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## Premier-designate promises a 'new beginning'

**THE TIMES REPORT**

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah signed a decree on 24 January appointing His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as Prime Minister and assigned him with forming a new government. The prime minister designate was also asked to submit the line-up of cabinet nominees in order to approve their appointment.



Al-Sabah, following the resignation of his predecessor Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Hamad was re-appointed as prime minister on 8 December, 2020 by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and assigned to head the 37th parliament, which was formed following general elections on 5 December. However, in a little over a

month of assuming office, the prime minister tendered his resignation and that of his cabinet in the wake of disagreements with opposition lawmakers in parliament.

Following his third appointment as prime minister, Sheikh Sabah Khaled held a wide-ranging meeting with Editors-in-Chief of local media on 20 January. He began by expressing his appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for once-again reposing his trust and confidence in him. He pledged to continue shouldering the responsibility in service of the homeland.

Asked about the formation of his new cabinet, the premier said it would require more time, as he will be meeting with lawmakers, activists, experts and specialists to listen to their views. He added that he would discuss with them the package of programs and laws that the upcoming government will put forward, and expressed hope

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### Serology tests for COVID-19 gaining popularity



Serology tests are increasingly becoming popular among residents of Kuwait as the tests

help in detecting antibodies that are specific to COVID-19 infection.

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# Philippines refuses to accept 'blood money'

Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro Locsin Jr. has ordered the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait to ensure that the Kuwait court verdict of death sentence was carried out against the Kuwaiti woman who murdered her Filipino maid. The foreign secretary also instructed the embassy to squash any attempt to pay 'blood money' to the victim's relatives so that the perpetrator could walk free.

Filipino overseas worker, Jeanelyn Villavende, 26, died from multiple injuries inflicted by her employer's wife in December

2019. In December last year, a Kuwaiti court sentenced Villavende's female employer, a Kuwaiti citizen, to death by hanging, while the husband was given a four-year jail term for not reporting the crime.

In a tweet, Filipino foreign secretary, Teodoro Locsin Jr., announced that he had instructed Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammed Noordin Pendsosina Lomondot to ensure that the death penalty was carried out. "Accepting an amount equivalent to 7.5 million Filipino pesos as the price of this horrific crime is tantamount to selling the



blood of this victim," he tweeted.

The minister stated that he had actually ordered the Philippine ambassador to

Kuwait, Muhammad Nur al-Din Lomondot, to "abort any attempts to proceed with the implementation of an offer to pay a ransom money to Villavende's family, and work to ensure that the death penalty is carried out against those convicted of killing her."

"Villavende is dead," he said. Nobody moved to save her when it was worth it. And now the issue is no longer related to salvation, but to respect her in her death through achieving justice for her, regardless of what her family believes about the cost of her suffering.

## Vaccination campaign inoculates 35,000 people in a month



Though the vaccination campaign against COVID-19 infection began a month ago, so far only around 35,000 people have been vaccinated, which works out to a little over 1,000 vaccinations administered daily.

Around 300,000 people have registered online to take the vaccine. Although nearly 70 percent of healthcare workers have received the vaccination, the total jabs given a month into the campaign is dismally low.

Kuwait is reported to have the lowest rate of vaccinations compared to other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. With a total population of over 4.8 million, the number of vaccinations given after one month is a significantly low 0.73 percent of the total population. Even if the vaccinations are administered to 65 percent of the population

as recommended by health experts, it would still take more than eight years to achieve that percent at the current rate of vaccinations. The vaccination drive clearly needs to pick up pace. At the current rate of administering around 1,000 vaccines per day it would take well over 10 months for the vaccination to be given to all those who have pre-registered online. And, if the aim is to inoculate the entire population, then we are looking at a time frame of over a decade. That is indeed a long wait for receiving an emergency vaccination.

In what could be a relief to the authorities, the first quantities of AstraZeneca - Oxford vaccine, around 200,000 doses, are likely to arrive in Kuwait next week. The initial shipment will be followed with another 800,000 doses expected to arrive in February and early March.

Unlike the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine that needs to be stored in special chambers at minus 70 degrees Celsius, the AstraZeneca vaccine can be stored at temperatures ranging between two and eight degrees Celsius, which is the temperature of a regular refrigerator. In addition, the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine is effective, safe and side effects are rare, and is being administered successfully in the United Kingdom and in South Africa.

## MoH rejects conditions for supply of Moderna vaccines

Ministry of Health (MoH) is reported to be in contact with more than one vaccine manufacturing company, to ensure stable supplies of vaccines needed to inoculate everyone against the COVID-19 infection.

However, the ministry is said to have rejected some conditions for the supply of vaccines

set by Moderna, an American pharmaceutical and biotechnology company producing anti-COVID-19 vaccines. The company had refused to provide any commitment to supply the specific quantities of vaccines ordered by Kuwait, while also refusing to take back 30 percent of the doses, in case they are not required by Kuwait.

## School attendance unlikely in second semester

Contrary to earlier plans to reopen schools for regular classes in the second semester, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has confirmed that students will not be returning to regular classes in the second semester and that classes will continue to be held online.

Earlier, the Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education (MOE), Faisal Al-Maqsid had announced the possibility of students returning to their schools at the beginning of the second semester.

However, in view of the continued infections from the virus in Kuwait, and the emergence of highly contagious new strain of the virus in many countries, the ministry's decision will be welcomed by health authorities who have repeatedly announced that it is not possible to return to normal life without vaccinating at least 65 percent of the population.

## Domestic worker recruitment: despite objections prices to be lowered



While domestic worker recruitment office owners have been clamoring to increase the recruitment charge of KD990 fixed by the government, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) is understood to be examining the possibility of reducing the cost of bringing domestic workers through recruitment offices to KD890, in an effort to reduce financial burden on citizens.

Discussions on this matter are reported to have taken place recently between the Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Minister of State for Economic Affairs, Faisal Al-Medlej, the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) and Recruitment Office Owners.

Head of the Federation of Domestic Workers

Recruitment Agencies, Khaled Al-Dakhnan, stated that the labor recruitment prices cannot be reduced from KD990 due to the costs of travel tickets during coronavirus pandemic, in addition to the employer having to pay the costs of quarantine and PCR tests for domestic workers being brought in through the government approved BelSalamah.com portal.

The recruitment offices remained adamant that rather than reduce the price for bringing in domestic workers, the price should in fact be raised taking into consideration the increase in price of hiring workers abroad, and in their transportation, quarantine and medical checkups, prior to their employment with the sponsor.

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## Stranded MoE employees continue to avail salaries

A large number of employees of the Ministry of Education (MoE) who are currently not working, as they are stranded abroad due to pandemic-related bans and flight suspensions, have continued to draw their monthly salaries.

The discovery of this ineptitude at the ministry, despite a decision being in place since August 2020 to suspend all such salaries, has surprised many who suspect foul play and the connivance of ministry staff in this incident.

Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Affairs Osama Al-Sultan has now asked the educational districts involved to investigate the matter and provide him with a detailed report immediately. In a letter to the relevant authorities in each

of the educational districts, Al-Sultan demanded to know why, despite the assistant undersecretary for financial affairs at MoE sending the list of names and other information about workers who have not resumed work till date, why the concerned departments had sanctioned the payment of monthly salaries to these workers. Pointing to the decision to suspend the salaries of such workers, Al Sultan called for such payments to be immediately stopped, and to explain why the salary suspension decision was not implemented earlier.

However, sources at MoE noted that stopping the payment of salaries to stranded teachers did not amount to terminating their services, but rather was an administrative measure in response to the teacher's absence

from work, with or without a reasonable cause for the inattendance.

The sources also added that the current Civil Service Commission (CSC) laws prevent the termination of an employee unless they are absent from work for over 15 days without a reasonable explanation. The fact that the teachers are absent because they are stranded abroad due to the government's ban on direct flights from 35 countries, is an acceptable cause for their absence.

On the issue of not renewing the visas of teachers stranded abroad, who do not have the requisite specializations needed by MoE, the sources said that this was a different matter not related to termination or non-payment of salaries. The ministry has so far not taken any action against the stranded



teachers and does not have the appropriate mechanism to disburse their dues. The ministry will also have to coordinate with the CSC and alter the rules if it needs to terminate the services of stranded teachers or those without the required specialization.

## US Ambassador visits Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum

The United States remains committed to the safety and protection of Kuwait, and is as resolved as it was 30 years ago to ensuring the independence and freedom of Kuwait, said the US Ambassador to Kuwait H. E. Alina Romanowski.

The US ambassador was speaking during a visit to the Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum. Following a tour of the premises in the company of the Secretary-General for the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Kamel Al-Abduljelil, the ambassador lauded the bravery of the Kuwaiti resistance fighters against all odds.

She pointed out that the Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum is testimony of the Kuwaiti resistance fighters' courage during the 1990-1991 Iraqi occupation of the country. The visit to the museum was part of a package of activities organized by the US embassy to mark the 30th



anniversary of the Liberation of Kuwait.

The Al-Qurain Martyrs Museum commemorates the heroic events by a group of Kuwaiti resistance fighters who bravely battled a large

number of Iraqi occupation troops that surrounded their hideout in the district of Al-Qurain, 20 kilometers south of the capital, Kuwait City, in the days leading to the liberation of Kuwait.

For his part, Al-Abduljelil said: "This landmark testifies to the patriotism and will of the Kuwaiti people that rose up to the challenge and resisted injustice for the sake of liberating the homeland from the blatant Iraqi aggression. He paid tribute to the martyrs who had fallen for sake of keeping the homeland, lauding the brave stance of the United States that led the resistance.

Al Abduljelil and Romanowski toured sections of the museum. They were briefed by the museum's curator Salman Boland, who noted that a number of the resistance had fallen as martyrs as a result of the bloody battle that erupted on 14 February 1991. The council had transformed the bullet-poked building into a museum upon orders by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



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## Thought “ for the week

The creations of mankind,  
Are the fruit of man's mind

Alisher Navoi, Poet and thinker

## Six Sneaky Ways to Make Brownie Mix Taste Homemade



Most people have never made brownies from scratch for one simple reason: The boxed mixes are so easy and taste almost as good! However, if you want the convenience of a boxed mix but crave the richer flavor and fudgier texture of homemade brownies, these six easy hacks are just what you are looking for.

Use melted butter instead of oil: Most boxed mixes call for vegetable oil, which gives brownies a lighter texture and more neutral flavor. To make them taste homemade, try substituting equal amounts of melted butter for the oil. This is my number one tip because the butter will add a richness both in flavor and texture.

Use milk, flavored creamers, or brewed coffee instead of water: Sticking with the theme of richer flavored brownies, using milk instead of water is an absolute must as the fat from the milk adds flavor and fudgy texture that water just cannot achieve.

If you want to add even more flavor, use one of your favorite flavored coffee creamers instead of water or milk. Coffee also works as a great substitute for water because the sharp, bitter flavor of coffee will bring out the dark chocolate flavor of the brownies even more. Just make sure your coffee has cooled to room temperature before adding it to your batter.

**Add extracts or flavorings:** One of the most special things about made-from-scratch desserts is the ability

to add a secret ingredient that can become your signature. A teaspoon of almond extract can give your brownies a charming old-fashioned flavor while a classic vanilla extract works with pretty much any other element you might add.

**Add mix-ins like cookies and candies:** This is the part where you can let your creativity shine. Cookies, candies, and nuts make especially great add-ins. Oreos, mini peanut butter cups, candy sprinkles, mini Snickers bars, pecans, or walnuts... just imagine all the possibilities! Add these pieces to your mixed batter and incorporate gently.



And let's not forget swirls! Peanut butter, marshmallow fluff, Nutella, caramel sauce, or white or dark chocolate fudge all make great additions when swirled into the batter. To swirl you have to make your brownies as usual then pour them into your baking dish then add dollops of the sauce you want to swirl in. Then drag a knife gently through the circles creating a line.

**Underbake, just slightly:** To get rich homemade brownie goodness, one of the best things you can do is pull them out of the oven 4 to 5 minutes earlier than you usually would. Even if you follow none of the other tips, this one alone will give you exceptionally gooey, melt-in-your-mouth brownies results.

**Toppings:** Everything that is a mix-in can also be a topping, but there are a lot more topping options too. Sprinkles, chocolate or caramel sauces, a sprinkle of flaky salt, and mini M & M's candies are all great toppings to add once the brownies have cooled. Plus, there are great toppings to add right when the brownies come out of the oven. Marshmallows added while the brownies are hot will melt just enough to create a great brownies. A sprinkle of chocolate chips added while the brownies are warm can then be spread once they melt and act as a quick ganache.

## RECIPE

### Broccoli-Potato Soup



This is a thick and creamy soup with chunky pieces of broccoli and potatoes that is made with absolutely no cream, making it a great and healthy way to eat your veggies..

Preparation Time: 30min.  
Serving: 3

#### Ingredients

1tbsp olive oil or other vegetable oil  
1tsp.chopped ginger  
1 large potato  
1 L vegetable stock  
250 g broccoli  
1 tsp onion/garlic powder  
1 pinch black pepper  
1 tsp vinegar  
For garnishing:  
Fried potato sticks and broccoli florets,  
Chilli flakes/ sesame seeds

#### Directions

Heat up olive oil in a pan. Add chopped ginger and sauté well before introducing small cubed potatoes. Add half a litre of vegetable stock. Bring everything to boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Add broccoli and the other half liter of vegetable stock. Let it simmer for approximately 10 minutes. Transfer your soup to a blender. Add onion/garlic powder followed by salt and vinegar with a dash of black pepper powder. Blend until perfectly smooth. Garnish the blend with fried potatoes sticks and fried broccoli florets. Sprinkle a few chilli flakes and sesame seeds before serving with accompaniments such as bread, salads, corn breads, biscuits...etc.

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



Chef Chhaya Thakker

## Fish Sauce

If you are a fan of Thai, Vietnamese, or Indonesian cuisine, then you have probably sampled fish sauce. The salty, savory ingredient is used to add umami to dozens of popular dishes, such as pad thai, but can also be used to marinate meats, dress vegetables or punch up the flavor in soups or stews.

It can even serve as a base to salad dressings and homemade condiments. But for those who are not familiar with the ingredient, the name might seem off-putting.

When one realizes that fish sauce is comparable to more familiar condiments — soy sauce and Worcestershire, for example — the flavor packed liquid becomes a far more approachable addition to your pantry.

Among savory ingredients and condiments, fish sauce is probably one of the most aptly named. The dark liquid is made by packing fish



and shellfish varieties with a high oil content — like mackerel, shrimp, and perhaps most commonly, anchovies — into a container filled with salt. Over time, the salt ferments the fish until it produces a salty, savory liquid that is black or brown in color. Fish sauce is generally fermented for at least two years before it is packaged and distributed to consumers, but it

can be left to ferment for as long as desired. It can even be made at home, for those who are interested in getting into meat fermentation.

Much like other umami-filled condiments, fish sauce is most often used as a base in more complex dressing and dips. For example, you could add sugar, garlic, chili garlic paste, and lime juice to make this seasoned fish sauce. Or,

you could add ginger and a couple of other household ingredients to make this fantastic ginger fish sauce.

Some even claim it is the key to making incredible tomato soup or marinara sauce. Since fish sauce is so strong, a little tends to go a long way, so the possibilities are truly endless.

When picking out a fish sauce at your local grocery store or Asian market, be sure to look for a variety that is high in protein. Fish releases glutamate — an amino acid used to make protein — when it is fermented, so any fish sauce that has low protein content likely has not been left to ferment for long enough, or did not use enough fish in the initial process. Those sauces will mostly taste too fishy, or too salty, and therefore fail to deliver the balanced savory punch you are looking for.

Once you have become familiar with it, it becomes a powerful tool that you will find yourself reaching for whenever you are making soups, stews, or simply need to add a bit more depth to your packaged ramen.

# Bangladeshi MP, Kuwaiti associates sentenced to 4-year jail term

The infamous case of money laundering and human trafficking to Kuwait involving a Bangladeshi Member of Parliament along with high-ranking officials and individuals in Kuwait, resurfaced last week with the verdict passed by the Kuwait's Criminal Court on 29 January.

The court sentenced the Bangladeshi MP Mohammed Shahid Islam to four years in jail along with a fine of KD1.9 million. Co-conspirators in the case, former Assistant Undersecretary for Training Affairs at Kuwait's Ministry of Interior Major General Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah, and ex-parliamentarian Nawaf Al Muteiri, were also sentenced to four years in prison along with a fine of KD1.9 million each. Hassan Al Khedr, a director at the manpower agency was sentenced to four years in jail and a fine of KD180,000. Two others alleged to be involved in the case, Kuwaiti sitting MP Saadoun Hammad Al-Otaibi and former MP

Salah Khurshid were acquitted.

Investigations into the case against the former Bangladeshi lawmaker and his accomplices were launched last year and culminated in the arrests of the main suspects. The Bangladeshi MP, who was running several companies in Kuwait, including the Marafie Kuwaitia Group as managing director and CEO is reported to have amassed over KD5 million in assets in Kuwait through his money laundering and human trafficking operations.

Shahid Islam was charged with receiving money from tens of thousands of Bangladeshi workers, with each worker paying to the tune of over KD2,500 in

return for recruiting and bringing them from Bangladesh to Kuwait through a company he managed. The sentenced Kuwaitis were charged with receiving bribes from Shahid Islam in return for illegally facilitating the Bangladeshi lawmaker's transactions.

Although the company that brought in the workers initially was closed due to legal violations, and the workers who arrived in Kuwait discovered their visas were illegal, they were forcibly employed in another company owned by Shahid Islam. The case came to light after investigations of worker complaints revealed that the workers were forced to work against their will for long working

hours in inhumane working conditions without wages, or being provided with adequate housing, according to their stipulated contracts.

Further investigations of the case and a search of the offices and residence of the Bangladeshi lawmaker uncovered evidence that he collected money in fraudulent ways, intentionally hiding some of its sources which was acquired from his victims from human trafficking crimes. It also came to light that the MP gave bribes to Kuwaiti officials to facilitate his unlawful transactions.

Prosecutors heard testimonies from scores of Bangladeshi workers who had been brought into Kuwait by the accused, from Bangladesh, for money. The testimony of 11 workers who admitted being recruited in Bangladesh after paying large sums of money to the accused lawmaker is said to have clinched the case.

The Bangladeshi lawmaker



is said to have transferred large amounts to the tune of millions of dinars to European and Gulf banks and prepared to leave the country after he became aware that he was implicated in the investigations in residency visa trading, human trafficking and money laundering.

The convicted was a sitting Member of Bangladesh Parliament and so was his wife, and they owned several companies in Bangladesh involved in providing cleaners through government contracts in Kuwait.



## PWF, Green Hands join in tree plantation drive

Pakistan Women's Forum Kuwait (PWF) in collaboration with Green Hands Environmental Team Kuwait organized a Tree Plantation Drive at the Islamic Health Center.

Chief Patron of PWF and wife of Pakistani Ambassador to Kuwait, Ambreen Mustafa was the Chief Guest on the occasion. Director of Al-Sabah Specialized Medical District Dr. Ahmed Al-Shatti, and Director of Islamic Health Center, Dr. Manal Al Matar, welcomed Mrs. Mustafa who was accompanied by Third Secretary at the Pakistan Embassy Tehreem Ilyas on a tour of the Health Center and its facilities.

Mrs. Mustafa, who inaugurated the green initiative by planting a sapling in the premises of Islamic Health Center, said: "Kuwait is our second home and Pakistani Community is playing a vital role in the progress of Kuwait. I am glad to see Pakistani Women playing a pivotal role in community welfare and



providing social services despite the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to collaborating with our Kuwaiti friends to ensure clean and green Kuwait."

President Green Hands Environmental Team, Dr. Samia Al Saidan, and Vice President of PWF, Nighat Tariq, also applauded the efforts of the volunteers. They

urged the participants to keep the surroundings clean and use environmentally friendly products. They thanked Dr. Manal Al Matar for her assistance in the tree plantation drive and expressed their gratitude to Mrs. Mustafa, while expressing hope of future engagements in protecting mother-nature.

## Philippines delegation to visit Kuwait over domestic worker issues

A delegation from the Philippines headed by the labor attaché Nasser Mustafa is expected to travel to Kuwait in the coming weeks to discuss new recruitments and other issues related to domestic workers from the Philippines.

The delegation is expected to meet with concerned authorities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), and the labor recruitment offices, to discuss the reopening of the recruitment of Filipino domestic workers to Kuwait.

Kuwait is reported to have received a report from the Federation of Employment Offices in the Philippines, The Philippine Labor Union also held a meeting recently with Kuwait recruitment offices through video

conferencing, during which they stressed the need for tougher penalties on sponsors who do not abide by the signed contracts.

Among the topics to be discussed by the labor attaché during his visit to Kuwait will be the issue of granting full rights to domestic workers approaching the Department of Domestic Workers at PAM. Currently such workers have to await the result of investigations, which could take any length of time. The labor attaché is likely to recommend that such workers should be immediately transferred to government shelters and allowed to leave the country, as most of these cases are related to the sponsor's breach of contract and not due to the worker refusing to work.

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## Second phase of reopening of airport postponed

The second phase of reopening of Kuwait International Airport (KIA), which was scheduled to begin on 1 February has been postponed indefinitely, through a decision by the Council of Ministers.

The Cabinet decided to postpone the second phase of the commercial operation plan at KIA in light of the ongoing restrictions on flights and number of passengers per flight, which are slated to end only on 6

February. The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had imposed the temporary restrictions on recommendations by the Ministry of Health due to the discovery of a more contagious strain of the coronavirus in many countries.

The second phase of reopening was planned to raise commercial operations limit to 60 percent level and to 20,000 passengers per day, from the 30 percent permitted



during the first phase of reopening. However, airport sources say that even during the first phase of reopening, air traffic did not exceed 18 percent of the airport's capacity.

In light of the emergence of new strains of the coronavirus and commercial operation rates at KIA failing to reach the limits set even for the first phase, the decision to postpone the second phase is probably a move in the right direction.



## Slovak ambassador meets with MoSA officials

Ambassador of Slovak Republic to Kuwait A.H.E. Igor Hajdusek met with the Assistant Undersecretary for Social Care Sector Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, Musalam Al Subaei, and held discussions on various topics.

The ambassador who was accompanied by his spouse Lydia Hajdusekova, and the Regional Representative of UNHABITAT for the GCC regional office in Kuwait, Dr. Ameera Al-Hassan, informed the state official of the embassy's initiative through Mrs. Hajdusekova and her companions in charity-related endeavors.

During the meeting, Ambassador Hajdusek presented hand-sewed face masks for children

to be delivered as a charitable and humanitarian initiative to support Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice, as a means of comfort in the current pandemic.

The Slovak Embassy believes in the importance of charitable social work to further strengthen the bonds of cooperation with the State of Kuwait, the center of humanity which confirms the vital role that the Ministry of Social Affairs plays in serving the inmates of the various social centers in the State of Kuwait. The two parties concluded to continue to work jointly to strengthen aspects of cooperation between the Embassy and the Social Affairs Ministry

## Power of Attorney needed to claim dues of stranded workers

Workers stranded abroad due to flight restrictions and whose visas have expired can claim their monetary dues and ensure their labor rights from their employer through a special Power of Attorney.

Disclosing this, the spokesperson for the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), Director of the Public Relations and Media Department, Aseel Mazyad, said that an expatriate worker whose residency has expired while outside the country can file a labor lawsuit through a special attorney with proof of his rights and entitlements. This is especially important for expats who are unable to return in light of the airport closures around the world, and the enforcement of total and partial lockdown in the country for months.

She indicated that the non-renewal of a work permit is a "matter between the worker and the employer", and pointed out that "visa renewal is subject to the legal regulations mentioned in the law and is subject to the desire of both parties together, and one party cannot impose it on another party unilaterally."

On a related note, Ms. Mazyad provided the latest statistics on the workforce transactions through the new online Ashal platform launched by PAM on 12 January. She revealed that since its launch, the system has renewed the residences of 40,000 workers and 32,387 companies benefited from its services.

She noted that PAM has added nine new



services to the Ashal platform, including updating the license data service, requesting the transfer of a work permit to a new employer, approving transfer requests, adding a new license, updating the contact information of the authorized signatory, transferring a license between files, classifying a license as a small business, and requesting the cancellation of a license registered on the system.

Meanwhile the Ministry of Interior (Moi) announced the launch of an online sponsorship transfer service, from one sponsor to another for Article (18) private sector at the Moi website (www.moi.gov.kw). The new service is a continuation of the many online services launched by the ministry with the aim of facilitating services and simplifying procedures provided by the ministry's various sectors to citizens and expats.

## Canadian Ambassador pays courtesy visit to The Times Kuwait office



Canadian Ambassador Louis-Pierre Emond paid a delightful courtesy visit to The Times weekly news magazine where he met with Mr. Tareq Al-Shumaimry, Publisher & Editor-in-Chief and Mr. Reaven D'Souza, Managing Editor. Topics of interest were discussed during the meeting.



## PCR test price fixed at KD30

To prevent the arbitrary rates being charged by private health clinics that are approved to conduct PCR tests on citizens and expatriates, the Ministry of Health has fixed the price of KD30 per test.

The Director of the Health Licensing Department is said to have issued a circular to all the directors of private hospitals, directors of private humane centers, directors of private dental centers, community clinics and other treatment institutions, setting the uniform



price of KD30 per PCR test.

The new prices are applicable to all private medical sector laboratories that are approved by the Ministry of Health and meet the standards set by the ministry for conducting PCR tests.

# Limited seats on incoming flights strands expats in transit countries

The decision by the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to temporarily limit the number of incoming passengers to Kuwait has added to the difficulties faced by expatriates from banned countries looking to return to Kuwait.

The DGCA had on the recommendations of the health authorities decided to stop the arrival of more than 1,000 passengers

per day, and to restrict the number of seats on each incoming flight to 35 seats, with exemptions for domestic workers and transit passengers. The DGCA said the temporary ban, which came into effect from 24 January and is slated to extend until 6 February, is in view of the new strain of highly contagious coronavirus detected in many countries around the world.

The sudden decision has accentuated the



plight of expatriates from 35 countries who are banned from flying directly to Kuwait. These expats were allowed to return if they completed 14 days of quarantine in approved transit countries. Accordingly, many expats had spent the requisite quarantine period in the UAE, Saudi Arabia or Ethiopia, but now have to prolong their stay at these transit destinations due to the limited number of tickets available on each flight.

## Grace period for residency violators extended, yet again

Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah announced on 27 January that the grace period for residency violators to rectify their legal status would be extended from the current deadline on 31 January to 2 March.

The decision was prompted by the prevailing extraordinary circumstances brought on by the coronavirus pandemic that prevented many illegal residents from rectifying their status, due to extended closure of relevant government offices and restricted or suspended flights in and out of the country. The extension, which is a humanitarian gesture on the part of the government, now allows illegal residents the ability to amend their residency status throughout the month of February.

However, the minister reiterated that violators



who failed to take advantage of the extended clemency would be apprehended and punished in line with the law, in addition to preventing them from obtaining a valid residency and deporting them with the provision that they would not be allowed to return to Kuwait.

## Labor contracts to expire after one year of project completion

The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) is to issue temporary government work contracts limited to one-year to contractors seeking workers for emergency government projects.

These contracts, which will automatically be cancelled after one year from the contract expiry date, aims to fix discrepancies in the issuance of work visas in a bid to fix the country's demographic imbalance and reinforce employment conditions.

As part of the new regulations, the contractor is obliged to attach a letter detailing the number of workers and the duration of the contract, and to register the contract with the Governmental Contracts and Projects Department, as well as provide a letter of guarantee regarding the recruitment of the number of workers required



for the project. The contractor will also have to file an absentee report within seven days with the concerned PAM department, if any worker abstains from work for several consecutive days without providing a reason for the absence.

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# MoH approves vaccine from India

Assistant Undersecretary for drug and food control at the Ministry of Health (MoH) Dr. Abdullah Al-Bader said in a press statement on Friday, that the ministry has approved use of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine against COVID-19 infections.

He added that the authorization was issued after a detailed review of all relevant scientific data and reports, and after conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the vaccine's safety, efficacy and quality. In addition, a technical committee appointed

by MoH also reviewed the results of the vaccine clinical trials, particularly those related to the effectiveness and safety aspects of the vaccine.

Al-Bader emphasized that the ministry will closely monitor the vaccine's safety after using it and will take all necessary measures to ensure safety of people. He revealed that the first batch of the first batch of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine doses will arrive within days to Kuwait and help accelerate the vaccination campaign.



He noted that the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India under a license from AstraZeneca, has received approvals from the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and Britain's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). He also added that the Serum Institute of India, the world's largest manufacturer of vaccines, is an accredited vaccine manufacturer by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

# Foreign ambassadors visit public shelter

The Ambassadors of the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany and Australia were part of a tour of the government labor shelter, in the company of the Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for Manpower for Labor Affairs, Abdullah Al-Mutouteh on 27 January. During their tour, the ambassadors interacted with inmates of the public shelter, which currently provides housing to 125 female expats, most of them domestic workers, and victims of trafficking and labor abuses.

Al-Mutouteh explained to the ambassadors of Kuwait's experience and its procedures for protecting expat employees, especially domestic workers, through institutional and governmental cooperation that aims to end the expats' pending problems and restore their rights. He pointed out how solutions were reached before facilitating the return of expats to their home countries or reaching agreements between employers and the employees.



The Kuwaiti official clarified to the ambassadors that of the 125 female expats currently in the shelter, 77 who were apprehended for violation of the residency law and 48 requested shelter on their own, and that the authorities are at present working to solve their legal and financial problems. In the meantime, there were processes

in place to help the female inmates communicate with their families back home in their country.

The heads of diplomatic missions listened to a detailed explanation of the mechanisms of entry, and departure of these expats, and the parties that coordinate with the authority to facilitate the departure of the inmates within the shortest period. Al-Mutouteh also spoke about the role of the Authority and its coordination with international organizations in the matter of organizing the recruitment mechanism and legal protection of workers in the country, through a project with United Nations Development Business (UNDB) and

Kuwait's General Secretariat for Planning.

Speaking following the tour, the US Ambassador H.E. Alina Romanowski said the tour was an excellent sign of cooperation and it provided an understanding of Kuwait's efforts in the field of human rights and the special care provided to domestic workers. For his part, the British Ambassador H.E. Michael Davenport highlighted the close cooperation that Kuwait extends with the International Labor Organization and embassy representatives, in addition to its large role in meeting the needs of those in the shelter during the accommodation phase and before their departure.

German Ambassador H.E. Stephen Moebis added that the visit provided extensive and comprehensive information in the field of preserving workers' rights and sheltering those in need," stressing that he is looking forward to another visit to see developmental projects in the matter of affected workers. For her part, the French ambassador, Anne-Claire Legendre, said that the tour allowed them to learn about the institutions' work in handling employment problems, facing challenges and efforts made to overcome difficulties, returning workers to their home countries, and granting them their rights in light of their specific problems.

**THE TIMES KUWAIT**

## Wear a Mask Even After You're Vaccinated

It takes a while for the Covid vaccine's protection to kick in. Even after you're fully vaccinated, others will be unprotected. Scientists are hopeful that vaccinated people won't spread the virus, but more research is needed.

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# Indian Embassy celebrates Republic Day

Indian embassy celebrated the 72nd Republic Day of India at the embassy premises attended by embassy staff, special invitees and the media, while the event was live-streamed online to thousands of Indian diaspora in Kuwait through several social media platforms.

Following hoisting of the tricolor national flag, the Indian Ambassador H.E. Sibi George read out a message on the occasion from the Hon'ble Indian President Shri Ram Nath Kovind. Speaking to the gathering and to compatriots watching online, Ambassador George said: "On the occasion of the Republic day of India, I extend greetings to all Indians in Kuwait. Let us join our 1.3 billion brothers and sisters in India and millions of Indian diaspora abroad and billions of our friends across the world to celebrate this occasion."

Noting the issues faced by the Indian community due to the coronavirus crisis, he said, "We in the Embassy are fully conscious of the fact that some of our brothers and sisters continue to face an unprecedentedly difficult situation today due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank the many community members and various associations who individually and in coordination with Indian Community Support Group (ICSG) took several steps to help our brothers and sisters in need during the most difficult days of the pandemic."

Pointing out that the crisis is still not over, the ambassador said: "We in the Embassy will continue to work with the community to address the myriad of challenges faced by our community and also to spread the message to our people not to panic, to

remain calm and confident. Here in Kuwait we have enough support and resources to ensure that no Indian goes hungry or remains unattended. We will continue to improve the Consular services of the Mission and keep its activities transparent. Let me reiterate, 'Embassy is Home Away from Home' and its doors remain open for all those who need love and support."

Highlighting the Embassy-Diaspora partnership, the ambassador added: In coming weeks and months, we will continue to celebrate, virtually and in hybrid format, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait and also the 75th anniversary of our Independence. Together we will celebrate India every day, everywhere, with everyone, while strictly adhering to the laws and traditions of our host country."

Underlining the strong ties between Kuwait and India that will be further cemented in the future, he said, "We value our partnership with the State of Kuwait, which is a key partner in our extended neighborhood. We will continue to work with all stakeholders to strengthen our partnership with Kuwait for the prosperity and wellbeing of the people of our two countries. We will not let 2021 be a zero year for building our partnership. We will endeavor to make it a vibrant year of activities in partnership with our Indian community and Kuwaiti friends. We will continue to take every step possible to strengthen the partnership of New India with New Kuwait, in collaboration with all our friends and well-wishers."

## Musical evening celebrates India's 72nd Republic Day



A beautiful Indian Musical Evening was organized by the Indian Embassy on 26 January to celebrate the country's 72nd Republic Day. The event was a showcase of India's vast and rich culture and heritage with an array of mesmerizing musical performances of patriotic Indian

songs presented by Indian artists.

During his address, the Indian ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Sibi George highlighted the tourism potential of the country and mentioned that India has diversity in arts, crafts, cuisine, and culture, as well as booming medical tourism.



## Shrimp fishing season ends, as February begins

Head of the Kuwaiti Fishermen's Federation, Zahir Al-Soyyan, announced that the shrimp fishing season will come to an end on Monday, 1 February. He added that fishing in Kuwaiti waters for shrimps will remain banned for the next six months.

Speaking about the fishing season that is ending, Al-Soyyan said that the shrimp fishing season was severely affected as many of the



boat workers were stranded in their respective countries. He explained that the fishermen were unable to return to Kuwait due to restrictions imposed by the authorities on direct flights from 35 countries, as a precaution against the spread of the virus in Kuwait.

He stressed on the increasing plight of local fishermen and urged the authorities to support

them. He pointed out that many fishermen face heavy debts on the loans they had taken to equip their boats, in anticipation of a good fishing season last year. In addition to the hurdles brought on by the COVID-19 crisis on their business, the fishermen regularly face many other challenges, including from volatile weather, pirates, robbers, and others.

He also called on the authorities to urgently approve an environmentally-friendly 'kufa' method of shrimp fishing that local fishermen have adopted, in time for the next shrimp fishing season.

It will be remembered that the government had banned the 'kufa' method of shrimp fishing due to its environmental hazards. Kufa fishing for shrimps involves

a large basket or net that is attached to a boat, which is then dropped in the sea and dragged along the bottom to net shrimps. The downside to this method is that along with shrimps a very large number of small fishes are also gathered by the net or basket and then later discarded.

It is estimated that one basket of shrimps fished in this manner results in the death and discarding of 15 baskets full of small fishes that are supposed to thrive until they reach the suitable age and size to be fished.

## Serology tests for COVID-19 gaining popularity

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Speaking to The Times Kuwait, Dr. Haya Al Tawalrah, Medical Director of I'm Negative Lab said that the tests help to show if the person had been infected with COVID-19 in the last three months.

She explained that the serology service involves a simple blood test that detects specific antibodies in the body and can determine if one had ever contracted COVID-19. This is particularly helpful for persons who were curious to know if they developed COVID-19 but did not have any symptoms, and whether they have to take the vaccine. The test helps in identifying a previous exposure and therefore making people aware of the risk factor towards the COVID-19 virus. A high count of the antibody, Immunoglobulin D (IgG) means that you are protected for the short term, whereas a low count



would mean that there is no protection and a vaccine should be taken, she pointed out.

The serology test differs from the PCR test which, Dr. Haya said was the gold standard of COVID-19 tests and is helpful in diagnosing Covid-19 if they are currently infected. She revealed that I'm Negative Lab would be launching saliva tests shortly for the benefit of residents, which is a more comfortable, easier-to-perform option for

COVID-19 testing.

Dr. Haya noted that the high-tech machines at I'm Negative Lab are able to completely identify the COVID-19 virus, including the new strain. She urged people to take the test for their own safety and that of their family, friends and colleagues, especially if they were socializing, going to work and interacting with others.

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# Domestic worker crisis to worsen with demand spike in Ramadan



**A** new demand by authorities in the Philippines to recruitment offices in Kuwait, could see a shortage in supply of domestic workers, especially during the upcoming month of Ramadan when demand for household help usually spikes.

According to the head of the Federation of Domestic Workers Recruitment Agencies Khaled Al-Dakhnan, the Philippines has put forward a new demand that recruitment offices hiring domestic workers from the Philippines should first execute an insurance policy of around US\$10,000 to ensure the safety, welfare and rights of the workers coming to Kuwait.

Al-Dakhnan said that the recruitment offices had outright rejected this new demand as it will contribute to additional burden on citizens and on recruitment offices.

## Around 40 infected after defying health guidelines

**D**espite repeated health warnings from the authorities against public gatherings maintaining proper social distancing and wearing masks, some people it appears are too daft to follow these simple instructions.

Around 40 people who defied the law and attended a social event and intermingled among themselves, have been infected by the COVID-19 virus. The authorities are still trying to determine how many people these individuals came into contact with later and potentially passed on the virus to them. Health officials

indicated that the lax attitude in respect to the health regulations by some people has dangerous health consequences for the rest of the population, in particular to the elderly and others that come in contact with them later, since the symptoms of the infection will not appear immediately.

Those who have become infected from the event have now been transferred to intensive care units due to complications from COVID-19. With frontline workers already stretched to the seams in fighting the disease, the new burden of tracing, tracking and

containing the individuals who could be infected by the 'party-goers' has now unnecessarily increased pressure on the authorities.

Health officials noted that there are too many gatherings continuing to be organized in some locations, such as farms, chalets and stables, even though the camping season was cancelled by the health authorities. This contributed to the relatively high infection rates during this January, especially with the lack of adherence to social or physical distancing, among citizens and expats.

## Premier-designate promises a 'new beginning'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that the program of the new government would address all pending files and issues that concern citizens.

On the grilling issue that led to the resignation of the previous cabinet, His Highness the prime minister affirmed the right of any parliament member to use the grilling tool, adding that the relationship between the executive and legislative was governed by Article 50 of the Constitution. However, he emphasized the need for constructive cooperation between the two state bodies so as to achieve desired reform in the national economy and prosperity for Kuwait and its people, Sheikh Sabah Khaled pledged to do his utmost to boost the constructive cooperation with the National Assembly, "to unify the forces in this critical phase of time for sake of attaining the aspired reforms and tackling prior issues".

While welcoming any questioning within the parameters of the Constitution and the law, the premier reminded editors that during his premiership of the 15th legislative term of the National Assembly, he had promised that he would never resort to four things when it came to grilling: He would neither refer the grilling to the Constitutional Court, nor to the Parliamentary Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee; and that he would not request an extension of the time for the grilling, nor discuss the interrogation in a secret session.

The prime minister stressed that the next government will work to coordinate with members of the National Assembly on all issues, including on tackling economic and social affairs, infrastructure development and public services. He stressed that in order to combat corruption, which is a priority for the government, the parliament would work with lawmakers to enact legislations aimed at addressing the elimination of corruption in the country.

He revealed that the government had "submitted 87 notices regarding public money to Kuwait's Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), in addition to referring 122 cases of misappropriation of public money, 1691 cases of encroachment on state property and 282 cases of residency trade, to the Public Prosecution for legal action.

Even as the premier promised to make tackling corruption his priority, a report out on

28 January highlights the deep tentacles that corruption spreads over the country. The 2020 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) published by the non-governmental organization Transparency International shows Kuwait trailing other states in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bloc in terms of corruption. With a score of 42 out of possible 100 on the CPI, Kuwait was ranked 78 out of 180 nations in the 2020 index.

Except for Bahrain, which tallied Kuwait's score, all the other GCC states scored above the global average of 43. The UAE came out on top in the six-state bloc, and also regionally, with a score of 71 to rank 21 globally. Qatar followed with a score of 63 and a global rank of 30, while Oman with a score of 54 was ranked 49. Even Saudi Arabia managed a creditable score of 53 to rank 52 globally.

The prime minister has a latitude of two months from his appointment date to nominate the 38th cabinet. But political experts point out that even if he comes up with a cabinet line-up that is acceptable to everyone in parliament, it is doubtful if the government will be able to function effectively given the opposition dominated National Assembly. Already, several parliamentarians have said they would continue to pursue the same issues that led to dissensions and resignation of the previous cabinet.

As the chief executive body of the state, if the cabinet's effective functioning is held hostage to demands by some lawmakers and parliamentary paralysis continues, Kuwait's social, political and economic future, at least in the near-term, appears rather bleak. Without the cabinet being able to take much-needed decisions and implement them on an urgent basis, the economy which has struggled to stay afloat for the last many months is expected to falter and come to a grinding halt. For one, the General Reserve Fund, which provides the government with the reserves to function has been nearly depleted by consecutive budget deficits.

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis that began in early 2020 in Kuwait has further drained state reserves and brought economic activity to a practical standstill, thereby exacerbating the economic exigencies facing the country. A lifeline to provide an economic breather for the state — to borrow on the international debt market — has yet to receive the necessary parliamentary approval. Lawmakers opposed

to the proposition have thwarted the passage of the debt bill since October 2017, when the previous bill lapsed.

Meanwhile, oil revenues which constitute the main source of revenue for the state has been steadily declining due to a 'lower-for-longer' international oil price scenario. Concomitantly, oil production cuts that were mandated by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies since 2017, have led to Kuwait's production dropping from nearly 2.8 million barrels per day to around 2.4 million barrels today. Lower oil prices and lower production have combined to wreak havoc on the country's budget in recent years, with expenditures rising while revenues continue to fall.

Immediately after the new premier was appointed, the care-taker cabinet held its weekly session at Seif Palace on 25 January and endorsed the budgets of ministries and government departments for the fiscal year 2021-2022. The projected expenditure amounts to KD23.1 billion and projected income stands at KD 10.9 billion, of which the largest chunk of KD9.1 billion comes from oil revenues, with non-oil contributing KD1.8 billion. The expected deficit for the fiscal year 2021-2022 is thus estimated at KD 12.1 billion, based on an average oil price of US\$45 per barrel.

Presenting his budget, the care-taker Finance Minister Khalifa Hamada said, "We are in a transitional phase that requires concerted efforts for economic recovery and growth." He urged for "more cooperation and collaboration with parliament to introduce and amend more laws that will benefit and improve our fiscal framework, and empower Kuwait's economy".

It is obvious that unless something gives in the immediate future, either through oil prices soaring back to over US\$80 per barrel, or the government using the interim period before cabinet formation to pass the debt bill through a Constitutionally approved Amiri decree, or the legislative having a sudden change of heart and deciding to cooperate with the executive, or probably, Manna dropping from heaven above, parliamentary paralysis will clearly be the least of Kuwait's worries in the coming months.

Asked by the media chiefs during his interview about the slow pace of the vaccination drive, with only around 35,000 people receiving the anti-COVID vaccine despite one month of the campaign, Sheikh Sabah Khaled said that

immunization in Kuwait is a process conducted according to a timetable and a schedule. Kuwait has begun administering the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine as per a plan that prioritizes frontline workers, the elderly, and those with medical vulnerabilities. The premier clarified that, "unfortunately, shipments of the jabs have been stopped throughout the world because suppliers are re-examining the needs, and we now hope to receive the new shipment of vaccines by 15 February".

The premier stressed that though there are several vaccines available in the market, he would not "accept dealing with any unsafe and unapproved vaccine that are not approved by the US Food Drug Administration and European Food Safety Authority". He pointed out that "Kuwait was the first among nations for securing vaccination against COVID-19 for all. The international community has only now chosen the logo, 'vaccine for all', which underlines the need for an international partnership, so as to secure vaccines for nations and people everywhere".

Elaborating on the demographics issue facing the country, Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled said that the demographics issue needs to move to an acceptable position during the coming period in order to correct the imbalances in the labor market. He added that "a law regarding demographics was approved by the National Assembly in the last legislative term, and executive regulations are being worked on now to amend the imbalance of the labor market, which in turn will be reflected in the demographic composition."

"I have said previously that the ideal situation is for the demographics to be 70 percent of citizens and 30 percent of residents," Sheikh Sabah Khaled said. "In order for us to move from the current imbalance to this ideal situation, we need to first move at least to an acceptable position in the next stage, and then on to a good position, and then even more," he added.

Promising that the new cabinet being formed will herald a 'new beginning and work as a team to find solutions to all problems that the country is facing, the premier concluded his meeting with media chiefs by calling for unity and safeguarding the country's security, safety and stability under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Preventing Next Food Crisis Now



**MARK LOWCOCK AND AXEL VAN TROTSENBURG**

Mark Lowcock is the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Axel van Trotsenburg is Managing Director of Operations at the World Bank.



The toxic cocktail of climate change, conflict, and COVID-19 is making itself felt most intensely in the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries. As a result, a record 235 million people worldwide will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2021 — an increase of 40 percent from last year.

It can be hard to wrap one's head around such numbers. But behind the statistics are individual human lives. For the most vulnerable people, the pandemic's secondary effects, not the coronavirus itself, will cause the most damage. And the hunger pandemic triggered by COVID-19 threatens to be the biggest killer.

The number of chronically hungry people increased by an estimated 130 million last year, to more than 800 million, about eight times the total number of COVID-19 cases to date.

Countries affected by conflict and climate change are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. Empty stomachs can stunt whole generations.

Moreover, the specter of multiple famines looms just as government budgets are being stretched by efforts to protect populations and economies from the pandemic. International solidarity to help prevent such disasters may look like a hard sell just now.

“ An anticipatory approach involves addressing long-term drivers of food insecurity — including vulnerability to extreme weather and pests, low incomes, fragile value chains, and conflict — in order to prevent new crises down the road. ”

But preventing famine and food insecurity is a smart investment for everyone.

Still, we must ensure that we are getting the most from every dollar we spend. That is why the United Nations and the World Bank are increasingly investing in an anticipatory approach to humanitarian needs. It has become ever clearer that acting early to address humanitarian needs ahead of a crisis is more effective, dignified, and cost-efficient than waiting until disaster has struck. Such a strategy also protects hard-won development gains.

For example, in Bangladesh last year, the United Nations and the Red Cross/Red Crescent provided vulnerable people with cash so that they could get themselves and their livestock out of harm's way before devastating floods hit. This effort cost half as much as picking up the pieces afterward would have done,

and it helped more people.

We are applying a similar anticipatory approach to the growing hunger pandemic, by taking action before food emergencies turn into full-blown famines. This involves addressing long-term drivers of food insecurity — including vulnerability to extreme weather and pests, low incomes, fragile value chains, and conflict — in order to prevent new crises down the road.

In line with this goal, the International Development Association (IDA, the World Bank's fund for the poorest countries) committed \$5.3 billion for food security in the six months between April and October 2020. This sum comprised a mix of short-term COVID-19 responses and investments to address the longer-term causes of food insecurity.

In Bangladesh, the World Bank redirected resources from an existing project to provide, among other things, cash transfers to 620,000 vulnerable small-scale dairy and poultry-farming households. In Haiti, where remittances were expected to decrease as a result of the pandemic, the IDA provided farmers with seeds and fertilizer to safeguard future harvests, and supported small irrigation works that increase long-term resilience. The IDA has also extended its Crisis Response Window to include \$500 million in financing dedicated to responding during the early stages of slow-onset food-security crises and disease outbreaks.

Likewise, in June 2020, the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund provided financing to help avert a food crisis in Somalia. Acting ahead of the triple threat of locusts, floods, and COVID-19 reduced the risk of disease outbreaks. By upgrading boreholes early, the UN averted disputes related to water sources, kept livestock healthier, improved household finances, boosted mental health, and prevented large-scale population displacement.

The development of effective COVID-19 vaccines means that the world may soon start to see the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel. But for many of the most vulnerable countries, the crisis will have deep and long-lasting after-effects, on incomes, health, nutrition, education, and whole economies.

Swift action can make the hangover less painful. We need to focus today on monitoring risks and the factors that

compound them, and emphasize effective early action and long-term investment to avoid much larger costs in the future.

Acting now on the danger signals is the smart, moral, and cost-effective strategy.

By working together to save and transform lives, we can free the world's most vulnerable people from crippling hunger and insecurity and build the foundations of a better future for all.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Evaluating effectiveness of pandemic debt relief



## ANNE O. KRUEGER

A former World Bank chief economist and former first deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, is Senior Research Professor of International Economics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and Senior Fellow at the Center for International Development at Stanford University.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread globally and will not be over until it has been brought under control everywhere. Hence, international efforts are underway to support the world's poorest countries. COVAX, a multilateral initiative organized by the World Health Organization and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, is arranging purchases of vaccines to be distributed equitably to developing countries.

This worthwhile program has already raised about \$2 billion, but it will need more funding to complete its mission. As of December 2020, most of the world's rich countries had ordered enough doses to vaccinate their own populations three times over, whereas 90 percent of people in the world's poorest countries are unlikely to receive a vaccine until 2022. While any additional support for poor countries would certainly help, there simply are not enough resources to meet all needs. All available resources thus will need to be directed as efficiently and effectively as possible to combat the pandemic.

Though many commentators have called for debt relief to free up resources in poor countries, suspending payment obligations is almost certainly not the most effective option available. Last May, the G20 launched a Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) in coordination with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. By December 2020, about 40 eligible countries had been granted postponements on about \$5 billion of debt service that would have come due before June 2021.

The problem with this approach is that poor countries' needs are not highly correlated with their debt levels. Neither debt nor debt-service costs — in absolute terms or as a percentage of GDP — is a good indicator of a country's relative needs. Because debt suspension rewards countries regardless of whether they have a strong



or poor macroeconomic record, there is no guarantee that it will result in more resources being allocated where they are needed most to fight COVID-19.

True, under the DSSI, postponements are supposed to be granted only to applicants who have enacted reforms under an IMF program or otherwise adopted economic policies judged to be appropriate for sustained growth. In practice, however, the urgency of the situation has overridden

debt is high, suspensions granted by one set of creditors simply allow for other, less forbearing creditors to extract more debt-service payments before the borrower defaults. These 'other creditors' can include both sovereign and private-sector lenders who have not agreed to participate in the debt-relief initiative. Zambia continued to service its debts right up until its default in November 2020. Now, when the country's creditors do agree on debt restructuring, the

that the funds will be used for COVID-related expenditures. Consider South Africa, which is not eligible for DSSI support. Like Zambia, it has increased its debt sharply, from 22 percent in 2008-09 to 82 percent in the current fiscal year. Now in a fiscal crisis, its deficit this year is expected to reach 15 percent of GDP. While the South African government blames COVID-19 for its current fiscal problems, the real issue is that for the past decade, its expenditures have grown without commensurate increases in revenue.

Given that South Africa would have experienced debt-servicing difficulties even without COVID-19, offering it debt relief probably would not free up many resources for fighting the pandemic. It is safe to assume that some countries that have already received relief are in the same boat.

Owing to these weaknesses, it would be far better for rich countries to allocate available resources directly to pandemic-related expenditures, either by purchasing vaccines, personal protective equipment, and other necessities and sending them where they are needed (the COVAX model), or by directly financing domestic purchases. This way, countries with high, unsustainable debt levels could still receive support, but it would go toward the most urgent expenditures, while payment obligations to other creditors and unwarranted fiscal expenditures might need to be postponed. The IMF could then support countries with unsustainable debt burdens in the usual way.

“ Debt suspension rewards countries regardless of whether they have a strong or poor macroeconomic record, and there is no guarantee that it will result in more resources being allocated to fight COVID-19 ”

these conditions.

Consider Zambia, which received debt relief eight times between 1983 and 2002, and had its debt forgiven under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative in 2005. Between 2011 and 2018, Zambia's debt rose from 21 percent of GDP to 120 percent, and it then had \$165.4 million (0.7% of GDP) of its debt-servicing obligations suspended under the DSSI. Nonetheless, in November 2020, Zambia defaulted.

The Zambian experience points to another problem with using debt relief to help poor countries. In cases where

amount available to compensate them will be smaller than it would have been had the debt servicing been suspended sooner.

In the case of the DSSI, the 33 most indebted countries that are eligible for relief owe around one-quarter of their public debt to China — the world's largest official creditor. While China has signed on to the initiative and provided some debt relief, it has done so on different terms than other DSSI participants. Worse, most private-sector creditors have not signed on at all.

Yet another reason to question the debt-relief strategy is that there is no assurance

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# Altering mealtimes impact type 2 diabetes

An innovative ongoing study is evaluating if shifting the time of daily meals to earlier or later in the day could help reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

In a unique 10-week study, researchers at the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom are examining whether changing the time the study participants eat during the day could reduce the risk factors such as obesity and cholesterol levels that are typically associated with the development of type 2 diabetes.

The participants aged between 18- 65 years old who have been identified as having an increased/moderate/high risk of developing Type 2 diabetes will be split into three groups. The first, a control group, will be asked to make no changes to their eating

habits; the second group will be required to restrict their eating times during the day to between 7am- 3pm; and the third group will limit their eating time to between 12-8pm.

Participants will regularly have their blood pressure, waist and hip circumferences monitored and will provide blood and urine samples for the study. A registered dietician will also use specialist eye-tracking equipment to analyse participants' eye gaze direction to identify and monitor any changes to food preferences over the course of the intervention. Previous research has shown that eye gaze direction is a strong signal of attention and preference behaviours.

The team will also investigate, via a series of interviews with participants and their friends and family, the impact of such changes on home life, work/social

commitments and whether co-habitants of those who make such modifications are influenced to alter their own meal timings/ eating habits as a result. Type 2 diabetes is a growing global problem with around 422 million people worldwide having diabetes, and 1.6 million deaths are directly attributed to diabetes each year. Diabetes increases the risk of developing serious problems with our eyes, heart and nervous system.

Public health initiatives are often rolled out with a focus on prevention, and tackling the lifestyle choices that lead to the development of type 2 diabetes, but these have had limited success. A simpler solution to this could be altering when we eat our meals, lessening the risk factors associated with the development of Type 2 diabetes.

Changing mealtimes limits our energy



intake to a set number of hours in the day, which leads to an extension of the daily fast that generally happens overnight. This study will help understand what time of day is optimal to eat to reduce our chances of developing Type 2 diabetes.



something that has been advocated for some time by the medical fraternity, but is not commonly done by doctors and nurses — checking patients' blood pressure in both arms. Doctors agree that while the blood pressure difference between both arms is by itself not a problem, it could indicate early atherosclerosis that is developing asymmetrically.

Atherosclerosis refers to a hardening and narrowing in the arteries that, eventually, could lead to heart disease or stroke.

The team behind the new analysis said that measuring blood pressure in both arms gives doctors "a simple way of noticing possible arterial stiffening. Though there is no way to 'fix' the discrepancies in blood pressure between the two arms, doctors need to take into consideration that differences between arms could be a 'marker' of a patient's future heart disease risk.

This early warning would allow doctors to recommend that such patients start eating more healthy foods and getting regular exercise, or prescribing medication, such as a statin, to ward off cardiovascular trouble.

While it is normal to have a few points of variation in blood pressure between the two arms due to various reasons including anatomy and the fact that one hand is typically dominant, the new analysis attempted to find out when that difference is large enough to be regarded as signifying something that merits more attention.

Overall, the team found, people's risks started to climb when the two arms showed at least a 5-point difference in systolic blood pressure, which is the 'top' number in a blood pressure

reading. For each 1-point increase, the risk of dying from diseases related to the heart in the next 10 years rose by nearly 2 percent, while the odds of suffering a first-time heart problem or stroke also crept up.

Those increases were small, but the researchers said that a 10-point difference in systolic pressure between arms should be considered the "upper limit of normal." The discrepancy in blood pressure between the arms is also a more serious issue for people with

high blood pressure or other risk factors, such as diabetes and high cholesterol.

Experts note that if a person repeatedly detects a significant difference between the arms when doing blood-pressure monitoring at home, they should inform their doctor about this. Doctors should also make it a practice of checking both arms, at least once, for each patient so as to get a more accurate gauge of patients' blood pressure, and if one arm has a higher reading, then future measurements should be taken on that arm.

## Difference in BP between arms a warning sign

An in-depth analysis of 24 previous studies carried out on more than 50,000 participants has found that blood pressure readings between the two arms can be different, and that this difference could be a warning sign of heart trouble down the road.

When people have at least a 5-point difference in blood pressure between the two arms, their risk of heart attack, stroke or premature death increases, with a wider difference leading to greater risks.

Experts said the findings give more support to



## Self-control key to long healthy life

Well-behaved children stand a greater chance of having healthy, happy lives as adults, suggests a new study.

Researchers at the University of Michigan in the United States, who conducted the study, found that kids who were goal-oriented and better able to restrain their thoughts, behavior and emotions turned out to be physically and mentally healthier by the time they hit middle age.

The study, which tracked over 1,000

participants in New Zealand, found that as adults, at age 45, children with better self-control aged more slowly. Their bodies and brains were healthier and biologically younger. We also found that they had developed more health, financial and social reserves for old age."

The researchers surmise that this has to do with "better emotional regulation to deal with life. They plan better so that they experience fewer crises and challenges. And their response to challenges is more measured and thoughtful when crises do arise." Many of our behaviors that contribute to poor health are the result of a relative inability to delay gratification; in other words, the inability to forgo smaller, short-term rewards in favor of more substantial long-term rewards. Examples of short-term indulgences, could include smoking, binge drinking, overeating, unsafe sex and going to parties in the midst of a pandemic. Youth with the ability to delay gratification were found to fare better in their body and mind later in life.

The study team gauged self-control between the ages of 3 and 11 by enlisting teachers, parents and the enrolled children to assess each kids' impulsivity, frustration tolerance and ability to persist in achieving goals. Then, a combination of physical exams, interviews and brain scans were carried out at age 45 to determine physical health and social well-being of these children as an adult.

The investigators found that those who had greater self-control when young had fewer indications of brain aging by middle-age, were better informed about both health and finances, and had developed better social skills.

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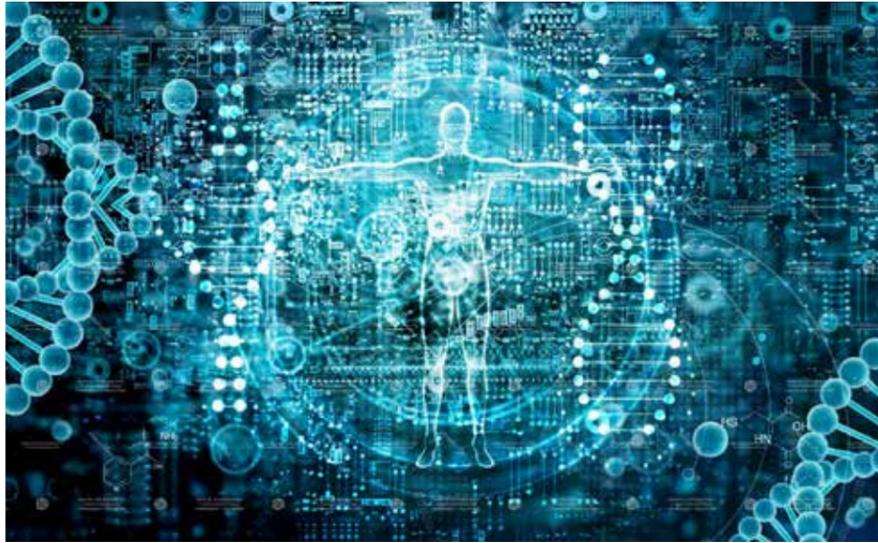
# Promises and perils of bio-revolution



**MATTHIAS EVERS AND MICHAEL CHUI**

Matthias Evers is a senior partner in McKinsey's Hamburg office and co-leads the firm's global research and development work in the pharmaceutical and medical products practice.

Michael Chui is a partner at the McKinsey Global Institute, studying the impact of long-term technology trends.



Thus, unless managed carefully, the risks of some new biological applications may outweigh the potential benefits. Scientists cannot pursue innovation in a vacuum: society's concerns matter, and innovators must exercise consistent and effective oversight. Fortunately, they have a track record of doing so.

Back in 1975, for example, prominent scientists, lawyers, and medical professionals gathered at the Asilomar Conference in California to draw up voluntary guidelines to ensure the safety of recombinant DNA technology. More recently, the American biochemist Jennifer Doudna, who, together with French microbiologist Emmanuelle Charpentier, was awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for inventing CRISPR, responded to the tool's use to gene-edit twin human embryos by calling for stricter regulation of the technology.

Governments that regulate bio-innovations and the businesses that develop and use them need to be part of the sustained conversation on risk. In fact, we estimate that as much as 70 percent of the bio-revolution's potential impact will be in uses that fall under existing regulatory regimes.

Regulation today is uneven. For example, as of late 2019, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine largely was leaving it up to clinics and parents to decide what genetic testing and diagnosis is permissible in identifying defects within embryos before they are implanted.

But the United Kingdom's Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority regulates the procedure tightly, permitting its use only for medical purposes and, even then, only for certain disorders.

Ideally, citizens also need to be involved in the debate, because their level of comfort with how science is applied influences regulators. In the UK, for example, the independent Nuffield Council on Bioethics was established in 1991 to advise policymakers and stimulate public debate on bioethics.

Many of today's biological innovations are complex, and we need to understand them fully to gauge their impact on our lives and societies. Only by working together can governments, scientists, businesses, and the public unleash the power of biology for good while effectively managing the risks.

Last November, the world cheered the news that three gene-based COVID-19 vaccines — one developed by German biotech company BioNTech in collaboration with Pfizer, another by US-based biotech firm Moderna, and a third by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca — had proved effective in clinical trials. But in October, researchers revealed that off-target effects of the CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing tool used to repair a blindness-causing gene in the early stages of human embryo development often eliminated an entire chromosome or a large part of it.

The two announcements, coming just a month apart, illustrate the promise and peril of biological engineering.

As a recent report from the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) makes clear, current breakthroughs in biological science and advanced data analytics could help us solve major human challenges, from reducing climate risk and strengthening food security to fighting pandemics. But realizing the revolution's potentially huge benefits will require us to think carefully about how to mitigate the potentially severe risks.

The scope of today's bio-innovation wave is large. Some 60 percent of physical inputs to the world economy are either already biological, or could be produced using biological processes in the future. Nylon, for example, can already be made using genetically-engineered yeast, rather than petrochemicals. Many such 'bio-routes' to production potentially will use less energy and water, and generate fewer greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions. Just 400 biological applications currently in the pipeline could reduce annual average GHG emissions by as

much as 9 percent by 2050.

CRISPR-Cas9 stands out as an increasingly accessible technology for manipulating genetic material, and is complemented by rapid and low-cost genetic sequencing and advances in data analytics that enable scientists to understand biological processes better. Our deepening knowledge of biology — genes, microbiomes, and neural signals — is making it increasingly possible to 'engineer life'.

But modifying biology is inherently risky. With CRISPR kits now available for sale on

but we may not be able to control them. The next generation of genetically-edited mosquitoes in one field experiment in Brazil were supposed to die, but are still breeding five years later.

Another concern is data privacy. The rapid spread of digital technologies has triggered an intense debate about technology companies' use of personal data, such as that relating to purchasing habits and social-media activity. But access to biological data from our bodies and brains represents another level of intimate knowledge.

“ The bio-revolution could entrench inequality, at least while applications such as breakthrough therapies, performance enhancements, and reproductive selection remain expensive and thus accessible only to the well-off. ”

the internet, anyone with some degree of biological knowledge could potentially create and release a new living entity, including harmful bacteria or viruses.

Biological organisms are self-replicating, self-sustaining, and interrelated. Moreover, as the rapid global spread of COVID-19 has demonstrated, they do not respect political borders. For example, so-called gene drives applied to infectious-disease vectors (such as Anopheles mosquitoes in the case of malaria) could save many lives,

Moreover, the bio-revolution could entrench inequality, at least while applications such as breakthrough therapies, performance enhancements, and reproductive selection remain expensive and thus accessible only to the well-off. MGI estimates that about 70 percent of the reduction in disease in the next 10-20 years could be in high-income countries, despite the fact that they collectively account for only around 30 percent of the global disease burden.

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# COVID-19 and the Doomsday Clock



**GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND**

A former prime minister of Norway and a former director-general of the World Health Organization, is a member of The Elders.

Last January, my fellow Elders Mary Robinson and Ban Ki-moon participated in the unveiling of the Doomsday Clock, the annual indicator of global catastrophic risk published by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. In 2020, the clock's hands moved closer to 'midnight' than they have ever been — just 100 seconds away — and they will remain there in 2021.

It is hardly reassuring that we came no closer to midnight this year. The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a stark and deadly demonstration of the precariousness of our way of life. We have made remarkable progress on vaccines, and a new US administration brings hope of renewed multilateral cooperation. But there is no doubt that the future will be rife with existential threats: new pandemics, the climate crisis, nuclear conflict, and other risks that we cannot ignore.

Post-pandemic political leadership will be a crucial test of the world's ability to rise to these challenges. Too many of our leaders have been found wanting. The virus has claimed some two million lives and wrought economic devastation worldwide. While mass vaccine rollouts offer some people a glimmer of hope,



national and global levels; and promoting healthier societies through holistic policies and social development.

No part of this agenda is revolutionary or too complicated to deliver quickly and at scale. Some of the countries that have performed well during the pandemic — including Thailand and Vietnam, which have reported barely 100 COVID-19 deaths between them — are already implementing this type of strategy. The challenge, as ever, is to back words with action, and to ensure that our efforts are properly funded and designed not to overlook the needs of the poor and marginalized.

Nowhere is this more essential than vaccination policy. The rapid development of not just one but several vaccines in less than a year is an incredible achievement and a triumph of human ingenuity, innovation, and cooperation. But it would be unpardonable if these precious vaccines were not equitably distributed around the world. In a pandemic, we cannot hope to recover fully or repair our social fabric unless we affirm and apply the principles of multilateralism and solidarity.

One of the most important lessons from the COVID-19 crisis is that short-termism and nationalism have weakened global health policy. It is now clear that national moves toward UHC must go hand in hand with multilateral efforts to strengthen public health systems globally.

To equip these systems for future pandemics, all stakeholders should define pandemic preparedness and response as a 'global public good' that necessitates a multilateral approach, with states and global institutions pooling resources, capacity, and expertise. Equally important is support (and respect) for the ongoing work of the WHO and other bodies specifically charged with pandemic preparedness, including the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (which I co-chair) and the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response.

In economic terms, investing in preparedness to strengthen health security offers excellent value for money. In the case of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, an annual global expenditure of around \$5 per person could avert a repeat of the COVID-19 disaster, which has already cost the world economy more than \$11 trillion. And a similarly high rate of return can be found in UHC reforms, which have

been shown to bring countries rapid health, economic, and societal benefits at all income levels.

We must act on the lessons of the COVID-19 crisis to create a new 'Bretton Woods moment' of innovation and creativity in the service of global governance. That is the only way to protect our shared planet and its population over

the long term.

There is no question that we have the capability to solve the collective challenges we face. But we now need global leaders to grasp this opportunity and commit fully to sustained multilateral cooperation. Now, as always, moving the hands of the Doomsday Clock away from midnight is a matter of political will.

“ Future health emergencies require remodeling global public-health policy around three key pillars: preparation for future pandemics; ensuring Universal Health Coverage at national and global levels; and promoting healthier societies. ”

most of the world's population will remain unprotected for quite some time.

To be sure, US President Joe Biden's decision to re-engage with the World Health Organization is a welcome signal of America's renewed commitment to multilateralism, as is his signing on to the COVAX scheme for equitable vaccine distribution. But WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned that unless we do more to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are produced and distributed according to the principles of universal health coverage (UHC), the result will be a "catastrophic moral failure."

As a new report by The Elders shows, fully overcoming COVID-19 and equipping ourselves for future health emergencies requires remodeling global public-health policy around three key pillars: preparation for future pandemics; ensuring UHC at

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Europe Must Become a Global Climate Power



## JOSEP BORRELL AND WERNER HOYER

Josep Borrell, a Vice President of the European Commission, is EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Werner Hoyer is President of the European Investment Bank.

**T**he world is eagerly watching the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines and looking forward to a return to normalcy after a year of lockdowns. But there will never be a vaccine for the other looming threat to humanity: climate change.

Apocalyptic images of forest fires in California and devastating floods in Bangladesh are harbingers of what awaits us if we fail to address the climate emergency. Without drastic action, such catastrophes will rage more frequently and ever more destructively. Moreover, climate change is one of the biggest geopolitical challenges we face. As a conflict multiplier, it fuels socio-political instability, creates migratory pressures, aggravates global injustices, and jeopardizes human rights and peace, especially in fragile states.

Climate scientists have made clear that to limit the rise in average global temperature to 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels — the target of the Paris agreement — the world can emit only another 580 gigatons of carbon dioxide. That is our carbon budget, forever. Yet at the current global emissions

rate of about 37 gigatons per year, we will have exhausted our budget by 2035. We therefore need to decarbonize without delay. Since the world has already warmed by 1.1°C, with temperatures in many regions having gone much higher, the next decade represents our last chance to tackle the problem.

The European Union has been a global leader on this issue for decades, and it has stuck to its ambitions even through the COVID-19 crisis. Among other things, the EU has launched what European Commission Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans has rightly called “the world’s greenest stimulus plan.” With the European Green Deal, the EU has also increased its 2030 emissions-reduction target to 55 percent, and committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

To support this effort, member states have agreed to transform the European Investment Bank into the EU’s Climate Bank. As outlined in the Climate Bank Roadmap 2021-2025, the EIB Group aims to mobilize €1 trillion (\$1.2 trillion) of investment in climate action and environmental sustainability between 2021 and 2030. It is the first multilateral development bank in the world to be fully Paris-aligned in its operations.

To be truly effective, however, Europe must complement these internal efforts with a proactive foreign policy. In a world where the EU accounts for less than 8 percent of global emissions, our climate efforts cannot be limited to our continent. If we allow growing energy demand in Africa and parts of Asia to be met through additional coal- and gas-fired power plants financed by China or others, our hope of limiting global warming will literally go up in smoke.

We must convince our global partners to embrace our ambition, and we must push, or help, them to take the necessary action.

To that end, Europe will need to put its economic and diplomatic weight behind the climate cause, becoming a global power in climate diplomacy. We must combine our climate efforts with realpolitik, recognizing the incontrovertible links between innovation and sustainable development. Only through innovation can we ensure Europe’s future competitiveness and tackle the climate challenge both inside and outside our borders. And only through innovation and green investment can we boost economic resilience in Africa and beyond.

Europe has the tools to make a difference globally. As one of the world’s largest markets and trading blocs, the EU has the power to set rules and standards for imported goods and services. We already have a wide range of trade agreements and strategic partnerships with countries and regions around the world; and, together, the EU and its member states are the world’s leading donor of development aid and humanitarian assistance. Finally, with the EIB, the EU has the largest multilateral lender at its disposal.

The EIB’s firepower is sorely needed. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to achieve our 2030 climate and sustainable development goals requires closing an annual investment gap of approximately \$2.5 trillion. We cannot rely only on the public sector anywhere, but especially in less-developed regions. As a public-finance institution and pioneer in green bonds, the EIB has an important role to play both in redirecting private finance toward sustainable investment projects globally, and in ensuring (through its banking



and engineering expertise) that all projects make economic sense.

To have a global impact, the EU must vigorously deploy all of the instruments at its disposal. For example, all current EU efforts to address the social and economic damage caused by COVID-19 in neighboring regions should be designed and implemented with the broader climate agenda in mind.

Moreover, other development banks should follow the EIB’s example by aligning their operations with the Paris targets, in order to lock in low-carbon, climate-resilient development pathways (or, at a minimum, to avoid undermining the green transition).

The UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26) in November will be a crucial milestone for raising global ambitions. Unlike previous COPs, it will be less about new multilateral rules and more about ensuring that as many countries as possible, especially the big emitters, strengthen their commitments. Next week, EU foreign ministers will discuss how to set the tone to ensure success in Glasgow, and how to develop our climate and energy diplomacy to promote the European Green Deal’s external dimensions.

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