to experience what he had, and as he bids fond farewell and heads home to India to spend time with his daughter and grandchildren, his message of love to all residents here is simply, "Don't text while driving."



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## Mistakes to avoid when cooking lentils

If you are not already cooking lentils all the time, you should be — they are quick, easy, wholesome, and affordable. While making them is pretty straightforward, there are a few mistakes that can be made along the way that may leave you with a pot of lentils that you're less than satisfied with. Here is what to avoid to achieve lentil success.

### Two ways to cook lentils

Lentils happen to be just as versatile to cook as they are to cook with. You can pressure-cook them or cook them on the stovetop with equal success. Just be sure to pick the right method depending on the variety of lentil you are cooking.



**Buying old lentils:** You buy a cheap bag of standard brown ones from the store and simmered them forever — and they never softened up. It is important to buy the freshest lentils possible. Older lentils take much longer to cook and often shed their skins during cooking.

Look to bulk bins when buying lentils, as they tend to have higher turnover so they will likely be fresher than those in boxes or bags in the shelf. After purchasing, try to use them up within a few months.

**Forgetting to sift through them before cooking:** It is possible that there are small pebbles in your bag of lentils. It is best to be safe and rinse

and sift through them before cooking, because no one wants to break a tooth by biting down on a rock. Give the lentils a good rinse in a colander to remove any debris and sift through them to be sure there are no hidden stones tucked among the legumes.

**Not adding any aromatics to the pot:** The beauty of lentils is that they are a completely blank slate — they can take on any flavor you throw at them. That also means if you do not give them any flavor, they will taste pretty bland. Add aromatics to the water or, even better, use chicken or vegetable stock instead of water.

**Follow this tip:** Add a few cloves of garlic, a bay leaf, a spring of rosemary, half of an onion, or a combination of these aromatics to the cooking water or stock to help flavor the lentils.

**Cooking them at too rapid of a simmer:** Mushy, overcooked lentils are far from tasty. Cooking them at a rapid simmer can lead to them splitting their skins from the pressure and thus lead to mushy results.

**Trust that a gentle simmer will cook the lentils perfectly.** Bring the pot to a rapid simmer first, then reduce the heat to low so that the pot just barely bubbles. If you're making your lentils in a pressure cooker, know which varieties work.

**Salting or adding acidic ingredients to the pot too early:** On the other hand, undercooked, crunchy lentils really aren't ideal either. Salting the cooking liquid or adding an acidic ingredient like lemon or vinegar too early in the cooking process can prevent the legumes from reaching their peak tenderness.

**Follow this tip:** Wait until the lentils are done cooking to add salt or acidic ingredients like lemon juice or vinegar. Stir them into the lentils while still warm and they will absorb the flavor

## Thought for the week

In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.

— Martin Luther King Jr.  
American civil rights activist

## Connection between food and mood

Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



Although a low-carbohydrate diet (high-protein diet) can be an effective dietary approach to weight loss, it has an effect on psychological functions, including mood and cognition that might be negative.

Besides being something known among people, I can feel it personally when dealing with people who have changed their balanced diet (50% carbs, 25 % protein, and 25 % fat) to a pure protein one. Some signs include:

They are always stressed and easily bad-tempered.

You can see the pre-menstrual carbohydrate cravings, experienced by 70% of women and the usual binging of those who are on high-protein diets for more than 2 weeks. This is mainly because carbohydrates make people feel relaxed, focused, and always in a good mood.

### Here is an explanation of the short mechanism:

After consumption of a carbohydrate-rich meal, the hormone insulin is secreted. Insulin lowers the blood levels of most amino acids (the building blocks of protein), except for tryptophan (a precursor to serotonin). When there is a larger proportion of tryptophan, it enters the brain at a higher rate, thus boosting serotonin production.

Protein-rich food has been found to prevent serotonin production. Serotonin, this neurotransmitter, is the one responsible for elevating our mood. That is why, we feel sleepy,

relaxed and satisfied after a rich carbohydrate meal.

If you go back to the food guide pyramid, you can see that the base (starch and bread) provides the highest food consumption. So a well-balanced and varied diet of 50% carbohydrates is the best dietary approach to take.



Another benefit of carbohydrates is their impact on wakefulness. High-carbs breakfast for example improves mental acuity, decreases fatigue, and makes you generally feel positive about life.

You need to be energetic, healthy and happy even while on a diet.

The best choices of carbohydrate foods are always those that are high in fiber to prevent constipation. So go for whole grain breads, bran flakes, whole

fruits, brown rice and pasta.

And don't forget to limit fat consumption. Choose the meals containing unsaturated fat rather than fried fatty meals. Fatty foods make you feel tired and cause abdominal discomfort.

### Top foods that boost your mood

**Avocado:** helps in keeping the receptors in your brain sensitive to serotonin.

**Pineapple:** The manganese and thiamin in pineapple help to relax and increase concentration.

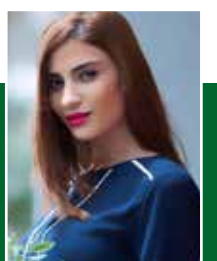
**Oatmeal:** Triggers the release of serotonin, a hormone that relaxes you.

**Whole grains:** Improve alertness, concentration and memory.

**Chocolate:** a stimulant that triggers the release of serotonin and endorphins.

And the end, don't go for any type of diet without asking an expert. A diet has to be tailored for a person's specific body type and depends on the health case.

To subscribe to my diet programs, don't forget to log in to:  
[www.eatlikemira.com](http://www.eatlikemira.com).



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







## Reception held to mark Sri Lanka's 72nd anniversary of Independence

**S**ri Lankan Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Nuzrath Mohammed Jauhar hosted a reception at the Radisson Blu Hotel on 6 February to celebrate the 72nd anniversary of his country's Independence. Dr. Rana Al-Fares, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs was the chief guest at the function, which was attended by members of the diplomatic corps, Kuwaiti officials, members of the Sri Lankan community, and media personnel.

In his address to the gathering, Ambassador Jauhar praised the excellent bilateral relations between Kuwait and Sri Lanka.

Pointing out that Kuwait is a second home for over 100,000 Sri Lankans who live and work peacefully, the ambassador emphasized, "They make tremendous contribution to Sri Lanka's economic development in general and to their families' betterment in particular. We are pleased that they have also made significant contributions towards the



transformation of Kuwait."

Highlighting the potential for the expansion of economic relations between Sri Lanka and Kuwait, Ambassador Jauhar remarked, "The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) has been contributing immensely to socio-economic development in Sri Lanka, by its funding assistance. Since 1975, the KFAED has funded 14 projects to the total value of



nearly KD73 million, with another mega project still in the pipeline." He added that the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka have signed an MOU with the view to further enhancing bilateral trade.

Noting that Sri Lanka was ranked among the best tourist destinations by the hospitality industry, he stated, "It is the preferred destination



for many of our friends from Kuwait and many high level dignitaries. Kuwaiti Airways and the Sri Lankan Airlines operate 14 frequencies per week between Colombo and Kuwait. I wish to warmly welcome you all not only for this reception but also to visit Sri Lanka."

During the event, performers dressed in traditional dresses displayed cultural dances of the country.

## Indian nurses scam resurfaces

**T**hough the Indian government has authorized only a handful of state-run agencies to recruit nurses and household workers for employment in certain countries, and despite repeated, well-publicized stories in the media about overseas recruitment frauds, hundreds of people, including 'educated' nurses, continue to fall victims of scam employment agencies.

The latest incident of a company duping hundreds of nurses comes from the Indian state of Kerala, which is home to hundreds of thousands of nurses around the world, and is also the den for unscrupulous human traffickers who pose as recruitment agents.

Police in Kerala's economic hub of Kochi are reported to be carrying out investigations after more than 200 nurses claimed that they had been cheated by a recruiting firm named George International, which operated from the city.

The nurses alleged that they had paid lakhs of rupees to the firm, which promised them nursing jobs in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Canada. Though the police arrested the secretary of the firm last week, the owners are reported to be missing.

Anish Jose and Adarsh Jose who are brothers, and their friend George T. George, believed to be the perpetrators behind the scam, have been absconding since the nurses filed the case against them with the police.

Anish is said to have masterminded the fraud from Kuwait, while the other two assisted him in Kochi by collecting the money from the nurses.



The scam began with advertisements on social media platforms of jobs for nurses, including under the Ministry of Health and the Kuwait Oil Company, in Kuwait. Once nurses began responding to the advertisement they were meticulously pursued through repeated phone calls and messages.

Over a period of time the nurses are believed to have paid the con-men sums of money ranging from Rs10,000 to as much as Rs 1 million, as fees for various services related to the job, such as certificate attestation, visa processing and agency payments.

The scam came to light after some of the nurses approached George International and demanded the return of their money, since they were not provided with the promised visas despite the passage of length of time. On failing to receive the money or a proper response from the company, the nurses filed an official complaint with the police, who began investigation and soon found that the owners had absconded with the money, leaving the nurses high and dry.

## Car registration card with magnetic chip

**C**ar registration, which previously was a slip of paper that the owner then usually laminated for durability, is set to take on a new look with the government deciding to issue it in the form and size of card with an embedded magnetic chip.

The chip based car registration, which comes into effect from Sunday, 2 February, will carry all the information of the owner and the vehicle, while also containing the information printed in both English and Arabic. The dual lingual

approach is being taken as many owners who travel with the vehicle outside the country have faced difficulties.

The new-look registration card is the idea of Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs Major-General Jamal Al Sayegh, who pursued the matter so that the various departments operate according to technologically advanced systems.

In the context, the Ministry of Interior has also issued an administrative circular to the general traffic sectors and service centers to inform citizens and residents that after receiving their vehicle registration vehicle owners should not remove the white bottom part of the car registration slip.

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# Ministry of Finance launches e-stamps, e-payments

**M**inistry of Finance (MoF), in cooperation with KNET, the joint automated banking service company, announced on 2 February the launch of a new e-service to purchase and issue electronic stamps, in lieu of the paper stamps used previously.

The service, which can be availed directly through 'KNET devices' made available to various ministries and other government entities will in effect replace the paper stamp issuance devices that were employed before.

In addition to the e-stamp service that

generates an electronic stamp when payments have been made, the MoF has also launched services to facilitate the payment of all transaction fees with various ministries through e-payments instead of cash payments.

These services are expected to enhance the quality of services provided to citizens and residents in the country, as it will reduce the steps for completing transactions that require payment of cash fees or the affixing of stamps.



The payment and issuance of stamps will now be through the 'KNET device' provided to the ministry 'cashier', which will expedite the transaction process at various ministry counters, said the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Accounting Affairs at the Ministry of Finance, Ibrahim Assaf Al-Enazi.

He added that since last September, the ministry has been gradually implementing the e-stamp dispensing plan by replacing all

old stamp vending machines with the new electronic process. The e-stamp service also allows the ministry to receive the stamp fees and other transaction fees immediately into its account through KNET and the customer's local bank card.

Al-Enazi noted that the electronic stamp vending process and e-payments for transactions came through close cooperation and coordination between MoF, the Central Agency for Information Technology, and the joint automated banking services company (KNET).

## Fake news originators and spreaders to get jail terms

**P**eople apparently will go to any length to get a few 'likes' or 'follows' on their social media sites. Posting attention-grabbing news, with headlines designed to garner clicks and likes, appears to be the aim of many on social media. The result is the alarming spread of fake news through social media platforms.

Each time the government has only reacted to such fake news, without taking any effective proactive measures to curb such actions for fear of being accused of curtailing the much vaunted 'freedom of speech'.

Now that coronavirus infections are in the news, the scourge of fake-news on coronavirus is spreading on social media platforms. In recent days, there have been claims on social media of cases of coronavirus infection reported in Kuwait and that several people have been hospitalized.

The government has responded by saying that strict measures will be taken against those posting such messages, as well as those who spread such news by retweeting or forwarding such posts to others. But, in the rush to be the first to spread the 'fake' news and grab a few likes, social media users often disregard the warnings by authorities, as they know that nothing serious will arise from such



government admonishments. The authorities clearly need to act swiftly, and resolutely, to stamp out purveyors of fake news, as well as those spreading it. Enforcing severe punishment, including jail terms, on social media offenders is a good place to start.

Meanwhile, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, Dr. Mustafa Redha has categorically denied any case of coronavirus in the country and affirmed that hospitals in the country are fully prepared and equipped to deal with any coronavirus infections should the need arise.

## 'Best of Bangladesh' festival inaugurated



**B**angladesh Counselor & HOC Md Anisuzzaman inaugurated the 'Best of Bangladesh' Festival at Grand Costo stores in the presence of embassy delegates, management team from the Grand Hyper Kuwait Region including Rahil Basim, COO, Thehasir Ali, GM, Mr. Sanin BDM, Sameer Babu, Area Manager Grand Costo in addition to embassy staff and other well-wishers.

## LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait launches Online Shopping Portal & App



**L**uLu Hypermarket, the region's leading retailer, announced the launch of its online shopping portal and shopping app for Kuwait.

The online portal and mobile app were announced by Mr. Ashraf Ali M.A., Executive Director of LuLu Group International along with our chief guests Mr. Bader Al Otaibi, Head of Department Municipality, Mr. Fahad Al-Nassar Sheikh, Department of Municipality & Rashed Saad Al-Hajeri, Expert Consumer protection, in the presence of Mr. Stuart Davidge, LuLu Group Operation Manager & top LuLu management in Kuwait, special invitees and shoppers at the hypermarket's Egaila outlet on 3rd February.

The new online initiative complements the many iconic brick-and-mortar LuLu Hypermarkets located strategically around Kuwait, and provides customers with a cutting-edge online shopping experience 24x7.

With the tagline of 'Shop Online. We deliver', the new LuLu online shopping and app offer online customers a seamless shopping experience, while retaining the brand's commitment to quality, affordability and customer service excellence that are hallmarks of LuLu hypermarkets. The website can be accessed through luluhypermarket.com, while the shopping app is available for free download from both, Google's Play Store and Apple's App Store.

In addition to the services offered by LuLu Hypermarkets stores around the country, the best-in-class online shopping and mobile app allows

customers to shop for over 20,000 products right from the convenience of their homes and have purchases delivered to their door-step.

Among the products available at the online shopping and through the shopping app are groceries, fresh food and lifestyle products such as fashion wear, as well as electronics and home appliances and so much more. Moreover, online



shoppers also get access to all the excellent deals, promotions and discounts regularly offered by the hypermarket at its stores.

A highly skilled team of personal shoppers work behind the scenes to fulfill all orders placed online and ensure that the right products and brands requested online are delivered to customers. A fleet of customized temperature-controlled delivery vehicles also make sure that orders are delivered freshly, hygienically and rapidly to any part of Kuwait.

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POSTER BY- MANVIR THIND





## LuLu Exchange opens new branch at Farwaniya

**L**uLu Financial Group, one of the world's most trusted names in currency exchange and remittance services, launched its new branch at Farwaniya today. The new branch, which was inaugurated by the Group Chairman, Mr. MA Yussuf Ali, is the company's 24th in Kuwait and its 4th under the Farwaniya Governorate. The branch will offer remittances and foreign exchange services.

Customers can also opt for premium membership with the LuLu Gold Card and avail a host of discounts at other shopping & hospitality partners, as well as benefits from any LuLu Exchange branch, including best

rates for remittances and currency exchange, and faster turnaround time on transactions.

Speaking post the inauguration, Mr. Adeeb Ahamed, MD, LuLu Financial Holdings said, "Kuwait is a key market for us. The new branch is in line with our vision to extend our offerings and bring our network closer to our customers around the world. Our well-connected global network and focus on modern technology will make it easier and convenient for residents of Kuwait to conduct payments, exchange currency and remit money to their dear ones back home." The company is also upbeat about its mobile app LuLu Money, which has

emerged as a gamechanger in the sector. "Our digital payments offering, Lulu Money, is already impacting the way our customers transact online. We see it as the way forward for our business to connect with new-age customers", Mr. Ahamed added.

Lulu Money, which is a fully integrated mobile app available on Android and iOS, enables customers to conduct all regular transactions online and monitor exchange rates in real-time, apart from a slew of other features.

The new branch is conveniently located in the LuLu Express Building and will operate on all days from 8.30 am to 11 pm.



## NRIs and Indian Budget 2020

**A**fter the Indian Budget 2020 was announced, many media outlets headlined that non-resident Indians (NRIs) would now have to pay taxes in India on their income in India and abroad. The personnel behind those headlines are probably quietly eating their words now, though some are still squirming and saying, "Yes, but..."

Adding to the confusing rhetoric on the budget and its implications for NRIs were scores of 'arm-chair tax experts' who shared their wisdom through tweets and posts that were then lapped up and promptly retweeted or posted by their 'followers' and 'likers' on social media platforms.

To do an airing-out of the issue, let us begin by seeing what the Indian Budget 2020 documents say: "The issue of stateless persons has been bothering the tax world for quite some time. It is entirely possible for an individual to arrange his affairs in such a fashion that he is not liable to tax in any country or jurisdiction during a year. This arrangement is typically employed by high-net-worth- individuals (HNWI) to avoid paying taxes to any country/ jurisdiction on income they earn. Tax laws should not encourage a situation where a person is not liable to tax in any country."

"The current rules governing tax residence make it possible for HNWI and other individuals, who may be Indian citizens to not be liable for tax anywhere in the world. Such a circumstance is certainly not desirable; particularly in the light of current development in the global tax environment where avenues for double non-taxation are being systematically closed."

Yes, it is true that HNWI Indians who were able to evade tax by planning their travel across multiple countries would now be impacted by the proposed amendment. Such dubious 'Non-Resident Indians' (NRIs) would not be able to completely escape taxation in India going forward.

Clarifying this further, Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a media interview: "The Finance Bill 2020 has proposed that an Indian citizen shall be deemed to be resident in India, if he is not liable to be taxed in any country or jurisdiction. This is an anti-abuse provision since it is noticed that some Indian citizens shift their stay in low- or no-tax jurisdiction to avoid payment of tax in India."

The minister emphasized, "The new provision is not intended to include in tax net those Indian citizens who are bonafide workers in other countries. In some sections of the media the new provision is being interpreted to create an impression that those Indians who are bonafide workers in other countries, including in the Middle East, and who are not liable to tax in these countries will be taxed in India on the income that they have earned there. This interpretation is not correct."

To avoid any misinterpretation, it was also clarified that in case of an Indian citizen who becomes deemed resident of India under this proposed provision, income earned outside India by him shall not be taxed in India unless it is derived from an

Indian business or profession.

According to tax experts, Indian citizens who do not stay in India but have significant economic activities in India would now find it difficult to escape paying taxes in India. In a bid to tighten the residency provisions on HNWI, the Budget also proposed to reduce the period of stay in India to 120 days, from earlier 182 days, for a person to be categorised as non-resident Indians (NRI).

To cut through all these legalese and convoluted statements of tax pundits let us simply state:

If you are a 'resident' Indian, your global income is taxable in India. If you are a 'non-resident' Indian, your Indian income, whether it is earned or accrued, is taxable in India. However, income earned on your Non-Resident External (NRE) and Foreign Currency Non-Resident (FCNR) accounts are tax-free. Any questions?

So, whether you pay income tax in India boils down to your resident status. Are you a resident, or are you a non-resident? This brings up the question of who is a resident, who is an NRI?

For financial purposes, as per Indian Income Tax Act, you are considered an Indian resident for a financial year if: One, you are in India for at least 6 months (182 days to be exact) during the financial year. Two, if you are in India for 2 months (60 days) for the year in the previous year and have lived for one whole year (365 days) in the last four years.

If you are an Indian citizen working abroad, or a member of a crew on an Indian ship, only the first condition, and not the second, is available to you — if you spend at least 182 days in India, you are a resident. The same is applicable to a Person of Indian Origin (PIO) who is on a visit to India. PIO is a person whose parents, or any of his grandparents were born in undivided India.

You are an NRI if you do not meet any of the above conditions.

What the Budget 2020 is now proposing is, to amend the above mentioned Income Tax Act to change the period provision from the existing six months to four months (120 days). So you will be considered a resident of India, if you spend 120 days in India. And, as an Indian resident, your global income will be taxable in India, if it is derived from an Indian business or profession. This income may have been earned or received outside, but it will be taxed in India. In case this income is also taxable in another country, you can take advantage of the Double Tax Avoidance Agreement (DTAA).

Meanwhile, for Indian income tax payers, the finance minister has provided major income tax cuts across most tax slabs. The income tax rate has been revised to 5 percent tax for income between Rs2.5-5 lakh; 10 percent tax for income between Rs5-7.5 lakh as against 20 percent; 15 percent tax for income between Rs7.5-10 lakh as against 20 percent; 20 percent tax for income between Rs10-12.5 lakh as against 30 percent; 25 percent tax for income between Rs12.5-15 lakh as



against 30 percent; and 30 percent tax for income above Rs15 lakh. The budget also offers taxpayers the option to avail of the reduced tax rates and forego all tax exemptions, or to remain with the previous tax rate and continue to claim various tax exemptions.

Most taxpayers tend to look at the budget amendments in tax provisions through a narrow perspective of what impact it will have on their cash in hand and how to avoid paying taxes or getting the most exemptions. However, the government needs to consider the broader vision of improving living for all Indians with the tax money it collects. It has to focus on providing food, shelter, health, education, jobs, infrastructure, industry, defense and a whole host of other things that benefit all 1.3 billion Indians. This is no doubt, not easy, especially considering that only a miniscule percentage of the population pay taxes.

An analysis of tax data from the assessment year

2017-2018 shows the top 5 percent of individual taxpayers contribute over three-fifths of the total income tax collections. To put it in perspective, just 1.3 million people out of a total population of 1,300 million contribute 60 percent of the income tax the government receives each year. This is even further skewed when it comes to corporate tax, with the largest 5 percent of firms contributing more than 90 percent of total corporate tax collections.

We all revel in complaining about the potholes on Indian roads, the dilapidated state of everything in India, how our politicians are corrupt and never pay attention to our needs despite us paying taxes. Well, why would the politician bother with you the taxpayer, after all, only around 7 percent of total voters in the country pay any income tax. FYI: 70 percent of voters pay tax in the United States and 100 percent do so in Norway.


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# NatGeo Encounter to bring Ocean Odyssey to Saudi Arabia

National Geographic Encounter has announced its expansion into Saudi Arabia in partnership with Saudi-based global asset management company KBW Ventures, and its partner, the General Entertainment Authority of Saudi Arabia. The partnership will develop and launch up to 10 new locations throughout the region to feature Ocean Odyssey — an entertaining and immersive walk-through adventure across the ocean from the South Pacific to the coast of California. The first of several locations in Saudi is to be located in the city of Riyadh.

A world-class team of professionals are currently reported to be working on the project. When launched, the Saudi Ocean Odyssey will become the second such venue outside the United States. The National Geographic Encounter's first and flagship location is located in New York City's Times Square. The creators and developers of Encounter in New York, SPE Partners, and its partner the Peterson Companies will once again engage a world-class global team of Academy, GRAMMY, and Emmy Award-

winning artists, including the design firm Falcon's Creative Group, Pixomondo which is the visual effects team behind 'Game of Thrones', and GRAMMY Award-winning composer David Kahne, to reproduce the experience in Saudi Arabia.

The venture is expected to change the landscape of entertainment and cinema in the region with its groundbreaking technology and stunning photo-realistic animation. Visitors to Ocean Odyssey are transported to extraordinary underwater destinations and gain access to rarely witnessed moments in nature. "We are excited to bring this iconic brand and immersive experience into Saudi Arabia and provide premium entertainment in our country," said Faisal Baraft, CEO of the General Entertainment Authority of Saudi Arabia.

"Our goal at SPE and Peterson is to expand and revolutionize entertainment and storytelling, while delivering world-class guest experiences," added Alexander Svezia, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of SPE Partners.

"We aim to combine the power of technology with the awe of entertainment to advance science and conservation, and KBW shares that vision. The General Entertainment Authority's mission, to create a vibrant society and provide exciting entertainment and tailored experiences in Saudi Arabia, aligns perfectly with our vision. We are excited to bring 'entertainment with purpose' to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," said Mr. Svezia.

The brain behind bringing Ocean Odyssey to Saudi Arabia is young Prince Khaled bin Alwaleed, Founder and CEO of KBW Ventures. "When I first visited National Geographic Encounter and saw that the experience brings people around the globe into the natural world of wildlife, I knew that this was the future. We also believe in Encounter's 'entertainment with purpose' ethos, especially with our current work with Future Oceans, an organization whose mission is to protect all marine wildlife," he said.

"National Geographic has been igniting the explorer in all of us for 130 years through ground-breaking storytelling from the best



scientists, explorers, photographers, and filmmakers in the world," said Rosa Zeegers, Executive Vice President, Consumer Products and Experiences at National Geographic Partners. "Because of our partnership with SPE Partners, audiences have gotten to experience this in a completely new way as part of the enriching, immersive experience that National Geographic Encounter: Ocean Odyssey now offers."



## Indo-Chinese joint venture wins freight handling on Etihad Rail

Indian engineering, technology, construction, manufacturing and financial services major Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has been selected, along with Chinese state-owned firm Power China, by Etihad Rail, the UAE's national freight and passenger railway network, to build freight handling facilities at seven locations across the UAE.

The contract valued at over US\$500 million, which was won in a global competitive bidding process, will see L&T execute the project in a joint venture with Power China International (PCI), the comprehensive construction group involved in energy, power, water, infrastructure projects.

The contract was signed by chief executive officer of Etihad Rail, Shadi Malak; L&T's Anupam Kumar and Power China International's Hong Lee, in the presence of L&T's managing director, S.N. Subrahmanyam and president of Power China International, Wu Wenhao. Construction works under the package was launched by the Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince's Court, and Chairman of Etihad Rail, Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

In a regulatory filing, the \$21 billion revenue Indian conglomerate said: "The metallurgical and material handling Strategic Business Group of L&T Construction has been awarded the Etihad Rail project, which involves the design and building of freight handling facilities." The company added, "The project has been bagged against stiff international competition and is a major

breakthrough project for L&T in the Stage-2 expansion phase of Etihad Rail."

The scope of Etihad rail work, to be jointly carried out by the Indian and Chinese firms, involves design, engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning of bulk material handling systems, with associated civil and structural works, general cargo and container handling facilities with freight terminal management and control systems.

The 1,200km railway network in the UAE is being built in stages to link the principal centres of population and industry of the Emirates, as well as to form a vital part of the wider Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) railway network. Stage 1, which is already operational since 2016, links the gas fields at Shah and Habshan to the port of Ruwais where granulated sulphur is processed for export.

The 264km-long Stage 1 has the capacity to transport 22,000 tonnes of granulated sulphur daily. One single train journey removes approximately 300 trucks from the road, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 70 to 80 percent compared to the amount emitted by trucks required to transport the same tonnage.

Stage 2 Package A will cover 139km, starting from Ghuweifat on the UAE border with Saudi Arabia will connect Fujirah and Khorfakkan on the east coast to the port of Ruwais, where the line connects with Stage 1 of the rail network.

## Non-profit Injaz awarded \$1 million from Google.org



The leading non-profit organizations in the Middle-East, Injaz, has been awarded a further \$1 million from Google.org, the philanthropic arm of global search giant Google. The latest awarding brings to \$2 million awarded to Injaz by Google.org since 2018. The philanthropic arm of Google was founded in 2004 to support non-profit organizations around the world.

Injaz, which operates in 13 countries, is the largest non-profit organisation dedicated to overcoming unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Funding from Google.org previously helped 100,000 students across the MENA region, particularly women and underserved communities, expand their digital skills through hands-on training. "For us it's really been committing to

empowering people to have the skills they need to thrive in this new, digital economy and that's been our work in several countries," said Rowen Barnett, head of Google.org for the Europe, Middle East and Africa, as well as the Asia Pacific region.

Google believes that by 2020, at least one in five jobs in the Arab world will require digital skills that are not widely available today, leading to a skills gap. To address this potential gap, Google launched Maharat min Google in 2018. This digital skills training programme for Arabic speakers, specifically women and youth, will help them prepare for future job opportunities. It is estimated that over the next 30 years, governments and companies in the region will need to create over 300 million jobs and many of those jobs will be created through

the digital economy. However, a recent survey showed that only 38 percent of youth in the region believe that their education gives them the skills they need to succeed in the workforce.

"I think there's huge potential. Not only are we committed as a company, but we also see the commitment from organisations we work with, from the government and it's the 'can do' attitude, this thirst for innovation and for improving lives," said Mr. Barnett.

"I do feel that, the way this region has embraced innovation in the last decade, I think there's an incredible amount of promise. The conversations I've been having with non-profits and also with others in the region over the last few days, is how can we learn more, how can we apply AI, how can we improve this in our universities," he added.

## Mutually accepted conditions included in new contract

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The new standard contract agreement reached between Kuwait and the Philippines will also prevent the Philippines embassy in Kuwait from harboring Filipino domestic helpers at its premises in future. Instead, the embassy would be obliged to report all such workers to the domestic workers' employment department at the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), to ensure their protection and take necessary legal measures.

Other relevant clauses in the tripartite agreement include a new clause added to the fifth article and relates to the obligations of the second party, the employer, to allow the domestic worker to own a phone and use it after working hours, provided that he/she maintains the family's secrets and privacy in a manner consistent with public morals.

Another clause prevents the employer from assigning the domestic worker any work outside Kuwait without her consent, and if forced, the sponsor is obliged to return her to her country at

his own expense. The seventh clause in the agreement also stipulates that the employer will not retain the worker's passport and civil ID.

In addition, the minutes of the Joint Committee meeting held with the visiting Philippine delegation pledges all parties to fully comply with the standard dual and tripartite contracts and emphasizes the need for the Kuwaiti and Philippine parties not to sign contracts or other pledges other than the standard bilateral and tripartite contracts.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Limited Liability Is Causing Unlimited Harm



**KATHARINA PISTOR**

*Professor of Comparative Law at Columbia Law School, is the author of The Code of Capital: How the Law Creates Wealth and Inequality.*

In a recent tweet, Olivier Blanchard, a former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, wondered how we can “have so much political and geopolitical uncertainty and so little economic uncertainty.” Markets are supposed to measure and allocate risk, yet shares in companies that pollute, peddle addictive painkillers, and build unsafe airplanes are doing just fine. The same goes for corporations that openly enrich shareholders, directors, and officers at the expense of their employees, many of whom are struggling to make a living and protect their pension plans. Are markets wrong, or are the red flags about climate change, social tensions, and political discontent actually red herrings?



Under the prevailing legal dispensation, shareholders are protected from liability when the corporations whose shares they own harm consumers, workers, and the environment. Shareholders can lose money on their holdings, but they also profit when (or even because) companies have caused untold damage by polluting oceans and aquifers, hiding the harms of the products they sell, or pumping greenhouse-gas emissions into the atmosphere. The corporate entity itself might face liability, perhaps even bankruptcy, but the shareholders can walk away from the wreckage, profits in hand.

Shareholders have been let off the hook in case after case — from the 1984 gas leak at a Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India, which killed thousands, to Big Tobacco, asbestos manufacturers, and British Petroleum following the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Since then, shareholders of Boeing, the company responsible for two airplane crashes that killed 346 people, made \$43 billion through share repurchases between 2013 and 2019 — precisely the period during which the firm ignored safety standards

in the interest of cutting costs. Meanwhile, the families of those who died must make do with a \$50 million disaster fund, which amounts to just \$144,500 per victim.

Elsewhere, a lawsuit against members of the Sackler family, which owns Purdue Pharma, one of the companies at the heart of the opioid epidemic, is trying once more to hold the beneficiaries of corporate misconduct accountable. Fearing liability, some family members have reportedly sold their properties in New York and moved their money to Switzerland. But they probably need not worry. As John H. Matheson of the University of Minnesota Law School shows, courts rarely allow victims of harmful corporate conduct to “pierce the corporate veil” that protects shareholders from liability.

The stated justification for limited liability is that it encourages investment in, and risk-taking by, corporations, leading to economically beneficial innovations. But we should recognize that sparing owners from the harm their companies cause amounts to a hefty legal

subsidy. As with all subsidies, the costs and benefits should be reassessed from time to time. And in the case of limited liability, the fact that markets fail to price the risk of activities that are known to cause substantial harm should give us pause.

Worse, this particular subsidy makes little economic sense. Property rights, every economist knows, are meant to increase efficiency by ensuring that owners internalize the costs associated with the assets they own. But limited liability insulates investors from the externalities created by the companies they own: heads, they win — and tails, they win too.

So long as shareholders can gain from these externalities, they will defend them. They will fight every attempt to force an internalization of costs, including the carbon tax that the European Union is currently promoting.

Top-down regulation, they argue, is inefficient, because governments cannot possibly identify the optimal tax rate. But if that is the case, why not enable markets to price risk correctly, by removing the distortion that is currently preventing them from doing so?

The liability rules cannot be changed overnight. But changes could be phased in after a transition period that puts everyone on notice. No new multilateral treaty or complicated harmonization efforts are needed. If just a handful of countries adopted ‘piercing statutes’ and ensured that claimants would have standing in their courts, markets would respond accordingly.

No doubt, shareholders would try to avoid liability by shifting assets to safe-haven jurisdictions, and by lobbying their own governments to protect them with the threat of trade sanctions against countries that do adopt piercing statutes.

But the greater the number of countries adopting such statutes, the less successful these strong-arm tactics will be.

In the end, a subsidy that distorts markets and gives investors a license to harm is not only inefficient, it is a threat to both the market system and the natural environment upon which we all depend for our survival.

“Boeing, the company responsible for two airplane crashes that killed 346 people, made \$43 billion through share repurchases between 2013 and 2019. Meanwhile, the families of those who died must make do with a \$50 million disaster fund.”

Closer inspection reveals that the problem lies with markets. Under current conditions, markets simply cannot price risk adequately, because market participants are shielded from the harm that corporations inflict on others. This pathology goes by the name of ‘limited liability’, but when it comes to the risk borne by shareholders, it would be more accurate to call it ‘no liability’.

## Brexit: what does it mean for the European Union and our partners?

On 31 January 2020, the United Kingdom left the European Union. We lost a member of our family. It was a sad moment for us, for European citizens — and, indeed, for many British citizens.

Nevertheless, we have always respected the sovereign decision of 52% of the British electorate, and we now look forward to starting a new chapter in our relations.

Emotions aside, 1 February turned out to be historic but also undramatic. This is largely thanks to the Withdrawal Agreement that we negotiated with the UK, which enabled us to secure ‘an orderly Brexit’. One that — at least for now — minimises disruption for our citizens, businesses, public administrations — as well as for our international partners.

Under this agreement, the EU and the UK agreed on a transition period, until the end of 2020 at least, during which the UK will continue to participate in the EU’s Customs Union and Single Market, and to apply EU law, even if it is no longer a Member State. During this period, the UK will also continue to abide by the international agreements of the EU, as

we made clear in a note verbale to our international partners.

So, with the transition period in place, there is a degree of continuity. This was not easy given the magnitude of the task. By leaving the Union, the UK automatically, mechanically, legally, leaves hundreds of international agreements concluded by or on behalf of the Union, to the benefit of its Member States, on topics as different as trade, aviation, fisheries or civil nuclear cooperation.

We now have to build a new partnership between the EU and the UK. That work will start in a few weeks, as soon as the EU27 have approved the negotiating mandate proposed by the European Commission, setting out our terms and ambitions for achieving the closest possible partnership with a country which will remain our ally, our partner and our friend.

The EU and the UK are bound by history, by geography, culture, shared values and principles and a strong belief in rules-based multilateralism. Our future partnership will reflect these links and shared beliefs. We want to go well beyond trade and keep working together on security and defence,

areas where the UK has experiences and assets that are best used as part of a common effort. In a world of big challenges and change, of turmoil and transition, we must consult each other and cooperate, bilaterally and in key regional and global fora, such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, NATO or the G20.

It is perhaps a cliché but the basic truth is that today’s global challenges — from climate change, to cybercrime, terrorism or inequality — require collective responses.

The more the UK is able to work in lockstep with the EU and together with partners around the world, the greater our chances of addressing these challenges effectively.

At the very core of the EU project is the idea that we are stronger together; that pooling our resources and initiatives is the best way of achieving common goals. Brexit does not change this, and we will continue to take this project forward as 27.

Together, the 27 Member States will continue to form a single market of 450 million citizens and more than 20 million businesses.

Together, we remain the largest



trading bloc in the world.

Together, at 27, we are still the world’s largest development aid donor.

Our partners can be sure that we will stay true to an ambitious, outward-looking agenda — be it on trade and investment, on climate action and digital, on connectivity, on security and counter-terrorism, on human rights and democracy, or on defense and foreign policy.

We will continue to live up to our commitments. We will continue to stand by the agreements that link us

to our international partners and we will continue to develop multilateral cooperation frameworks around the world.

The European Union will continue to be a partner you can trust. A steadfast defender of rules-based multilateralism, working with our partners to make the world more secure and fair.

*Joint Op-Ed by The European Union (EU) High Representative / Vice President Josep Borrell and chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier.*



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Orphanage Tourism Endangers Children



**PETER SINGER AND LEIGH MATHEWS**

Peter Singer is Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University. His books include *Animal Liberation*, *Practical Ethics*, *The Most Good You Can Do*, and *The Life You Can Save* (now available as a free download). Leigh Mathews is Principal Consultant at ALTO Global Consulting, a co-founder of the *ReThink Orphanages Network*, and an author and editor of *Modern Slavery and Orphanage Tourism*.

Angelina Jolie, Madonna, Melania Trump, and Kanye West have all, in recent years, made highly publicized visits to orphanages in low-income countries. Tourists who 'travel with purpose' are following their lead. Tourist itineraries often include a visit to an orphanage, alongside local markets, craft workshops, and historic sites. Tour operators promote these visits as a form of ethical tourism that allows affluent Westerners the opportunity to assist needy children. The visits often include playing with the children, giving them a cuddle, and making a donation to the orphanage. Often, tourists keep up the connection, making regular donations to the orphanage after they return home.

**“To raise revenue, however, orphanages need ‘orphans’. Many orphanages thus employ ‘recruiters’ who travel to remote villages and encourage impoverished parents to send their children to the orphanage, with successful recruiters receiving finders’ fees.”**

But good intentions are not enough, especially when they are based on misinformation. Orphanage tourism turns children into cash-generating commodities subject to the usual economic laws of supply



and demand. While that may be good for orphanage operators, it is bad for the children who live there.

Many believe that there are millions of orphans in poor countries who need food, shelter, and the care, love, and support of an orphanage. Without the support of donors from wealthy countries, many of these orphans would, it is widely assumed, lead miserable lives, surviving by begging or selling their bodies.

This is a myth. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) there are some 140 million orphans worldwide. But this figure is misleading, because UNICEF defines an orphan as a child who has lost "one or both" parents. About 15 million of the children UNICEF counts as orphans are 'double orphans', that is, they have lost both their parents. Most of the 'single orphans' live with their remaining parent, and the vast majority of double orphans live with their grandparents or other family members. Estimates of the number of children living in institutional care (orphanages) range from 2.7-8 million, and of these, at least half, and perhaps as many as 90 percent, have a living parent, while some have both parents still alive.

Research confirms what many charities

learned long ago: showing potential donors a photo of a child, with the child's name and a description of the child's needs, induces more donations than offering general information about people in need, without identifying any of them. It is not surprising, therefore, that bringing people into close contact with a needy child is an especially effective way of raising money. This explains why 90 percent of the registered orphanages and children's homes in Nepal are located in the districts that attract the most tourists.

To raise revenue, however, orphanages need 'orphans'. Many orphanages thus employ 'recruiters' who travel to remote villages and encourage impoverished parents to send their children to the orphanage. The recruiters may promise parents that their children will have a wonderful life and a high-quality education. In some cases, parents are paid a fee, and successful recruiters receive finders' fees.

Once in the orphanage, children must interact with visitors, whether they like it or not. They may be kept deliberately malnourished to elicit more and bigger donations from visitors, and some orphanages instruct the children to tell visitors that their parents are dead and threaten them with punishment if they do not.

Obviously, there will always be children

in low-income countries who cannot live with their parents, and there are certainly orphanages that do have children's best interests at heart. But the institutional model of care is inherently harmful to all children — no matter how good the intentions of those running the institutions. More than 70 years of research shows significantly poorer outcomes for children who grow up in orphanages than for children who grow up in families, and the impact of institutionalization on a child is lifelong and often intergenerational.

You might ask, how can a tourist distinguish a 'good' orphanage from one that is exploiting children? The answer is that no one can: there is no such thing as a good orphanage. Although there are children in such desperate circumstances that they may benefit, in the immediate term, from entering an orphanage while alternative arrangements are made, it is important to look at the larger picture. Children do better in families, not institutions. In many low-income countries, inadequate regulation of orphanages provides an environment rich in opportunity for child trafficking and exploitation. The system we have described is clearly flawed, but any suggestion that tour operators cease to promote visits to orphanages immediately leads to the question: "What will happen to the children?" The answer is that without tourist-supported orphanages, most of them would not have entered an orphanage in the first place.

They would have stayed in their communities and had better lives than an orphanage can provide. By removing the demand promoted by tour operators to well-meaning visitors, the supply of 'orphans' would be significantly reduced.

As for children currently living in orphanages, they are often suffering the effects of trauma, institutionalization, and attachment disorders and require specialized care in a family-based setting. The money that donors currently give to support children in orphanages should be redirected. Worthy organizations include Forget Me Not, Cambodian Children's Trust, and Hope and Homes for Children, which reintegrate children into families and communities, as well as those working to prevent family separation in the first place by assisting people in extreme poverty.

## Ban on returning Philippine household helpers, a denial of rights...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

full support, from her treatments to medications, as well as for her family in the Philippines. Whether we can find a replacement for her, is the least of my concerns, but her continuous treatments and medications for her to be able to live is what worries me most," explained Munirah. She added that her kids have been in constant communication with her maid and provides support and encouragement that she will be able to return to them in no time. "I urge the Philippine government to not only look into the issues of violations and crimes committed by an isolated number of individuals in Kuwait, but to also look closely at the bigger number of household employers who have made their maids a part of their families for years," concluded Munirah.

"It's heartbreaking to see my house helper not being able to return home for fear of not being able to come back" said LouJean, a Kuwaiti Businesswoman and mother of a small boy. LouJean stated that her Filipina maid has been paying for her daughter's college education for several years and the daughter will graduate this March and the only wish her daughter wanted was

to hand over her diploma to her mother during graduation. Since the ban was implemented among returning workers, she decided not to return home as she will not be allowed to come back to her employer. "I can feel how depressed she is not to be with her daughter during this special occasion, in fact I volunteered to go to Philippines to represent her and bring the mobile gift she purchased from her savings. This is so inconsiderate of the Philippine government to deprive these household helpers not to come back to their employers and go on working to support their families. The Philippine government needs to understand that they are coming back to their employers because they are treated well and somehow built that relationship well," stated LouJean. She added that this whole fiasco on banning returning workers should not have been taken from the very start.

"The Philippines government wanted justice for the death of the Filipina maid and so do we all," said Nadia, a Kuwaiti Banker. Nadia said that the crime of one can never and should not have a collective effect. "Taking someone's life is not only a heinous crime but a grievous sin before God. But only those who commit such a crime should face



justice and be held accountable for what they did. Many Filipinos I know are not in favor of this ban and I agree, as I heard from the friend of my son's nanny that many could not return to their employers here in Kuwait and are currently stuck in the Philippines until this case is resolved. I felt that the effect of this ban has more negative effects among Filipinos who could not return," stated Nadia. She asked, "What happens to the Filipinos who are stuck in the Philippines and without any income to support their families, the case drags on in the court?" Nadia explained that the effect of the ban is being shouldered by innocent workers,

who want nothing more than to work and earn good income for their families. "Why is the Philippine government then ignoring these workers who want to return to their employers? They need to reconsider their laws," ended Nadia.

The Philippines Department of Labor and Employment headed by Secretary Silvestre Bello III, who was on a recent visit in Kuwait announced the lifting of the ban on Filipino workers with Visa 18 that included professionals, skilled, semi-skilled and returning workers, but maintained ban on Visa 20 holders both for those newly hired and returning workers, which has been contested and questioned several times not only by

the workers but existing employers who have their household helpers working for their families for years. Bello affirmed that the ban will only be lifted when justice is served to the slain Filipina Jeanelyn Villavende.

The first day of court hearing on the case of Jeanelyn Villavende was on 5 February. The three lawyers of the defendants were Adel Mejbil, Zaid AlSanea and Mark. The lawyers requested the court to temporarily release their client to take care of her young children.

However, Attorney Sheikh Fawziya Al-Sabah, representing the Philippine government objected to the request, citing the gravity and seriousness of the crime of "murder". Since the 21-day custodial detention will be complete soon, the court extended the defendants' custodial detention at the Sulaybiyah Central Prison.

The presiding judge advised the lawyers of both sides to submit their respective Special Power of Attorney, which are executed by Ms. Villavende's family and the defendants, respectively, during the next court hearing on 25 March, 2020. The presiding judge said they still need to read, study, and review the case file to enable them to determine if the case is murder.



# Face masks and coronaviruses

**B**y now, most of us must have had more than our dose of coronavirus stories, the latest lethal statistics, and the precautions we can take to avoid infection and prevent transmission of the virus.

Some of the recommendations made by health authorities to avoid coronavirus infection include regularly washing hands with soap and water, or, in areas where there is no ready access to water, to use alcohol-based hand sanitizers; not touching the eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands; covering cough or sneeze with a tissue, and then disposing the tissue in trash; avoiding contact with people who are sick; and remaining at home if you are sick.

Read the recommendations again, if need be, and you will realize that nowhere do they recommend to go about wearing face masks. But, precautionary advice or not, we find masked people everywhere. Do face masks help protect you against coronavirus, should you be rushing out to buy them immediately, and should you be wearing them while out in public? Here are the truths behind the masks.

Let us begin by stating that the face masks you usually see people wearing are totally inadequate to avoid coronavirus infection, or for that matter, any other viral infections. Viruses are way, way smaller than the mask material, and viruses and other microorganisms are easily able to enter and egress through

the masks. Most off-the-counter face masks available at shops and coops are designed for specific purposes such as preventing debris, dust and other larger pollutants from entering our nose.

Even a surgical mask provides only limited protection against infection from the virus. So why do we find doctors and other medical personnel wearing them in operating rooms and elsewhere in a hospital environment? Well, believe it or not, doctors and other medical personnel don masks before operations largely to prevent the patient from getting infected by pathogens from their nose or mouth.

Our homes are full of pollutants of different sizes, from pet dander, mold spores and mildew, fumes from paint, chemicals from air fresheners, and much more. Pollutant particles are generally measured in microns (micrometer), with one micron being one-millionth of a meter. To put this size in perspective, there are about 100 microns in the width of a human hair.

Now let us look at the size of some household pollutants. Mold spores and pet dander could range from 3 to 40 microns; dust particles could be anywhere from 0.5 to 100 microns; bacteria are 0.3 to 60 microns. On the other hand, viruses such as coronavirus are only 0.005 to 0.3 microns in size, which is five-one thousandth of a micron.

According to air-filter standards a HEPA filter used in many homes must capture at least 99.97 percent of particles above 0.3 microns, which is much larger than viruses. Even material used for professional medical masks are not small enough to prevent viruses. When doctors are treating patients who have a communicable disease, they wear a type of mask called an N95 respirator. What these masks actually prevent is the droplets of excretions from sneezing or coughing that carry viruses from entering the body.

Because this mask is sealed around the mouth and nose, it will block the droplets carrying viruses. But using N95 respirator requires special training, and it makes breathing harder and it is also uncomfortable to wear for extended periods.

When a sick patient wears a respirator, the respirator can be very effective at preventing infectious material from leaving the patient's body; when worn by healthy individuals, it can prevent infection to an extent, but more importantly it prevents the user from rubbing



or touching their mouth or nose, which is a very high risk factor. The cloth masks commonly used by most people are in fact a hazard to their health, as it could be a source of contamination if they are not discarded after each use. Moreover, they retain moisture and allow various microorganisms to thrive in it and cause infection to the person wearing the same mask repeatedly and thereby annulling the purpose it was meant to serve in the first place.

## MSG, once nearly banned, is back boosting flavors

**M**cDonald's is the latest global fast-food purveyor to look at Monosodium-glutamate (MSG) to give its sandwiches a flavor boost. More than 230 McDonald's branches in the United States are said to be test marketing chicken sandwiches in which MSG is a key ingredient. This move comes following the use of MSG to enhance flavors and lure customers by other food vendors such as Popeyes and Chick-fil-A.

The news fast-food chains once again this flavor enhancer represents something of a comeback for MSG, considering that it had been the subject of health concerns for several decades and was for long on the list of ingredients banned by many restaurants and other food manufacturers.

However, MSG seems to have received a second-lease of life on culinary tables following a health 'thumbs-up' given to it recently by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The consensus according to latest studies by the FDA is that MSG is generally recognized as safe.

Despite this clean chit, there are many people who are adversely affected by even traces of MSG in their food. These MSG victims experience everything from flushing, nausea and severe headaches akin to full-blown migraine.

MSG is a common amino acid naturally found in



foods like tomatoes and cheese, but it is considered as an 'artificial ingredient', as it is extracted and fermented from its naturally occurring state through a process similar to how yogurt or wine is made.

It remains a popular food ingredient particularly because of its ability to enhance 'umami', one of the five basic tastes — along with sweet, sour, salty and bitter — which corresponds to the savory taste. It tends to make food taste good even with less salt and fat, and hence the interest by major fast-food chains looking to provide healthy options to their menu.

## Stress, a factor behind gray hair

**S**cientists have long understood that there is a link between stress and gray hair. Researchers at Harvard University in the United States have now conducted extensive studies to find the exact mechanism behind stress and gray hair.

The researchers initially looked at cortisol, the 'stress hormone' that surges in the body when a person experiences a stressful situation. Cortisol has an important bodily function, and the prolonged presence of heightened cortisol is linked to a host of negative health outcomes. However, scientists could not directly link cortisol to gray hair. Further research revealed another potential culprit, the sympathetic nervous system, which is also associated with the body's 'fight or flight' response



under stress. These nerves are all over the body, including making inroads to each hair follicle.

Digging deeper the scientists found that chemicals released during the stress response — specifically norepinephrine — causes pigment producing stem cells to activate prematurely, depleting the hair's color 'reserves'. The researchers found that after just a few days, all of the pigment-regenerating stem cells were lost. Once they are gone, the body

cannot regenerate pigments anymore and the damage is permanent.

But stress is not the only, or even primary, reason that most people get gray hair. In most cases, it is simply due to genetics. Gray hair is caused by loss of melanocytes (pigment cells) in the hair follicle.

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# Sri Lanka

## The world's biodiversity hotspot

A pearl-drop in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka has been a popular tourist destination for years. With its breathtakingly beautiful mountains, pristine beaches, scenic landscapes, the island has a diverse beauty that never fails to charm visitors.

In recent years ecotourism has been given a significant boost with green and responsible tourism gaining momentum in parts of the country. Apart from bustling Colombo and its surrounding urban sprawl, vast stretches of the country remain verdant and has one of the highest rates of biological endemism in the world, whether in plants or animals. No wonder, the country is included among the top-five biodiversity hotspots in the world.

As you travel away from the heart of Colombo, the sprawling buildings quickly melt away to be replaced by luscious nature. The greenery only increases as you travel into the Central Highlands of Sri Lanka. Waterfalls, rivers, forests and native wildlife species will be sighted frequently in the thriving ecosystems. You can even see packs of wild deer roaming the cities of Trincomalee and the surrounding areas.

There is so much to experience in the eco-rich countryside of Sri Lanka; have a river bath, take a shower under a waterfall, explore underground caves and witness some of the most breathtaking sunsets of your life.

Here are some of the best eco-friendly experiences to be had in Sri Lanka:



**Wonderful view from the Knuckles Mountain Range:** This craggy landscape can be found in Central Sri Lanka, in the districts of Matale and Kandy. Spend a day hiking or cycling in the foothills of the mountain range to absorb the unique, raw beauty of the Knuckles, and to immerse yourself in nature. Central Sri Lanka was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010 and still boasts some of the most spectacular scenery in the whole country.



**Take a rural village walk in Ella:** Step out of your comfort zone and venture out on foot into Sri Lanka's countryside with

a rural village walk in Ella. This is a fantastic way to appreciate the beauty of the country outside of the busy towns and cities while learning lots more about the traditional way of life here. Wander through picturesque villages, soaking up the morning sunshine and taking in the greenery around you as the locals go about their day to day lives.



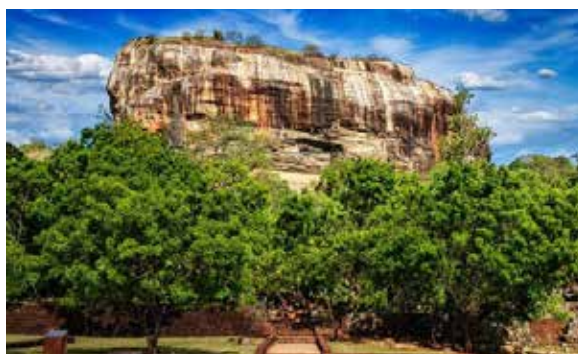
**Spot a Blue Whale at Trincomalee:** Some of Sri Lanka's most famous creatures are the magnificent Blue and Sperm whales which can often be seen off the coast of Trincomalee between May and October. These gentle giants follow their migratory path past Sri Lanka every year, giving thousands of awe-struck visitors the chance to see them in their natural habitat.

**Take a boat trip down the Madu River:** Lose yourself in the beauty of Sri Lanka's wetlands with a boat trip down the incredible Madu River. This rich and complex ecosystem stretches over 900 hectares and includes a total of 64 islands, and is home to hundreds of birds, fish, plant and animal species.



There are also many points of cultural interest around the Madu River Wetlands. Tours often include visits to fish farms, Cinnamon Island (where you can see how cinnamon sticks are made) and a Buddhist temple. Drift past dense mangrove forests and bask in the tranquility of this pristine natural environment.

**Escape into nature-rich countryside:** Sri Lanka's countryside is beautifully conserved and a paradise for green



travelers. If you want your time in Sri Lanka to be all about that incredible scenery, consider booking a villa out in the countryside.

Many places still have convenient access to the beach and other amenities but are situated outside of the main tourist areas. This creates a soothing bolthole from the crowds of town, a haven where all you can hear is birdsong – perfect for a relaxing getaway.



**Check out the Peradeniya Botanical Garden in Kandy:** Green experiences can be found even in the city of Kandy. One such example is the Peradeniya Royal Botanical Gardens, a stunning expanse of greenery spanning a whopping 147 acres. This incredible site is a must-see for visitors, especially those with an interest in Sri Lanka's historic spice industry.

Located just 5km outside of Kandy, the Royal Botanical Gardens houses over 4,000 species of plants. Although especially renowned for their orchid collection, the gardens are also home to a great many other exotic species including medicinal plants, spices, and palms. Set aside an afternoon to wander through these expansive and beautifully maintained gardens.



**Take a wildlife safari and spot leopards in Yala:** The Yala National Park is a well-known spot for safari rides amongst tourists. Catch a glimpse of the elusive leopard or the endangered sloth bear among a variety of Sri Lanka's most famous inhabitants. Expect to see elephants, deer, monkeys and many, many tropical birds throughout the day.



**Enjoy the beauty of Bundala National Park:** Located about 15km east of Hambantota, Bundala National Park is one of Sri Lanka's foremost destinations for birdwatchers, protecting an important area of coastal wetland famous for its abundant aquatic, and other, birdlife. The park is also home to significant populations of elephants, Marsh and estuarine crocodiles, turtles and other fauna, including the leopard. Stretching along the coast east of Hambantota, Bundala National Park is home to elephants, 8ft crocs, giant squirrels and flamingoes.



# Gallium Nitride to replace Silicon

If you have not heard about Gallium Nitride (GaN), chances are you will soon. GaN is the important new technology that is poised to become mainstream in the near future.

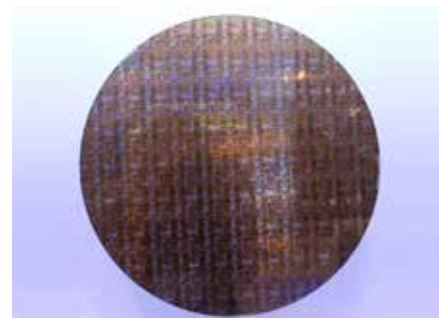
Gallium Nitride is a chemical compound that has semiconductor properties. Semiconductors are what made it possible to make electronic devices smaller and exponentially powerful. Today, semiconductors are largely made of silicon.

However, after decades of incremental advancements in silicon technology we are now reaching a theoretical limit on how much silicon can be further improved. This is exactly where gallium nitride steps in. Gallium nitride is a relatively new chemical compound that has only recently been considered for use in semiconductors. Like every ideal successor, GaN brings in a range of improvements over silicon.

For instance, GaN has a wider band-gap

than silicon so energy can pass through it more easily. In fact, it over a thousand times the electron mobility of silicon. The wider band-gap also allows GaN to sustain higher voltages and current can flow faster. In addition, GaN can withstand higher temperatures that allow designers and manufacturers greater freedom in design and production. Energy loss is also significantly less in GaN which makes it more efficient. This lets manufacturers pack more of GaN in a smaller area. In layman terms, this will lead to even smaller devices.

While GaN appears an obvious upgrade over silicon, GaN is more expensive than silicon and it is going to be a while before every manufacturer makes the switch. Although, companies are already researching how to make the technology more affordable, replacing silicon will require companies to invest resources in



either making existing manufacturing facilities suitable to manufacture GaN or build new facilities altogether.

There is also a technical reason why GaN is not commonly used in transistors. GaN has been traditionally used in the optoelectronics industry (such as LEDs). But unlike LEDs with their single channel of output and input, transistors have two sources of input. This depleted nature of GaN transistors is a hurdle that needs to be overcome too. While there already are ways to overcome this, they rely on typical silicon transistor technology, or have to make use of additional special layers which make them hard to shrink. Some companies are already developing methods to counter this problem.

Currently, the key characteristics of GaN — offering better thermal and power efficiency in a smaller area when compared to silicon — make it more viable in some particular applications.

First of which is fast charging technology. Unlike earlier smartphones and other daily use devices, charging technology now feature 30W, 40W or even 65W chargers. But this push in wattage has led to an increase in the sizes of chargers, making them increasingly unwieldy.

To combat this, third-party manufacturers are now making use of GaN to offer chargers with similar higher wattage in a package that is not only two-thirds smaller than existing chargers but also runs cooler.

Another avenue that seems perfect for the use of GaN tech is 5G wireless technology. The millimeter wave (mmWave) higher frequency bandwidth that 5G operates demands more power, which is why 5G smartphones do not fare too well when it comes to battery endurance. The mmWave technology makes use of the largely unused spectrum between 24Ghz and 100Ghz. But unlike the current sub-6Ghz frequencies, mmWave need high directional beamforming technology to efficiently deliver reception.

Such power-hungry 5G equipment could make use of the more efficient GaN tech that not only dissipates heat more effectively but also takes less space. GaN's ability to work in the high-frequency range makes it desirable for everything from base stations to small cell applications for 5G. Eventually, it is expected that GaN will also make its way into mobile devices, which is when its prevalence is predicted to take off.

## YouTube nets over \$15 billion in ads



Google has finally revealed how much it earns from ads from its YouTube video platform; until now, Google had declined to disclose YouTube's revenue, which had led to wide-spread speculation.

Ahead of parent company Alphabet's fourth-

quarter earnings call for 2019, Google disclosed that ads on YouTube raked in \$15 billion in revenue last year. While this is nearly 10 percent of Alphabet's total revenue, it is not the full revenue of YouTube, only what came in from ads; other sources of revenue, for instance from subscriptions were not included in the revenue tally.

Google also revealed that it made over \$10 billion from its Cloud service. The new revenue disclosure made by CEO Sundar Pichai goes back to 2017. Highlights of revenue for the search giant show that YouTube and Cloud have been two newer growth areas for the company.

YouTube has nearly doubled its ad revenues since 2017 when the video platform took in \$8.1 billion, which then reached \$11.1 billion a year later. Meanwhile, subscribers to YouTube Premium and YouTube Music rose to more than 20 million and that for YouTube TV climbed to 2 million.

Overall, YouTube's non-advertising revenue, which includes subscriptions and commerce, amounted to \$3 billion.

## Secure WhatsApp account from social hacking

WhatsApp messaging service is incredibly easy to set up, but few people realize that this effortless set up also comes with a security cost.

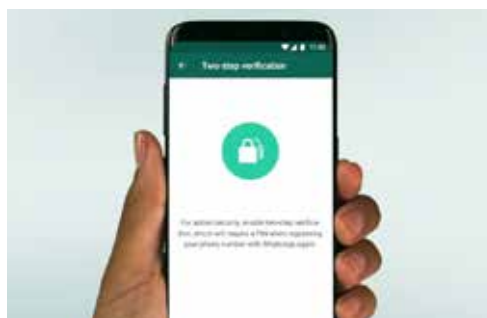
If you are not careful, the simple set up process could leave your account open to abuse by hackers. Luckily, it is also fairly easy to enable an extra layer of protection for your account so that you will be able to retain control over your account even if your six-digit activation code gets compromised. While your account could still be vulnerable to any serious hacker, it still offers a layer of protection should someone manage to trick you revealing your security code, through a process called 'social hacking'.

Social hacking involves hackers managing to gain control of a friend's WhatsApp account and then sending you a message asking you to forward a six-digit code that is being sent to your phone on their behalf. Shortly after that you receive the six-digit code that you then forward to your friend. In moments you get locked out of your WhatsApp account.

If you are wondering what happened. It is quite simple. The six-digit code that you forwarded was the six-digit code that WhatsApp sends to your mobile via SMS to associate with your account.

Since the hacker now has control over your account they are able to send messages on your behalf to others in your contact list pretending to be you and repeating the hack with everyone on your contact list. This is probably how the hacker managed to gain access to your friend's account in the first place.

In theory, having your WhatsApp account taken over should be a fairly easy situation to resolve: just enter your phone number into the app and have it



send you another six-digit code. The problem is that hackers can spam your number with a bunch of incorrect six-digit codes so that you get locked out of your account for up to 12 hours. Then, if you had not set up a PIN of your own, this leaves an attacker free to set up one of their own on your account, locking you out for seven days in total.

That is why it is so important to remember never share your six-digit WhatsApp code with anyone. No one will ever have a legitimate reason to ask for the code that WhatsApp sends you over SMS, so do not even think about sharing it. Should the worst happen, then setting up a PIN will act as another barrier to stop someone from being able to sign in to your account.

To set up your PIN open WhatsApp and tap the three dots on the top right of the screen.

Click on 'Settings' go to 'Account' and then pick 'Two-step verification'. Click 'Enable' and then pick your six-digit PIN. The next step is not mandatory, but adding an email address will allow you to recover your account if you forget your PIN.

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# LUXURIOUS LIVING IN LONDON

BY HERMOINE MACURA-NOBLE  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES KUWAIT



From the majestic Thames that weaves through the city to Europe's tallest building, the Shard, London is one of those cities that has so much to offer. Considered to be one of the world's most vibrant cities, here are some top picks on the luxurious side of what London has to offer.

## 9 am: Breakfast

Considering that you will breeze through Heathrow airport and get to the city centre within one hour, it is best to start the day with a delicious breakfast. The Grill at the Dorchester in Mayfair is a great place to consider. Enjoy any of their breakfast options in the stunning dining room. If you prefer to gear up for designer shopping right after, you may want to consider heading over to Covent Garden's Sushisamba and try their Piazza Terrace Breakfast or Tredwell's which offers healthy vegetarian dishes that are tasty and satisfying.

## 10 am: Shopping

Designer shopping is only a few meters away in Covent Garden, so you can easily spend a few hours exploring the stores in this area. If you are looking for culinary delights, the best place to head to is Burlington Arcade in Piccadilly. For chocoholics, head to the nearby Prince's arcade, the home of Prestat, the city's oldest chocolate shop made famous by author Roald Dahl who even featured some of their delicacies in his books. Also located close by is the Caviar House & Prunier, a place where you can pick up smoked salmon, caviar and other delicious smoked fish. Luxurious department store, Fortnum & Mason is also within walking distance and worth checking out for even more gastronomy delights. The Queen herself has even visited to open the Diamond Jubilee Tea Salon formally.

## Midday: Sightseeing

If you are interested in taking in central London's landmarks by foot, why not take a stroll along the river and marvel at the House of Parliament, Big Ben, the London Eye and the Tate Modern, a former power station that is

now home to some of the best art in the world.

Some other sites worth visiting include St Paul's cathedral — one of the financial district's most prized assets and Nelson's Column which commemorates the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Across the square from Big Ben, you will also find Westminster Abbey, the 700-year-old building where Prince William and Kate Middleton got married in 2011. It is also the burial place of British figures such as Sir Isaac Newton, Geoffrey Chaucer and Charles Dickens.

## 1.30pm: Lunch

All that shopping will make you hungry, and it is time for lunch! Some great places to dine include Nobu on Berkeley Street, which offers some of the best sushi in the world. If you would like to try something new, head over to Yeni, a warm and welcoming restaurant that offers super fresh and inspiring food. Influenced by Istanbul's rich food culture, Yeni brings a taste of the historic city to London. Drawing influence from the different ethnicities which unite on the streets of chef and founder, Civan Er's, hometown, the menu offers mouth-watering dishes inspired by his



rich heritage. The menu features vegetable, seafood and meat options all curated using the best seasonal produce. Vegetable dishes include Öcce (fresh herb fritters, pomegranate molasses, feta, sour cherries), Olive Oil-Braised Beetroot (dried sour cherries, xigalo cheese) and Stewed Celeriac (quince, feta, caramelized chillies). If you have space for dessert, try the Katmer (homemade crisp, layered pastry with pistachios and orange), Kadajifi Fritters (mastic ice cream, candied range or Mahlab Panna Cotta (salted caramel, hazelnuts, butternut squash).

## 3 pm: Relax at a Spa

For a spa with a view, head over to the Four Seasons Hotel London at Park Lane. The

10th Floor Spa offers relaxing massages and facials in luxurious treatment rooms as well as bespoke blow dry in the salon. Another great spa with a traditional British menu is Sense at the Rosewood London. Expect your stress to melt away as your therapist guides you through the spa's Zen themed bamboo walls and wooden walkways over rippling water and pebble stones. Offering an array of nurturing treatments such as the Rose body Massage, and products from Sodashi and Face Place, you can also experience five-star hair treatments from celebrity stylist Matthew Curtis, within an intimate and boutique-style salon at Sense spa. The shimmering gold leaf and teak relaxation lounge is the centerpiece of the spa and provides a tranquil and therapeutic hideaway after your treatment.



## 7 pm: Dinner

London is famous for its many excellent restaurants, and its traditional English pubs, but world-class cuisine is not in short supply,



so you will have no problem finding a place that will make your taste buds sing. Dinings is a hidden gem located in a mews off Walton Street in Knightsbridge. The restaurant specializes in an evolved Izakaya-style of cooking, incorporating authentic Japanese and European cuisines to create delicious small plates in a relaxed atmosphere. Service is faultless from the start — a warm hand towel and edamame beans arrive at the table just moments after arrival. Executive Chef Masaki Sugisaki and his team have developed a unique style of sushi and sashimi that changes with the seasons. Celebrating the finest of Japanese cooking traditions, Dining's also makes use of the Jospo oven to create a range of 'Sumiyaki' dishes. Vegan-friendly, it also has a sushi counter where you can watch the chefs at work while sipping on their delightful mocktails.

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