Staff Report

B eing a migrant worker in Kuwait is not an enviable position. Caught between lawmakers clamoring to throw out expatriates to adjust the demographic imbalance, and a government keen on addressing youth unemployment among nationals through a Kuwaitization drive, many expatriates are left without recourse to a decent livelihood in this land of plenty. The plight of migrant workers in the country was brought out in a recent report by the Kuwait Society for Human Rights (KSHR).

The report, prepared by Labor Issues Monitoring and Follow-up Unit of KSHR and covering the first four months of 2018 is aptly titled ‘Kuwait Treatment of Migrant Labor: A Step Forward & Two Steps Backward’. Continued on Page 11

M any expatriates working in Kuwait’s public sector must have sighed in relief last week to hear the Head of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) admit that it was not realistic to expect replacing expatriates from the public sector any time soon.

Speaking during a media interview, the Head of CSC, Ahmad Al-Jassar, said that Kuwait could not replace all expatriates in public sector, especially in the health and education sectors, as there were not enough qualified candidates from among Kuwaiti applicants to replace the foreigners. He added that, of the total 78,317 foreigners working in the public sector, the majority where employed in the health and education sector. “Around 76 percent of foreigners in the public sectors are employed by the ministries of education and health,” he said. “The health ministry has 33,303 expatriates and the education ministry has 26,433. We have regularly informed the competent committees that replacing them would not be possible for the time being,” admitted Al-Jassar.

In a bid to address the country’s demographic imbalance, where citizens account for less than a third of the population, Kuwait has embarked on a massive Kuwaitization drive to reduce reliance on foreigners and boost employment for nationals. The drive is being closely monitored by several lawmakers who have been pushing for a genuine ‘Kuwaitization’ by replacing expatriates with citizens, initially in the public sector and later reducing their numbers in the private sector.

“Head of Civil Service Commission Ahmad Al-Jassar”

He added the situation meant any drive to replace foreigners, especially in the health and education sectors would be highly difficult. “We study the requests by all public departments to appoint employees and we assess the availability of Kuwaiti citizens,” Al-Jassar said.

In September, the commission said it created 17,936 vacancies for Kuwaiti nationals in the public sector to deal with applications from around 22,000 Kuwaitis who had signed up for recruitment.

Despite a robust drive by the government to make the private sector more attractive to Kuwaiti nationals, foreigners continue to overwhelm the sector by accounting for 97 percent of jobs in this sector. Most Kuwaitis opt for government jobs and would rather sit and wait for a public sector vacancy than enter the private sector. According to government labor statistics released in 2016, about 58 percent of Kuwaitis refuse to work in the private sector and would rather wait for an opening in the public sector.

Continued on Page 9

KSHR report flays treatment of migrants

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Head of Civil Service Commission
Ahmad Al-Jassar

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Sarah Al-Mulla

Swimming with Sharks

Have you ever swam with sharks? Most of us would probably answer “no” to that question. Well, most of us aren’t exactly like Sarah Al-Mulla, 31, a vibrant, fearless rescue diver.

I have known Sarah for a few years but when we sat to discuss her many escapades across the ocean, I saw her in an entirely new light.

Her love for diving was first triggered after a snorkeling experience in Thailand in 2011. The instructor offered an “explore diving” session which sparked Sarah’s curiosity instantly. “I fell in love, from the surface of the boat you can see the fish clearly, when you go down it’s a different world. It’s so therapeutic.”

I pried further, I couldn’t understand how someone can be so entranced by a prospect that carried so much danger and uncertainty to it. “The serenity, the different types of creatures, you don’t know what might appear. It’s exciting. It’s an ocean, you don’t know what might pass by, I don’t know, I just loved it.”

When Sarah returned from Thailand, she was a changed woman. She trained and obtained her advanced diving license which enabled her to descend all the way down to 30 meters. “They train you in the pool and you have to sit on the floor of the pool. You have to remove your mask, remove your air and bring it back without panicking. That took me a while, I felt like I was drowning myself. There’s a technique to go back and catch your oxygen mask. It did come in handy. I was in Greece, in 2012 and the diving place was where a volcano erupted many years ago. When diving, me and my brother, water came in my regulator, so I pushed on the regulator to get the water out and I felt off, I kept losing air, I had to calm down and not panic. I used the technique and placed it back on my mouth.”

Sarah was a fully trained and licensed scuba diver, but she had a desire to push herself further. The community is so positive and trust and mutual respect. Diving is very much a team sport and heavily depends on the close-knit relationships formed between all divers.

“As a rescue diver, you’re equipped to help someone or find someone under water. In training, you have to play a real-life scenario where there’s a diver missing. One person would be the anchor and the other person would take a rope and go around and if they didn’t find anything, more rope would be released to go deeper to continue searching.”

There are several local groups who work hard towards cleaning the sea and the beaches in Kuwait. Sarah believes this is such an important cause and works actively to support this community.

“I went diving with the sharks in the Dubai Aquarium, you can go before or after their feeding. There are so many types of sharks, Manta Rays and sting rays. I wasn’t scared for my life. Sharks are scary, but they command such respect when you see them. They own the place, we’re not allowed to touch them, so they don’t think that we’re trying to hurt them.”

This experience, however, does not come close to the most intense encounter Sarah had with a shark. Earlier in 2018, Sarah went back to the Maldives to snorkel, and for the first time in her life, she was fortunate enough to spot a rare sighting of a whale shark. A giant, 7-meter-long whale shark. “I literally laughed and cried at the same time from excitement. I felt so humbled, he was swimming peacefully. The fact that we got the chance to see it, when some divers were exploring for 3 weeks trying to spot one, but they didn’t.”

Sarah was a fully trained and licensed scuba diver, but she had a desire to push herself even more. In 2017 she pursued a rescue diver license, which was by far more challenging. “As a rescue diver, you’re equipped to help someone or find someone under water. In training, you have to play a real-life scenario where there’s a diver missing. One person would be the anchor and the other person would take a rope and go around and if they didn’t find anything, more rope would be released to go deeper to continue searching.”

The whole process relies heavily on teamwork, trust and mutual respect. Diving is very much a team sport and heavily depends on the close-knit relationships fostered between all divers. “I’m passionate about this, I do want to take it further. The community is so positive and encouraging. There are so many possibilities, you can become an instructor and open up your own training center. In the future, I’d love to do something like that, why not?”

I was moved when listening to Sarah’s various experiences and encounters as a diver, I was certain she must have learned a lot and grown as a person upon witnessing so much of the ocean’s majestic beauty. I found myself wondering, what were some of her key take-aways?

“You have to be respectful, you can’t touch the coral, you can’t touch the fish. You can’t feed them something out of their ecosystem. I saw a red snapper attack and eat a blue tang fish. I have such an appreciation for Planet Earth, you see it from a different perspective. When you have all these messages about preserving the ocean and taking care of it, you understand because you lived it as opposed to someone who isn’t part of the marine life.
Municipal Council elects new chairman, other committee members

The 12th legislative term of the Municipal Council commenced on Thursday, 24 May, under the chairmanship of the oldest member of the Council. The main item on the agenda was the election of the council’s chairman and vice-chairman, as well as members to other committees.

The elections to the top two posts saw Osama Al-Otaibi being elected as chairman after winning 12 votes to four votes for his challenger Hamdi Al-Azmi. In election for the vice-chairman seat, Abdullah Al-Azmi beat Dr. Hassan Kamal who received three votes. The opening session of the council also witnessed elections for members to the main committees.

Speaking at the inaugural session the Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Hussam Al-Roumi said: “The council, which has a four-year term, is responsible for formulating policies and plans related to the functions and areas of municipal activity, including implementation of laws and regulations related to public health, and the regulation of buildings, the division of land and distribution of public amenities and facilities.

“The council spearheads the expropriation and temporary seizure on public interest, the controlling of peddlers, the issuance of licenses in cooperation with other relevant authorities, and other laws and regulations for public municipal facilities. The council is also responsible for constituting a sub-committee of five members for each of the six governorates for a period of two years.”

The Municipal Council of Kuwait was established through an Amin decree on 13 April, 1930. The election of members to the municipal council provided citizens of the country with their first opportunity to participate in the running of the country. A total of 519,636 votes were cast to elect 10 members of the 16-member Council appointed by the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The elections to the council were held on 12 May, in accordance with the provisions of Law No. (35) of the year 1962, which provides for electing a member for each of the ten constituencies of the country. A total of 519,636 voters (248,059 men and 271,577 women) cast their votes to elect 10 members out of a total pool of 63 candidates. The following day, Kuwait’s Cabinet approved the appointment of six more members to the council.

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When you spend a day with an entrepreneur it simply blows your mind off on how much passion and effort is required to be one. It definitely is a lot of hard work and dedication to lead a team and even harder to have the courage to lead a start-up business, especially when you do not choose to be one but life leads you to take it up when you are not ready. That is Joshin, a young growing entrepreneur leading a small team next to his father, but someone who I would define as a very fearless person.

Oldest among his three brothers, Joshin was born and brought up in Kuwait. After his 6th grade he moved to India where he completed his schooling in Kerala and later pursued his bachelor’s in Pune. When he got the offer to work with KPMG, he continued to stay in Pune living the life every youngster would, before eventually moving back to Kuwait to join his dad’s building and construction materials trading business.

Growing up in a business family did you always want to get into your family business, or did you want to live a 7-5 job? I’ve always wanted to be a business man like my father. That was always my dream. But I wanted to start something of my own after getting enough experience from working with many firms. But I guess God had different plans for me and that has brought me here today; well, I am very happy where I am now. I have worked in a 7-5 job, but today I realize the kind of satisfaction you get from that is nothing compared to this.

Would it be right to say you are an entrepreneur by need and not by choice? Yes, actually you can say that, it was by need. What I had planned and where I am today is indeed on very different paths. I really wanted to see what it feels like to climb up the corporate ladder and then slowly get into business.

After working for KPMG for two years I did get that opportunity to climb with a job in Bangalore, but one day I got a call from my dad saying “I know you might have plans but is it possible for you to come here and help me?” He knew I was excited for my new job and it was with a heavy heart that he called me that day.

You see the person who was handling my dad’s business took it to the ground and we were on the verge of shutting down our operations in Kuwait. My dad wanted to move back to India and start a new business. That one phone call changed everything for me. It was definitely not even a question and I didn’t have to think twice for my dad and my family. So that’s when I dropped everything in Pune and came back to Kuwait. Today, I’m very proud to say that in the past two years, we have grown as a team and as a family, and I definitely could not have been able to do it without the support of my family, my uncles and cousins.

Being an entrepreneur does not usually give you a day off. How do you do that? Honestly, my alarms don’t wake me and my mom doesn’t wake me, it is usually my clients and workers from the site who wake me up with urgent material requirements or problems.

After attending 3-4 calls of problems and issues, after mentally preparing myself to face and sort out those issues is when I get out of bed. So then, that is how my day starts, but I always say a small prayer before I start my day and get off my bed with a smile. Because I know for a fact that it’s all going to be okay at the end of the day no matter what I have to face or go through.

Talking about your day to day activities, would you call yourself a planner through and through? Honestly I never plan my day and I mostly do as things usually go very fast.

One advice to other young entrepreneurs out there in Kuwait? Well, I’m not so experienced enough to give advice but this is what I would like to say is that there is never going to be a right time to start something and there will always be ups and downs. The success and the failure you face are momentary. If you feel like you are at the lowest point in your life, remember, it will change. I will get better and I won’t worry. And even when you are at the highest point of success, remember, even that’s temporary. It could be best. So be grateful for it. Keep working hard. I believe this applies for both business and in life.
A ban on recruiting expats under the age of 30 holding diplomas and higher degrees will come into effect in July.

The ban, announced last year, was scheduled to be implemented in January, but was postponed ‘to review some technical issues related to labour transactions’.

The only exceptions were menial jobs, and jobs that required no school diplomas, such as drivers and machine operators.

Sources at the Manpower Public Authority (PAM) said the situation was now clear, and the ban should be applied from July 1, a Kuwaiti daily reported on 21 May.

In calling for the ban, the authority said it aimed to attract experienced and qualified expatriates aged at least 30 to work in Kuwait, as well as to guide employers and private companies to employ Kuwaiti nationals and create jobs opportunities for young people, especially university graduates.

All applications for jobs in Kuwait will be processed through computers to ensure that those who are less than 30 years old are not accepted, the authority added.

More than two thirds of Kuwait’s total population of 4.5 million is made up of foreigners, mainly unskilled workers in the booming service and construction sectors.

The government has launched a drive to address the demographic imbalance, reduce reliance on foreigners and boost chances for Kuwaiti nationals to find jobs.

However, the high number of expatriates is posing challenges that are reportedly too formidable to tackle easily.

### Introducing the new BEC App with Money Transfer capabilities

**Bahrain Exchange Company (BEC) is pleased to announce the launch of its new and improved BEC App available for download to customers in Kuwait. The new App now includes the BEC online money transfer service (BEC Online) providing customers with easy access to fast and secure online money transfer to over 150 countries anytime, anywhere.**

The BEC App also provides added convenience to customers with all its additional features including a currency convertor, up to date exchange rates and fees, a favorite currencies management tool and much more. Commenting on the launch of this new app, Mathews Varughese, General Manager of BEC said, “We are excited to launch our new app which will now offer online money transfer on smart phones. This is a big step in our journey of commitment to our customers to provide continuous innovation and improve their experience. BEC was the first Exchange company in Kuwait to launch an online web portal back in 2006.”

You can now download the new BEC app for free on the App Store for iOS or on Google Play for Android.

Bahrain Exchange Company (BEC) has been serving people for over 25 years, providing unparalleled money transfer and currency exchange services.

### Jazeera Airways welcomes first passengers at new dedicated terminal

**Jazeera Airways, Kuwait’s leading low-cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, welcomed its first passengers on 22 May at its newly inaugurated Jazeera Terminal (T5) at the Kuwait International Airport.**

Passengers travelling to Cairo were the first to check-in through the new Jazeera terminal, departing from gate B2 at 9:45am. Passengers returning from Najaf were the first to arrive at the new terminal, landing in Kuwait at 12:20pm. All Jazeera Airways flights to Kuwait landing from Tuesday, 22 May, from 12:00pm arrive at the Jazeera terminal, while departing flights are gradually be routed to the Jazeera terminal. All departing flights will be fully served from the new terminal starting Sunday, 27 May.

#### Schedule of flights departing from the Jazeera terminal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Departing flights from Kuwait</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 22 May</td>
<td>Cairo, Doha (J9 144), Dubai, Alexandria and Sohag (J9 560)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 23 May</td>
<td>Cairo, Doha, Dubai, Alexandria, Sohag, Mashhad and Sharm El Sheikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, 24 May</td>
<td>Amman, Assiut, Bahrain, Beirut, Cairo, Doha, Luxor, Dubai, Alexandria, Sohag, Mashhad and Sharm El Sheikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 25 May</td>
<td>Amman, Assiut, Bahrain, Beirut, Cairo, Doha, Luxor, Mashhad and Sharm El Sheikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, 26 May</td>
<td>Amman, Assiut, Bahrain, Beirut, Cairo, Doha, Dubai, Alexandria, Sohag, Istanbul, Luxor, Mashhad, Najaf and Sharm El Sheikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, 27 May</td>
<td>All departing flights from Kuwait</td>
</tr>
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Marriott Hotels in Kuwait hold a Ramadan Ghabka for local media

Marriott Hotels in Kuwait organized a Ramadan Chabka for the local media on 24 May, at Al Thuraya Ramadan Tent at the JW Marriott Kuwait City.

The event was attended by more than 100 media representatives from different newspapers and magazines in Kuwait, and included a wide range of activities, live music and various prizes. The Chabka was a great opportunity for Marriott Hotels to raise awareness about the different offers and promotions available throughout the holy month of Ramadan.

The JW Marriott Kuwait invites guests to enjoy the perfect Ramadan experience at the breathtaking ‘Al Thuraya Tent’. The tent offers traditional settings complimented by stunning Ramadan decoration and breathtaking ambience. ‘Al Thuraya’ embodies seasonal specials and breathtaking traditional settings complemented ‘Al Thuraya Tent’. The tent offers an ultimate invitation into the homely setting.

Guests will also stand the chance to win valuable prizes every week, including free airline tickets to various destinations, free gift vouchers and a lot more.

Court yard by Marriott Kuwait also offers an amazing Ramadan experience with fascinating oriental and international buffets every night for Iftar and delicious a la carte menus for suhoor. Furthermore, guests can celebrate Ramadan in style at the ‘Blendz’ restaurant at Residence Inn by Marriott Kuwait, which offers sumptuous iftar buffets featuring a variety of oriental and international dishes.

George Aoun, Cluster General Manager at Marriott Hotels in Kuwait, said, ‘On behalf of Marriott Hotels Kuwait management and associates, I would like to wish Kuwait’s nationals and residents Ramadan Mubarak. Marriott Hotels in Kuwait always try to offer their guests exceptional Ramadan experiences, including rich iftar and Ghabka buffets, live entertainment and valuable prizes at competitive prices.”

In celebration of the Holy Month of Ramadan, Café Bateel-Kuwait, the home of gourmet Mediterranean cuisine, presents a wholesome Iftar four course sharing menu offering a lighter and healthier alternative to the city’s lavish Ramadan buffets. The menu is designed to share, and showcases a fine selection of dishes that families and friends can delight whilst breaking their fast.

The Iftar experience commences with a taste of quality and tradition as guests are invited to break their fast with Bateel’s finest organic dates. Café Bateel will also be featuring its latest Ramadan collection at all its outlets, highlighting a beautiful selection of gifts that would make for the ultimate centerpiece at any Ramadan setting.

The Iftar menu will be available at all Café Bateel locations in Kuwait.

Every week, our ‘Dining in Kuwait’ section features selected restaurants in the country that provide sumptuous cuisines from around the world. Want to feature your restaurant in our ‘Dining in Kuwait’ section and reach out to our wide reader base? Email us at editor@timeskuwait.com with a brief about your restaurant along with images in high resolution.

Ask Mira : Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy

As you all know, this year Ramadan is coming during a month where dehydration is such a serious problem. Dehydration can slow your performance and affect your energy levels. In order to stay active, eating and drinking right in Ramadan is a must. Traditionally, many people who fast during Ramadan drink sugary drinks with high sugar content and juices that provide no benefit for your body, like Vimto, Tang and Jallab. These drinks contain large amounts of sugar which is directly absorbed into the bloodstream causing an increase in your insulin levels, and stimulating your sweet cravings. The best way to handle the weather and to stay healthy is to focus on healthy drinks that are more beneficial for your health. Here are some of the six healthy drinks:

Amar el-deen (apricot juice): The most traditional of Ramadan beverages. It is made of dried apricot paste. Amar al deen is full of antioxidants that prevent diseases plus has lysocysteine that prevents male infertility and prostate cancer.

Watermelon smoothie: Beat your thirst and boost your energy by having a glass of watermelon smoothie. It is an excellent drink during summer, full of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Watermelon also contains lycopene that can prevent prostate cancer.

Almonds drink: It consists of raw almonds, grounded and mixed with water, with a little bit of vanilla and honey added in. Almonds are rich in unsaturated fatty acids, decreases cholesterol and triglycerides levels. It also gives you the satiety feeling for a very long time.

Ginger and carrot juice: An excellent drink to refuel your body and to clean your inner digestive system. It is an important drink for your blood circulation, decreases inflammation and body cramps.

Banana Dates shake: This drink is made of low-fat yogurt, dates, honey and banana blended all together. Dates are rich in iron and other essential vitamins and minerals needed to break the fast with. Bananas are rich in potassium which replaces sodium so it won’t make you feel thirsty. Potassium also prevents body cramps which are caused by dehydration.

Frozen Lemonade with mint: Very refreshing cold drink, with zero calorie, when used a sweetener. It boosts your metabolism and also prevents cellulite. And finally, don’t forget to drink a lot of water to keep you hydrated.

To log in to my diet programs, visit: www.eatlikemira.com

Question: Dear Mira, I am just starting out as a personal trainer, and I find that many people prefer the Keto Diet to exercise. Some ladies told me recently that they have seen great results without exercise. Can you tell me if Keto Diets are really effective? Are there any negative effects from this diet? Please let me know because I could not find any consistent information on this topic.

Answer: The Keto diet is a kind of fat diet, meaning you cannot sustain it for a lifetime. So basically you will lose weight very quickly while on the diet but mainly fat. But then you will start craving carbs like all the things you couldn’t eat and you will end up gaining all the weight back. Carbs are essential in our diet; particularly for giving the body energy that ensures a better performance. The reason why people like the keto diet is because they can have unlimited quantities. What I recommend for you is to encourage your clients to eat a balanced diet with less carbs at night to obtain results and not to ruin your metabolism. If you need better results, go for the carb cycling method which consists on full proteins for 2 days/1 carb day and so on.

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

Top six healthy Ramadan drinks

Indulge in wholesome Iftar delights at Café Bateel this Ramadan

(In celebration of the Holy Month of Ramadan, Café Bateel-Kuwait, the home of gourmet Mediterranean cuisine, presents a wholesome Iftar four course sharing menu offering a lighter and healthier alternative to the city’s lavish Ramadan buffets. The menu is designed to share, and showcases a fine selection of dishes that families and friends can delight whilst breaking their fast.

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The Iftar menu will be available at all Café Bateel locations in Kuwait.

(Avenues Mall Al Hamra Mall, Dhia Complex), through the Holy Month of Ramadan from Sunset. The four course menu is priced at just KD10 per person (minimum two persons) and includes dates and welcome drinks.

The Times Kuwait
www.timeskuwait.com

27 May - 02 June, 2018

The Times Kuwait
www.timeskuwait.com
President Duterte lauds Kuwait on signing agreement protecting Filipino migrants

During celebrations marking the 120th anniversary of the Philippine Navy, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte expressed his appreciation towards Kuwait for signing an agreement with the Philippines that stipulate safeguards for protecting Filipino migrant workers in Kuwait.

Duterte added that the relations between the Philippines and Kuwait have returned to normal following recent frosty relations and a diplomatic row over the treatment of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). He said, “Deployment of OFWs. He said, “Deployment our challenge,” Duterte said.

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

The Filipino Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III reiterated the sentiment on 23 May in a statement during a Senate hearing on the welfare of OFWs. He said, “Deployment guidelines will be coming out next week. Skilled workers can fly to Kuwait anytime but the household service workers can fly next week, pending their visa application approval.”

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administrator Chief Bernard Olalia stated that other issues such as training the Household Service Workers (HSWs) and requiring employers to know the rights of OFWs as stipulated in the memorandum of agreement (MOA) will also be taken into consideration when the guidelines are issued.

During the hearing, Mr. Bello said that the two countries will create a joint committee to finalize the implementation of rules and regulations of the MOA. He said the committee will comprise representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Labor Attaché Resty dela Fuente and their counterparts from the Kuwaiti government, and that they will “conduct an assessment of the situation of OFWs in Kuwait, particularly the HSWs.”

The joint committee will be convened after Ramadan to finalize procedures for the enforcement of the Memorandum of Understanding, signed on 11 May, which strengthened the diplomatic and labor relations between the Philippines and Kuwait after an earlier row over the supposed ‘rescue’ of domestic workers in the country.

Labor Secretary Bello III also pointed out during the hearing that another batch of more than 200 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) from Kuwait will soon be brought home. He added, “By the end of this week, 23% of them will be flown in,” during the Senate inquiry on OFW abuses and deaths abroad.”

Bello noted that these OFWs are among the 601 wards currently staying in two embassy shelters most of whom are facing charges or those who have cases against their employers.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Mama-o, special envoy of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte to Kuwait, thanked the Kuwaiti government for allowing the embassy to have an additional shelter, because the first shelter could accommodate only about 300.

“As part of the commitment of the State of Kuwait, they are going to pay for the expenses of these 601,” Mama-o added. Until now, more than 3,000 what the Philippines called ‘OFWs in distress,’ have been repatriated under Kuwait’s amnesty program, officials said.

Labor and migration expert Emmanuel Cestani earlier commented that the labor situation in Kuwait, where there was high incidence of abuse and deaths especially among household workers, was partly due to lack of welfare officers to monitor the situation of OFWs.

The Philippines’ total deployment ban to Kuwait was lifted on 16 May, following the signing of a protection agreement for OFWs in Kuwait. A total ban on Filipino employment was enforced in February following reports of abuse and murder of Filipino workers, the most heinous being the news of a housemaid Joanna Demafelis, whose body was discovered stuffed in a freezer more than a year after she had been reported missing.

BDK-Aspire 2k18 - Gopinath Muthukad’s Motivational Program in Kuwait

T he notable Motivational speaker and celebrity UNICEF supporter Gopinath Muthukad will be in Kuwait for the first time with his prestigious show ‘M-Cube’, a mentoring program developed by himself after continued research and rich expertise in the field. The event is scheduled for 7 September at the Indian Central School, Abbassiya, Kuwait.

The first poster of the event was released in a launch ceremony recently by Dr. Divakara Chaluvayya, VP, Indian Doctors Forum in Kuwait and the website launched by Dr. Divakara Chaluvayya, VP, Indian Doctors Forum. The function was presided over by Murali S. Panicker, President, (BDK Kuwait), Manoj Mavelikara (Patron, BDK Kuwait), Rajan Thottathil (Musiq Beats) and Salim Kommeri (KOMA) felicitated the function.

The show ‘BDK _ ASPIRE _ 2k18’ is organized as part of the closing ceremony of Blood Donors Kerala and Kuwait Chapter’s yearlong intensive campaign on voluntary blood donation in Kuwait, which is also part of the Social Responsibility Program of the fraternity. The highlight of the function is the Blood Donors Kerala’s Founder and President Vinod Bhaskaran will be the Chief Guest of the program who will be honoured with BDK Kuwait’s Inspiring Leadership Award.

The main event will start at 05:00 pm with a brief formal inaugural function attended and felicitated by the Kuwait Central Blood Bank Officials, Embassy of India, Kuwait and Kuwait Red crescent representatives and eminent personalities in Kuwait, followed by the exclusive Mentoring Program by Gopinath Muthukad.

M-Cube is a motivational program designed with magic, art, science, logic, curiosity, fun and wonder to ignite the senses and broaden your mind. The BDK Kuwait team is inviting the NRI community in Kuwait to utilize this golden opportunity with family and make it as a memorable experience. The entry to the event is restricted to pre-registration on their website http://bdkkuwait.org or by contacting the following numbers:

Abbasia- 9995 0214/6005. 4480 1 Salmiya- 6658 7784 I Fahaheel. 9855 7344 I Farwaniya- 9873 8016/9803 6991

A Ramadan commercial created by Kuwait-based telecommunications company Zain has gone viral on social media, sparking an intense debate about its depiction of Arabs and current affairs.

In the commercial, a young Arab boy is seen singing to a number of world leaders including Donald Trump, Angela Merkel, Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong-un, calling on them to come to the aid of Muslim refugees and help end wars in the region.

In one scene, the boy – standing in the Oval Office of the White House – invites Trump to have iftar at his house “if he can find it in the debris”. The boy is later shown sitting at a table with his family and Putin, as well as walking along a beach near Angela Merkel as refugees come ashore.

His iftar, the boy notes, will be in Jerusalem, “the capital of Palestine”, an apparent reference to the recent American move to shift its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Many Twitter users have praised the ad, including Jordan’s Queen Rania, who said that the world “would do well to listen to children’s voices.” “A huge well done to the creative team for coming up with this genius idea and everyone who worked on this amazingly powerful production,” noted another Twitter user.

Another Twitter user thanked the company for picturing “one of the most harrowing humanitarian crises since the Second World War”. Others, however, harshly criticized the ad for being in poor taste.

“Zain Kuwait, just another company that capitalizes on the current political chaos in the region and the fact that people are emotionally driven,” wrote a UK-based Twitter user.

“Very harmful ad. People in Palestine and Syria and in any occupied country don’t beg criminals for justice,” wrote another. “[Zain] use ads to trigger people’s emotions in such a humiliating way. I believe that Zain failed this time. Since first being published on May 16, the ad has amassed more than 4,733,000 views on YouTube.
Editor-in-Chief welcomes guests to Ramadan Diwaniya

Editor-in-Chief of The Times, Kuwait, Tareq Al Shumaimry, held his annual Ramadan Diwaniya last week to welcome guests and well-wishers on the occasion of the Holy Month of Ramadan. Diplomats from various countries took the opportunity to visit the Diwaniya to greet and exchange Ramadan greetings with Kuwaitis gathered there on the occasion.

The diwaniya is an integral part of Kuwaiti life and traditional social interaction. It takes full bloom during the Holy Month of Ramadan when people visit each other in Diwaniyas to not only exchange greetings but also to catch up on old times.

The Kuwaiti diwaniya in Ramadan is really a beautiful feature of Kuwaiti culture. All people are welcomed warmly to the diwaniyas they visit, and this helps break barriers creates a sense of warmth between the host and visitors to his diwaniya, as together they share in the joy of Ramadan.
Limitless offers Pinoy Care, student and migrant visa consultancy for Filipinos

Ricky Laxa
Staff Writer

Limitless introduces Pinoy Care, a visa consultancy and documents processing center, which provides the opportunity for OFWs and other nationals in Kuwait the chance to avail of student and migrant visas to Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Free assessments, show of student and migrant visas to Australia, Canada center, which provides the opportunity for OFWs personnel and parents. The investiture ceremony held on 14 May, in the exquisite presence of great auspicious function. Major Eng. Ali Hussain Ashour the special guest Mohandas and parents to the Chief Guest, Major Eng. Ali Hussain Ashour, as the winner after impressing the judges on ten awards program for the regional automotive sector. These included design and quality; exterior and interior; handling and drivability; safety and durability; performance and capability; technological innovation; emotional appeal and driver satisfaction; value for money (new purchase and resale); environmentally friendly; regional appeal; and driver satisfaction; value for money (new purchase and resale); environmentally friendly; regional appeal; and drivability; safety and durability; performance and capability; technological innovation; emotional appeal and driver satisfaction; value for money (new purchase and resale); environmentally friendly; regional appeal; and comfort and practicality. The new 2018 Toyota Corolla was launched in the region in July last year with a choice of 1.6-liter and 2.0-liter four-cylinder engines and it is available with a Multimedia 7.5 transmission to offer improved efficiency and driving pleasure.

Toyota Corolla scoops ‘Best Small Sedan’ award at 2018 Middle East Car of the Year awards

A

adding a new feather in its cap, the 2018 Toyota Corolla has been recently honored with the recognition for the best car in the ‘Small Sedan’ category at the 2018 Middle East Car of the Year (MECOTY) awards, the biggest and most prestigious awards program for the regional automotive sector. The most successful production car model ever built was chosen by a judging panel comprised of 16 independent senior editors from leading automotive publications representing the Middle East and North Africa. The 12th generation Toyota Corolla emerged as the winner after impressing the judges on ten aspects that have been set as the selection criteria for the fifth edition of MECOTY. These included design and quality; exterior and interior; handling and drivability; safety and durability; performance and capability; technological innovation; emotional appeal and driver satisfaction; value for money (new purchase and resale); environmentally friendly; regional appeal; and comfort and practicality. The new 2018 Toyota Corolla was launched in the region in July last year with a choice of 1.6-liter and 2.0-liter four-cylinder engines and it is available with a Multimedia 7.5 transmission to offer improved efficiency and driving pleasure.

ICSK Khaitan invests the New Students’ Council

Indian Community School Kuwait (ICSK) Khaitan invested the badges of power upon the newly elected school Senate at an Investiture Ceremony held on 14 May, in the exquisite presence of great auspicious function. The investiture ceremony signifies the reliance and confidence that the school consigns in the newly elected senate members. The ceremony commenced with the welcoming of the Chief Guest, Major Eng. Ali Hussain Ashour, by the newly elected Senate in a solemn and traditional way. The flags symbolizing the pride and authority were handed over to the Senate and the House Captains by the chief guest. K-Campadh, Principal, cordially welcomed the Chief Guest, Major Eng. Ali Hussain Ashour, the special guest Mohandas and parents to the auspicious function. Major Eng. Ali Hussain Ashour enthusiastically bestowed the School Senate, House Captains and Assistant Captains with badges of office amidst applause from the audience. The Vice Principal, Ravi Ayanoli, administered the oath for the school senate to uphold the school motto of loyalty, truth and honour in high esteem. The distinguished guest Eng. Mohandas addressed the young minds and urged them to be innovative. While addressing the students, the Chief Guest, Major Eng. Ali Hussain Ashour inspired the students by sharing his own experiences of disciplinary habits and what makes one successful in life. The investing of office bearers of the four Houses, namely, Achievers, Victors, Winners and Leaders were performed by respective House Mentors. A motivational song sung by the school choir and a scintillating dance performance followed.

Why replacing expatriates is not possible

Continued from Page 1

Statistics from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) for December 2017 show that there are 322,381 Kuwaitis working in the public sector, representing 79 percent of the total Kuwaiti labor force. Government jobs lure nationals because of the work security that it offers; once employed in the public sector a national cannot be dismissed unless in extreme cases. Young citizens are also attracted by less work pressure, more relaxed timings, fewer working hours and longer holidays that a government job offers.
Muslims around the world consider the Holy month of Ramadan as a period to practice restraint, enhance generosity, foster unity and spend time reflecting on their spiritual, personal and professional lives.

Spiritual and personal reflections are private affairs, whereas the professional aspect of an individual’s life often involves interaction with the public. The attitude to work and its prospects among people in the region, and their professional hopes during Ramadan were revealed during a recent online poll conducted by leading job site, Bayt.com.

The online survey, titled ‘Ramadan in the Middle-East and North Africa’, was conducted by leading job site, Bayt.com, was conducted from 3 March to 11 April of this year and polled over 9,000 respondents living in the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) region and included people in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the UAE and Yemen.

Goals: The majority of MENA respondents (88.4 percent) agreed with the statement that Ramadan is a ‘good time to reflect on their personal and professional goals’, 6.7 percent were neutral towards this statement while only 4.9 percent disagreed.

Favorite aspect: When asked to share their favorite aspects about Ramadan, more than two thirds (67.5%) of MENA respondents said that ‘gathering with friends and family’ was their favorite aspect. Meanwhile, 12.6 percent said they also enjoyed ‘practicing religious and spiritual life’, and 2.5 percent were happy at the ‘slowing down’ of pace and enjoying the quiet time (provided by Ramadan).

Productivity: On the question of productivity during Ramadan, 81.7 percent of MENA professionals agree that they ‘feel more productive’ during Ramadan; 14.8 percent of respondents said their ‘productivity does not change during Ramadan’, and only 3.5 percent said they become ‘less productive’.

Work loads: In answer to work loads during the holy month, 61.4 percent of poll participants from MENA said that their workload increases during the holy month, 21.7 percent of respondents said their workload stays the same, while 16.9 percent of respondents said it decreases during Ramadan.

Work-timings: The perceived increase in workload could probably be attributed to the fact that the vast majority of respondents (89.4%) said that their total working hours decreased during the month. Across the region, the majority of respondents (87.9%) are satisfied with their working hours, with 81.9 percent saying that they are ‘very satisfied’. 4.7 percent of respondents are ‘neutral’ towards this aspect, while only 7.6 percent report being ‘somewhat dissatisfied’ or ‘very dissatisfied’. In contrast, 89.4 percent of respondents said that their total working hours decreased during the month.

Vacation: A majority (54.6%) of respondents said they work during Ramadan, with 54.6 percent of respondents saying that they take ‘more vacation days during Ramadan’, while 45.4 percent claim the opposite is true.

Relationships: A vast majority (89.6%) of respondents claimed that Ramadan improved their relationships at work, with only 4.4 percent of poll participants claimed the opposite to be true and 6 percent of respondents were neutral towards this statement.

Charity: An overwhelming 91.4 percent of respondents said that their company becomes more charitable during Ramadan, and when it comes to social and team building activities, 91.1 percent of participants agreed that their company increases such activities during the holy month.

Job hunting: According to the poll, the vast majority of job-seekers in the MENA region (9 in 10 job seekers) plan to make more time to finding a job during Ramadan; also, more than two thirds (68.6%) of respondents believe that more companies hire during Ramadan. This correlates with hiring-data from Bayt.com, which reveals that more than 12,000 jobs were posted in May 2017 and over 15,000 jobs during June 2017.

“Ramadan is a great month for MENA professionals,” said Suhail Masri, Vice President of Employer Solutions at Bayt.com. “Not only do they reflect on their personal, spiritual, and professional life, they also become more focused and productive.”

PRAYER TIMINGS - KUWAIT

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The Times Kuwait

Annual Report of KSHR on Migrant Workers

The Law of Migrant Workers

The report reveals the disparities among many migrants over growing xenophobia in the country, often fuelled by lawmakers making derogatory remarks that verge on racism and which sway the attitude of society and citizens towards migrant workers.

"Building New Kuwait begins with building human beings," and building the cause being done in spite of the actual positive values and granting them rights and privileges as a citizen and resident, and not feeding them with messages of violence, discrimination, or racism," says the KSHR.

According to latest statistics made available by the Public Authority for Social Welfare (PAM), the total workforce of Kuwait is 2,705,613, of which 1,807,901 (63%) are working in the private sector and 967,710 (35%) are within the public sector. Among the total number of workers 860,118 (31%) are non-Kuwaitis, out of which 125,630 (28%) are in the private sector.

For instance in January, the government began implementing its Kuwaitization drive, which aims to reduce the number of migrant workers in government agencies on an annual basis in order to reach specified percentages for each job category by 2022. In the wake of this initiative, many migrant workers in government institutions have been terminated with their notice period of three months to expire in early June. Along with Kuwaitization drive, the government also announced plans to reduce the number of expatriates to one million, by deporting more than two million workers at the rate of 500,000 each year. In January, a member of the National Assembly proposed imposing fees for the expats driving license amounting to 100 dinars per year as well as imposing additional fees on expats possessing more than one car. In April, the Parliamentary Finance Committee approved bills on imposing fees on remittances of expatriates after ensuring that there was no constitutional violation.

The report also mentioned many complaints that KSHR has received from domestic workers on the 'long work hours without rest; working for long hours without pay; being provided with annual leaves'. The reports adds that domestic labor is subjected to many violations, sometimes amounting to slavery, torture, humiliation and rape, which has led to political, diplomatic problems between the Government of Kuwait and the Philippines, in addition to a number of countries such as Sri Lanka, India and Ethiopia that sent domestic workers to Kuwait.

Kuwait is a signatory to 19 International Labor Organization conventions, including seven of the eight fundamental conventions that give priority to international labor standards and are supposed to guarantee the rights of workers. But the truth is these domestic laws are based primarily on recruitment of migrant workers under a sponsorship system. This system links labor visas to those recruited who, raises the chances of abuse of labor. In addition, it restricts the workers' freedom by giving the sponsors the power to control the workers' lives in terms of renewing residence and moving to another work. Such a system also facilitates the sponsor into becoming a visa-trader and a key contributor to the vicious cycles of migration.

While commending the positive steps taken to protect the rights of workers in Kuwait, the report also calls for an immediate stop to racist verbal attacks against expatriates. The report also hopes that lawmakers and others will rationalize their speeches against migrant workers that aim to spread hatred in the society.

Recommendations: Among the many recommendations made in the report are:

- Canceling the sponsorship system and transferring the sponsorship to the government.
- Updating labor laws and criminalizing its violators.
- Ensure decent work for laborers, especially for domestic laborers.
- Recently cancel administrative deportations and replace them with judicial deportation.
- Stop the targeting of migrant workers' earnings and refrain from discrimination in official decisions.
- Initiate non-discrimination in the right to education and employment.
- Replace the term 'servant' in the official transactions or official websites.
- Develop a new system for the activity of the six other offices due to non-compliance and violation of the law. By 26 April, the Kuwaiti Criminal Court issued a first-of-its-kind order to confiscate a group of Asian workers to massage parlors in Kuwait and forcing them to engage in adultery with customers.

Negative Influences:

- Increasing the chances of abuse of labor.
- Reducing the workers' freedom by giving the sponsors the power to control the workers' lives.
- Preventing the workers from annual leaves.
- Restricting the workers' freedom by giving the sponsors the power to control the workers' lives.
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- Preventing the workers from annual leaves.

KSHR report flays treatment of migrants

As expected, the release of veteran journalist Seema Mustafa’s latest book, ‘Azad’s Daughter: Being a Muslim in India - A Memoir’, raises a lot of questions as to why secular Muslims have to rise in support of the community’s causes in a more candid manner. Former IFS officer Farooq Vakil and new Rajya Sabha MP, who was among the three panelists at the book launch on 15 May was part of the discussion.

‘Azad’s Daughter’ is written by the author as the first-person perspective and she weaves her personal journey as a teenage into the story and her conflicts within a religious outlook. The book also follows her career as a budding journalist and later, a failed politician who faced the intertwining challenges that threatened India’s secular ethos. She takes a look at instances in India’s history that contributed to shaping India in which minorities and backward communities found themselves pushed to the margin.

“The demolition of the mosque at Ayodhya, or a horrifying incident as the Muslims in independent India began questioning their leadership, including the authority of Shahi Imam and other clergy,” said Seema at the book launch.

Seema is not a compulsive pessimist; she notes that Indian democracy, in spite of not being in the pink of health, has enough checks and balances that offer Indian Muslims a huge sense of belonging. She concluded by saying, “Indian Muslims know how to coexist with different religious groups in their everyday life. They happily interact with Hindu, Sikh, Christians Parish and other denominations from schools to market, festivals and social gatherings.”

CBSE appoints ICS Principal

The Principal of Indian Community School, Kuwait (ICS), Dr. V. Binumon, has been once again appointed as Post – Result CBSE Counsellor.

Dr. V. Binumon had been appointed earlier this year as a counsellor for the Kuwait region, as part of the CBSE annual pre-examination counselling. He will be providing the post-result CBSE annual counselling as well. The voluntary, free-of-cost counselling, being provided by CBSE for the 2022-23 academic year, would continue from 26 May till 9 June daily from 7 pm to 10 pm.

CBSE for the first time in post-result counselling to students and parents to overcome common psychological problems and address general queries related to Class X and XII results. The counselling session will be carried out telephonically and Dr. V. Binumon can be reached at the mobile number 09965 4784593 on all these days. Dr. V. Binumon is a multi-faceted personality with long expertise and experience as an Educational Counsellor and is sensitive to the needs of students. CBSE tele counselling is largely offered by trained counsellors and Principals from within CBSE affiliated schools located in India and outside India. Techniques to cope with result related anxiety are available at the CBSE website www.cbse.nic.in by accessing the Helpline icon.

The enthusiastic celebration of the Day of the Saint Brothers by all Bulgarian people is a proof of the country’s thirst for enlightenment and internal freedom, national development and prosperity of Bulgaria.

The Times Kuwait

Bulgaria Celebrates National Day of Culture

Bulgaria celebrates National Day of Culture

106x85

The enthusiastic celebration of the Day of the Saint Brothers by all Bulgarian people is a proof of the country’s thirst for enlightenment and internal freedom, national development and prosperity of Bulgaria.
1 June

Extreme Challenge: Extreme Sports BMX, Scooter and Skateboard challenge will be held at Marina Waves, at 9pm. The fee for each challenge is set at KD5. Further information will be available at the website. For more information and to register: Visit, www.events.pro-vision.com.

14 June

Study in Canada: Glinks International will be offering unique opportunities to interact with officials of top Canadian schools, colleges and universities at the Study in Canada event which will be held at Glinks International, Kuwait City, from 10am to 6pm. For further information on the event: Visit, www.glinksgroup.com or call, 65553128.

17 June

Summer Swim Camp: British Academy of Sport will be hosting its Summer Swim Camp 2018 from 17 June to 5 July (Sunday to Thursday), at the ISK Salwa Campus, from 10am to 2pm. The camp will be open to children aged 3 to 12 years. Activities such as gymnastics, karate, swimming, board games, water polo, Zumba, cooking class and more will be a part of the camp. Further information will be available upon registration. For more information and to register: Call, 99458013, 25623604 ext: 217/218 or email, info@bas.edu.kw.

Ongoing

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

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

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

Jazz at Home Cabaret Night: Ahmadi Music Group will be hosting jazz at Home Cabaret Night featuring Ashley Young and Harriet Bushman in Adan Block 7 at 9pm. Further information will be available upon registration. For more information and to get your tickets: Visit, www.eventat.com or write to info@ahmadimusicgroup.com, or Call 5063843.

Kidpreneurs Camp: A camp to fuel kids’ entrepreneurial spirit, Kidpreneurs Camp will be held from 3 to 7 June, at Sirdab Lab from 11am to 2pm. Kids aged 6 to 11 years can register for the camp, the fee of which is KD10. To register: Visit, www.sirdab-lab.com/ myfirstdinar/
Moral Urgency of Mental Health

Michael Plant and Peter Singer

Michael Plant is a Ph.D. student in philosophy at the University of Oxford. His research centers on finding the best ways to improve worldwide happiness. Peter Singer is Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University and Laureate Professor at the University of Melbourne. His books include Practical Ethics, The Most Good You Can Do, One World Now, and Ethics in the Real World.

If we can prevent great suffering at no cost to ourselves, we ought to do so. That principle is widely accepted and difficult to dispute. Yet Western governments are neglecting an opportunity to reduce the great misery caused by mental illness, even though the net cost would be nil.

The evidence for this claim comes from recent research by a team of economists at the London School of Economics. The team, directed by Richard Layard, drew on data from four major developed countries (Australia, Britain, Germany, and the United States) in which people were asked to indicate, on a 0-10 scale, how satisfied they were with their life.

The researchers refer to those in the bottom 10 percent of the population in terms of life satisfaction as being in ‘misery’. Respondents also answered other questions designed to indicate factors affecting life satisfaction.

When Layard’s team analyzed the results, they found that the biggest factors affecting misery were all non-economic: mental health, physical health, and whether someone had a partner. Mental health was the biggest predictor of all; it explained twice as much of the difference between people in terms of life satisfaction as physical health or income inequality did. (This was also true for those in the non-miserable 90 percent of the population).

Overall, the researchers claim, eliminating depression and anxiety would reduce misery by 20 percent, whereas eliminating poverty would reduce it by just 5 percent. If we want to reduce misery in the developed world, then mental health is the biggest challenge we need to overcome.

Many people will find this result surprising. After all, most of us expect that if we were richer, we would become happier. But why is mental health, not poverty, the biggest cause of misery?

The answer is that people adapt to higher levels of income over time—a phenomenon known as ‘hedonic adaptation’—and they compare their income to that of their peers. This gives rise to the so-called Easterlin Paradox, the finding that although richer people are more satisfied with their lives than poorer people, economic growth has often not increased overall life satisfaction in the developed world. If your neighbor becomes richer, you feel poorer. If both of you become richer, neither of you is likely to be significantly happier. In contrast, people do not adapt to poor mental health; nor does your neighbor’s mental health treatment still funds itself because those who receive psychotherapy demand far fewer physical health services.

In reality, the UK didn’t shrink its health budget. The effect of treating mental health therefore was to free up otherwise scarce funds that were used for other patients. But this effect was so substantial that Frijters claims we could expand treatment to all 12 percent of the UK population who have mild to moderate anxiety or depression and expect the investment to pay for itself in savings in no more than two or three years.

Attitudes toward mental health have changed dramatically in the last few years; even princes and athletes now feel able to open up about it. In the UK, a study showed that mental illness affects one in four people in any year, while research carried out in 30 European countries found that 38 percent of the population suffered from some kind of mental or neurological illness. What has not been grasped is that this suffering is largely avoidable. Governments are starting to regard mental health as seriously as they do physical health. But they could do much more. Increasing their spending on mental health could reduce an immense amount of misery and at no cost in the long run.

Of course, some mental illnesses are more difficult to treat than moderate depression or anxiety, and at some point higher spending may not pay for itself. But until that point has been reached we should all agree on the moral urgency of a radical expansion in funding for mental health.
TRAVEL

Italia's top Destinations

From the busy cosmopolitan Milan to tiny villages of Sicily, Italian cities are a sensory delight with layers of history and culture and so much art in everything around you. You will visit hundreds of museums with the world's most priceless treasures in Florence, Rome, and Milan, but it is beauty of the streets, markets, squares, and fountains that will leave the most lasting impression.

**Milan:** Once a capital of imperial Rome, the Milan of today is a modern metropolis in northern Italy. It is a European economic powerhouse and a fashion and design capital that is elegant, sophisticated, and incredibly beautiful. Walking through downtown Milan means peeling back the layers of history, architecture, and art. With the gothic majesty of Duomo cathedral, Leonardo da Vinci's mural 'The Last Supper,' and magnificent Piazza del Mercato with its bright white leaning tower surrounded by a field of green grass. It is stunningly beautiful, and the Cathedral and the Baptistry are nearby.

**Rome:** Coming to Rome, be prepared for a total sensory overload. The entire city is a living, breathing museum. Everything around you is thousands of years old, from the cobblestones you walk on to the massive fountains and ancient stone houses that line the narrow streets. There is so much beauty all around you that it is difficult to take it all in, especially if you are trying to cram all Rome has to offer in a few days: the Vatican, St. Peter's Square, St. Peter's Basilica and eighteen additional basilicas, the Trevi Fountain, Spanish Steps, Colosseum, Piazza Navona, Roman Forum, Aqueducts, Catacombs, and so much more.

**Florence:** One of the wealthiest and most powerful European cities from medieval times, Florence is called 'the cradle of Renaissance,' and its magnificent architecture, churches, and palaces full of art never stopped attracting artists and art lovers. Walk from the magnificent Duomo cathedral, the Uffizi gallery, and Pitti Palace to the Baptistery, the Bargello, and the Accademia and churches such as Santa Maria Novella and Santa Maria della Croce. You can also admire the priceless art treasures left behind by Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Giotto, and Michelangelo. From the magnificent Duomo cathedral, the Uffizi gallery, and Pitti Palace to the Baptistery, the Bargello, and the Accademia and churches such as Santa Maria Novella and Santa Maria della Croce. You can also admire the priceless art treasures left behind by Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Giotto, and Michelangelo.

**Venice:** A major maritime and financial power during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Venice is a northern Italian city on more than 100 islands in a large beautiful lagoon in the Adriatic Sea. The heart of the city is its Piazza San Marco with St. Mark's Basilica, tiled with Byzantine mosaics. The cathedral's bell tower the Campanile offers fabulous views of the city.

**Siena:** The heart of Tuscany, Siena represents Italy before the Renaissance. With its soaring brick buildings, enormous fan-shaped Piazza del Campo with the Gothic town hall Palazzo Pubblico, and the 14th-century tower Torre del Mangia, Siena is an open museum of medieval architecture, art, and history. Its Duomo, the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, is a wonderful example of Romanesque-Gothic architecture in Italy with white and green marble creating striped patterns so characteristic of Siena.

**Riomaggiore:** If you watch Riomaggiore from the sea, it looks like colorful kids' blocks piled up on top of each other. Snuggled in a small valley, the houses are built vertically into the steep cliff that drops down to the sea, where one can find a tiny harbor and even smaller beach. Riomaggiore is the first of five Cinque Terre villages as you travel from La Spezia and is their unofficial headquarters. Its main and only street Via Colombo is where everything touristy goes on with a number of restaurants, shops, and cafes.

**San Gimignano:** This is a small medieval town perched on the hill in Tuscany in north-central Italy. As you approach it by road, you will know right away why it is called the Town of Fine Towers. Just a short drive from Florence, Lucca is one of the most beautiful cities in Tuscany. Surrounded by wonderfully preserved 16th and 17th-century Renaissance walls, it is an ancient city perfect for walking and discovering the layers of its history in its cobbled streets, shady promenades, and glorious piazzas. The massive old walls are now topped by a large park wonderful for strolling and biking.

**Pisa:** Once a powerful Italian maritime republic and a university city that attracted young minds since 12th century, Pisa is now attracting millions of tourists who come to see its famous leaning church tower – one architectural project that went wrong. Naturally, you will start your exploring by visiting the magnificent Piazza del Miracoli with its bright white leaning tower surrounded by a field of green grass. It is stunningly beautiful, and the Cathedral and the Baptistry are nearby.

There are fourteen towers now, though originally the rich citizens built seventy-two beautiful lean towers in the 12th century, mostly to show off their wealth, an ancient version of keeping up with Joneses. The city's medieval architecture is stunning and very well preserved, both churches and secular buildings, with some wonderful examples of Gothic and Romanesque architecture. The Palazzo Communale, the Church of Sant' Agostino and Collegiate Church are some of the most notable examples and contain beautiful frescos from the 14th and 15th centuries.

**Sarzana:** Just a short drive from La Spezia and is their unofficial headquarters. Its main and only street Via Colombo is where everything touristy goes on with a number of restaurants, shops, and cafes.

**Manarola:** One of the five incredibly beautiful villages of Cinque Terre on the rugged coast of Ligurian Sea, Manarola's colorful houses look like they are piled on top of each other, dug into the side of the vertical cliff that drops into the sea. Established in 12th century by inhabitants of the nearby village of Volastra, Manarola is the oldest of the five villages and has a unique fishing port – fishermen have to lift their boats by crane and park them on one of the terraces like cars.
Evening hours may pose higher risk for overeating

A new study from the Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston, US, has found that consuming healthy food may decrease the risk of hearing loss in women. The findings suggest that healthy eating patterns may lower the risk of hearing loss by 30 percent.

For the study, researchers examined the relation between three different diets and risk of developing hearing loss — The Alternate Mediterranean diet (AMED), Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH), and the Alternative Healthy Eating Index-2010 (AHEI-2010) — in 70,966 women who were followed for 22 years. The AMED diet includes extra virgin olive oil, grains, legumes, vegetables, fruits, nuts, fish and moderate intake of alcohol. The DASH diet is high in fruits and vegetables and low in sodium. The AMED-2010 diet has common components with AMED and DASH. The researchers collected detailed information on dietary intake every four years. They found that women whose diets most closely resembled the AMED or DASH dietary patterns had an approximately 30 percent lower risk of moderate or worse hearing loss, compared with women whose diets resembled dietary patterns the least.

A separate study of over 31,000 women for whom detailed hearing-related information had been collected suggests that the magnitude of the reduced risk may be even greater than 30 percent, and may also pertain to the AHEI-2010, the researchers noted.

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Vitamin D in fight against diabetes

Vitamin D can help treat damaged beta cells in pancreas that produce, store and release the hormone insulin, paving the way for a new approach to treat diabetes, scientists say. When beta cells become dysfunctional, the body cannot make insulin to control blood sugar and levels of glucose can rise to dangerous levels. Researchers from the Salk Institute in the US accomplished their goal by using an unexpected source: vitamin D. Vitamin D in cells and mouse models proved beneficial in treating damaged beta cells.

It also provided new insights about gene regulation that could be applied to developing treatments for other diseases, including cancer. “We know that diabetes is a disease caused by inflammation. In this study, we identified the vitamin D receptor as an important modulator of both inflammation and beta cell survival,” said the researchers. Using beta cells created from embryonic stem cells, researchers were able to identify a compound, iBRD9, that appeared to enhance the activation of the vitamin D receptor when it was combined with vitamin D and treated with stress.

The team accomplished this by conducting a screening test to look for compounds that improved the survival of beta cells in a dish. They then tested the combination in a mouse model of diabetes and showed that it could bring glucose back to normal levels in the animals.

Epidemiological studies in patients have suggested a correlation between high vitamin D concentrations in the blood and a lower risk of diabetes, but the underlying mechanism was not well understood. It is quite difficult to protect beta cells with the vitamin alone but we now have some ideas about how we might be able to take advantage of this connection, said the research team.

The underlying process has to do with transcription — the way that genes are translated into proteins. Combining the new compound with vitamin D allowed certain protective genes to be expressed at much higher levels than they are in diseased cells. Activating the vitamin D receptor can trigger the anti-inflammatory function of the receptors to help cells survive under stressed conditions.

“By using a screening system that we developed in the lab, we’ve been able to identify an important piece of that puzzle that allows for super-activation of the Vitamin D pathway,” said the Salk team behind the study. The discovery can have far-reaching implications as it identifies a basic mechanism that can be translated into drugging many different targets in the clinic.

The team also saw relatively decreased levels of peptide YY, a hormone linked to reduced appetite, glucose and insulin levels, in relation to a liquid meal later in the day.

Researchers say that only those with binge eating disorder showed lower overall fullness in the evening. This group also had higher initial levels of ghrelin in the evening and lower initial ghrelin levels in the morning, when compared with those without binge-eating disorder.

After the stress test, stress levels spiked and hunger levels rose slowly in all participants in both the morning and evening, but there were overall higher levels of ghrelin in the evening, suggesting that stress may impact this hunger hormone more in the evening than in daytime.

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