



LOCAL

Increase in
'fill and run' cases at
gas stations

5

6



LOCAL

Domestic labor office
owners protest new
parliamentary proposal

8

LOCAL

The Times Kuwait holds
presentation at American
Creative Academy



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250 Fils

KGLI embezzlement case: The makings of a thriller



THE TIMES REPORT

The Criminal Court in Kuwait last week passed a sentence of 15 years imprisonment with hard labor against two former executives of Kuwait Gulf Link Investment (KGLI), who were accused of embezzling public funds and money laundering.

The former CEO and Vice-Chairperson of KGLI, Marsha Lazareva a Russian national, and her co-defendant

Saed Dashti, a Kuwaiti businessman who led Kuwait & Gulf Link Transportation Company were sentenced on two counts of money laundering and were also asked to return to the state around KD2.9 million in a case filed by parliamentarian Abdullah Al-Kandari.

The two were arrested and jailed in 2017 for embezzling nearly half a billion dinars from The Port Fund, an investment portfolio managed by KGLI, in which two government entities, Kuwait Ports Authority and Kuwait Public Institution



for Social Security had together bought a 60 percent stake in 2007.

In May 2018, a court had sentenced the two to 10 years imprisonment and ordered them to pay a fine of KD22 million for their role in the embezzlement. Both former executives have maintained their innocence since their arrest and have repeatedly appealed their sentences. In June of this year, the Court of Appeal overturned the earlier convictions

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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Co-op workers who survive on customer tips



Many people employed to help stuff bags at check-out counters in cooperative societies are reported to be working without salaries

and relying solely on the meager tips they receive from customers to make a living.

This violation of labor law came to light when it was revealed that these workers are not staff of the cooperatives, but are employed by third-party contractors who supply laborers to the co-ops. Some of these workers hired through reprobate third-party contractors, are not paid regular salaries and instead have to survive with the tips they receive from customers. Besides not paying any salaries to these workers, the crooked contractors are said to force each worker to pay KD60 a month as an 'employment fee'. This gross violation of

labor laws, where the employee has to pay the employer each month is shocking beyond belief, said one co-op customer.

The tips these workers receive for ferrying purchased goods from the check-out counter to the vehicle of shoppers can range from a quarter-dinar to one-dinar. On average, a worker who toils for eight hours or more a day can hope to make KD100 to KD150 a month, depending on the location of the coop. From this pittance, he has to first set aside KD60 to pay his employer, which leaves him with KD40 to KD90 a month. With this small amount he has to take care of his food, lodging and

sundry expenses, as well as send money back home to take care of his family and relatives.

Meanwhile it has been reported that the Public Authority for Manpower and the Ministry of Social Affairs are preparing to undertake a new set of procedures this month to terminate the contracts of expatriates working in various co-op societies around Kuwait. This move follows pressure from parliamentarians calling for resolving the demographic imbalance in the country. The termination and deportation procedures are said to start with loaders and cleaning workers in the co-ops.

BAIA holds its lavish Hollywood Oscars evening



The British Academy of International Arts (BAIA) celebrated a 'red-carpet' Gala Oscars evening at the Shakespeare Theatre on the BSK campus where students of dance, music and theatre were nominated from the members of the Academy for BAIA Oscars 2019. Arriving in their magnificent evening wear, the students and their families were welcomed by BAIA Founder Madam Vera Al Mutawa MBE and Dr. Lavinia Davenport, a filmmaker, TV chef and blogger; wife of the British Ambassador to Kuwait and the evening's guest of honor.

Highlighting the outstanding examination results achieved by the various faculties, BAIA prides itself on offering classes that lead to UK based examinations in Dance, Music and Theatre with outstanding results achieved by BAIA's students. Taking examinations with the Associated Boards of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), students achieved a 100% pass rate in a range of musical instruments, achieving 25% of grades at Pass, 55% at Merit and 20% at Distinction.

In dance, 59 students took National Association of Teachers of Dancing (NATD) Performance Awards, achieving a 100% pass rate with 11 at merit and 48

at distinction, a truly outstanding entry for 2019.

Similarly with the British Ballet Organisation-Dance (bbodance) students also achieved a 100% pass rate in their graded examinations in May 2019. With 43 entries, 20% at a Pass, 60% with a Merit and 20% with Distinction from Introduction to Ballet all the way through to Advanced Level, an outstanding effort across the board.

In Theatre, students took examinations with the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA). Like those of dance and music, results were outstanding. Of the 38 entries, there was a 100% pass rate with 17 at Merit and 21 at Distinction; testament to the great work of our teachers and dedication and ability of our students.

The presentations were interspersed with fabulous performances. The climax of the evening was the 2019 Oscar winners of 32 students, nominated by their teachers from Theatre, Music and Dance, who received their Oscars trophies from Dr. Lavinia and Madam Vera to a round of applause from a packed house of family and friends.

Finishing the evening off in style were amazing musical performances.

TEF organizes 10th TICE

Tamilnadu Engineers Forum (TEF) Kuwait, the one & only ISO certified voluntary Engineers Forum registered with Indian Embassy, Kuwait organized the 10th Technological Innovations Conference and Exposition (TICE) on 7 November at Radisson Blu Hotel, Kuwait under the theme 'Towards Tomorrow: Energy & Technology Management'.

TEF celebrating its 20th year organized their flagship event 10th TICE under the Patronage of MEW, KPC, KNPC, KIPIC, PIC & EQUATE.

Waleed Al-Bader, Chief Executive Officer KNPC and Ambassador of India to Kuwait H.E. K. Jeevasagar, inaugurated the exhibition.

Waleed Al-Bader, Chief Executive Officer KNPC formally inaugurated the Conference and delivered the Keynote address. He shared his thought on the Theme of the Conference 'Towards Tomorrow: Energy & Technology Management'. The address covered the wide perspective of Energy & Technology Management and contribution of Indian Engineers to the growth of Kuwait.

Ambassador of India to Kuwait H.E. K. Jeevasagar addressed the audience and mentioned about the



long standing relationship between Kuwait and India. He also mentioned about the contribution of Indian Engineers to the growth of Kuwait.

Thirty technical presentations enlightened the audience about the emerging technologies and innovative solutions to the various challenges faced by the Industry. Technical Presentations were delivered in six sessions chaired by eminent personalities in the Oil & Gas Industry, Research Institutes & Universities. Exciting trade show with thirty exhibitors was the highlight of the conference and exhibited their products in their booths.



ILOA sizzles at SCIMA International Quiz Competition



Indian Learners' Own Academy (ILOA) bagged the Winner's trophy at inter-school science and Math quiz competition (SCIMA), a quiz competition conducted by Salmiya Indian Model School (SIMS) Kuwait. It was a moment of pride and prestige for the students of ILOA.

Ten schools had participated in the preliminary round on 23 October and only four schools made their way to the finals. On 24 October, was a nail

biting competition between all the four schools, and the team comprising of Aaditya Biju of 6B, Chris Geo of 7D and Anushika of 8A performed extremely well. ILOA won with a total of 110 points.

The Principal of ILOA, Mrs. Asha Sharma congratulated the team and said that this would not have happened without the hard work, dedication and unity among the team members along with the valuable contribution and assistance of teachers.

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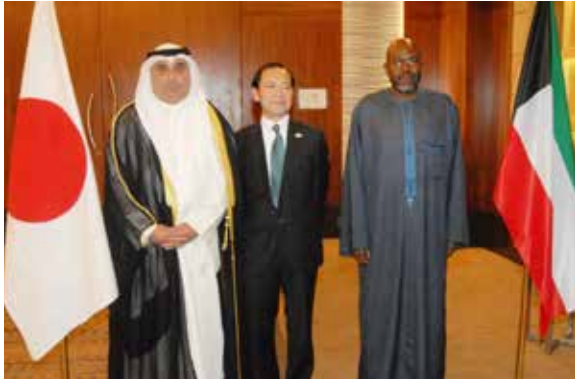
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Farewell reception held for outgoing Japanese ambassador

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and the Ambassador of Senegal to Kuwait H.E. Abdou Lahad Mbacke hosted a farewell reception to bid farewell to the outgoing Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Takashi Ashiki.

Attending the event was the representative of the Protocol Department at Kuwait's Foreign Ministry, Khalid Al-Farsi, along with a large gathering of members of the diplomatic corps. Speaking



on the occasion, Ambassador Ashiki extended his thanks to the leadership, government and people



of Kuwait for their support and cooperation they had extended to him during his stay in the country.



For his part, Ambassador Mbacke, on behalf of his colleagues bid a fond farewell to the Japanese

ambassador and congratulated him on his successful tenure in Kuwait. He pointed out that the Japanese Ambassador had played a prominent role in the development of relations between Japan and Kuwait, and extended bridges of friendship and cooperation between his country and Kuwait in several areas.

A memento to commemorate the occasion was then handed over to the outgoing Japanese Ambassador.

Iqbal Qureshi, long-time Indian resident of Kuwait passes away

Prominent Indian businessman, philanthropist, and foreign trade counsellor of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Iqbal Qureshi (85), passed away in Kuwait on Tuesday, 12 November.

A native of Hyderabad in India, he was one of the most senior Indian expatriates in Kuwait and will be fondly remembered by everyone who came to know and respect him. Burial was on Wednesday, 13 November at the Sabhan Cemetery. One of the pioneers of air-cargo business in Kuwait, Mr. Qureshi was instrumental in launching the freight services of Cargolux Airlines International



of Luxembourg to Kuwait. His efforts in improving trade between Luxembourg and Kuwait led to his appointment as the foreign trade counselor of the Duchy in 2003 and his knighthood by the Duke of Luxembourg in 2011.

Starting his professional career with Trade-Wings in India, Mr. Qureshi moved to Kuwait and worked in the air cargo business for the past 40 years. He was the CEO of Bahman International Cargo in Kuwait and his professional achievements over the years have been recognized through numerous awards from the airline and cargo industries.

Only nationals to be employed as fish brokers

Aiming to eradicate some of the fishy businesses alleged to be taking place in the fish market, the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Services Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan issued a new notification on 10 November.

According to the new regulations, fish and shrimp can only be auctioned by a broker licensed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) and registered to operate in a certain location. The notification adds that the broker has to be a citizen, or a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)



national, with good conduct, no criminal record, hold valid health certificates, and should not have been debarred from the MoCI registers in the past five years.

First commerce batch of ICSK Khaitan completes ACCA Diploma



A grand ceremony to felicitate and award Diploma in Accounting and Business to Commerce Students (ACCA) of the Indian Community School, Kuwait (ICSK), Khaitan was held at Millenium Hotel and Convention Center, Kuwait on 8 November, 2019.

Sixteen young dynamic students of ICSK, Khaitan achieved a professional milestone by completing their Diploma studies while pursuing their Class 11th and 12th CBSE Commerce studies.

Mr. K. Gangadhar Shirsath, Principal ICSK, Khaitan, welcomed the distinguished guests Pinak Maitra, CFO, KIPCO, Michael Gordon, Director, British Council, Kuwait, Alexander Leach, Education Manager, ACCA, Middle East, Amitabh Ranjan, Second Secretary, Embassy of India in Kuwait, Anjum Masood, Principal, International School of Pakistan, Kuwait, Shaik Abdul Rahiman,

Hon. Chairman, BOT, ICSK, Vinukum Nair, Hon. Vice – Chairman, BOT, Amer Mohammed, school principals, parents, students and staff of ICSK.

Shaik Abdul Rahiman, Hon. Chairman, BOT, the visionary and leader who floated the idea of ACCA coupled with Commerce at senior secondary level of CBSE, also congratulated the successful students. Pinak Maitra, CFO, KIPCO, touched a chord among the audience by narrating his personal experiences, and underlined the need to be focused and ethical in the field of accounting and business.

The highlight of the ceremony was the handing over of the ACCA Diploma certificates and mementos to the students.

Michael Gordon, Director, British Council, Kuwait, admired success of the students and wished them good luck for their future endeavor. A sumptuous dinner concluded the ceremony.



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AVOIDING CHEESE CLUMPING IN PASTA

Clumpy is not a word you would use to describe a perfect, cheesy pasta sauce. Smooth or velvety or sublime? Yes, those sound right. But clumpy? No. If your pasta sauce is clumpy, something is wrong, and it is likely the cheese.

Maybe not the actual cheese you are using. If it is something hard and crumbly like Parmesan or Pecorino or Grana Padano, you are probably fine in that regard. But there are some things you need to keep in mind when adding cheese to your pasta sauce to avoid unwanted textures. Here are the three things to ask yourself when adding cheese to pasta:



Is your cheese the right size?

When cheese is to be added to a pasta sauce, usually it is finely grated Parmesan. Cheese that is grated in large sheets or thick shreds will clump, because a larger amount of surface area allows for more cling potential.

A larger piece of cheese also increases the chance that it will melt unevenly and onto other cheese surrounding it. Keep your cheese small and consistent in size

for the highest quality melting.

Is there liquid in your pot?

Throwing grated cheese, regardless of size, onto dry pasta will give you a lumpy sauce. Well, not even a sauce. It will just give you globs of cheese. Hot liquids, like pasta water, heavy cream, melted butter, or beaten eggs, help distribute melted cheese evenly by surrounding it with heat. Since every bit of surface area is in contact with hot liquid, the cheese melts at the same rate. No clumps to be found, just a glossy, luscious sauce.

Are you adding your cheese all at once?

If you are, stop. Do not do it! Adding the sauce slowly, bit-by-bit, as you stir the liquid and pasta in your pot will make the cheese melt evenly and avoid clumping. Letting the cheese incorporate into the sauce little-by-little will guarantee that it stays smooth. Lighten the load. It will make everyone, including your sauce, happier.



TOMATO AND CHEESE PASTA

Ingredients

1 cup uncooked small tube pasta
1 small onion, chopped
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 can (14-1/2 ounces) Italian diced tomatoes
1/2 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1/4 teaspoon sugar
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/4 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Directions

Cook pasta according to package directions. In a small saucepan, saute onion in oil until tender. Add garlic; cook 1 minute longer. Stir in the tomatoes, basil, oregano, sugar and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Drain pasta; stir into saucepan.

Transfer to a greased 1-qt. baking dish. Top with cheeses. Bake, uncovered, at 375° for 10-15 minutes or until cheese is melted.

Thought for the week

“ A person does not love what he possess if it means disparaging whatever is dear to others. One's love of one's nation is not love if it offends other nations If he is a true internationalist his patriotism must not - and cannot - offend people of other nationalities.

- Konstantin Simonov

Healing Power of Ginger

Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy

Ginger is always thought to be good for digestion and circulation, and I am sure that a lot of you have used it for many purposes. I personally enjoy savoring it cooked though a lot of people prefer to have it as a drink. In Japanese restaurants, they usually offer ginger to alter the taste between different rolls, but I usually order a double portion to enjoy its taste.

Ginger has been used by Chinese herbalists for more than 2000 years for culinary and medicinal purposes. Here are the various health benefits of ginger.

Prevents motion sickness when travelling: Ginger is just as effective as other drugs used to treat motion sickness. So add a bit of ginger to the meal you eat before going on a plane or boat.

Calm an upset stomach: Ginger is also known to have the ability to promote the flow of bile and calm an upset stomach.



Supports a healthy cardiovascular system: Stimulates the health of the cardiovascular system by making platelets less sticky, which in turn reduces circulatory problems. Stomach cramps can be eased and circulation can also be improved.

Best for cooking: Ginger can be freshly grated and used in cooking. It is also available as a supplement which can be taken on a daily bases. It is always better to take it from food rather than supplements, but Ginger pills do not interact with any other nutrients or drugs in the body and



ginger in all forms is very safe to take. Besides providing a lot of benefits, ginger is also low in calories and in saturated fat.

Reduce pain and inflammation: Studies have shown that ginger has anti-inflammatory properties and is a powerful natural painkiller.

Relieve heart burns: Ginger has long been used as a natural heart burn remedy and is mostly taken in the form of tea (whether cold or hot) for that purpose.

Treating ovarian cancer: Ginger is also powerful in treating ovarian cancer, and research proves that ginger gives a remarkable migraine relief.

Menstrual discomfort: Ginger tea with brown sugar is used for the treatment of menstrual cramps, according to Chinese medicine.

Asthma: Drinking ginger tea is beneficial to help with problems related to asthma. It helps to loosen phlegm and expand the lungs, which

allows you to recover from difficult breathing. This is also in addition to reducing allergies and constant sneezing.

Recipe for lemon and Ginger drink:

Servings: 5

Ingredients:

2 whole lemons
1 handful Ginger, peeled and sliced
3 tablespoons of brown sugar
2 liters of boiled water

Directions:

Place lemons, Ginger and sugar in a heatproof jug. Pour boiled water over the ingredients and wait until it cools to room temperature. Refrigerate until cold. To serve: Put plenty of ice and few mint leaves in each glass then serve.

*To subscribe to my diet programs, don't forget to log in to:
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

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Increase in 'fill and run' cases at gas stations

There is an increase in the number of motorists who fill their vehicles with fuel and then drive off without paying, gas station attendants complain.

Cases of mostly young, males driving off without paying for the fuel have become a daily occurrence in some pumps, say the employees there. And, security cameras installed at all petrol stations in the country do not appear to have deterred the budding criminals.

Gas station operators are apparently not very perturbed by this delinquent phenomenon, as any shortfall in the collection is



immediately deducted from the employee's salary. In all fairness, it must be said that the amount is reimbursed to the worker, if and when the thief is apprehended by the authorities. "When someone drives away without payment, we get their plate number from the cameras and report it to the police. When they are eventually

caught and pay up, it will be transferred to the account of the worker. This procedure may take two months or more," said one gas-station official.

Clarifying the issue from a legal viewpoint, lawyer Aziz Al-Sayed said that such thieves could face sentences of up to three years in prison. "Driving away

without paying is considered a misdemeanor, as this theft was committed without breaking in, so the thief will be sentenced to imprisonment or a fine. The company of the fuel station will receive the stolen amount, in addition to compensation for the harm caused by this illegal act," he explained.

Elaborating on this view, lawyer Khaled Al-Juwaisri said that if the pump happens to be public gas stations owned by KNPC, or if the government has a share in it, then the misdemeanor becomes classified as a crime, and harsher punishment ensues. The reason



for this difference is that stealing from a public gas station is the equivalent of stealing public funds; no matter what the amount, stealing from the government is a crime," said the lawyer.

DDI holds its Annual World Diabetes Day



Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), held their annual informative event to commemorate World Diabetes Day on 14 November, at its premises. The event allowed visitors to consult with diabetes specialists and dietitians, as well as gather medical information from booths that explained various facts of diabetes and promoted healthy lifestyle modifications.

Many of the booths at the event offered various components, such as educating visitors on proper dietary habits, physical activities, first aid techniques, diagnostic imaging services amongst others. In addition, some of the booths provided blood glucose and blood pressure testing, as well as podiatric assessment.

Another aspect of the event was to help people living with diabetes and provide valuable health information to the general public. A special thanks to Kuwait Finance House for their continuous support and for sponsoring this event for many years. The activity area was divided into various stations dedicated to special game zones where visitors could play and learn. "Holding such events and activities stems from Dasman Diabetes Institute's mission

statement, where health promotion and awareness are a priority for the Institute. Since its establishment in 2006, the Institute organizes and takes part in many events and campaigns annually to shed light on diabetes and health in general. This is in accordance with the Institute's belief that, 'Prevention is better



than cure," said Dr. Qais Al-Duwairi, Director-General of Dasman Diabetes Institute.

The primary goal of the event was to promote awareness about diabetes, work towards achieving long-term positive health outcomes for diabetes management and empowering those affected by diabetes to proactively improve their quality of life.

Jazeera Airways to launch direct flights between Kuwait and Al Ain

Travelers in Kuwait will soon be able to travel directly to Al Ain, Abu Dhabi thanks to a newly established flight route by Jazeera Airways. Supported by the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi), the independent airline announced the new direct flights to Al Ain at a stakeholder event in Kuwait.

"This deal marks a new chapter in tourism between Kuwait and Abu Dhabi," said Nabeel M. Al Zarouni, Regional Promotions Manager, Middle East and Africa at DCT Abu Dhabi. "Proximity, volume and strong cultural ties between the UAE and Kuwait make it one of the most important source markets for us in Abu Dhabi. We would like to thank Jazeera Airways for their hard work and collaboration over the past months to bring this pioneering deal to life, and we will be working closely with them in the future to encourage Kuwaiti travels to discover the UAE gem that is Al Ain, with the help of the new flight routes."

"With its stunning views, rich heritage, and breathtaking nature, we see Al Ain as the ideal destination for family-friendly retreats and cultural excursions. Visitors to Al Ain can enjoy nature hikes, sightseeing, visits to some of the world's oldest architectural wonders, and unique Emirati heritage experiences. Whether it is curious explorers, adventurers, families, or culture enthusiasts, we truly believe that various types of travelers would thoroughly enjoy visiting Al Ain," Al Zarouni added.

Andrew Ward, Jazeera Airways Vice President-Marketing & Product, said: "We are proud to be operating our second destination in the United Arab Emirates and provide our customers with more choices to explore and enjoy the hidden gems of our region."

We are committed at Jazeera Airways to connecting passengers from across our network to new destinations while ensuring we continue to



provide them with value fares and a reliable service throughout their journey with our airline. We look forward to flying to Al Ain International Airport with three flights a week starting from December 8."

ESF student excels in IGCSE exams



The English School Fahaheel (ESF) has excelled in IGCSE exams and congratulates Yasmin Zakkiyah for her outstanding efforts in achieving the highest marks in Kuwait in IGCSE Biology.

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Domestic labor office owners protest new parliamentary proposal

The Union of Owners of Domestic Labor Offices has overwhelmingly rejected the recent proposal by parliament to increase the period of bank guarantee for bringing in domestic workers from the current six months to two years or the duration of the contract.

The owners said the proposal would definitely add a new burden to their operations and could lead to many offices becoming bankrupt. They warned that if the

new proposal is implemented it could lead to foreign recruitment agencies for domestic workers refusing to send their labor force to Kuwait.

In a statement to the daily, the Union President Khaled Al-Dukhanan lamented the potential damage to the domestic labor offices if the proposal is approved, stressing that the proposal allows sponsors to return the domestic workers to the offices even after a year or nine months, which will

definitely cause heavy financial losses for these recruitment offices. Moreover, some domestic helpers do not continue their work with the sponsor, which then obliges the office to repatriate the worker back to their country at the office's expense.

Al-Dukhanan pointed out that the union was never consulted about the parliamentary proposal, although the union is the legitimate representative of the owners of domestic labor offices in Kuwait. He called upon the



MPs to reject the proposal as it would be a burden to the labor offices and result in many of them having to close down.

Crime Beat

Traffic accident claims life of a nurse

An investigation has been opened by the authorities into the traffic accident that led to the death of one nurse and injuries to several others. The incident occurred when a private bus transporting nurses collided with another vehicle killing one nurse instantly and causing injuries to three others. The body of the nurse was sent to the coroner while the injured have been referred to Al-Adan hospital. Two of the injured are said to be in critical condition while the third is stable. The driver of the bus who also suffered injuries is reported to be in stable condition.

Kuwaiti woman punished for acquiring two names, IDs and husbands

A Kuwaiti woman has been sentenced to seven years in prison for having two different Kuwaiti IDs with two different names. The woman was also married to two different husbands and was working in two different positions in different jobs. Local media reported that the woman was able to receive two different social allowances, and also was able to get two different housing loans using her two identities. For that, the criminal court has sentenced the woman, who committed the first-of-its-type crime, to seven years imprisonment with labor.

Shop employees jointly steal from owner

Nine expatriates employed in a shop were arrested for systematically looting the Kuwaiti owner of a total of KD70,000 by manipulating the accounts. Those arrested have been referred to the Public Prosecution to pursue further measures. The incident came to light when the lady owner of the shop discovered manipulations in the accounts. On questioning the accountant eventually admitted that he had been stealing from the shop for the past two years. He also implicated the rest of the staff as having joined him in sharing the stolen loot.

Death sentence commuted to life imprisonment for citizen

Finding discrepancies in a lower court verdict, the Court of Cassation has commuted the life sentenced pronounced on a Kuwaiti citizen to life imprisonment. The case involves a citizen who deliberately killed his father at the family's residence in Waha. Following the incident security personnel investigating the case arrested the suspect in November 2018 from a desert area near Oyoun. They also retrieved the murder weapon from a garbage dump close to where the incident took place. The arrested man, an ex-convict, confessed that in the heat of the quarrel with his father and under the influence of narcotics, he had picked up a kitchen-knife lying nearby and stabbed his father to death.

KGLI embezzlement case: The makings of a thriller

...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and ordered the release of the two on a bail of KD1 million each, after it was found that the documents used as evidence were forgeries. The latest order from the Criminal Court now rescinds the bail granted in June and sends the duo back to prison.

Interestingly, while the bail amount of KD1 million for 45-year-old Ms. Lazareva was paid by an unnamed Kuwaiti dignitary, and the earlier KD 11 million fine came from her supporters, there was no such relief for her co-defendant Mr. Dashti. Despite being a Kuwaiti citizen there were no compatriots willing to act as benefactors and pay for his bail or fine, so he has continued to languish in jail. Ms. Lazareva will now once again join him in prison to serve her sentence.

The latest sentencing of Ms. Lazareva and her earlier arrest and subsequent release on the charges of embezzlement, raises several interesting questions but very few credible answers.

An international team that has been vociferously campaigning on behalf of Ms. Lazareva since her arrest in 2017, were aghast at the latest verdict. Among the high-profile supporters clamoring for her release are US businessman and investor Neil Bush, the son of former American President George H.W. Bush, British barrister Cherie Blair, the wife of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and Tatyana Yumasheva, the youngest daughter of the late former Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

Neil Bush, who claims that he is looking to protect his father's legacy in helping liberate Kuwait in 1991, has been involved in the Lazareva case early on and has made several trips to Kuwait to campaign for her release. Speaking to media during one of his visits to the region, the younger Bush described the charges against Ms. Lazareva as "totally bogus". He added, "Kuwait has had countless opportunities to root out corruption within its legal system. Its failure to do so has resulted in the latest false conviction and may leave the United States government no choice but to intervene and hold those responsible to account."

For her part, Ms. Blair, who has also campaigned for Ms. Lazareva's release since the beginning said she was "disappointed, but not surprised" by the latest judgment. "It follows a campaign of persecution against Marsha and displays grave flaws in the judicial process which raises serious questions for Kuwait," she said. In May of this year, Ms. Blair had filed

a complaint petition against Kuwait with the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), requesting an investigation into the detention and treatment of Lazareva.

In addition to Bush, Blair and Yumasheva there have been several other high-profile individuals helping in the case to have Ms. Lazareva released. The matter is also reported to have cropped up during a meeting in March between visiting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Kuwaiti counterpart Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Sabah Al Khalid Al Sabah. Incidentally, support for the Russian detainee has now come from an unexpected new quarter. Calls for the release of Ms. Lazareva, who has a 5-year-old son born in the US and hence is a US citizen, has now come from the United States Congress.

Five US Representatives have requested an investigation into the case under the US Global Magnitsky Act. The Act authorizes the United States to impose sanctions against foreign citizens who have been found to have committed human rights violations and engaged in corruption. The sanctions include the freezing of assets in US financial institutions, and prohibition from entering the United States. Luckily, US President Donald Trump has so far not waded into the issue by voicing his weighty thoughts on Twitter.

The Lazareva case certainly has all the ingredients of a suspense thriller. Trouble for the successful Russian business-woman began in 2017 when a former KGLI employee, who was arrested for stealing company funds, filed a complaint accusing Ms. Lazareva of being a spy and gathering information for a foreign country. "I was in Europe when the charges were first levelled against me. If I was guilty I could have remained outside Kuwait, instead, on hearing about the charges, I immediately returned to Kuwait," said Ms. Lazareva during a media interview back in 2017.

But then, as her British legal team prepared to fly out to Kuwait to defend her against the spying charges, a new case of embezzlement was brought against Ms. Lazareva and she was arrested and later sentenced to ten years hard labor. However, when the court found that the documents used as evidence against her were fakes that had been submitted by a government auditor who had since fled the country, she was released on bail.

Moreover, the funds alleged to have been embezzled were found

lying frozen in a Dubai bank since 2017. Over the ten years since the Fund began operating in 2007, it had more than doubled in value from its original investment of \$188 million. They have since been returned with interest to the creditors, investors and shareholders of Port Fund. The funds were reportedly in the process of being distributed to investors when it was frozen by the Dubai bank.

Meanwhile, it has now come to light that in the first quarter of 2019 alone, KGLI had spent over US\$2.5 million to hire lobbyists in the United States to help secure the release of Ms. Lazareva. A public file submitted by the legal adviser of KGLI in the United States, under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) of the US Department of Justice, has unveiled a public relations strategy deployed by the law firm Crowell & Moring on behalf of the former KGLI executive.

Crowell & Moring hired Marathon Strategies, a public relations firm in the United States, with an explicit mandate to raise questions about whether Kuwait is a safe place to invest and publicize this in the United States media and elsewhere, as well as to denounce the unjustified actions by the State of Kuwait. According to sources in Kuwait, those actions were a blatant attempt to subvert the course of justice in Kuwait, and to help disgraced former KGLI executives to escape due legal processes in the country.

With such a powerful coterie of executives, dignitaries and US Representatives lobbying for her release, and money being thrown around to besmirch the reputation of Kuwait and its judiciary, it is quite uncharacteristic that Kuwait has so far not bowed to the pressure and released Ms. Lazareva under some face-saving pretext.

The fact that Kuwait has so far refused to kowtow to pressure clearly indicates that there must be much more at stake than Kuwait attempting to uphold its judicial credentials and demonstrate that everyone is equal before Kuwait courts. Kuwait's obstinacy is also certainly not about retribution and recouping the relatively piddling few millions dinars embezzled that have now been returned to stakeholders in The Port Fund.

No one is exactly sure what lies behind Kuwait's dogged perseverance of the case. But, as always happens, when something is not clear-cut there is ample opportunity for speculation, which is ultimately in no one's interest, least of all Kuwait's.

Expat engineers found to have forged certificates

Five Indians and one Syrian engineer were found to have submitted forged certificates while obtaining jobs in companies contracted with the oil sector.

The forgeries came to light after the Kuwait Engineers Society (KES)

imposed an accreditation mechanism that verified engineering certificates and mandated competency tests that engineers had to pass. The engineers found to have used forged certificates were referred to the Public Prosecution for further action against them.

Moving garages to one area will lead to congestion, competition



Owners and workers of vehicle repair garages in Shuwaikh Industrial Area are worried that implementation of the directives given by the Council of Ministers, to find alternative sites for garages and shops in the

Eastern Industrial Area in Shuwaikh, will only increase congestion in one area and lead to stiff competition that could see many shops closing down and workers being left without a livelihood.

Workers fear that stiff competition will result in workshops offering low repair costs in the hope of securing jobs, but this would ultimately make many shops unprofitable and owners would have to shut them down and terminate their workers.

The Shuwaikh Industrial Area is the most preferred place for vehicle owners, not only because spare parts of all kinds are available in one area, but also because of the presence of skilled technicians.

LuLu Exchange wins Brand of the Year at World Branding Awards

LuLu Exchange, one of the most trusted names in the non-banking financial sector, was honored with the Brand of the Year Award in the Finance category at the 2019 World Branding Awards held at The State Apartments, Kensington Palace, London.

Speaking at the award ceremony, LuLu Exchange Managing Director Adeb Ahamed remarked, "It is a huge privilege for LuLu Exchange to be officially recognised at the renowned World Branding Awards. We will continue investing in our core values of Trust, Talent and Relationships to maintain our market position and impeccable



reputation among customers, employees, and shareholders alike."

Mr. Ahamed added, "Our reputation is built on successfully bringing together consistency and innovation – so we look forward to continuing this winning streak in future editions of awards of this magnitude." The Brand of the Year is a coveted industry award that recognizes exceptional achievement in branding across several categories. For LuLu Exchange, the Finance category award celebrates their pioneering efforts in branding for innovative financial services offered around the world.

Taiwanese Halal Trade Mission visits Kuwait

Officials from the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), accompanied by a trade delegation of representatives from four well-established Taiwanese suppliers of leading companies involved in the Taiwan Halal industries, paid an official visit to Kuwait on 13 November.

The trade meeting provided a platform for local business people to discuss cooperation with the four participating Taiwanese companies and representing Amis Nature Farming Company,



Madam Rose Coffee & Tea, GR Global Company, and UQing Company. The Taiwanese companies, which have made great strides in their respective fields, provided valuable information while promoting their products and services in Kuwait, while also furthering trade relations between Taiwan and Kuwait with respect to the Halal industries.

Indian trapped in Kuwait for last seven years back home

An Indian man who has been trapped in Kuwait for the last seven years has finally managed to go home, due to efforts by the Indian embassy and help from his compatriots.

The man, one Jesuraj from Villuppuram in Tamilnadu was working in Kuwait as a driver when he met with a traffic accident and had a travel ban imposed against him. The case against him kept getting delayed and he has been struggling to make a living in Kuwait for the last seven years.

Based on news about Jesuraj, which appeared in some sections of Indian media, the Secretary of Indian Frontliners organization, Mathi, raised the issue with the Indian Embassy.



The First Secretary (Community Welfare) at the embassy, P.P. Narayanan, acted on this request and Indian Embassy appointed a Kuwaiti lawyer who effectively argued the case in court and got Jesuraj cleared off all legal obstacles. Mr. Sameer, ICF was entrusted with this work and worked hard with court and investigation departments to get the case cleared.

The man who had waited for the last seven years to see his loved ones was finally able to go back to India on 7 November. Back with his family, a clearly delighted Jesuraj has conveyed his utmost gratitude to the Indian Embassy, especially to Mr. Narayanan and to Mr. Mathi, for all their help and support in getting him back home.

Bachelor eviction continues unabated

Public Relations department at Kuwait Municipality has stated that the inspection tours of family residential areas to verify whether bachelors were staying there would continue unabated.

According to the Deputy Director for Farwaniya and Mubarak Al-Kabeer affairs Ammar Al-Ammar the campaign to evict bachelors had so far tracked

22 violating residences, filed nine citations, evicted bachelors from six houses and disconnected electricity supplies to 16 more houses found to be in violation of rules. He added that the inspections, which were being held in collaboration with the Ministry of Electricity and Water, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior and the Public Authority for Civil Information, were going according to schedule.

Health coverage may cost expatriates KD130 per year

The Ministry of Health (MoH) is coordinating with the private Health Assurance Hospitals Company (Dhaman) to offer healthcare to expatriates through an insurance scheme costing KD130 annually.

The scheme, which is slated to begin in 2020, will see Dhaman opening three private hospitals, one each in Jahra, Ahmadi and Farwaniya governorates, as well as private clinics around the country, to offer primary and secondary healthcare to expatriates and their families.

The insurance will cover the costs for various tests, as well as X-rays and other treatments at



Dhaman Hospitals. The company is planning to release a media plan that will explain the details of acquiring health insurance and treatment at Dhaman Hospitals and Clinics.



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The Times Kuwait holds presentation at American Creative Academy

Children should develop an early reading culture



The Times Kuwait held a presentation at the American Creativity Academy (Salmiya) on the benefits of developing the habit of reading newspaper among children at an early age.

Srikanth Reddy, Marketing Manager, The Times Kuwait demonstrated to the students of American Creativity Academy that a newspaper in its basic form contains news and comments on issues and events happening across the globe.

The second grade students supervised by Nivi Irusan, the 2A Homeroom teacher of the school displayed a commendable eagerness to know more about news and newspapers.



The presentation emphasized the importance of reading newspapers daily and highlighted the benefits from this daily habit, including increasing knowledge about the world, learning to use language skillfully, improving vocabulary, enhancing concentration and igniting imagination.



With the advent of technology, especially the widespread use of the internet, there has been a steady drift in the way news is being transmitted and received, and as a result there has been a paradigm shift in readers away from print and towards the digital screen.

In a query about the sustainability of printed newspapers in a world going digital, Mr. Reddy stressed that the newspapers were finding it difficult to recover even the cost of production from a

subscription model, and were increasingly turning to advertisements as a source of revenue.

The presenter clarified that Kuwait's premier weekly news magazine, The Times Kuwait, has also joined the digital trend with its online content portal www.timeskuwait.com

At the end of the presentation, copies of The Times Kuwait were distributed among the students to instil in them the newspaper reading habit.



The 22 students of the class who attended the presentation are:

Abdulrahman Abdulmalek, Hussain Abdulsalam, Salman Al Amir, Faisal Al Baker, Ali Al Beirouty, Faisal Al Busairi, Abdulrahman Al Dawod, Ali Al Ibrahim, Alhareth Al Jasem, Othman Al Khlaifi, Meshal Al Mudhhi, Bader Al Refai, Hamed Al Roshoud, Ahmad Al Rumaihi, Saleh Al Sabah, Yousef AL Shumaimry, Khalid Al Sijari, Yousef Ali, Jamal El Khatib, Amir Ali Rastabi, Qassem Serhan, and Saqer Zowed.





Best attractions in BELGIUM

From the Art Nouveau splendor of Brussels to Flanders' medieval cities and the rolling hills of Wallonia, there are so many things to do in Belgium, a small but perfectly formed country that is crying out to be explored. It is ideal for active travellers, with great hiking trails, water sports and (outside Brussels, at least) excellent cycle infrastructure. The French influence is evident in Belgium's food, with more Michelin stars per head than just about anywhere in Europe and a flourishing vegan scene in cities like Ghent.

Spend a little time here and you will find a country that rewards the curious traveller. Here are the best things to do in Belgium.



Spend the day in the living museum that is Bruges: Its medieval houses, cobbled lanes, charming cloisters and meandering canals add up to a must-see city that is easily explored in a day or two. Follow Potterierei north along the canal for a bit of respite from the crowds.

Enjoy the view from the highest spot in Belgium at the Hautes Fagnes Wetland Nature Reserve: The Hautes Fagnes wetland nature reserve contains the highest point in Belgium, at a scratch under 700 metres above sea level. The land here is boggy and criss-crossed with boardwalks, and the park is a wild, faintly eerie place where at times you can walk for miles without seeing another soul (just be sure to take a map). It is rich pickings for nature-lovers, too: keep



your eyes peeled for wild boar, roe deer, hen harriers and black grouse.

Pay your respects at one of Menin Gate's Last Post ceremonies: The western corner of Belgium will forever be remembered as the bloodiest theatre of World War I. A hundred years after the armistice, the area still honors the war dead at dozens of military cemeteries and memorials large and small, with the city of Ypres at the centre of commemorations. Begin at the In Flanders Fields museum, where the battles are brought vividly back to life, and do not miss the moving Last Post ceremony held every evening at the Menin Gate.

Explore underground caves and sleep among the bears at Grotte de Han: Deep beneath the Walloon countryside is the Grotte de Han, a major cave complex made up of spectacular galleries, chambers, stalactites and an underground river. It's part of a Unesco-recognised wildlife domain with some offbeat accommodation: spend the night in the trapper's log cabin and you'll get dinner, drinks and a chance to give the park's bears their breakfast the next morning.



Lose yourself in one of Europe's most mesmerizing paintings at the Fine Arts Museum: Ghent is home to one of the world's earliest oil paintings: The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb, also known as the Ghent Altarpiece. Painted by the Van Eyck brothers in the fifteenth century, the 18-panel work is one of the great European masterpieces – and one of the most frequently stolen. Visit the Fine Arts Museum to watch experts painstakingly restoring sections of the work, before getting the bigger picture at Sint-Baaf's cathedral.

Discover Charleroi, a defiant city being reborn after hard times: Much-maligned Charleroi is slowly reinventing itself after years of post-industrial neglect to become a centre of alternative and contemporary art. An ironic urban safari takes you to the places other tours gloss over: slagheaps, abandoned factories, burnt-out cars and the tracks of a



Belgium celebrates King's Day

Belgium has celebrated the King's Day on 15 November since 1866 when it was decided to consecrate the day to the ruling monarch in honor of Saint Leopold whose feast falls on this day in the German liturgical calendar. However, following the crowning of King Albert I in 1909, the date of the celebration has also honored Saint Albert, whose feast falls on this day as per the Roman Catholic calendar.

Belgium's first two kings and the country's fourth King were called Leopold. The third King of the Belgians was called Albert as is the current king.

Traditionally, the day begins with a 'te deum' at Brussels Cathedral which is attended by all Royal family members with the exception of the King and Queen, as protocol and decorum do not consider it appropriate for the king to attend an event in his honor. The current monarch His Majesty King Albert II and Their Royal Highnesses Princess Astrid and Prince Lorenz attended the Palace of the Nation on Thursday to participate in the ceremony organized by the House of Representatives, the Senate and the Federal Government.

On the other hand, the Presidents of Regional and Community Governments reiterate their loyalty and allegiance by taking an oath during an audience granted to them on the occasion.



deserted metro station, but the city's smart Photo Museum in a converted convent is one of many spots demonstrating that things are moving in the right direction.

See the pearl of the Ardennes from a different point of view: Bucolic Bouillon sits in a forested valley in Belgium's deep south, combining Ardennes wilderness and natural charm with French-style sophistication. While others hike its hilly streets to enjoy the panorama from on high, you will get a different perspective from a paddle board along the meandering Semois river. In summer, explore the town's darker side with a torchlit night-time tour of the castle's dungeon and torture chambers.

Sleep inside a Trojan horse at Balade des Gnomes hotel: With rooms christened Monk's Despair and Legend of the Trolls, you know straight away that Balade des Gnomes isn't going to be your standard holiday home. Dreamed up by an architect with a love for travel and mystery, the inventive accommodation includes a treehouse, a caravan and a Gaudi-inspired suite with hot tub and sauna. This must be Belgium's most magical place to spend the night; the on-site restaurant is equally creative in both design and menu.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Toward a global biodiversity accord



CARLOS MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ AND ALVARO CEDENO MOLINARI

Carlos Manuel Rodríguez is Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica. Alvaro Cedeno Molinari is a former Costa Rican ambassador to Japan and the World Trade Organization.

Governments from around the world are already preparing for the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Kunming, China. This is no ordinary gathering: its goal will be to conclude a new policy framework on biodiversity that works for all member states.

Although the CBD adopted the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in 2010, the international community has been decidedly ineffective in achieving them. Some countries that host vast extensions of rainforests spend up to 100 times more on subsidies that cause deforestation than on aid to prevent it, and the global picture may be even worse in other latitudes.

The next decade will show that we can no longer treat the destruction of nature as "business as usual." We are quickly approaching environmental and climatic tipping points that could trigger catastrophic feedback loops, making climate change impossible to reverse. A major report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy

The next decade will show that we can no longer treat the destruction of nature as business as usual. We are quickly approaching environmental and climatic tipping points that could trigger catastrophic feedback loops, making climate change impossible to reverse.

Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services earlier this year shows that our current activities could lead to the extinction of up to one million species in the next few decades.

Given that such losses to biodiversity will jeopardize the future of humankind itself, the time for effective public and private leadership is now, or never. In developing a framework to align international policies and



industrial practices, we should focus on ten key priorities that belong in any new CBD framework.

First, we must end the global trade in wildlife and endangered species, by making it illegal in both supplier and destination countries. As matters stand, the international community is doing nothing about this issue. Second, we need a global agreement on how to regulate high-seas industrial fishing, given that industry subsidies are currently contributing to unsustainable overfishing.

Third, we must put an immediate stop to industrial-scale logging and burning of primary forests, be they tropical, boreal, or temperate. Allowing such activities makes no sense. Industrial logging benefits neither governments nor indigenous communities, which should be permitted to farm and log their own lands sustainably.

A fourth, related priority is to ban deforestation across the board. In many countries, deforestation can be conducted legally simply by submitting a request for a change in land use on a given plot. Reaching a world of zero-deforestation commodities will require the support of private companies and consumers who are willing to make a change.

Fifth, we need all governments to adopt a carbon tax, without which we will be effectively promoting a market failure. Currently, we not only subsidize fossil fuels; we also fail to provide ample compensation

for the carbon sequestration provided by tropical forests, agroforestry systems, mangroves, and wetlands. While carbon prices in voluntary markets averaged \$3 per ton of CO2 equivalent in 2016, the global price should be in the order of \$40 per ton if we are to meet the reduction targets under the 2015 Paris climate accord.

Implementing a carbon tax might be politically complicated, but it makes perfect economic sense. Costa Rica introduced a carbon tax in 1997 that now generates \$32 million per year. Those funds are then used to provide environmental services to indigenous communities, farmers, and others who plant trees with the intention of increasing biomass in the productive landscape.

Sixth, we should adopt a new financial target for the international community's biodiversity efforts. We are currently investing a mere 0.08 percent of global GDP in natural conservation. If we can commit to mobilizing 1 percent of global GDP under the new framework, we will have the resources to meet all the other targets we set. Although conservation programs are a domestic matter for national governments, the target should be framed as a multilateral benchmark, given that biodiversity loss is a shared problem.

Seventh, we must stop, and reverse if possible, PADDD (protected area downgrading, downsizing, degazettement)

events. In the United States and elsewhere, the movement to deregulate protected lands, or to strip them of their protected status entirely, is well-funded and powerful. Obviously, such efforts pose a direct threat to all conservation efforts.

Eighth, we should aim to phase out single-use plastics before the end of the next decade, as the accumulation of non-biodegradable plastics is impeding many other conservation efforts. Ninth, in a similar vein, we need to start thinking about how we can tax pollution of all kinds. In too many cases, polluting is simply free. In the absence of any costs, the problem will only worsen.

Finally, governments urgently need to adopt green national accounting systems. Effective policymaking requires the best available data. Insofar as the current economic system fails to account for biodiversity loss, water pollution, and greenhouse-gas emissions, it is part of the problem, not the solution.

In pursuing a new global framework for biodiversity, we should heed the lesson of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations. The Paris agreement was made possible when countries realized it was in their own interest to commit to reducing their emissions. That understanding still has not taken hold among the CBD parties. We have between now and the gathering in Kunming to ensure that it does.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Mind the Learning Gap



M. NIAZ ASADULLAH

Professor of Development Economics at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur and Head of the Southeast Asia cluster of the Global Labor Organization.

Despite frequent calls for action to provide universal primary education and eliminate gender disparities, few developing countries have made much progress toward these goals. For example, although South Asia made substantial progress toward achieving gender parity during the era of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), the region still has the second-highest number of out-of-school children in the world, and lags behind international standards on several key indicators.

Girls account for the majority of the region's ten million children who are not receiving formal education, owing to a lack of schools, poverty, the threat of violence, and social customs. Progress has been especially slow in countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan, where patriarchal values and traditional cultural norms militate against girls' education.

In Afghanistan, women's status declined sharply under Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001. Public education for girls was banned, and many government-run girls' schools were converted into male-only institutions. Gross female enrollment fell from 32 percent to just 6.4 percent by 2001, by which time as many as 1.5 million children had been barred from school. The literacy rate for Afghan women fell to as low as 3 percent in rural districts. With little opportunity to acquire skills, thousands of young girls were forced into early marriage.

Given these historical conditions, Afghanistan has long represented an important test case for global efforts to provide universal education. After the Taliban regime was toppled, the Afghan constitution was amended, in 2003, to guarantee women and girls the right to an education. And women have been allowed since 2005 to participate in politics. But the influence of patriarchy remains strong. Socialization and mobility outside



percent to 52 percent. By 2015, the female-to-male ratio in primary- and secondary-school enrollment had risen to 69 percent and 56 percent, respectively.

Even so, participation and retention rates remain low by international standards. The share of girls enrolled in school fell from 39 percent in first grade to 35 percent by ninth grade (the end of the lower secondary cycle), with a sharp decline coming at the end of the primary cycle (sixth grade). In explaining these rates, the Afghan government points to a continued shortage of all-girls' schools, qualified female teachers, and resources for existing schools.

Yet we also found that the poor quality of education may also be a reason for low enrollment and retention. Even Afghan girls who are in school are not learning much. Among girls enrolled in grades four through nine, advancing from primary to secondary grades yields almost no gains in basic numeracy; and similar results follow from an analysis of student performance in oral reading fluency and comprehension. These findings are in line with those from an earlier nationwide study, which concluded that only 43 percent of a sample of third-grade children could read with comprehension.

These findings could have implications for the broader education challenge in Afghanistan. There are currently around 3.7 million children, mostly girls, who are not in school. But reforms to enroll them may not succeed if the poor quality of education is one of the main reasons why parents are keeping their daughters at home (if not marrying them off).

To be sure, the learning crisis is not confined to Afghan public schools. Similar gaps can be found in Bangladesh and India. But these countries, at least, have made much more progress in enrolling girls. In post-Taliban Afghanistan, girls' education is still not a society-wide priority, not least because conservative religious groups remain staunchly opposed to it in principle.

Generally speaking, aid agencies and their development partners have been right to focus on helping the governments of fragile states like Afghanistan build more schools and invest in girls' education. As Gordon Brown, a United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, writes, "putting girls in school is the most effective way to keep them free from exploitation, forced labor, trafficking, and child marriage."

But efforts to achieve universal education will fail if schooling does not translate into basic numeracy and literacy skills. To account for the learning crisis in many developing countries, governments and development

agencies should look for more opportunities to form strategic partnerships with non-state providers. In Bangladesh, for example, schools run by BRAC employ female teachers (which is key to increasing girls' enrollment), and outperform government-run schools in terms of learning outcomes.

Fortunately, the Afghan government has begun to open its doors to innovative NGO models like BRAC's community-based

education program. But a shortage of qualified female teachers makes scaling up such efforts difficult to impossible. Women account for just one-third of all teachers in Afghan primary and secondary schools, partly owing to extremely low female literacy. And, as we have seen, the poor quality of education in existing schools threatens to derail the next generation of would-be female teachers.

“Similar gaps can be found in Bangladesh and India. But these countries, at least, have made much more progress in enrolling girls. In post-Taliban Afghanistan, girls' education is still not a society-wide priority, as conservative religious groups remain staunchly opposed to it.”

the household remain limited for girls, particularly after puberty. Worse, after almost two decades of US intervention, the Taliban insurgency is stronger than ever. Attacks on girls' schools are once again on the rise. And with the United States calling off recent peace talks, Afghanistan's political future looks precarious.

To understand what is at stake, we should consider the important achievements that have been made since 2001. In a recent study that I co-authored with Md. Abdul Alim and M. Anwar Hossain of BRAC International, we found that there has been a sharp increase in Afghanistan's gross primary- and secondary-education enrollment ratio since the Taliban fell. Between 2001 and 2013, the total number of schools operating in the country increased from around 3,500 to 14,600, and the average primary-school completion rate for girls increased from 47

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Disrupting climate change through innovation

**AMBROISE FAYOLLE**

Vice President of the European Investment Bank.

Because it poses an existential threat to humanity, climate change represents the bad kind of disruption. But it can, and must, be fought with the good kind of disruption: innovation. Since the Industrial Revolution, disruptive innovation has generated growth, created jobs, and opened new avenues for investment. And in the case of climate change, it could save humanity, by accelerating global efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions. In fact, innovation will be absolutely necessary for a successful transition to a green economy that leaves no one behind. Without it, we have less chance of achieving genuine sustainability.

The alternative, of course, is unthinkable. To understand the extent of the threat posed by climate change in the event that we do nothing, consider where we are today. Average global temperatures have already risen by almost 1°C above pre-industrial levels, owing to the accumulation of GHGs in the atmosphere; and two-thirds of that increase has occurred since 1975. If the trend continues, global average temperatures could rise by 4°C by the end of this century.

“To bring innovative solutions, such as floating wind-farms and bioluminescent lighting to scale, we need to put more financing into the right hands.

We also need to encourage industries to be more creative, and to pursue more breakthrough technologies.”

If that doesn't sound like much, remember that our climate is fragile. Small changes in surface temperatures will cause big problems. When average temperatures were 4°C below pre-industrial levels, much of Europe was buried beneath several kilometers of ice. Just imagine what a world that is 3°C warmer than today might look like. Nonetheless, I am confident that effective, disruptive ideas are out there. Floating wind-farms, for example, can



unlock clean wind power for the dozens of countries whose coastal waters are too deep for traditional offshore facilities. And advances in technologies based on waste-eating bioluminescent bacteria promise to illuminate our streets and factories. To bring these solutions to scale, we need to put more financing into the right hands. We also need to encourage industries to be more creative, and to pursue more breakthrough technologies.

For example, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Commission, and Breakthrough Energy Ventures established a €100 million (\$110 million) fund in 2019 to support disruptive investments in clean energy.

Innovative disruption needs to happen fast. According to the International Energy Agency, only seven of the 45 energy technologies and sectors assessed in its most recent Tracking Clean Energy Progress report are on target to meet its Sustainable Development Scenario, which is aligned with the global commitments enshrined in the 2015 Paris climate agreement. Hence, for policymakers, technologists, executives, and entrepreneurs, the question is: Where do we go from here?

Citizens across the European Union and around the world are demanding action to tackle climate change. This growing awareness of climate risks is filtering into the public debate. Moreover, under its new president, Ursula von der Leyen, the

European Commission has proposed a European Green Deal to enshrine 2050 carbon-neutrality targets in law, with the goal of positioning Europe as a leader in the circular economy and clean technologies of the future. Europe could reap significant economic benefits as a first mover on climate action.

But European industries must first show that they want to be part of the effort. They need to innovate, create new solutions, bring new products to market, and get to work on breakthrough technologies. Investments are urgently needed to drive down the cost of new technologies, increase efficiencies, support first movers, and create new markets.

Of course, even if the private sector is committed fully to climate action, business leaders cannot ignore the bottom line. Putting money into new technologies and business models is risky, and the outcomes are never guaranteed.

This is where public investment banks have a key role to play. As Europe's climate bank and a global leader in green finance, the EIB intends to expand its support for Europe's transition to a sustainable, zero-carbon economy. When it comes to innovation, institutions like the EIB can adopt a long-term view that is not always feasible for private-sector actors. By reducing risks and enabling multiple technological pathways, we can create new, greener opportunities for all sectors.

Identifying promising green projects and directing capital toward them is a major challenge. Yet, acting as incubators, development banks like the EIB can mobilize the private sector behind such investments. By offering innovative financial instruments, experience, and expertise to investment partners around the world, public institutions can empower inventors, entrepreneurs, and large companies to take on the climate challenge.

At the same time, we must not forget those who stand to be harmed the most by climate change, or those who could be left behind in the shift to a low-carbon economy.

To ensure a just transition, we must increase support for vulnerable regions and communities. Support for innovation must also include backing for education and training, so that the next generation will have the skills needed to contribute to a low-carbon economy. We should be cultivating the talents and intelligence of our youth, because it is they who will be developing the technologies and creating the jobs needed for the future.

The EIB will be working closely with European firms and other partners around the world to spur disruptive innovations. The green economy offers many pathways for investors and companies, and the world's international financial institutions should be paving the way toward even more opportunities.

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Workouts can combat depressive episodes

Depression takes a physical and mental toll on the body and is reportedly the leading cause of disability worldwide. More than 300 million people around the world are said to be living with this disease.

Now researchers at the Massachusetts General Hospital in the United States say that simply staying active will help offset some of the symptoms of depression. Previous studies have linked lifestyle changes, such as more exercise, to a decrease in cases of depression. But the new study is the first to suggest that an increase in physical activity can help significantly lower the risk of depression among individuals at low and medium risk, or those having a predisposition to depression.

Researchers behind the new study found that incorporating more physical activity — whether high-intensity dance, aerobic, or machine workouts, or more low-intensity yoga or walks — for 4 hours per week (or approximately 35 minutes per day) can help decrease the chances of depressive episodes by 17 percent.

To reveal the impact of physical activity on depression, researchers pulled the genomic and electronic health records

of 8,000 patients enrolled in a healthcare program that collects patient data from partner hospitals for research. Participants provided blood samples and completed a brief survey, which included questions about their physical activity level.

Throughout the next 2 years, researchers also referenced millions of other health records to calculate genetic risk of depression and the impact of physical activity on the disease. Those with a higher risk of depressive episodes were more likely to be diagnosed within the two year period, yet, the individuals who were more physically active were less likely to show signs of depression.

The new study is the first to link exercise to an actual decrease in episodes of depression, even in individuals with a genetic predisposition to the condition. Even if someone has a family history of depression, researchers believe this study can give mental health and primary care providers a manageable recommendation other than medication to help lower the risk of the disease. Even if you go out for a walk for half an hour a day, you could see some benefits.

Some of the common symptoms of

depression include poor appetite, poor sleep patterns, having negative ruminating thoughts, and poor energy levels. Exercise can help improve general physical well-being, sleep, appetite, and energy levels, thus helping recover from depression. Good physical health is connected with improving mental well-being and encouraging social interactions that help prevent social isolation, which is known to make depression worse.

Any form of low to high intensity activity works, such as swimming, walking, running, aerobic exercise, dancing, cycling, gardening, yoga, Pilates — even household chores that involve physical movement, such as climbing up and down stairs can help. If you drive everywhere, try walking instead to pick up your local newspaper or your carton of milk from your local shop. All are small, easy steps that go a long way in maintaining a healthy mind and body.

Exercise stimulates the brain to release neurochemicals like endorphins, also dubbed as the 'happy hormone', or the body's natural painkiller and helps with stress relief and pain. It also helps prompt the release of serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine,



which are also linked to feelings of well-being and happiness. Exercise also has other health benefits, such as weight reduction, regulating blood sugar, and it reduces the risk of heart disease.

And it is never too late to start getting more physical — whether in your 20s, 30s, 40s, or older. As long as you enjoy what you are doing, it may become part of your lifestyle and, ultimately, help you stay happier, longer. Overall remember, take it easy, take it slow, and do not be too hard on yourself; what is important is that you enjoy the physical activity.

Study reveals why yawning is contagious



Researchers at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom suggest that the propensity to automatically yawn when we watch someone else yawning, could be triggered by primitive reflexes in the primary motor cortex — the area of the brain associated with motor function.

The study of contagious yawning was another stage in the ongoing research into the underlying biology of neuropsychiatric disorders, and the search for new methods of treatment, by the researchers.

The latest findings from their research show that our ability to resist yawning when someone else near us yawns is limited, and that the urge to yawn is increased if we are instructed to resist yawning.

Importantly, they also discovered that the urge to yawn — our propensity for contagious yawning — is individual to each one of us.

The findings from the study may be particularly important in understanding further the association between motor excitability and the occurrence of echophenomena. Contagious yawning is a common form of echophenomena, which also includes the automatic imitation of another's words (echolalia) or actions (echopraxia). Echophenomena can also be seen in a wide range of clinical conditions linked to increased cortical excitability and/or decreased physiological inhibition, such as in epilepsy, dementia, autism and Tourette syndrome.

The neural basis for echophenomena is so far unknown. To test the link between motor excitability and the neural basis for contagious yawning the researchers used transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). The use of TMS allowed the researchers to quantify motor cortical excitability and physiological inhibition for each participant and predict the

propensity for contagious yawning across all the volunteers.

For the study, 36 adults were shown video clips of someone yawning and then instructed to either resist yawning or to allow themselves to yawn. Using electrical stimulation the team was also able to increase excitability and consequently the urge to yawn among participants. The results from the study showed that the 'urge' to yawn is increased by trying to stop yourself. Using electrical stimulation to raise excitability level also increased the propensity for contagious yawning.

The TMS measures proved to be significant predictors of contagious yawning and demonstrated that each individual's propensity for contagious yawning was determined by the cortical excitability and physiological inhibition of their primary motor cortex.

Researchers say that if they could understand how alterations in cortical excitability give rise to neural disorders, then they could potentially reverse them and thereby modulate imbalances in brain networks.

Whether weather affects pain



A new study suggests that a direct link exists between chronic pain and humid, windy days with low atmospheric pressure. So the next time someone tells you that they can feel bad weather in their bones, they may well be right.

Weather has been thought to affect symptoms in patients with arthritis since the time of Hippocrates, the ancient Greek physician. Today, nearly three-quarters of people living with arthritis believe their pain is affected by the weather.

Now researchers at the University of Manchester, in the United Kingdom, have confirmed this popular wisdom, following a six month study of more than 13,000 people from all 124 of the UK postcode areas. The participants were mainly people with arthritis, though some had other chronic pain-related conditions, such as fibromyalgia, migraine, or neuropathy.

The researchers collected the data

with a smartphone app that they had developed specifically for the study. Each participant used the app to report their pain levels daily, while the app recorded the weather in their area using the phone's GPS.

The analysis showed that on damp and windy days with low pressure, the chances of experiencing more pain was 20 percent, compared to an average day. In other words, if your chances of a painful day on an average weather day were 5 in 100, they would increase to 6 in 100 on a damp and windy day.

The data suggested no connection between actual rainfall and pain. Likewise, the researchers found no relationship between pain and temperature alone. However, it did appear that temperature can make pain caused by muggy, turbulent weather worse: The most painful days for participants proved to be humid, windy days that were also cold.

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Creative ways to wear Cubism fashion



Known as the most influential abstract art movement of the 20th century, cubism is now being translated into fashion introducing abstract patterns, geometric prints, dimensional silhouettes, stiff fabrics, sharp cuts, and edgy shapes influenced by the characteristics of Cubist paintings. If you are a fan of cubism art, here are some creative ways to wear it.

Cubism-inspired accessories:

If you're unsure on how to wear the cubism fashion, start small by selecting accessories featuring sharp edges, asymmetrical cuts, strips and shreds style, and unconventional ones. Instead of going for a rounded toe ballet flats or classic pumps in your footwear, you may slip into ankle strap footwear embellished with unique cuts and designs. Take a moodier turn, a chic, aloof look, with rectangular shaped-frame sunglasses over rounded ones as Cubism is known for its sharp edges, while Geometric ones may consist of irregular and even curvy shapes.

Clothing choices with cut-out, asymmetrical, and bias-cut features:

Since Cubism art represents its subject in multiple perspectives in different angles; ensembles with two dimensional or even three-dimensional silhouettes

are visually appealing with ruffles, folds, cut-outs and panel cuts that are all achingly modern. Fabrics can play an amazing role in your overall modish look; softer and silkier fabrics are the best to emphasize style. Spruce up your basic attire by pairing them with blouses and skirts in bias cuts and edgy shapes, your perfect matches are those with a body skimming effect.

Patterns with repeated designs and sharp geometric shapes:

Geometric prints are attractive and their psychedelic boldness is perfect for women who like to stand out. When it comes to

choosing a geometric-print design, the possibilities are endless. Sharp geometric patterns like checks, triangles, diamonds, stripes and such offer a variety of styling choices. However, keep in mind that the clothing items effect on your figure, whether they slim it down or widen it out. If you're carrying weight on your hips, go for a geometric-printed top to balance your figure, it will draw the attention away from your hips.

Color blocked styles of clothing:

Show off a color-blocked style with different solid-colored pieces to create a color blocked outfit or alternatively, pick out ensembles with color blocked panels that is easier to pull off a complete outfit. Go for bright and cheery colors, and creatively contrast the textures of your fabrics to make your outfit more interesting and striking. Lace, chiffon, faux leather, patent leather, neoprene, cashmere, and even fur can switch up your usual style and help you achieve a look that is very modern, really clean and fresh-feeling.

Make your SKINCARE more effective

If you're going to spend time and money taking care of your skin, it makes sense that you'd want to use the most effective products around. But with so many new products constantly flooding the market, it's hard to sort through what's good, what's overrated, and what's great. There are a few super simple, tried-and-true ways to maximize your skincare on a daily basis. Below, the seven best ways to make sure you're getting everything you can out of the products you already own.

Read the instructions: If a product makes claims about its efficacy, those claims are based on proper application—instructions will tell you how long to leave it on and how often to use it for best results. It'll also help you avoid a reaction from misuse, and maybe introduce you to a new way to use your product. Or maybe you could be using your favorite cleansing balm as a mask for a deeper clean. Not all products are created equally, so even skincare experts with loads of product experience can benefit from checking out the instructions before proceeding.

Follow the skincare order of operations:

Skincare is all about penetration—when your products can't penetrate each other, they also can't make it very far into your skin. There are more in-depth explanations on the right order to layer skincare, but here's a refresher. After cleansing, you should always apply the most liquidy, water-based product first. Acid toners or products meant to balance pH, like P50, should go on bare skin. Moving forward from there, apply an essence if you have one, then serums and spot treatments, eye cream, and then moisturizer. If you'd like, you can top that with an oil. If oil is your hero product, apply it to damp skin to seal in that moisture before it evaporates, and don't follow with anything else (besides sunscreen, of course). Oil that is applied before water-soluble products—like essences, serums, and moisturizers—acts as a barrier, thereby weakening the effectiveness of those water-soluble products. For daytime, SPF should



always be the last step in your routine. It's also quite important to apply SPF to skin that's dry to the touch. Just like how mixing SPF into makeup dilutes it, applying it on top of a moisturizer that's still wet leaves you with weaker SPF protection.

Skip the cotton and apply liquid skincare directly to skin: If your skin is clean, there's no real reason to apply toner or essence with a cotton pad—swiping on a toner may remove the last bits of leftover dirt or makeup, but so will a thorough makeup removal and cleanse. Not only are cotton pads wasteful in terms of environmental impact, but they also suck up product and you'll end up going through expensive toners or essences at a faster rate. To skip this step, shake a few drops of toner or essence into your fingers or directly onto skin. Then, use the same press and pat method you'd use with cotton to distribute it across your face, neck, and décolleté.

Pair ingredients that help each other work:

Go into your bathroom and line up every skincare product you own—even the ones you only use sometimes. Certain ingredients work in symbiosis, adding what the other needs for quicker, more visible results. Split your routine into day and night depending on which products work best together. One example: if you're using vitamin C, you should use it in the morning, under SPF. Antioxidants in vitamin C actually help your sunscreen work better, and the SPF protects your skin from developing the hyperpigmentation that you'd use vitamin C to lighten. And chase your strongest acid with your richest moisturizer at night to keep your skin's protective barrier intact.

Focusing on the concept of urban expedition, the new KENZO x PALLADIUM shoe collection brings two iconic French brands in tandem to embark on a journey of modern exploration and discovery. The collaboration teams up the fashion house, KENZO, with the longstanding shoemaker, PALLADIUM, on the relaunch of a vintage unisex shoe: the PALLADIUM Pallashock by KENZO. As a re-edition, the shoe honors the original collaborations of the two heritage brands under KENZO's founder Kenzo Takada in the late 80s and early 90s.

Fusing their hefty 50 and 70-year respective histories to create the perfect seasonless item—a celebration of color, heritage and vitality—the PALLADIUM Pallashock by KENZO is a true archive shoe. Originally created by PALLADIUM in the early 50s as an outdoor boot, KENZO's playful

yet re ned vision reimagines them as a hybrid style for intrepid urban expedition. The PALLADIUM Pallashock by KENZO channels the headstrong spirit of today's global explorers. The collaboration feeds into the idea of the bold and the audacious; connected



Alyasra Fashion's Kenzo launches new Dynamic Collaboration 2019

adventurers and new urban leaders. An opportunity to create the unexpected, harnessing an unleashed spirit who dares to explore.

The PALLADIUM Pallashock by KENZO comes in two styles and multiple colorways with vintage logos, each instilled with the French houses' air for intrepid fun. The result



sees technical cuff boots and shoes in colorful yet practical nylon or quilted nylon with iconic vintage branding on the side, constructed on a low-tech retro hiking rubber shockwave outsole.

The collection will be available globally in KENZO stores, Palladium stores, selected partners, and at kenzo.com and palladiumboots.fr from 6 November, 2019.

Google Stadia, cloud-based gaming, goes live



Google Stadia, the new service from the search giant, which beams high-end console and PC games to any Chrome web browser, Chromecast Ultra TV dongle or Pixel 3 or higher smartphones from powerful Google servers — is to launch this week. Google has announced that Stadia will be available in 14 different territories, including in the US, UK and Canada on 19 November. A minimum of 31 games from 21 different publishers will be available at launch, for an initial price of \$130 that includes a hardware starter kit and three months of premium service, with \$10 a month afterwards. A separate free tier is reportedly coming in 2020.

Reports say that preorders for the 'Founder's Edition' have since sold out. If you are in one of the 14 territories and looking to play Stadia before the end of the year, your best bet now is the Premiere Edition.

Both Founder's Edition packs and Premiere Edition ones are likely to ship before the end of November, but Google is sending out Stadia kits based on when you placed your order, so not all at once.

While there have been predictions that Stadia will be the 'Netflix of games', it turns out the analogy only goes so far. While Google intends to eventually have a back catalog of free games included for your \$10 monthly fee,

Stadia is not primarily a subscription service. The subscription only includes a single game as of today — Destiny 2. Mainly, Google is expecting you to buy, not rent, cloud games for the same retail prices you would find on other platforms like PlayStation Network, Xbox Live, and Steam. On a related note, Google has also released the latest version of its Chrome Operating System, Version 78, which adds picture-in-picture (PiP) support to its YouTube Android app, as well as improves the operating system's support for printers, and tweaks the settings menus.

YouTube's picture-in-picture mode activates whenever the app is minimized or otherwise covered while a video is still playing. Chrome OS 78 also simplifies the process of printing from the operating system. The software now automatically lists compatible printers, without requiring you to manually set them up first. It should also now be easier to save specific printers to your profile for easy access. Google has also tweaked the operating system's settings menus by separating the respective menus for your device and browser. Settings for the device can now be found in the quick settings sheet, while that for the browser is accessed directly from the top right of the browser.

Chrome OS 78 also introduces virtual desktop support for the operating system with a feature called Virtual Desks. This virtual desktop feature has been kicking around in Chrome OS releases since at least August, and it lets you move apps into separate virtual workspaces.

In addition, the new operating system has a new 'click-to-call' feature, where it can automatically send phone numbers to your Android phone so you can call them without having to retype a number.

Disney launches streaming service, Disney+

Disney has launched its long-awaited Disney+ streaming service this week in the United States and Canada, after its successful test in the Netherlands earlier. The launch streaming lineup of original content includes the first episode of the very first live-action Star Wars series, 'The Mandalorian', along with an extensive library of Disney, Pixar and Marvel movies and shows, as well as the first 30 seasons of 'The Simpsons'.

The service is available on the web, iOS, Android, Roku, various smart TVs and game consoles and Amazon Fire TV, all for a monthly price of \$6.99. The company is also offering Disney+, ESPN+ and Hulu together in a package that it calls the Disney Bundle, at a monthly price of \$12.99, which incidentally is the same as a basic Netflix subscription. In addition, Disney, which owns the Hotstar streaming service in India, is planning to bring it to other developing countries in Asia.

Speaking about the launch of Disney+, the company's Direct to Consumer and International Chairman Kevin Mayer called Disney+ "the crown jewel of our streaming collection." He explained that the service will be "the ultimate and exclusive



home" for all the content from the company's Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars and National Geographic brands.

He pointed out that this has required a big shift in Disney's strategy, since it has had to pass up revenue from licensing content to streamers like Netflix. The company also expects to spend \$1 billion on original content during the service's first year, with that number increasing to \$2.5 billion by its 2024 fiscal year.

It also could take a little while before the full libraries of the various Disney brands make it onto the Disney+, because they need to be freed up from the company's deals with Netflix and others. But at launch, it will offer a number of classic Disney films, as well as the first seven Star Wars movies (available in 4K Dolby Vision for the first time) and many Marvel movies, including 'Endgame'.

Electric vehicles beat manual transmission in sales



People living in the US and many other countries that have widely adopted automatic transmission in their vehicles would most probably consider manual transmission cars and electric vehicles (EVs) as niche products used by a limited few. Interestingly, competition in this niche market seems to be going the EV vehicle way with manuals being relegated to third spot.

In a possible sign of changing times, electric vehicle sales have for the first time exceeded sales of manual transmission cars, accounting for 1.9 percent and 1.1 percent respectively of vehicles sold in the US last quarter.

Uptake of vehicles with manual transmissions has been declining for decades, as more drivers opted for automatic cars, and fewer models are made every year that require drivers to manually shift gears.

Manual transmission, which was the only option when cars began rolling on the road

more frequently in the 1890s, has apparently fallen from its once dominant position and continues to fall in favor of automatic transmission, electric vehicles and probably automated vehicles in future.

Though EVs have been around for quite a while now, and are seen by many as an integral part of the transition away from fossil fuels, the fact that they accounted for less than 2 percent of total vehicles sold will come as a disappointment to some die-hard fossil-fuel opponents. Yet EV adoption is slowly on the rise with more manufacturers announcing new electric models all the time, and the EV-only producing company Tesla having had two record-setting quarters in a row.

The factors limiting EV uptake, including concerns around range, lack of charging stations, or price, are diminishing bit by bit, so that 1.9 percent market penetration is likely to continue rising in the years ahead.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Sporting Tribes



IAN BURUMA

The author, most recently, of *A Tokyo Romance: A Memoir*.

Siya Kolisi, who raised the Webb Ellis Cup for his country in Yokohama, Japan, early this month, is the first black man to captain the South African national rugby union team, the Springboks, in a game that used to be associated entirely with white South Africans. He was born in a poor township in the Eastern Cape. Jean de Villiers, a former Springbok captain, said the Springboks' victory was "for the whole country." But it was something in which even non-South Africans could rejoice.

In a way, however, Michael Leitch, the captain of the Japanese team, the Brave Blossoms, is an even more remarkable phenomenon. For several weeks, Leitch, born to a New Zealand father and Fijian mother, became the poster boy of a team representing one of the world's most insular and ethnically homogeneous societies. Of course, native Japanese stock is hardly pure or monolithic. But, to most Japanese, ethnicity cannot be separated from nationality. Japaneseness runs in the blood. Leitch, who arrived in Japan for the first time



the rules for rugby are especially generous. Countries like their teams to win, and they will take excellence where they can find it. This concept long predates international sports competitions. After all, most of the soldiers who defeated Napoleon for the Duke of Wellington were born outside the British Isles. Many did not even speak English.

It is interesting, nonetheless, how quickly tribal feelings can adapt to new circumstances. Not long ago, British soccer clubs, like clubs in many European cities, commanded fierce loyalty along geographic, ethnic, and even religious grounds. Almost all players were local boys. Some teams in London were associated with Irish fans, and others with Jews. In Glasgow, Rangers and Celtic were bitter rivals because one was supposedly Protestant and the other Catholic. And yet, by the end of the last century, a top British team was lucky to have more than a couple of British players, or indeed a British coach. But fans' loyalty was undiminished, and supporters of different clubs still beat each other up with gusto. The foreign players may be mercenaries, but they are "our mercenaries."

A closer look at tribal loyalties soon reveals a more complicated picture, however, and not just in sports. A Hungarian Jew once told me that Jews are not regarded by anti-Semites as real Hungarians until

a Jewish writer wins the Nobel Prize; then they are "one of us." A German soccer star of Turkish parentage once said that he was a national hero when a game was won, but when Germany lost, he would be the first to be blamed.

Japanese are happy to celebrate the successes of the tennis player Naomi Osaka (who has a Japanese mother and a Haitian father, and was educated in the United States) as national victories, but that does not mean that many people regard her as truly Japanese.

One of her sponsors, noodle company Nissin Foods, had to apologize for running an ad campaign featuring the dark-skinned player as a cartoon character with the palest of hues. Leitch has carried a Japanese passport since 2013 and speaks fluent Japanese. Whether most Japanese regard him as "one of us" when he is not on the rugby pitch is open to question.

And yet something is changing, even in hidebound Japan. In the 1950s, a Japanese professional wrestler named Rikidozan became a national idol because he regularly defeated much bigger and usually very blond Caucasian opponents. There was more than a little showmanship involved in these bouts, which usually began with the pale giant bullying the smaller Asian man and ended with a cathartic victory

when the plucky Japanese wrestled the foreigner to the ground. Humiliated by wartime defeat and US occupation, Japanese men, in particular, enjoyed a sense of vicarious revenge by watching Rikidozan on televisions displayed in shop windows throughout the country.

The fact that the Japanese hero was actually named Kim Sin-rak and was born in North Korea had to be kept a closely guarded secret. A few people remember how he built a small shrine in his apartment with a photograph of his mother surrounded by various Korean artifacts. But only his most intimate friends knew about this. In public, he was nothing but Japanese. (Unfortunately, when Rikidozan, who ran in dubious circles, was stabbed by a gangster in a Tokyo nightclub in 1963, he went on a bender instead of recovering in hospital and died a few days later.)

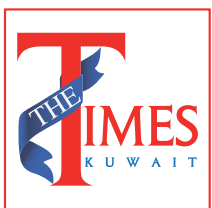
Leitch's family background obviously is no secret. His looks alone would have made it impossible to hide his foreign origin. But that is precisely the point. Rikidozan had to save (male) Japanese honor by pretending to be something he was not. There is nothing Japanese in Leitch's bloodlines. Quite a few Japanese might still regard him as an alien. And yet he was made captain of the national team. Call it opportunism. But it is also a sign of progress.

“It is interesting how quickly tribal feelings can adapt to new circumstances. Not long ago, British soccer clubs, like clubs in many European cities, commanded fierce loyalty along geographic, ethnic, and even religious grounds. Almost all players were local boys.”

as a 15-year-old schoolboy, seems to prove otherwise. He is now officially known in Japan as Leitch Michael – his names written in the Japanese order.

Leitch is not the only Japanese player from overseas. Other members of the team come from South Africa, Tonga, New Zealand, and South Korea. To be sure, there is an element of opportunism in the porousness of national sports teams, and

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