



LOCAL
One year into
COVID-19,
third curfew begins... **2**

10 

*Mental Healthcare
is a
Human Right*

11 

*Who do we celebrate
when we celebrate
International
Women's Day?*



www.timeskuwait.com 250 Fils

Kuwait cannot remain a big oil shop: Dr Saad

Reaven D'Souza
Managing Editor

It is a rare opportunity to converse at length with a distinguished personality whose accomplishments speak volumes about him. Dr. Saad Al-Barrak is a living legend in the world of business, and a pioneer as well as prolific catalyst of private enterprise in Kuwait.

In just seven years, from 2002 to 2009, he transformed Kuwait's ex-state owned telecom operator Mobile Telecommunications Company (MTC), with its customer-base of 500,000 into an international telecom giant, Zain, with over 72 million customers across 23 countries. Over the same period, revenues leapt



from US\$400 million to a staggering \$8.2 billion. Before joining Zain, Dr. Saad headed International Turnkey

Systems (ITS), which had a revenue of \$1 million when he joined and over \$100 million in revenues when he left the company.

Dr. Saad's call to be bold, be daring, be different has revolutionised the business models of companies. In an

INTERVIEW

exclusive chat with The Times Kuwait Managing Editor Reaven D'Souza, the former head of Zain shares not only his passion for adventure and taking calculated risks but also reveals the mindset behind his success.

An outspoken intellectual, Dr. Saad does not mince words when he speaks, and it is this clarity of thought

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Canada's #PeaceByHer Campaign



Jacqueline O'Neill
Canada's Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security



Louis-Pierre Emond
Ambassador of Canada to the State of Kuwait

No country in the world has achieved gender equality. The global Covid-19 pandemic has been a stark reminder of the enormous work that remains to build a gender-equal world.

Since its outbreak, women have been on the front lines of pandemic response and recovery.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



المزيني
Al Muzaini



BEST RATE IS ON...

Send money to your loved ones from anywhere anytime through
AL MUZAINI APP



**BEST RATE
FASTER CREDIT**



One year into COVID-19, third curfew begins...

Kuwait will come under a partial curfew from Sunday, the third such curfew since the start of the pandemic in early 2020. The new curfew, which is slated to come into effect from Sunday, 7 March, will limit the movement of people outside their homes from 5am until 5pm for a month to 8 April.

The curfew hours and the one-month period could be extended or reduced by the authorities depending on the evolving infection rate in the country. The first curfew which lasted from 5pm until 4pm began on 22 March, 2020. With the infection situation showing no signs of abatement, a full curfew was imposed on

10 May of last year that extended until 30 May.

Some of the new measures and revamped old measures during the new bout of partial curfew include:

No walking, no cycling during curfew...

Citizens and expatriates will not be permitted to walk or cycle during the curfew period. Violators of this law will be registered as a violator of health requirements, and will be immediately referred to the prosecution for further legal action.

These are part of the stringent measures introduced by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) as part of an integrated plan to set up monitoring mechanisms and distributing security personnel in cooperation with the National Guard and the Ministry of Defense. The security teams will be deployed in areas, and in various sectors where there is high population density to ensure citizens and expats are adhering to the health measures and following the partial curfew in the country.

The only people who are authorized to move during the curfew period are those with the necessary exemption permits provided by the MoI. The law also states that the exemption permit should only be used by the person authorized to do so and whoever violates this condition will have the permit immediately cancelled.

Clear and strict security directives are being implemented in hospitals and clinics with the exit and movement of patients permitted through the use of barcodes that will monitor and control their movements in hospitals and health centers only.

Special MoI teams have also been organized to monitor all diwaniyas, farms, chalets, and other public gathering spaces, to ensure no gatherings take place at these venues. The owners of these places will be held accountable if any illegal gatherings take place at these sites. The owners will be referred to the competent authority, to face penalties including imprisonment or fine of up to KD10,000.

Diplomats included...

Ambassadors and staff of diplomatic missions are strictly prohibited from going outside during the partial curfew hours, except on taking special permission from the Ministry of Interior. Ambassadors and other staff of diplomatic missions will also not be exempt from the decision to restrict walking and cycling during the partial curfew hours.

If a diplomat is found breaking the regulation, legal measures will be taken, including registering his failure to adhere to the curfew and follow the laws and decisions of the country.

Oil sector workers need to be excluded...

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has sent the lists of its employees in various oil sector facilities to the Interior Ministry requesting exemption permits, so that personnel can continue working during curfew in oil fields, gathering centers and oil refineries. The Corporation added that the employment rate in operations need to be 100 percent, as all employees in this field are required for unhampered operation of oil facilities in the country.

With regard to administrative staff, KPC said their working hours do not contradict with the partial curfew period as they normally work from 7am to 3pm. The Corporation also stressed that oil companies remain fully committed to the Council of Ministers decision to limit the number of workers in the administrative sectors at 30 percent of total strength at any given time.

No banking...

Kuwait Banks Association issued a circular stating that the working hours at local banks will be until 2pm. Banks that are located in industrial and commercial areas of Kuwait, will not operate during evening hours.

And, the exemptions...

Even before the curfew comes into effect, the MoI has begun the process of providing exemptions to the curfew to personnel employed in several specific categories of work. The exemption permits are being provided to government agencies and establishments as well as the private sector companies approved by the Ministry of Commerce based on the nature and need of their work during the curfew period, and would allow the holders to travel outside during the partial curfew period from 5pm to 5am each day.

The MoI has provided a list of the personnel employed in specific work categories who will be excluded from the partial curfew that will enter into effect on Sunday, 7 March. Though the exemption list is exhaustive, the MoI does not provide any explanation as to why some of these exempt employees need to be working between 5pm and 5am in the first place.

The list of exempt work categories include: Personnel from the fields of food and consumer goods distribution, maintenance and security, and those involved in continuously providing basic services and resources in the country, will be among the categories exempt from the curfew. The exemption list would be subject to auditing and reassessing by the MoI. The list currently includes: Ministers; Speaker of the National Assembly and members of the National Assembly; People who suffer from chronic diseases, emergency health cases; Kuwaiti Army, National Guard and General Fire Force personnel wearing uniform.

Personnel of the Ministry of Health; All employees in private hospitals and medical laboratories; Engineers of the Ministry of Works and the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport; Employees of the Ministry of Electricity and Water as well as those working on operational contracts or contractors.

Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) employees and airline workers as well as Ground service providers at Kuwait Airport; Kuwait Airways and Jazeera Airways employees including pilots, flight attendants, engineers, ground service providers; General Administration of Customs; Companies working in unloading, shipping and customs clearance in ports; Departing and Arriving Passengers. Only one person is allowed to accompany the traveler and to help them with transport and luggage; Workers at the Kuwait Ports Corporation.

Workers in contracting companies contracting with the Ministry of Works and Roads and Land Transport Authority; Workers at Kuwait Mills, Flour and Bakeries Company, as well as Kuwait Catering Company; Water pumping stations located in the areas for all governorates and their workers; Managers and Supervisors of cleaning companies' projects; Workers of cleaning companies contracted with Kuwait municipality, and those part of maintaining hygiene procedures; Providers of sewage removal services that have contracts with government agencies;

All suppliers of foodstuffs, vegetables and consumables for co-op societies; Drivers and special vehicles transporting vegetables and fruits from Abdali and AlWafra farms to Co-op societies; Workers at Wafra Company for Marketing Services; Laundry staff and gravediggers, even though why gravediggers would be digging graves between 5pm and 5am was not made clear.



Inevitable residency status checks and deportations...

With the curfew slated to start on Sunday, a tripartite committee, led by Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), Ministry of Interior (MoI), and Kuwait Municipality, has swung into action.

Teams headed by the committee will conduct various checks and inspection procedures at shops, Co-Op societies, food and vegetable selling outlets, and food-order delivery services that are licensed to operate at the time of the curfew, to ensure that the exemption permits mention the names of only their employees. The committee said the names on the permits should be identical to the names of workers holding residency permits of that employer. In the event that a worker is caught with a residency visa of a business other than the one he works for during the curfew, he will be referred to the Residency Affairs Investigation Department for legal measures to be taken against him, including a penalty of deportation from the country.

Kuwait vaccine drive adheres to international protocols



In a bid to allay fear of vaccinations and squash rumors on social media sites, the Ministry of Health (MoH) clarified last week that there were no unexpected side effects or deaths linked to the coronavirus vaccinations among the more than 200,000 people who have received the vaccinations so far.

An announcement from the MoH also made clear that prior PCR swabs or antibody tests were not required for people taking the vaccinations. Health officials stressed that medical teams conducting the vaccinations strictly adhere to international guidelines and

health recommendations on administering the vaccines.

Emphasizing that there is no need to conduct a PCR swab or test for antibodies before taking the vaccine, the health authorities added that doing so would unnecessarily tie-up the limited number of medical and nursing staff conducting the vaccination drive, besides slowing down the pandemic containment measures being pursued by MoH.

A statement from MoH also noted that if someone is confirmed to be infected with Coronavirus after receiving the first dose of any vaccine, they must then wait about three months before taking the second dose.

The ministry also clarified that if citizens receive the first dose of the vaccine outside the country they can still take the second dose upon their return, provided the vaccine is available. The MoH also said that those who have symptoms of infection with the virus are advised to postpone the vaccine until the disappearance of those symptoms.

CSC declares 11 March as Isra and Miraj holiday

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has issued a circular declaring Thursday, 11 March as a public holiday on the occasion of Isra and Miraj for the Hijri year 1442.

Work will be suspended in ministries, government agencies, bodies and public institutions as it is considered an official holiday. Businesses will resume on Sunday, 14 March.

However, managements of some sectors of special work nature have been permitted to determine how to observe the holiday according to their individual conditions and taking into consideration the public interest.

PAM permits transfer of employees between sectors

In view of the ongoing pandemic and the consequent downturn in the economy, the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has issued an administrative decision that would allow the workers in specific sectors to transfer their work permits. The directive also permitted expatriates working in government entities, and those with family visas, to work in the private sector in accordance with the authority's existing regulations.

In addition, the decision also permitted the transfer of labor from some specific sectors that are currently banned to other sectors. Workers in the sectors permitted to change their jobs are the sectors of industry, agriculture, herding, fishing, societies, cooperative unions, and employment in companies located in the free trade zone.

PAM noted in its statement on the changes



that the decision also includes permitting the transfer of locally employed workers in all sectors with the consent of the employer and without the condition of the period stipulated in Clause No. (1) of Article (5) of Administrative Decision No. (842) of 2015. However, the permission does not extend to government contract employees or small and medium enterprises.

The statement emphasized that this decision came in response to the needs of the labor market during the current period and will be implemented until further notice in light of the repercussions of the pandemic.

COVID-19 leads to huge spike in annual death-rate

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has taken a heavy toll on human life, with more than 2.5 million people around the world succumbing to the lethal virus. In Kuwait, the number of deaths attributed to coronavirus infection have climbed

to over 1,000 in the span of a year and widely distorted the country's annual death rate.

increased by about 40 percent when compared to the total number of deaths in 2019, Al-Rai reported.

A total of 11,302 deaths among citizens and expatriate deaths were reported in the 12-month period ending 31 December, 2020; an increase of 40 percent when compared to the total deaths a year earlier. In 2019, the total number of deaths registered among citizens and foreigners was 8,072.

ENJOY
10%
DISCOUNT

ON TOTAL BILL ONLY
FOR SELF PICK-UP ORDERS
FROM ANY BRANCH OF
MUGHAL MAHAL
ACROSS KUWAIT.

LIMITED PERIOD OFFER!

www.mughalmahal.com



SECRETS TO GREAT PIZZA CRUST

You know how the crust at your favorite pizza joint is crispy on the outside, soft on the inside and full of flavor? When done right, pizza dough is crispy and crunchy and delicious. Here are five tips to improve your pizza crusts.

Use enough salt: Flour is not enough to add flavor, its bland taste does not make a great base for your toppings so it is imperative you season the pizza dough well. The salt from the topping ingredient more often than not, will not be sufficient to bring up the flavors. A good coffee spoon for 4 cups flour is a minimum. Of course, keep in mind the saltiness of your toppings and scale back accordingly if needed—especially when using anchovies, or black olives.

Never use a rolling pin: A rolling pin gets rid of air bubbles naturally present in the dough, leaving the finished product dense and tough. Instead, work with your hands to pull and stretch the dough out to your desired shape and size. Do not worry about an irregular shape, your pizza can be an oval, a square, or a triangle: It can be any shape you want it to be. If the dough is difficult to work with, let it sit at room temperature for 15 minutes to let the gluten relax and the temperature rise before trying again.

Do not go heavy on the toppings: An authentic pizza does not need tons of toppings. By supercharging your pizza with 4-cheese mix, 3 sorts of sausage, meatballs, mushrooms, egg yolks, pineapple, you are just ruining the key factor to a crisp pizza crust: All these ingredient will make the crust soggy. Instead, choose a handful of ingredients that complement each other and use restraint. Opt for mozzarella, a simple tomato sauce, and meatballs for instance. A drizzle of olive oil once the pizza comes out of the oven is also good thing.

Par-bake if necessary: It is a handy trick that keeps crust from getting soggy. If you are topping your pizza with something moist or wet like fresh mozzarella or pickled capers, you want to partially bake the crust before proceeding with the add-ons. This way the crust will be just firm enough to stand up to the extra weight, then make your pizza pretty.

Bake at maximum temp: 350°F (180°C) will get you nowhere on your quest for the perfect pizza crust—if you bake a pizza like you would with a pound cake, you'll end up with a soggy crust and overcooked toppings. Go very hot and quick: push that oven temperature to 500°F (260°C), or as high as you can go without broiling, and keep watching the pizza. When the cheese is melty and bubbly and the crust is golden brown, pizza is done!

Unexpected Ways to Use Yogurt

That humble container of yogurt is full of possibilities. Here are some unexpected ways to use yogurt.

1. In mashed potatoes. Greek yogurt is a great addition to classic garlic mashed potatoes, giving them a creamy taste and consistency without all the fat.
2. In pasta. Toss farfalle with zucchini and a tangy yogurt sauce for a fast and delicious weeknight pasta.
3. In soup. Goat-milk yogurt is a terrific, creamy base for chilled soups like herb-flecked tomato.
4. On burgers. Spicy, gingery yogurt sauce is a great alternative burger topping.
5. In zucchini bread. Fat-free Greek yogurt adds moisture to lightly sweet zucchini bread without any added fat.
6. In egg salad. Instead of mayonnaise, mix chopped hard-boiled eggs with a smoky Greek yogurt sauce.



7. In béchamel. Typically made with butter, flour, milk and seasonings like nutmeg and shallots, béchamel is also delicious when enriched with yogurt.

Thought for the week

Lack of appreciation is painful; Over-estimation is shameful

- Alisher Navoi Writer
Politician, and Linguist

RECIPE

Baked Zaatar and Fresh Cottage Cheese Fingers



Zaatar and fresh cottage cheese (paneer) fingers recipe is a Lebanese-inspired oven-baked appetizer that is savory, crunchy and incredibly easy to make with cottage cheese. If you enjoy paneer, then you must try this recipe.

Ingredients:

- 200g Fresh cottage cheese (paneer) block
- 12 to 15 square medium size spring roll sheets
- 1/2 cup zaatar powder
- Small bowl of water for sealing edges
- Olive oil for brushing
- Labneh yogurt cheese for serving (optional)

Directions:

- Preheat the oven on 180 degrees C for 10 minutes. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Cut the cottage cheese block into slices about the size of your index finger
- Arrange the spring roll sheets on a dry cutting board or other working surface and position them at an angle so that the corner of each sheet is closest to you.
- Place a slice of the cottage cheese at an angle in the lower third of each spring roll sheet, and sprinkle some zaatar powder.
- Fold the edges inward along the way.
- Roll the sheet shut, adding a dab of extra water if needed. Press lightly to seal the edges together.
- Place the stuffed spring rolls seal side down on the prepared baking dish.
- Repeat with the remaining sheets until complete.
- Brush the fingers lightly with olive oil.
- Bake in the preheated oven until they are golden brown and crisped on the outside, about 10 minutes.
- Take it out and again brush some olive oil and sprinkle some zaatar onto it.



Chef Chhaya Thakker



Serve hot.

I usually serve it with Roasted Red bell pepper (couli) sauce and labneh yogurt cheese. You can also freeze the spring rolls before or after cooking them.

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

His Highness the Amir calls for constructive cooperation



His Highness the Amir told the new ministers they have "great responsibilities in this important time, and I am confident you are, Allah's willing, capable of confronting them." He urged them to work "collectively with the one team spirit to push forward the national action towards reforms and development" in order to achieve the aspirations of the Kuwaiti people at all levels.

His Highness the Amir thanked His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled AlHamad Al-Sabah for his "great efforts" and urged the ministers to "double efforts" and show dedication in their national duties in order to create opportunities and alleviate burden of citizens. His Highness the Amir also thanked the former ministers for their service.

In a speech after the cabinet minister took their oath of office before him, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah urged the government and parliament to have "constructive cooperation" to address pressing issues and protect the public fund and promote rule of law in line with the constitution.

His Highness the Amir added, "I call upon the Legislative and Executive Authorities for constructive cooperation, armed by our social fabric and national unity, to achieve national goals, address pressing issues and protect public funds, in line with the constitution, and the decisive and transparent application of law on all."

Earlier His Highness the Amir on 2 March issued Decree No.18 of 2021 forming the new government. The first article to the decree noted that subsequent to the appointment of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al Sabah as Prime Minister on 24 January, and based on his proposal, a new lineup of ministers had been appointed.

The second article of the decree tasked the Prime Minister with notifying the National Assembly of Decree No.18 of 2021, and that it would be enforced from the date of its issuance and published in the official gazette.

Ministers in the new cabinet headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah are:

- **Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah** as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense.
- **Abdullah Yusef Abdul-Rahman Al-Roumi**, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Integrity Promotion
- **Issa Ahmed Muhammad Hassan Al-Kandari** as Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs
- **Dr. Muhammad Abdul-Latif Al-Faris** Minister of Oil and Minister of Higher Education
- **Dr. Basil Hammoud Hamad Al-Sabah**, Minister of Health.
- **Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Muhammad Al-Sabah**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs.
- **Dr. Rana Abdullah Abdul Rahman Al-Faris**, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Communications

and Information Technology.

- **Mubarak Salem Mubarak Al-Harees**, Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs.
- **Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah**, Minister of Interior.
- **Khalifa MUSAED Hamadeh**, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment.
- **Abdul-Rahman Badah Al-Mutairi**, Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs.
- **Dr. Ali Fahad Al-Mudhaf**, Minister of Education.
- **Shaya Abdul-Rahman Ahmad Al-Shaya**, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development.
- **Dr. Abdullah Issa Al-Salman**, Minister of Trade and Industry.
- **Dr. Mashaan Muhammad Mashaan Al-Otaibi**, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, and Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development.

MoE to stop salaries of stranded teachers



Ministry of Education (MoE) has notified the relevant authorities in each school district to stop the salaries of teachers who are stranded outside the country and have not resumed their jobs for over a year.

Announcing this, the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education, Osama Al-Sultan, said measures are being taken to halt the salaries of teachers who left during

the mid-year vacation of the last school year and are stranded in their countries. He explained that this was in line with stipulations that require halting the salaries of staff in the event that their absence exceeds the legal period granted through Resolution No.41 of 2016.

He added that administrators in each school district have been instructed to stop the salaries of expatriate teachers who have not started work in the second semester. The administrators have been asked to forward the names along with their Civil ID number, specialization, nationality, educational zone and the reason for their absence.

He noted that the MoE is committed to adhering with all regulations and systems in this regard and in line with latest circulars issued by the Civil Service Commission on those stranded outside the country.

Hotline to report health regulation infringements

A hotline has been set up to report incidents of public violation of health regulations. Kuwait Municipality has assigned the number 1 800 048 to receive complaints via the social media platform WhatsApp about any infringements of health regulations, including the gathering of people attending social functions, celebrations or commercial activities in violation of existing laws.

Ministry of Health (MOH) has repeatedly warned the public about the dangers of not adhering to health safety guidelines issued by the ministry. The spike in infections since mid-January has been attributed to indifference of many people to health regulations imposed by the authorities, including restrictions on public gatherings and social events.

In this regard, it has been reported that Cabinet's

decision to introduce restrictions on movement of people and economic activities by a month since 7 February, which is slated to end next week, is likely to be extended by a further two weeks or a month. The Emergency Committee on COVID-19 is said to be reviewing the restrictions and is expected to forward its recommendations to the Cabinet on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the Director of Hawally Health Zone Dr. Nadia Jumaa said there was an increase in cases in the intensive care department in Mubarak Hospital in recent weeks by three times compared to the numbers in

November and December last year. She explained that the same spike in the number of cases was evident in the emergency department of Mubarak Hospital with a frequency between 80 to 100 cases per day.





HIDE & SEEK

MADE WITH THE WORLD'S Finest Chocolates



Chocolate Chip Cookies

Sole distributor in Kuwait

Al-Othman & Al-Bisher Trd.Co. W.L.L

P.O. Box: 22984 Safat 13090 Kuwait
Tel: +965 24755074, 24755073
Fax: +965 24760108
Email: obtc_kwt@qualitynet.net
www.obtc_kwt.com






PAM provides details on new and cancelled work permits



Since the launch of the online service for most residency related services, the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has

released regular reports on the latest labor market situation in the country.

The latest report on work permits and other residency matters, for the period from 12 January to 3 March, shows that 18,775 expats lost their work permits during this period, of whom 11,610 permits were cancelled due to the loss of residency visas as the holders were stranded outside the country. A further 5,864 work permits were cancelled prior to their final departure from the country, 865 work permits were revoked following the death of the workers, and 436 people cancelled their work permits and

transferred them to family visas.

The report also revealed that the number of work permits renewed for expat workers during that period rose to 145,074, while 96 work permits were cancelled as the person involved shifted to the government sector. The total number of online service transactions conducted by PAM in the same period reached 326,000 divided among the 61 different services. According to PAM, a total of 596 work permits were issued after they obtained necessary cabinet approval for the recruitment of expats from abroad, and other 204 work visas. Meanwhile, 60

transfer work permits were issued from the government sector, 323 transfer work permits from family visas, 60 work permits from the government sector, issuance of 93 work permits transferring from an entry visa, and issuance of 77 work permits.

PAM also approved 15,752 university degrees for workers residing in the country through the online system, and also cancelled 167 files of business owners and 978 licences registered on files, and transferred 96 workers to the government sector.

More information can be availed by contacting 24759250/70/80 or 60689323

Decrease in bad loan write-off by banks



The new data on bank write-offs indicate that banks in the country have been able to maintain high levels of the quality of their assets, and thereby continue to provide efficient services to all sectors of the national economy, in a balanced manner that takes into account the interests of all concerned parties.

Despite the decline in bank profits by 53 percent in 2020 and the decrease in distributions, especially cash, the ability of banks to clean their balance sheets confirms that the banking sector faces the crisis firmly and steadily. It is noteworthy that bank allocations increased by 47 percent to exceed KD1 billion in 2020.

Banking industry analysts attribute this stability of banks to the application of macro-prudential policies imposed by the Central Bank of Kuwait on banks in Kuwait. These policies have fortified banks over the past decade in the face of various crises, by raising the quality of risk management, strengthening capital rules, forming precautionary provisions, and applying the Basel III set of standards.

For the fourth year in a row, the write-off of bad loans by banks continued to decline. Despite the ongoing pandemic, in 2020, the bad loan write-offs by banks in Kuwait was down by 21.9 percent to KD522 million from the KD668 million written-off in 2019, and about KD735 and KD746 million bad loans written-off in the years 2018 and 2017 respectively.

Nevertheless this write-off remains higher than the annual average since the global financial crisis of KD454 million.

CAIT launches Technology Skills Development initiative



Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) announced the launch of a new skills development initiative for government sector employees in cooperation with Microsoft Corporation. The program, labeled 'Technology Skills Development Initiative in the Governmental Sector' aims to raise the capabilities of the national cadre working in public sector entities, specifically in their cloud skills and optimal use of digital technology.

Announcing this initiative, the Director General of CAIT Haya Al-Wadani said in a statement last week, that the program will

contribute to building a base of professional national cadres that will enable them to take their first place in the country's digital transformation plan and its development policies in line with the vision of New Kuwait 2035.

Al-Wadani added that the initiative will continue until the end of next June and includes an opportunity for remote training of 900 government employees in cloud computing programs, under the supervision of trainers certified by Microsoft. The initiative also provides free test vouchers for employees to obtain an international professional certificate in cloud computing management, information security, artificial intelligence applications, and modern application development.

She stressed the need to keep pace with the rapid development of information technology and the current and future challenges by raising the level of skills of employees in the government sector. Al-Wadani urged all government agencies to encourage Kuwaitis working in the field of information technology to take advantage of the proposed training initiatives and programs, which are part of the agency's strategy to enhance the use of cloud computing and accelerate the pace of digital transformation in the government sector.



Badr Al Samaa Medical Center celebrates 4th anniversary

Badr Al Samaa Group celebrated its fourth anniversary in Kuwait on 1 March by thanking the people of Kuwait for their trust and tremendous support to complete four successful years in the country.

Board of Directors of Badr Al Samaa Group Abdul Latheef, P.A. Mohammed and Dr. V.T. Vinod appreciated the efforts of the doctors, nurses and other staff in ensuring the successful journey of the medical center over four years in Kuwait.

During the celebrations marked by active participation of doctors, nurses and other staff, Ashraf Ayyoor announced the 4th Year Anniversary Health Packages, and Abdul Razak briefed the gathering on the details of the 4th Year Anniversary Health Packages and praised the dedication and selfless compassionate work done by all staff of Badr Al Samaa Medical Center.

Established in March 2017, with a handful of doctors and medical staff, Badr Al Samaa has now grown to a full-fledged medical centre with super-

specialty clinics with doctors in all specializations.

On the occasion of the fourth anniversary, Badr Al Samaa Medical Center is offering Special Health Packages that are valid from 4 March to 24 March.

The Anniversary Body Check-up package for only KD4, includes CBC, RBS-Sugar Test, Uric Acid, BP- Check-up, Oxygen Saturation Level, Pulse Rate, Free GP Doctor Consultation, and Free Follow Up for 10 Days.

The Anniversary Health Check-up, for only KD14 includes CBC, RBS-Sugar Test, Uric Acid, Creatinine, Total Cholesterol, Bilirubin Total, Urine Routine Analysis, Chest X-ray, BP Check-up, Free GP Doctor Consultation, and Free Follow Up for 10 Days.

The Anniversary full Health Check-up, for KD24 includes CBC, FBS, Thyroid Test (TSH), Kidney Screening (UREA, Uric Acid, and Creatinine), Liver Screening (SGPT, SGOT), Lipid Profile, Urine Routine Analysis, Chest X-ray, ECG, Ultrasound Abdomen, BP Check-up, Free GP Doctor Consultation, and Free Follow Up for 10 Days.

PACI urges people to use online services

In compliance with circular No.4 of 2021 approved by the Council of Ministers and issued by the Civil Service Commission, which instructs government entities to limit the number of staff working at any particular time to 30 percent of its original strength, the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) said it will no longer receive any request for a transaction in person if it can be completed online through the authority's website at www.pack.gov.kw.

Clarifying the decision, a statement from PACI said that the aim is to reduce the number of appointments in view of the limited number of personnel working at a time. Appointments for transactions not available online will be only

through the PACI head-office in South Surra, from 9am to 1pm for citizens and from 2pm to 5.30pm for foreigners, and at the Jahra branch from 9am to 1pm.

The statement also said that Civil ID cards that have been processed will be available from the main building from 8am to 8pm and at the Jahra and Ahmadi branches from 9am to 5pm concerning the work capacity, and no transaction will be received without an appointment. The dates for receiving transactions that are not completed through the website and by booking an appointment in advance will be in the main building south of the navel from 9 am to 1 pm for Kuwaitis and from 2 pm until 5:30 pm for arrivals

The authority called on everyone to adhere to health guidelines issued by the authorities when visiting PACI offices so as to ensure the health safety of visitors and employees of the authority.

SMEs reiterate demand for government support

Stressing that they are suffering heavy losses due to the closure of business activities by the authorities, the owners of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) reiterated their demand to expedite the reopening of their businesses.

During the press conference hosted by the Bar Association, the participants confirmed that about 15,000 employers are about to stop their business, which threatens to end the employment of 56,000 people. Participants in the conference stated that the owners of 100 nurseries have already left their business after they accumulated debts, while 75 percent of salon owners have expressed their desire to forego their licenses and leave their business.

The head of the Salon Union, Tariq Asad, said that there was no evidence to suggest that businesses are the reason behind the spread of infection, and moreover, despite the closure of businesses the current rate of infection has increased sharply. He added that the government had failed to manage the crisis for 12 months and did not provide any economic package or support, and left entrepreneurs to face their losses.

The representative of the tourism and travel sector, Mohamed Al-Mutairi, criticized the series of conflicting decisions issued by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation recently, noting that the lack of transparency in the methodology of government decisions confuses the general situation.

While the representative of the food supply sector, Salah Bouhsen, stressed the need to support this sector, indicating that the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development and the Public Authority for Industry have not yet provided any support to SME owners despite the importance of the sector.

Owners of SME requested the government to immediately consider their demands, which include: Opening of all closed businesses; reopening the airport; increasing the pace of vaccination delivery; allowing the vaccine recipients to enter the shopping complexes after eight in the evening; postponing entrepreneurs loans and canceling the work permit; opening



theaters and cinemas; paying the salaries of Kuwaiti employees and residents whose businesses are closed; exemption from rents; applying the law fairly on everyone; and providing financial support

Indian Embassy suspends consular services until 11 March

A press statement from the Indian Embassy has said that routine consular services at the Indian Embassy will remain suspended until 11 March, as part of precautionary health measures related to COVID-19, and based on advice by the concerned health authorities in Kuwait.

The statement added that emergency consular services, including death case registrations and Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) assistance requests, will continue to be rendered by the Mission on a priority basis. Requests for emergency consular services may kindly be sent to cons1.kuwait@mea.gov.in

Passport Services at all three outsourced passport centers in Abbasiya, Fahaheel, and Sharq, will continue to function normally.

PACI announces new working hours

Director-General of Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) MUSAED AL-ASOUSI announced the new working hours at PACI for providing services to citizens and expatriates.

Al-Asousi said that the working hours in the main building (South Surra) for providing services to citizens are from 9am to 1pm, and for expatriates 1pm to 4pm. Citizens and expatriates can collect their Civil IDs between 9am and 4pm.

As for the Jahra Governorate building, the services are provided from 9am to 1pm and for collecting Civil ID cards is from 9am to 1pm. The timings at the Ahmadi Governorate branch (South Sabahiya) for collecting Civil ID cards



is from 9am to 1pm. Regarding the external centers, Al-Asousi indicated that work begins at 9am until 1pm.

The Director-General also stressed the need for everyone to book an appointment to attend and that no citizen or expatriate without a prior appointment will not be received at PACI. Appointments are booked through the Authority's website www.paci.gov.kw

Vaccinations mandatory for Hajj this year

A communique from the Ministry of Health in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has stated that only people who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 will be allowed to attend the Hajj this year, as part of precautionary measures ahead of the annual pilgrimage.

"The COVID-19 vaccine is mandatory for those willing to come to the Hajj and will be one of the main conditions for receiving a permit to come," says a circular signed by the kingdom's Minister of Health Dr. Tawfiq al-Rabiah.

Saudi Arabia takes pride in its guardianship of Islam's holiest sites in Mecca and Medina and its smooth organisation of the annual Hajj, which has been marred in the past by deadly stampedes, fires and riots. In 2020, the kingdom dramatically reduced the number of pilgrims allowed to attend Hajj to about 1,000 Saudi citizens and residents of the kingdom, in order to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus, after barring Muslims abroad from the rite for the first time in modern times.

Hajj, a once-in-a-lifetime duty for every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it, is a major source



of income for the Saudi government. However, the congregation of millions of pilgrims from around the world can be a major cause of coronavirus transmission.

In the same circular, the Saudi health minister said the government must be prepared to "secure the manpower required to operate the health facilities in Mecca and Medina". These facilities will be stationed at entry points for pilgrims, he said, in addition to a formation of a vaccination committee for pilgrims within Saudi Arabia.

confirmed that extensive efforts and continuous follow-up by the Federation, along with the concerned government entities, had led to finalizing the procedures with the Ethiopian side, and thereby opening the door to new recruitments from that African country.

Al-Dakhnan also praised the efforts made by the Federation in cooperation with the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) to complete the procedures for repatriating Filipino domestic workers who were in the government-run shelters. The often long and arduous stay of many Filipino workers at these shelters had been a sticking point in resuming the recruitment of domestic workers from the Philippines, which had been suspended since February.

Al-Dakhnan hoped that after the departure of workers in the shelters and their arrival in the Philippines, the country's embassy in Kuwait would recommend the lifting of the suspension on recruitment of Filipinos. He also added that if new contracts were inked soon after recruitment resumes, then Filipino workers could be expected to land in Kuwait before the start of Ramadan.



Domestic helpers to be sourced from Ethiopia

A new labor agreement between Kuwait and Ethiopia will see the arrival of Ethiopian household workers to the country before the start of the month of Ramadan.

The agreement, which has been perused and commented on by the Ethiopian side, is expected to be signed within the next two weeks, once it receives the approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kuwait. The signing of a bilateral agreement between the two sides could lead to Ethiopian household helpers arriving in Kuwait before the start of Ramadan, which is usually the time when domestic helpers are in great demand due to the extra workload brought on by the holy month.

Head of the Federation of Domestic Workers Recruitment Agencies, Khaled Al-Dakhnan,

Join Us in Our New
Telegram Channel
<https://t.me/thetimeskuwait>

For the latest news and updates please subscribe to our Telegram channel.

Credible. Insightful.
Accurate.
The right news,
right in time.

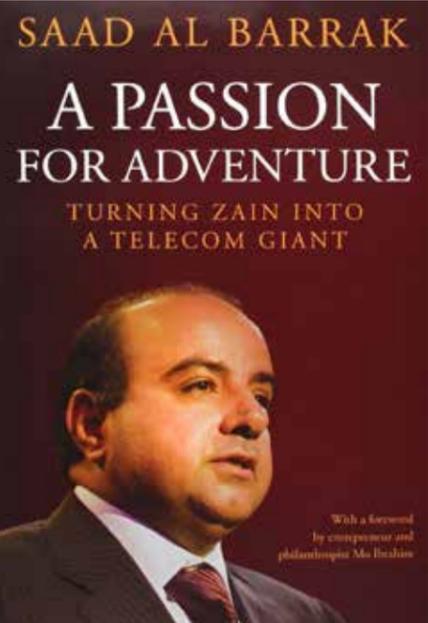
Kuwait cannot remain a big oil shop: Dr Saad



make him an ideal candidate to head many projects that need his determination and grit to turn them around. He has consistently declined government job offers because his revolutionary and enterprising mindset does not allow him to be bogged down in a public sector enterprise. However he continues to volunteer his services to government entities. He is vice chairman of the National Fund for Small and Medium Industries Development (SME Fund), and also a member of the Supreme Council of Planning.

"Kuwaitis today are skilled and we can see that in the 1,500 projects being financed by the SME Fund, of which 25 percent are in technology and industry. There is a lot of innovation and entrepreneurship," he points out. With a capital of \$6.5 billion the Kuwait SME Fund is the largest such fund in the world.

"We have been talking about diversification of our economy for the past 60 years, but nothing has happened," he says bluntly. "Our boat was rising on the high tide of oil and now when the low tide is in, our boat is stuck. Until we bring in other resources to raise the



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and vision that has taken him to the pinnacle of success. He has received many distinguished leadership awards throughout his professional career and in 2009 was even ranked the 20th most influential telecom executive by Global Telecoms Business Magazine.

In his best selling book, A Passion for Adventure, Dr. Saad narrates how he was

which has seen him gain immense success. "I cherish failure," he quips, and adds that "failure is great and it is the only school you can learn so much from; one cannot succeed without failure."

An engineer by profession, Dr. Saad became an entrepreneur by choice. His story is one that every Kuwaiti should be proud of, because his self-made successes come from dedication and diligent work, from venturing

his money for over 10 years before he began reaping its rewards. Today ILA is almost a \$1 billion company that focuses on investments in technology related to mobility, big data, artificial intelligence and cloud computing. These four phenomena, he says, will help bring about change and improve lives going forward.

"Technology has evolved rapidly in the last 30 years, data has become mammoth,

“

Kuwait's integrated vision for the future, the strategic plan 'Vision 2035', has all the plans and projects aligned 100 percent, but the crux lies in implementing them.

instrumental in turning around Zain into the telecom giant it became. "If you only move when you are sure, than not sure, then you will do something much less important and much less rewarding," says Dr. Saad, emphasizing his risk taking philosophy, before adding "the point is, life can only be built by trial and error, and if one develops a passion for adventure then he really becomes an instant learner and grows in every direction, spiritually, morally as well as technically and in knowledge."

These wise words have been the guiding philosophy of his professional life when he set about conquering uncharted territory and



across uncharted territories, taking risks and thinking big.

As a first-generation entrepreneur in Kuwait, Dr. Saad may have been a reluctant CEO, but his insatiable thirst for knowledge is something remarkable. He has degrees from various prestigious educational institutes such as Ohio, Harvard and London Universities, but he has never stopped learning.

A firm believer in technology, Dr. Saad is not only passionate about technology but also puts his money in his passion. Since leaving Zain, Dr. Saad has set up ILA (pronounced ELA meaning 'toward' in Arabic) and risked all

the rhythm of the world has become faster, transactions have moved to real time," he says while pointing out that, "game changing software that can cut across several industries will make a difference and improve people's lives. This is what ILA is all about'.

"Technology investment is risky, one needs to be patient for the results," he warns while noting that, "at ILA, we invest in small to medium startups, of which four out of five might fail, but one could rise to succeed and go all the way up".

An optimist to the core, Dr. Saad's proven track record at ITS and Zain, and now at ILA,

tide, the boat will never move forward."

"In general, we need to evolve the functioning of our government; we have a wonderful constitution and great institutions, but unfortunately we tend to govern the old way and remain within our comfort zone," observes Dr. Saad. "Kuwaitis are still living under the myth that their country is very rich with huge oil reserves and a large sovereign wealth fund. This is short-term thinking; it has to change. We need to think 30-40 years ahead," he points out.

"Kuwait's integrated vision for the future, the strategic plan 'Vision 2035', has all the plans and projects aligned 100 percent, but the crux lies in implementing them." Underlining that implementation of the projects has been slow, mainly due to the status of the government today, Dr. Saad adds, "Hopefully, this will change over time and everyone will come together to aggressively pursue this well-designed strategic Vision 2035."

Even with the slow pace of change he is optimistic that things will change because "things have to change", he says, pointing to the state of Kuwait's economy which is "a great balance sheet but with no cash flow".

"Fear propels people to change nearly twenty times more often than from need or greed; if you are satisfied and relaxed you hardly move. But if you are where Kuwait

“

Kuwaitis are in fear today, but this is also bringing out a negative response among many of them, especially the new generation,” notes Dr. Saad before adding that as a result their mindset is changing.



is now, we have no other option before us than to change, and to move faster and more assertively,” he reiterates.

“Kuwaitis are in fear today, but this is also bringing out a negative response among many of them, especially the new generation,” notes Dr. Saad before adding that as a result their mindset is changing. “New graduates have to wait between 2 to 3 years for a job, their lifestyle and demands are much higher than earlier generations, these young people are transforming into a negative political power.” Reiterating that change is imminent, he warns, “Fear not aligned with hope is often destructive.”

Regarding the way forward, Dr. Saad says, “A lot of the planning work and the vision are already in place, we should form partnerships and make alliances with world renowned countries as part of the diversification and restructuring process. “Kuwait cannot stay a Big Oil Shop, that is over,” he stresses.

“Our real aim should be to become an energy-skilled country not an oil country,” We should transform to become one of the greatest platforms for energy development — electric, wind, solar, all renewable, sustainable, green energy and efficient. We can use our large financial resources to really develop a line that can support the whole world and we have the capabilities to do that. The economic fundamentals will be drastically changed as the country moves forward in this direction,” he says.

“In the northern economic Zone, we have several great natural assets called islands. We are probably the only country not making use of our natural assets, except for oil. We should be developing these assets as a free zone and venturing forward boldly, with a passion for adventure and risk-taking,” he suggests.

Dr. Saad is often credited for taking Kuwaiti businesses global. He broke the glass ceiling of businesses remaining confined to Kuwait’s borders. At one point, Zain was operating in 23 countries with 99 nationalities on its payroll and it was even referred to as the “Empire of Zain”. Shrugging off this reference, Dr. Saad modestly says that he was only at the right place at the right time. It was the start of the golden age of mobile telecommunications, hence it was the synergy between the two that created the success.

He says that many family-owned businesses start to fade by the second-generation of the

family, but here in the Arab world it fades in the first-generation. While they appear to be held together, in reality, the business is already in the process of degeneration. He attributes this mainly to the luxury we live in, to the pampered culture that makes life easy, but which makes the business non-robust. “If the business does not fight tooth and nail to win the business either dies or becomes sick,” he opines.

Pointing out that Kuwaiti businesses are protected through monopoly’s, dealerships and agencies, he calls them “a parasitic model of business that has to evolve through either partnerships or as publicly traded entities, so as to grow, remain competitive and sustainable.

Elaborating on the telecommunication

work on the new age to change into a digital services company, unfortunately this was never pursued and after the bonanza of the golden age it is now struggling. It takes a new mindset or rather a revolutionary mindset to take the company to the next level,” he says.

Dr Saad’s leadership role is well recognised and appreciated; all through his career he has been a revolutionary business leader evolving ideas and creating new paths rather than just being a business operator. Commenting on the new 5G technology, he says that this is just another speed. “Over the centuries, people always viewed technology with suspicion, so it is nothing new to be reluctant to embrace a new technology when it appears.” Clarifying



industry, Dr. Saad feels big data, artificial intelligence and cloud computing are the future. Information Technology has become a core part for business in many industries, it is no longer just in a support role for business. “Because telecom companies sat in their comfort zones during the golden age for mobile operators, collecting huge margins from selling electro-magnetic waves, and they did not evolve their business model or add value to their businesses, they have now become pressed for margins and are not able to evolve into the new world.”

“During my last two years in Zain we started

that it is not just about the speed, he adds that most telecom companies also cannot leverage the speed of 5G because they are not prepared for it.

Giving an analogy on the response of some companies to the changing telecommunication landscape, he says, “Earlier, companies had an army that could conquer open lands, but now they are confronted with having to fight in jungles and mountains, and many have been found wanting, and as a result their margins have been falling.” He attributes some of the blame to the government, who he says got greedy and spoiled the market. The licencing

tariffs and over regulation had also deeply impacted the investment into the telecom sector.

As much as he believes in technology, he also adds that the critical part is the human being, it is not just the technology. “The human mind is unlimited but their creation will always be limited,” he points out. Noting that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will make us so much more productive and that one should not fear but rather embrace this technology, he adds, “AI does not control the brain, rather the brain controls it, but unless we free ourselves from this fear we cannot move forward.”

Dr. Saad’s story of climbing to the top echelons of decision making, both in the

“

During my last two years in Zain we started work on the new age to change into a digital services company, unfortunately this was never pursued and after the bonanza of the golden age it is now struggling.

business and political world, is one of immense pride and fortitude. As a young boy who lost his father early in life, he was brought up by his brother.

“I responded to being an orphan by taking on the challenge and fighting harder in life in a positive way,” he explains. “Many people become indifferent or cast themselves to the side when they feel impacted by life. But we need to remember that a bullet that does not kill you makes you stronger; that has been my experience in life,” says Dr. Saad at the conclusion of his very interesting and informative chat.

Mental Healthcare is a Human Right

In Memory of Ali Khaled Yasser



By Nada Faris
Special to
The Times Kuwait

On this International Women's Day, 8 March, 2021, I felt compelled to highlight Dalal and Alaa Alhomaizi's campaign SPEAK (Standing for Psychological and Education Awareness in Kuwait.) Dalal and Alaa are twins who spent years promoting the importance of mental health across the country. They managed to raise almost US\$300,000 to stage a major conference with Kuwait's Ministry of Health, and in 2015 the sisters gave a TEDx talk at Teachers College. In their speech, the Kuwaiti sisters mention the amplified nature of the stigma people suffering from mental illness experience in Kuwait. Isolated and maltreated, the neurodivergent have to "bear the shame of disgracing their family's reputation" for contaminating their entire family line with their disorder (most never marry as a result), and they have to defend themselves against accusations of demonic possession and weakened faith.

Dalal and Alaa Alhomaizi's campaign was on my mind recently because on 23 February an eleven-year-old Kuwaiti national committed suicide. His death sparked conversations on social media. One tweet that went viral said:

Please, if you have suicidal thoughts, even if they are just thoughts, ask for mental help. There are doctors and counselors who provide services for free or for a nominal price. Please ask for help. Do not melt our hearts. (My translation)

As was expected from a viral tweet, responses varied; however, one in particular caught my attention. The tweet that stood out for me was by a Kuwaiti activist who campaigns for the rights of minorities. It said:

I'm a big advocate of getting mental health support when you're struggling with thoughts of suicide. But I can't help but wonder how useful mental healthcare would be when the issue is with systemic racism driving you towards despair and you have no control over changing it. (Original)

Unfortunately, this tweet is emblematic of a nationwide misconception about mental health, and about healthcare as a human right. For example, a tweet that followed agreed with the sentiment that mental healthcare might be useless in the face of sustained social and political pressures stemming from other missing rights (such as education). The other tweet, originally written in both Arabic and English, said:

Exactly. People can provide their services in good faith, but do you believe a child deprived of education, who goes out to sell [items] on the street every day [for his livelihood], who knows that he has no future, will regularly go to his appointments with a therapist after work, just to learn how to adapt to these circumstances? I'm sorry this is ridiculous. Seems like we're completely ignoring the root. (The Arabic section is translated into English for consistency)

Why are we pitting education against mental healthcare and acting as if one right cancels out the other, especially if the intention is to advocate for minorities to receive rights that have been denied them? How is it that we have rendered mental health, as another tweet puts it, as a mere privilege:

Mental health is a luxury. Mental health is the last thing an exploited minority thinks about who is unable to find a morsel of food. The effective treatment is [political] emancipation and rights. (My translation)

Again, this way of thinking, reducing mental health to "the last thing" that someone who is experiencing harrowing living circumstances would think about, is dangerous especially if it is coming out of a contingent who "support" minorities. Another responder echoed this stance, writing:

A passport and an immigration visa are better than any cure as long as there is no intention to end the deliberate restrictions on people. (My translation)



Dalal and Alaa Alhomaizi end their TEDx talk with a question and a challenge: "What can you do as a single member of society to end the stigma of mental illness?" Their answer is simply: speak up. Therefore, as a Kuwaiti writer and teaching-artist (who suffers from bipolar) I decided to honor the work of the Alhomaizi sisters and use my voice to intervene in this conversation.

Here is how The World Health Organization defines healthcare:

The right to health is one of a set of internationally agreed human rights standards, and is inseparable or 'indivisible' from these other rights. This means achieving the right to health is both central to, and dependent upon, the realisation of other human rights, to food, housing, work, education, information, and participation.

From the outset, then, any genuine discussion of healthcare as a right already encompasses the others. There is no need to separate healthcare from, say, education. Minorities already suffer from 'survivor's guilt', which Dictionary.com defines as: "feelings of guilt for having survived a catastrophe in which others died." Minorities already feel pain for the peers they lost and shame for the life they still possess. Attempting to convince them further that their mental health is a luxury is cruel.

There are many in Kuwait who dismiss mental health because they confuse it with toxic positivity. Konstantin Lukin writes in an article published on Psychology Today, "Toxic Positivity: Don't Always Look on the Bright Side."

The phrase "toxic positivity" refers to the concept that keeping positive, and keeping positive only, is the right way to live your life. It means only focusing on positive things and rejecting anything that may trigger negative emotions.

It must thus be emphasized that mental healthcare does not mean teaching people

how to feel good about their horrible lives. MentalHealth.gov explains:

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Human beings are complex creatures; some with mental illnesses suffer from breakdowns in brain networking and chemical messaging, and others struggle with problems in thinking and behavior. These types of mental issues are frequently caused or aggravated by changes in physical functions or complications in body

question is phrased misleads readers about healthcare's indivisibility from other rights and confuses mental healthcare with toxic positivity. Therefore, if our intention is not to rattle minorities with more survivor's guilt, then we shouldn't even say "mental healthcare is useful," but rather emphasize unequivocally that minorities deserve affordable access to safe spaces with professionals who can equip them with knowledge and resources to tackle psychic, somatic, and social areas of imbalances—because that is their human right. In fact, the 38th Article and the first bullet point in the 39th Article of the League of Arab States's Arab Charter on Human Rights (written on 22 May, 2004 and entered into force 15 March, 2008) state:

Article 38: Every person has the right to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, which ensures their well-being and a decent life, including food, clothing, housing, services and the right to a healthy environment. The States parties shall take the necessary measures commensurate with their resources to guarantee these rights.

Article 39: 1. The States parties recognize the right of every member of society to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the right of the citizen to free basic health-care services and to have access to medical facilities without discrimination of any kind.

If our states are not yet delivering upon their promises the solution is to fight harder for these rights rather than to dismiss them as "useless." After all, groups are composed of individuals: human beings with human needs. The more that people who struggle in the social, political, and economic realms are able to access mental healthcare services — enabling them to make better critical and creative decisions (and survive) — the more that this will positively impact their groups. Saying otherwise displays a dangerous inclination toward barbarism.

I end this piece with Dalal and Alaa Alhomaizi's question ("What can you do as a single member of society to end the stigma of mental illness?"), and suggest that if you are a mental health professional, please use your voice to publicize your willingness to see minorities for free (or for a nominal price); and if you belong to a disenfranchised group in Kuwait know that your mental health is not a luxury or a waste of time and resources. The integrity of your humanity is not up for haggling by activists who have failed in their advocacy for your rights. You will not be selfish to seek help. In fact, the healthier you are, the more resilient, creative, and analytical you will become. Hence, receiving mental healthcare will benefit your community.

Lastly, dear reader, I leave you with the same question: if you are neither a mental health professional nor someone struggling with mental health, how might you contribute to the conversation?

Nada Faris has earned an MFA in Creative Writing from Columbia University. In 2018, she received an Arab Woman Award from Harper's Bazaar Arabia for her impact on Kuwait's creative sector. She is an Honorary Fellow in Writing at Iowa University's International Writing Program (IWP) Fall 2013, an alumna of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) April 2018, USA: Empowering Youth Through the Performing Arts, and the author of three international books.

Website: www.nadafaris.com
Twitter: @nadafaris

Who do we celebrate when we celebrate International Women's Day?



Shaikha Al-Hashem
Special to
The Times Kuwait

International Women's Day was born out of a group of women workers who decided to rise up in the early 1900s against inequality, disenfranchisement, and lack of rights for women in the United States. The fifteen thousand women who reportedly marched in the streets of New York City in February 1908 demanding equality, could be said to have paved the way for women around the world.

Similar movements and marches followed in Europe and elsewhere. In 1975, the year the United Nations celebrated as International Women's Year, the global body recognized 8 March as International Women's Day. In the following years the UN began adopting annual themes for the day; this year's theme is #ChoosetoChallenge, where we are asked to make a choice by challenging and calling out gender bias and inequality. The campaign also encourages us to seek out and choose to celebrate women's successes and achievements.

But if we are to set out and 'choose to challenge' then there is much to challenge. The women workers of New York broke

convention and challenged the status quo. What are we to challenge here in Kuwait? What is worth marching out for? What struggles do we take to the public sphere? What are our priorities? We must look beyond the veneer that just because women in Kuwait got their suffrage, we now have equal rights. The struggle goes much deeper than mere votes. We have still not had a fair share of representatives in the National Assembly. The last elections were a defeat in the name of Kuwaiti women.

Our laws need massive revision and others outright elimination, for several articles explicitly discriminate against women. We, as women, have a lot to do to receive equal health services for example. The bylaws at the Ministry of Health discriminate against women. Single women have no right to demand for basic gynaecological examinations, while married women cannot undergo any procedure without the consent of their husbands. In the education sector, mothers are not considered an authorized signatory for their children. Kuwaiti mothers married to foreigners still cannot pass citizenship to their children. And domestic violence is still very prevalent.

But International Women's Day when celebrated in Kuwait is not just about Kuwaiti women. It is a day to think of and appreciate all women. I think here of migrant women workers who have left their families behind, who struggle by putting others first, who suffer in silence and who persist despite all the dire conditions. When we meet these women, whether they are baristas, saleswomen, cashiers, nurses, manicurists, and domestic



as community violence; their struggle with the patriarchy is far more than we can ever conceive of.

That the exploitation and oppression of women across the world still thrives before standing on an equal footing with our male counterparts; before dismantling gender bias; before demolishing the roots of the patriarchal systems; before needing to remind the world that women exist and have an assigned day to celebrate them. We, as women, have a lot of work ahead of us and it is not a smooth road but it is necessary for us to tread and march on.

On this day then, we must celebrate, honor, protect, and stand in solidarity with all migrant and stateless women. They are our sisters and our struggles are one. We must honor, protect and support victims and survivors of domestic violence, migrants, stateless and citizens. To eliminate gender-based discrimination, we need to first eliminate discrimination amongst us as women. It is time that women across Kuwait unite!

workers, they smile and greet us hiding behind unimaginable anxiety and anguish. They are strangers in a land they know will be a temporary stay for them. They will either return when their time is up, or continue to tread the path in the migration chain.

I also think of the stateless women who want nothing more than to be recognized as human; a human who deserves to belong to a community. A human who has the right to education, health and equal and secure job opportunity. I think of stateless mothers who live in torment worrying about the future of their children, and trying hard to make their unlivable conditions liveable. Stateless women face a higher risk of domestic violence as well

Shaikha Al-Hashem is a writer and researcher from Kuwait focusing on women, migrant workers and the political economy. Shaikha is also a PhD Candidate in The European Graduate School, in the Philosophy, Art and Critical Theory (PACT) Program. Her specialization is in women and gender studies. She tweets @AlHashemShaikha

Canada's #PeaceByHer Campaign

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

No country in the world has achieved gender equality. The global Covid-19 pandemic has been a stark reminder of the enormous work that remains to build a gender-equal world.

Since its outbreak, women have been on the front lines of pandemic response and recovery. They have also faced its dire impacts: alarming levels of domestic and intimate partner violence, increased and unacknowledged care responsibilities, and economic insecurity.

Yet, from challenges comes the opportunity to bring meaningful change, and Canada is committed to work with partners around the world to make this change a reality. Resolution 1325 – the foundation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, adopted by the United Nations Security Council just over 20 years ago – calls on us to

recognize that women are powerful agents of change and to ensure they are included in key decisions that impact their lives. This is their right. We also need their participation. There is growing evidence showing that peace is more likely, and more likely to be sustainable when women's voices and experiences are taken seriously and their rights are respected. When women are involved in peacebuilding, for example, the probability that violence will end increases by 24%.

In times of crises and conflict, women and youth play vital roles in building peaceful communities, despite the enormous risks they often face in doing this work. Time after time, women and youth are the ones leading demonstrations, building movements and campaigns, and calling for inclusive peace negotiations and representative governments.

Despite their important contributions to prevent, end and rebuild after crisis and conflict, women are still largely excluded from peace processes, their work remains underfunded, their expertise remains under-recognised, and they are targets of violence.

This is why the Government of Canada is launching a year-long campaign, #PeaceByHer, to increase the recognition, access, support, and protection of women peacebuilders worldwide. The #PeaceByHer campaign is relevant to us all. In Canada, in Kuwait and elsewhere.

Over the past years we have noted with interest the efforts of groups like the Intisar Foundation, led by Sheikha Intisar Salem Al Ali Al Sabah, who work on fostering peace in the Arab world by accelerating the transformation of Arab women traumatised by the brutality of war and violence into the world's most impactful Peacemakers. The Foundation provides psychological support programming through drama therapy. The sessions aim at sustaining and strengthening women's psychological healing and personal growth and helping them become peacemakers in their communities.

The Embassy of Canada in Kuwait is committed to providing support and advice to Kuwaiti groups and organizations working towards empowering women in peace and security processes and will, over the next 12 months and beyond, provide updates via our social media channels on these endeavours.

Times of crisis often present profound turning points. Do we want to carry on with the status quo or is it time for change? This International Women's Day, Canada affirms that it's time to get behind the peacebuilding potential that women peacebuilders possess. It's time for change.



THE TIMES KUWAIT

Subscribe & Receive

your print copy @ your doorsteps

- Call (+965) 97492440
- Send email to subscribethetimes@gmail.com

Advertisement for The Times Kuwait subscription. It features the newspaper's logo at the top, followed by the text 'Subscribe & Receive your print copy @ your doorsteps'. Below this, there are two call-to-action items: 'Call (+965) 97492440' and 'Send email to subscribethetimes@gmail.com'. The background of the advertisement shows a person's hands holding a copy of The Times Kuwait newspaper, with a cup of coffee and a tablet visible on a wooden table.

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

The COVID Bubble



NOURIEL ROUBINI

CEO of Roubini Macro Associates and host of the NourielToday.com broadcast, is Professor of Economics at New York University's Stern School of Business.

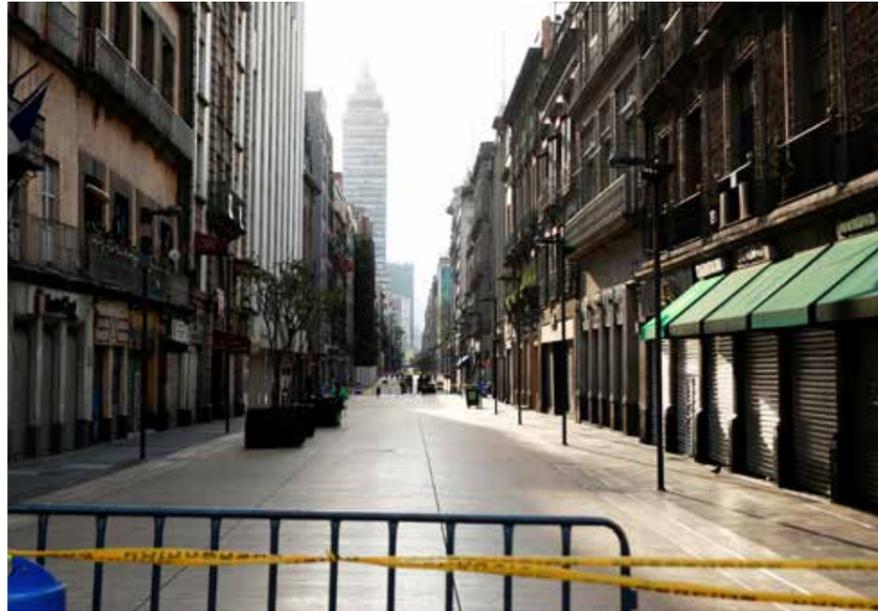
The US economy's K-shaped recovery is underway. Those with stable full-time jobs, benefits, and a financial cushion are faring well as stock markets climb to new highs. Those who are unemployed or partially employed in low-value-added blue-collar and service jobs – the new “precariat” – are saddled with debt, have little financial wealth, and face diminishing economic prospects.

These trends indicate a growing disconnect between Wall Street and Main Street. The new stock-market highs mean nothing to most people. The bottom 50% of the wealth distribution holds just 0.7% of total equity-market assets, whereas the top 10% commands 87.2%, and the top 1% holds 51.8%. The 50 richest people have as much wealth as the 165 million people at the bottom.

Rising inequality has followed the ascent of Big Tech. As many as three retail jobs are lost for every job that Amazon creates, and similar dynamics hold true in other sectors dominated by tech giants. But today's social and economic stresses are not new. For decades, strapped workers have not been able to keep up with the Joneses, owing to the stagnation of real (inflation-adjusted) median income alongside rising costs of living and spending expectations.

For decades, the “solution” to this problem was to “democratize” finance so that poor and struggling households could borrow more to buy homes they couldn't afford, and then use those homes as ATM machines. This expansion of consumer credit – mortgages and other debt – resulted in a bubble that ended with the 2008 financial crisis, when millions lost their jobs, homes, and savings.

Now, the same millennials who were shafted over a decade ago are being duped again. Workers who rely on gig, part-time, or freelance “employment” are being offered a new rope with which to hang themselves in the name of “financial democratization.” Millions have opened accounts on Robinhood and other



investment apps, where they can leverage their scant savings and incomes several times over to speculate on worthless stocks.

The recent GameStop narrative, featuring a united front of heroic small day traders fighting evil short-selling hedge funds, masks the ugly reality that a cohort of hopeless, jobless, skill-less, debt-burdened individuals is being exploited once again. Many have been convinced that financial success lies not in good jobs, hard work, and patient saving and investment, but in get-rich-quick-schemes and wagers on inherently worthless assets like cryptocurrencies (or “shitcoins,” as I prefer to call them).

more.

Making matters worse, markets are starting to worry about the massive experiment in budget-deficit monetization being carried out by the US Federal Reserve and Department of the Treasury through quantitative easing (a form of Modern Monetary Theory or “helicopter money”). A growing chorus of critics warns that this approach could overheat the economy, forcing the Fed to hike interest rates sooner than expected. Nominal and real bond yields are already rising, and this has shaken risky assets like equities. Owing to these concerns about a Fed-led taper tantrum, a recovery that was supposed to be good

with only around one-third of the stimulus likely to be translated into actual spending.

This implies that the package's effects on growth, inflation, and bond yields will be smaller than expected. And because the additional savings will end up being funneled back into purchases of government bonds, what was meant to be a bailout for strapped households will in effect become a bailout for banks and other lenders.

To be sure, inflation may eventually still emerge if the effects of monetized fiscal deficits combine with negative supply shocks to produce stagflation. The risk of such shocks has risen as a result of the new Sino-American cold war, which threatens to trigger a process of deglobalization and economic balkanization as countries pursue renewed protectionism and the re-shoring of investments and manufacturing operations. But this is a story for the medium term, not for 2021.

When it comes to this year, growth may yet fall short of expectations. New strains of the coronavirus continue to emerge, raising concerns that existing vaccines may no longer be sufficient to end the pandemic. Repeated stop-go cycles undermine confidence, and political pressure to reopen the economy before the virus is contained will continue to build. Many small- and medium-size enterprises are still at risk of going bust, and far too many people are facing the prospects of long-term unemployment. The list of pathologies afflicting the economy is long and includes rising inequality, deleveraging by debt-burdened firms and workers, and political and geopolitical risks.

Asset markets remain frothy – if not outright bubbly – because they are being fed by super-accommodative monetary policies. But today's price/earnings ratios are as high they were in the bubbles preceding the busts of 1929 and 2000. Between ever-rising leverage and the potential for bubbles in special-purpose acquisition companies, tech stocks, and cryptocurrencies, today's market mania offers plenty of cause for concern.

Under these conditions, the Fed is probably worried that markets will instantly crash if it takes away the punch bowl. And with the increase in public and private debt preventing the eventual monetary normalization, the likelihood of stagflation in the medium term – and a hard landing for asset markets and economies – continues to increase.

“ Many people have been convinced that financial success lies not in good jobs, hard work, and patient saving and investment, but in get-rich-quick-schemes and wagers on inherently worthless assets like cryptocurrencies ”

Make no mistake: The populist meme in which an army of millennial Davids takes down a Wall Street Goliath is merely serving another scheme to fleece clueless amateur investors. As in 2008, the inevitable result will be another asset bubble. The difference is that this time, recklessly populist members of Congress have taken to inveighing against financial intermediaries for not permitting the vulnerable to leverage themselves even

for markets is now giving way to a market correction.

Meanwhile, congressional Democrats are moving ahead with a \$1.9 trillion rescue package that will include additional direct support to households. But with millions already in arrears on rent and utilities payments or in moratoria on their mortgages, credit cards, and other loans, a significant share of these disbursements will go toward debt repayment and saving,



Foreign Embassies & International Organisations in Kuwait

<https://www.timeskuwait.com/timesa-z/foreign-embassies-in-kuwait/>

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Green Shoots of COVID Solidarity



NGAIRE WOODS

Ngaire Woods is Dean of the Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford.

OXFORD – In a recent letter to her G20 colleagues, US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen argued that a truly global COVID-19 vaccination program “is the strongest stimulus we can provide to the global economy.” With rich countries vaccinating their populations while low-income countries have yet to receive even paid-for vaccine doses, the world seems a long way from that goal. But the first shoots of solidarity are beginning to appear, and leaders must strengthen cooperation to nurture them.

Such an approach is essential, because reopening the global economy requires containing the coronavirus everywhere. One recent study estimates that, even if advanced economies reach optimal vaccination levels by mid-2021, they could nonetheless suffer economic losses of up to \$4.5 trillion this year if developing countries’ vaccine rollouts continue to lag far behind. Open economies such as European Union member states, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States would be most at risk, and output losses in sectors such as construction, textiles, retail, and automobiles could exceed 5%.

Uncoordinated vaccine distribution also poses grave health risks. Leaving poorer and needier countries out of the supply chain has resulted in the deaths of numerous desperately needed African frontline nurses and health workers. When Guinea declared an Ebola outbreak in February, the world relied on the country’s own health-care workers to roll out a containment and vaccination campaign. Without such workers, the world is more vulnerable to future pandemics: in 2014, for example, a single case of Ebola in the US caused nationwide panic when it spread to the nurses treating the patient.

But ensuring a speedy global vaccine rollout is proving difficult. The COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, established by three international health agencies to speed up vaccine production and distribution, needs more money. Otherwise, poorer countries will be forced to divert scarce budget resources or slow down vaccination programs against other diseases such as polio, measles, and meningitis.

More funding is also needed for the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, which the World Health Organization and other partners created to develop tests, treatments, and vaccines to fight the



disease. According to one estimate, a \$10 billion US contribution to this initiative would safeguard up to \$1.34 trillion in domestic output, giving America a more than hundred-fold return on its investment. Yellen’s letter to the G20 recognizes this logic, and the group agreed on February 26 that granting equitable access to safe COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics for all countries “is a top priority.”

But money is not the most immediate obstacle. African countries that have borrowed to purchase vaccines have discovered that there are no doses for them to buy. Although COVAX has concluded

COVID-19 vaccine, has said that, while the pandemic continues, it will not enforce its coronavirus-related patents against those making vaccines intended to combat it. And AstraZeneca says that “for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic,” it will proceed “with only the costs of production and distribution being covered.”

Yet, these short-term arrangements will soon need attention. The voluntary licensing regime preferred by the UK and other rich countries may well be inadequate. At the least, policymakers should be considering non-exclusive licenses and technology transfer, as John-Arne Røttingen, who

governments also are competing to prove that they are procuring adequate supplies for their own citizens.

Two Brazilian research institutes had planned to produce millions of doses of the AstraZeneca-Oxford and Chinese Sinovac vaccines, but have been hampered by unexplained delays in shipments of vital ingredients from China. And the Serum Institute of India, the world’s largest vaccine manufacturer, was aiming to make more than 300 million doses available to 145 countries through COVAX in the first half of 2021, before the Indian government recently ordered it to meet domestic needs first.

Still, some encouraging signs of vaccine solidarity are emerging. Forty-seven countries, as well as the African Union, which has 55 member states, have made or been offered COVID-19 vaccine deals with China, India, or Russia. India has shipped nearly 6.8 million free doses around the world, China has pledged around 3.9 million, and Israel is offering 100,000.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has pledged to donate most of his country’s surplus doses to poorer countries. Some other G7 leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, are making similar commitments, although the US government has declined to do so for now.

Rich-country governments must deliver on their solidarity promises. They need to donate vaccine doses immediately to protect frontline health-care workers in vulnerable countries. They need to contribute more to the ACT and COVAX initiatives to ensure a genuinely global rollout. And they need to work with their own countries’ pharmaceutical firms to deliver more transparent, non-exclusive licensing deals. Only this level of solidarity can restore global growth.

“ Even if advanced economies reach optimal vaccination levels by mid-2021, they could nonetheless suffer economic losses of up to US\$4.5 trillion this year if developing countries’ vaccine rollouts continue to lag far behind. ”

some deals for developing countries, by March 1 it had delivered only a few hundred thousand doses to Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire. A first shipment reached Nigeria on March 2. And Guinea has administered a total of 55 doses to date.

Some blame intellectual-property (IP) protections for developing countries’ lack of vaccine access. In late 2020, India and South Africa, as well as some NGOs, urged the World Trade Organization to waive current IP rules related to COVID-19, but the US, EU, and UK opposed the idea. Governments will debate the issue at the World Trade Organization in early March.

But patents are not (yet) the problem. The US pharmaceutical firm Moderna, which has developed an approved

chairs the WHO Solidarity Trial of COVID-19 treatments, has proposed.

This still leaves two more immediate obstacles. First, there are manufacturing challenges related to increasing production speed. Each vaccine is different and relies on biological and chemical processes of variable efficacy that are sometimes difficult to scale up. And vaccine production requires intensive supervision and quality control. But these problems will ease as manufacturing improves and more vaccines, including a newly approved one from Johnson & Johnson, come on stream. The other big problem is vaccine nationalism. Wealthy countries have stockpiled more COVID-19 vaccine doses than they need, and other



Join the Conversation

@timeskuwait

@thetimesq8

@thetimeskuwait

www.timeskuwait.com

EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Saving Journalism from Big Tech



TAYLOR OWEN

Director of the Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy at McGill University and Host of the Centre for International Governance Innovation's Big Tech podcast.

It is easy to forget that for a long time — long before Google and Facebook went head-to-head with the Australian government last month — there was no proven business model for the internet. That, after all, is why the dot-com bubble popped. But then Google and Facebook found a way to transform their biggest asset, user data, into a lucrative product: advertising that targets consumers with far more nuance and precision than traditional TV or print ads ever could.

Much can be said about this type of micro-targeted advertising, its impact on society, and whether it should even be allowed. But one thing is clear: it has been wildly successful in commercial terms. Having captured almost all of the advertising revenue in the market, Google and Facebook are now two of the most profitable companies in history, so powerful that they can strong-arm many national governments.

Because Google and Facebook have gained monopoly-like dominance over digital advertising in search and social networking, respectively, it is now next to impossible to bargain with them. Worse, a business model that is not based on the distribution of reliable information has come at the expense of reputable journalistic institutions and others in the business of providing this crucial public good. We are thus left with a dual market failure that harms not only the advertising business, but also democracy.

To address both of these problems, the Australian government recently mandated that social-media platforms enter into negotiations to pay news publishers for their content, and introduced measures to ensure more transparency with respect to ad sales and algorithmic changes that could affect the news business. Implicit in this response is the idea that you can solve the market failures in both journalism and advertising by tackling the problem of market dominance.

Though Australia offered a capitalist solution to the crisis in journalism, the Big Tech firms vehemently opposed the move. At the same time that Google and Facebook are running ads professing their support for



new digital regulations, they both threw a tantrum as soon as a government actually proposed rules that did not align with their current business models.

While Google initially threatened to leave the Australian market entirely, Facebook went with the nuclear option of blocking all news from its platform in Australia (both companies have since backed down somewhat). Putting aside the disturbing implications of a media distributor blocking reliable information during a pandemic, neither company's response is sustainable over the long term. If the platforms' answer to regulation is to deny their users access to information, their products will become less attractive over time.

“ The new media code in Australia says nothing about how licensing money from the platforms should be distributed, raising the possibility that smaller start-ups and innovators will be left out in the cold. ”

Still, one can debate whether the Australian approach represents good public policy. On the surface, its 'News Media Bargaining Code' is a fairly simple and potentially effective way to address a market failure by redirecting funds from platforms to publishers. The policy's use of forced arbitration to level the playing field has many precedents in Australia, and certainly makes sense in principle. But this approach has three limitations that other countries should bear in mind before adopting similar models.

First, mandated arbitration tends to

privilege big publishers more than smaller, innovative companies and organizations that are pioneering new journalistic business models. Among the biggest news publishers in Australia (and thus one of the biggest beneficiaries of the new law) is Rupert Murdoch, whom no one would ever mistake for a champion of democracy or public-interest journalism.

Major newspapers tend to advocate policies that serve their (and their shareholders') own interests, rather than the interests of independent journalism generally. In Australia's case, the new media code says nothing about how licensing money from the platforms should be distributed, raising the possibility that smaller start-ups and

and Google have amassed so much market power with their unrivaled ad delivery that they have managed to avoid entering into licensing agreements with publishers. But while mandated arbitration might address this particular problem, it would not suddenly restore the traditional news business model; nor would it do anything about the broader range of platform-based harms, from disinformation to data-privacy violations and election interference.

There are some easy fixes. Governments should not give platforms a get-out-of-jail-free card for making a 'significant contribution' to the news-media ecosystem. Publishers should be mandated to use any revenue they gain through the code for journalism. And the arbitration panel could favor proposals from smaller organizations and those in 'news deserts'.

But a broader, more promising solution is for governments and platforms (by government mandate, if necessary) to pay into a civic media fund that would independently and transparently allocate funding to a broad range of journalistic outlets. If Facebook and Google are going to put billions of dollars into news, an independent and impartial body representing the public interest should distribute the money. That way, reputable publishers would receive support while remaining free from undue government or private influence.

The Australian experience represents a significant step forward when it comes to reining in overly powerful digital platforms. Facebook and Google finally have had to come to the negotiating table. But Australia's new media code does not solve the crisis in journalism. To do that, we need to think even bigger than we currently do.

innovators will be left out in the cold.

A second problem with the Australian approach is that it encourages ad hoc and unaccountable deal-making that could result in platforms co-opting independent media organizations. We do not want publishers to become so dependent on the money they receive from platforms that they can no longer hold those companies to account.

Finally, the Australian media code treats the market failures in advertising and journalism as one issue, when they are actually separate problems. Yes, Facebook

Thank you for liking us on Facebook

Log on to www.timeskuwait.com and Read today's news.... today

101,000 Followers

THE TIMES KUWAIT

www.timeskuwait.com

Like us on facebook TimesKuwait

Digital app helps change personality traits

Researchers from Swiss Universities of Zurich, ETH Zurich and St. Gallen, working with their colleagues in the Universities of Brandeis and Illinois in the United States, have been studying the impact of digital intervention on personality traits.

Personality traits such as conscientiousness or sociability generally change throughout our lives influenced by experience and behavior patterns. These changes normally take place gradually, as people adapt to the demands of society and their environment.

Psychologists studying these behavior patterns have been keen to know whether certain personality traits can be influenced in a shorter-term and in a targeted manner. The new research in Switzerland and the United States aims to answer these questions.

In their study, around 1,500 participants were provided with a specially developed smartphone app for three months and the researchers then assessed whether and how their personalities had changed. The five major personality traits of openness, conscientiousness, sociability (extraversion), considerateness

(agreeableness), and emotional vulnerability (neuroticism) were examined. The app included elements of knowledge transfer, behavioral and resource activation, self-reflection, and feedback on progress. All communication with the digital coach and companion (a chatbot) took place virtually. The chatbot supported the participants on a daily basis to help them make the desired changes.

At the end of the three-month evaluation period, the majority of participants reported greater success in achieving their goals, which included reducing their emotional vulnerability, increasing their conscientiousness, and increasing their extraversion, than the control group. Close friends and family members also observed changes in those participants who wanted to increase expression of a certain personality trait. However, for those who wanted to reduce expression of a trait, the people close to them noticed little change. This group mainly comprised those participants who wanted to become less emotionally vulnerable, an inner process that is less observable from the outside.

The results that have surprised many psychologists show that we are not just

slaves to our personality, but that we can deliberately make changes to routine experience and behavior patterns. The findings also indicate that development of the personality structure can happen more quickly than was previously believed.

The researchers however point out that their study did not establish whether the behavioral changes were permanent or a temporary fluctuation. They said that more evidence of digital interventions were needed before they could recommend it for use by the public.

Nevertheless the research opens the way for potential digital intervention in several areas of life, including boosting the resources of individuals, as the response to a particular situation, or a personality trait such as conscientiousness, can influence health and healthy aging.

The smartphone application PEACH, short for Personality and Coaching, was developed as part of a project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) to study personality change through a digital intervention. The application provides scalable communication capabilities using a digital agent that mimics a conversation with a



human, as well as the digital journaling, reminders of individual goals, video clips, opportunities for self-reflection and feedback on progress. Weekly core topics and small interventions aim to address and activate the desired changes and thus the development of personality traits.

Though PEACH was developed as a research tool, it is hoped that in the future similar apps could be developed and made more widely available to the public. In the future, however, it is thought that research apps such as PEACH will be made more widely available.

Immune system harmed by high-fructose diet

Fructose, a natural sugar found in fruits, honey, and certain vegetables, such as asparagus and squash, contribute to a healthy diet, as they contain less sugar than processed, sugar-sweetened foods. On the other hand, high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), a manufactured sweetener made from cornstarch, is often seen as being harmful to health.

In the latter part of the last century, many manufacturers of processed foods and soft drinks, particularly in the United States, rapidly began choosing HFCS to sweeten their products because of its low cost.

Numerous research studies have consistently shown links between consuming large quantities of HFCS and various conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, and non-alcohol-related fatty liver disease. A major problem with HFCS is that it is in numerous processed foods, including some that people might not expect, such as in frozen pizza and salad dressing. Nevertheless, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) maintains that they have seen no evidence that foods containing HFCS are less safe than foods incorporating other sweeteners.

A new study reveals that a diet high in fructose sugar is inimical to the proper and effective functioning of the body's immune system. An earlier study had found that human dendritic cells that play an important role in the immune system when cultured in fructose solution led to an increase in inflammation. However, the researchers did not investigate the metabolic mechanism behind this occurrence.

For the new study, researchers at the British universities of Swansea, Bristol, and at the Francis Crick Institute in London, examined how human and mouse cells responded to fructose exposure. Results from their study indicate that a diet high in fructose may impair functioning of the immune system.

The researchers found that fructose causes the immune system to become inflamed, which in turn, produces more reactive molecules associated with inflammation.

More specifically, fructose was found to adjust cellular metabolic pathways to promote the production of more reactive inflammatory cytokines.



4th

الإحتفال بالعيد السنوي الرابع

ANNIVERSARY

CELEBRATION

We are thankful to the people of Kuwait for your TRUST and tremendous support to complete 4 successful years in the land of Kuwait.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Fiscal Follies in COVID recovery



DANIEL GROS

Director of the Centre for European Policy Studies.

When COVID-19 went global about a year ago, the memory of the 2008 global financial crisis was still fresh, and policymakers pulled every lever at their disposal to maintain financial stability. The reaction to the previous crisis had indeed been somewhat slow and confused, especially in Europe, because no one at the time had ever dealt with anything like it before. But 2020 was different.

In Europe, policymakers intervened on a massive scale, with the European Central Bank expanding its balance sheet from an already high pre-crisis level of €4.7 trillion (\$5.7 trillion) to more than €7 trillion — two-thirds of eurozone GDP. At the same time, governments stepped in to support incomes, mostly through expanded short-time work schemes, which preserved employment even as people's hours on the job plunged.

In the United States, close to 40 million people had lost their jobs by May 2020, but more than half that number soon found new employment opportunities. In the meantime, many availed themselves of unemployment benefits, and many more households received direct cash disbursements from the federal government. As a result, total US personal income has actually increased during the pandemic. Finally, like the ECB, the US Federal Reserve has expanded its balance sheet substantially and maintained a highly accommodative monetary policy.

These combined fiscal- and monetary-



policy blasts were absolutely necessary in the face of an unprecedented economic downturn. Even with such a massive response, Europe and the US experienced a sharp decline in demand as a result of lockdowns that prevented many sectors from producing or selling their products. With businesses shutting down en masse, consumption plummeted, and households saved a significant share of the income support they received.

The policy response to the COVID-19 crisis thus has resulted in a massive increase in liquid assets held by the public (and banks), which in turn seems to have helped drive stock markets to record highs and risk premia to near-record lows. But now that the end of lockdowns and other restrictions is in sight, policymakers need to decide whether the situation warrants a gradual withdrawal of support or yet another dose of fiscal and monetary stimulus.

On the question of fiscal policy, one of the big lessons from the 2008 crisis might now need to be unlearned. It has become almost conventional wisdom to say that the reduction in fiscal deficits after 2009 was a mistake. According to this narrative, the rebalancing of public-sector accounts

through 'austerity' (tax increases and spending cuts) resulted in an especially slow recovery and the ensuing rise of populism. Even the International Monetary Fund has now changed its position on the issue of government debt.

But policymakers must ask themselves whether the fiscal-policy lesson of the last crisis is applicable today. The output gaps that persist in some sectors do not reflect a lack of disposable income, but rather restrictions on mobility and a general hesitancy on the part of consumers who fear going out while the coronavirus is still circulating.

In these circumstances, governments need to keep providing replacement incomes for those rendered idle by the pandemic. When lockdowns are lifted, this support can be phased out. But even then, the 'GDP gap' will be slow to close, because many sectors will continue to operate below normal capacity for some time to come. In fact, the IMF predicts that some countries will have to wait until 2022 before they return to pre-crisis GDP, because not all sectors can bounce back immediately.

Nonetheless, the experience of the past year and common sense suggest that

additional large-scale transfers will simply be saved, implying that additional stimulus would have a low multiplier effect on aggregate demand. Given that aggregate-demand stimulus becomes less efficient in a sectoral crisis and recovery, one should not judge deficits in such cases by the metrics used during normal recessions. Under the current circumstances, the output gap and the unemployment rate are both misleading, because they reflect the effects of the pandemic on different sectors, not a general weakness of demand.

From this point of view, there would be no need for the \$1.9 trillion fiscal package that is now heading for approval in the US. While much of the US debate has been consumed by concerns about inflation, that is not the key issue. If most of the new transfers to households will be saved, the additional stimulus is unlikely to produce much additional demand, which means that it is also unlikely to fuel inflationary pressure.

There are signs that households might start spending more, possibly to compensate for reduced consumption last year. The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's latest GDPNow forecast estimates that in the first quarter of this year, US consumption and real (inflation-adjusted) GDP are set to increase at annualized rates of 8 percent and 10 percent, respectively.

But even if spending does continue to pick up, it is unlikely to be particularly inflationary, because much of it will go toward goods that can be imported. In this case, the US trade balance would deteriorate further, benefiting European and Chinese producers.

Whether or not inflation increases, the Biden package would increase US government debt as a share of GDP by ten percentage points, with little benefit for the US economy. Trying to stimulate an economy that has already begun a vigorous recovery is a lose-lose proposition.

لولو للصيرفة
LuLu Exchange

**NOW
OPEN**

Terrace Mall
Salmiya, Kuwait

Ground Floor

Shop No. 19, Ground Floor, Terrace Mall, Salmiya Area - Block (2), Kuwait.
+965 22054199 | +965 98785939 | terrace@kw.luluexchange.com
LuLuExchangeKW | www.luluexchange.com



26th
BRANCH
IN KUWAIT

228th
GLOBAL
BRANCH