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H.H. the Amir 'genuinely interested' in humanitarian issues — ICRC President

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LOCAL 6
 Kuwait marks 11th death anniversary of late 'Amir of Hearts' Sheikh Jaber

LOCAL 11
 First-degree relatives may get e-visas

KAPP to move forward with several PPP projects

Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP), the entity responsible for implementing Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects in the country, recently announced plans to invite proposals for several large-scale PPP projects in 2017.

power generation capacity and 102 Million Imperial Gallons Day (MIGD) of desalination capacity.

Speaking to the media on the sidelines of the Kuwait Projects conference, which was held last year in late November, General Manager

announced plans to issue a request for proposals for the Al Khiran IWPP before the end of the year. The Khiran facility is expected to have a power generation capacity of 1.5GW of generation capacity and 125 MIGD of desalination capacity.

In addition to several mega PPP projects announced in power generation and water desalination projects, Kuwait recently announced a major PPP collaboration in the education sector. Last month, the Kuwait Schools Development Program (KSDP) took a significant step forward with the announcement by KAPP that it Kuwait and that the project had moved into the financial evaluation stage. The KSDP project is to be built, financed and maintained by private investors, while the MoE will be responsible for recruiting staff. If completed as projected, the PPP in the education sector will be the first of its kind in the Middle East.

The government's PPP program and associated regulations, which were launched in 2006, gained more credence with the promulgation in 2014 of the new PPP Law No. 116. The new law along with its executive regulations strengthened the institutional framework for PPP programs in the country and offered

Continued on Page 12



Last October, Kuwait had invited two bidders for talks on the KD820 million Phase Two of Az Zour North Independent Water and Power Project (IWPP). Part two of the five-phase project will see private sector involvement on a build-finance-operate-transfer basis. Like the first phase, the second will run on natural gas and will add 1.8GW (Gigawatt) of

of KAPP Mutlaq Al Sanei announced that during the first half of 2017, the authority would invite advisory proposals for the third phase of the Az Zour North IWPP. The third phase, with a projected power generation capacity of 1.8GW and water desalination capacity of 75MIGD, is Kuwait's fourth IWPP project.

During the conference KAPP also



'Hala February' 2017 to offer various activities for all ages, prizes worth \$2 million

Arrangements and preparations have been completed for the 18th 'Hala February' festival that will kick off early next month, said the Higher Organizing Committee on Saturday.

The annual month-long national

festival is part of the efforts to stir tourism, shopping and the entire economic scene, committee member Walid Al-Saqa'bi told local media. Hala February 2017 will include a variety of

Continued on Page 12

Experts decry law forcing expats to visit 3 'private hospitals' for medical needs

Protests were raised by politicians and legal experts who condemned the law obligating expatriates who work in the private sector to deal with three specific private hospitals, calling it a violation of the Kuwaiti Constitution.

The Chairman of Kuwait Society for the Development of Democracy Nasser Al-Abdali vocally argued that expatriates should not be forced to visit only three private hospitals considering they pay health insurance fees to the State, adding it was unacceptable and it should be the expatriate's decision to choose the hospital whether in the private or public sector. Lawyer Hamdan Al-Namshan reiterated that

demanding expatriates working in the private sector and their families to be restricted to three hospitals for medical treatment that are run on Public Private Partnership will likely lead to monopoly which is detrimental to the masses.

He pointed out that encouraging difference in treatment of private sector employees and public sector employees was a violation of Article 29 of the Constitution that states "all people are equal before the law and there is no difference between them based on gender, origin, language or religion".

Al-Namshan also expressed his opposition to the recent proposed price hike of the health insurance of

expatriates from KD 50 up to KD 130, saying that the current fee of KD 50 is also a burden to expatriates. He questioned the sudden decision to raise health insurance fees for expatriates, especially since given the law, the money will be directed to the few people owning the three hospitals.

For his part, Chairman of the International Islamic Organization for Human Rights Mubarak Al-Mutawa also echoed the other protests saying that the decision violates Article 29 of the Kuwaiti Constitution, and there should be observation of the three private hospitals to prevent any abuse of expatriates.



Kuwait keen to increase role in international court

Kuwait's Minister of Justice Dr Faleh Al Azab met with Tareq Al Shumaimry, Counsellor at the Kuwait Embassy in The Hague and chairman of the finance committee at the International Court in The Hague. The meeting focussed on increasing Kuwait's role in courts and improving cooperation between the two bodies.



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Water as a Force for Peace



Sundeep Waslekar

Sundeep Waslekar is President of Strategic Foresight Group.

The changing of the guard on the 38th floor of the United Nations building in New York, with António Guterres taking over for Ban Ki-moon as UN Secretary-General, has taken place at a time when notions about peace and conflict are undergoing a subtle change. In particular, the role of resources – and especially water – is getting the recognition it deserves.

This has been a long time coming. Both Ban and his predecessor, Kofi Annan, have argued for some two decades that protecting and sharing natural resources, particularly water, is critical to peace and security. But it was not until last November that the issue gained widespread acknowledgement, with Senegal – that month's UN Security Council president – holding the UN's first-ever official debate on water, peace, and security.



Open to all UN member states, the debate brought together representatives of 69 governments, which together called for water to be transformed from a potential source of crisis into an instrument of peace and cooperation. A few weeks later, Guterres appointed Amina

Mohammed, a former Nigerian environment minister, as his deputy secretary-general.

The growing recognition of water's strategic relevance reflects global developments. In the last three years, the Islamic State (ISIS) captured the Tabqa, Tishrin, Mosul, and Fallujah dams on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. ISIS subsequently lost control of all of them, but not before using them to flood or starve downstream populations, to pressure them to surrender.

Many analysts hope that ISIS will finally be eliminated from Iraq and Syria in the next few months. But that does not mean that the group will disband; on the contrary, it may well relocate to the border areas between Libya and Chad, putting West African cities and water installations at risk.

This tactic is not exclusive to ISIS. Extremist groups in South Asia have also threatened to attack water infrastructure. And of course state actors, too, can use water resources to gain a strategic advantage.

The importance of water in the twenty-first century – comparable to that of oil in the twentieth – can hardly be overstated. Yet some strategic experts continue to underestimate it. The reality is that oil has alternatives like natural gas, wind, solar, and nuclear energy. By contrast, for industry and agriculture as much as for drinking and sanitation, the only alternative to water, as former Slovenian President Danilo Türk once put it, is water.

The same is true for trade. Consider the Rio Chagres. While it may not be widely known, it is vitally important, as it feeds the Panama Canal, through which 50% of trade between Asia and the Americas flows. There is no risk of the natural depletion of the river flow for the next hundred years, but, in the event of a security crisis in Central America, it could be taken over by rogue forces. The impact on the global economy would be enormous.

The consensus on the need to protect water resources and installations in conflict zones is clear. What is less clear is how to do it. Unlike medicines and food packets, water cannot be airdropped into conflict zones. And UN Peacekeeping Forces are badly overstretched.

The International Committee of the Red Cross does negotiate safe passage for technicians to inspect and repair damage to water pipes and storage systems in Iraq, Syria, and Ukraine; but each passage needs to be negotiated with governments in conflict and rebel commanders – a long and cumbersome process. A better approach would be for great powers, with their considerable influence, to negotiate short-term ceasefires in areas experiencing protracted conflict, specifically to repair and restore water systems.

To pave the way for such an approach, however, the UN Security Council will have to declare water a "strategic resource of humanity" and adopt a resolution to protect water resources and installations, similar to Resolution 2286, adopted last May to protect medical facilities in armed conflicts.

In the longer term, countries that share riparian systems will need to establish regional security arrangements to preserve and protect their resources. With collaborative management underpinning collective protection, water, often a source of competition and conflict, could become a facilitator of peace and cooperation.

Denis Sassou-Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo, is at the forefront of this movement,

by leading a group of eight governments toward the establishment of the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin. If successful, the Fund will help to mitigate climate change, create new avenues of river-based employment, and promote collective security in an unstable region. The Africa Action Summit in Marrakesh two months ago described the Fund as one of the four key ideas that can transform the continent.

Last March, on World Water Day, Jordan's Prince Hassan bin Talal and I called for the establishment of a Marshall Fund for the world's shared river basins. The Blue Fund for the Congo Basin is a step in that direction. Now, we need similar funds to emerge to protect all of the world's 263 shared river basins and lakes. It is a huge challenge; but, given the power of water to sow conflict and support peace, we must confront it head-on.

“
Now, we need similar funds to emerge to protect all of the world's 263 shared river basins and lakes.
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H.H. the Amir 'genuinely interested' in humanitarian issues — ICRC President

His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is "genuinely interested" in humanitarian issues, and believes action in this domain has to be detached from politics, ICRC President Peter Maurer said late Wednesday.

"His Highness the Amir is a leader who is genuinely interested in humanitarian issues. He is not one of those leaders who pretends to be interested in humanitarian issues for his own image," Mr. Maurer, who

Diwan Dr. Abdullah Al-Maatouq. He thanked His Highness Sheikh Sabah for the great contribution of Kuwait over the last four years particularly in Syria and Iraq.

Kuwait hosted three conferences and co-chaired a fourth one, helping Syrians affected by the ongoing crisis in their country since 2011, said the official, adding that Kuwait contributed over US\$ three billion to help them.

Kuwait has also been offering humanitarian assistance for the Iraqi people, affirmed the ICRC President.

His Highness the Amir has a "very clear conviction that humanitarian action has to be distinct from political action, and this is immensely helpful today because many actors are



His Highness the Amir has a "very clear conviction that humanitarian action has to be distinct from political action, and this is immensely helpful today because many actors are politicizing the conflicts," asserted Mr. Maurer.

heads the International Committee of Red Cross, said in an interview with a local news agency.

Mr. Maurer was on a visit to Kuwait and met with His Highness the Amir, First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer, and Chairman of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) and Advisor to the Amiri

politicizing the conflicts," asserted Mr. Maurer. He said that he provided detailed account of how ICRC spent the funds offered by Kuwait over the past three and half years, and His Highness the Amir emphasized "such a clear commitment to humanitarian values and principles, which is a strength to the ICRC."

Mr. Maurer said Kuwait, whose relations with ICRC are 26 years old, understood the importance of respecting the law, reunifying

families, searching for the missing people and humane treatment of detainees, principles that ICRC followed.

Maurer, who flew to Kuwait from Iraq, also said he discussed with the Kuwaiti officials ICRC's keenness to provide educational services in Somalia, as Kuwait was preparing to host an international conference on education in the African country.

Maurer, meanwhile, said his visit to Iraq helped create an understanding of the ICRC mission.

The visit aims at solving some practical problems with the Iraqi authorities regarding the facilitation of ICRC work, draw attention of the international community to the fact that there is a gap between needs of people and readiness of the international community to help, he said.

In Iraq, said Maurer, there were people displaced by violence, returnees who lost their homes and belongings, and all of them went to host communities which cause a strain on social services, hospitals, water supply systems and schools.

"Everything is happening at

the same time, which increases challenges on our organization," he said.

Mr. Maurer met with Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar Al-Abadi, President of Iraq's Kurdistan province Masoud Barzani and Shiite religious leader Ali Sistani and discussed how could those fighting on the ground avoid civilians, and to engage political, religious and military leaders to achieve this objective.

He said Kuwait Red Crescent Society donated food parcels that ICRC was distributing in Iraq, part of KRCS's humanitarian contributions to the needy throughout the region.

Iraq is ICRC's second largest operation worldwide with US\$ 127 million worth of funding. Syria is first with US\$ 180 million.

On Yemen, Maurer said the local community was the poorest in the region, with 70 percent of the population fully dependent on assistance.

He described the Yemeni economy as "fragile and coming to a standstill." Mr. Maurer expressed concern that Yemen might suffer more serious

problems in future coupled with insufficient attention from the international community.

Kuwait hosted Yemeni parties last year in a bid to reach an agreement to end the fighting between the legitimate government of President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi on one side, and Ansarullah and former President Ali Abdullah Saleh's supporters on the other, but negotiators failed to strike a deal.

Maurer, speaking about ICRC role, said his organization was engaging with all parties in any conflict to respect laws for their own interest.

"ICRC believe the efforts of humanitarian community is not enough to cope with problems, that is why we need different kind of assistance from the international community: scaling humanitarian assistance, shrinking needs (of people) and (create a) better behavior of actors on ground, and (initiate) political and diplomatic negotiations to solve problems," he said.

"All the three have to go hand-in-hand in order to have an impact," he added.

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African billionaire fortunes decline on new Forbes list

The number of billionaires in Africa— and the size of their fortunes — continues to drop. On this year's list, Forbes is only including African billionaires living in Africa, instead of featuring Africa's 50 richest people. There are 21 billionaires on this year's list, worth a combined \$70 billion. On the November 2015 Africa Rich List, there were 23 African billionaires worth a combined \$79.8 billion. That in turn was down from 28 African billionaires in 2014.

Nigerian cement tycoon Aliko Dangote remains Africa's richest person for the sixth year running



with a \$12.1 billion fortune, despite a nearly \$5 billion drop in his net worth for the second year in a row. Dangote is joined by just two other

Nigerian billionaires on this year's list — telecom tycoon Mike Adenuga, who is Africa's third richest person with an estimated \$5.8 billion fortune, and oil billionaire Folorunsho Alakija, who has an estimated net worth of \$1.6 billion. Two Nigerians dropped off the Billionaires List this year — oil marketer Femi Otedola, whose net worth dropped from \$1.6 billion in November 2015 to just \$330 million today, and sugar billionaire Abdulsamad Rabiu, whose net worth dropped below \$1 billion in the wake of a weakened Nigerian currency. South Africa retains its

dominance on the Africa List. While the country is tied with Egypt for the largest number of individual billionaires, South Africa's six billionaires are worth a combined \$22.7 billion — \$7 billion more than Egypt's six billionaires.

The richest South African billionaire and the continent's second richest person is diamond magnate Nicky Oppenheimer, who has maintained a low profile since selling his family's stake in diamond giant DeBeers to Anglo American for \$5.1 billion in cash in 2012. Luxury goods tycoon Johann Rupert and retail magnate Christoffel

Wiese are tied as South Africa's second richest and Africa's fourth richest billionaires, each with a \$5.5 billion fortune. Wiese's fortune has dropped \$1 billion since the November 2015 Africa list, while Rupert's net worth is down \$800 million.

Forbes counts only two female billionaires in Africa: Angola's Isabel dos Santos — Africa's richest woman with a \$3.2 billion fortune, and Nigeria's Alakija. Dos Santos is the daughter of Angola's president, who appointed her as head of Angola's state oil firm Sonangol in June 2016. Alakija is the vice chair of Nigerian oil exploration company, Famfa Oil.



Nigeria reclaims position as Africa's top oil producer

Nigeria may have reclaimed its position as Africa's top oil producer beating Angola. Angola had led the African oil producing countries with its 1.7 million barrels of crude oil a day, well above Nigeria's 1.5 million barrels per day, in September 2016, for seven straight months.

According to the December 2016 Monthly Oil Market Report (MOMR) of the OPEC, crude oil production from Nigeria went a notch above that of Angola even before the start of 2017 as per the planned production cut agreed by OPEC and non-OPEC producers.

Angola would be expected to cut about 78,000 barrels per day (bd) of its production in the agreement which was sealed in late 2016.

But secondary sources in the MOMR indicated that in November last year, Nigeria and Angola produced 1.692 million barrels (mb) of oil apiece. Information from primary sources in the MOMR stated that Nigeria produced 1.782mb of oil as against Angola's 1.688mb to show its takeover of Angola by about 94,000bd.

According to secondary sources, OPEC crude oil production in November increased by 151tb/d compared to the previous month to average 33.87mb/d. Crude oil output increased the most in Angola, Nigeria and Libya, while production in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia showed the largest decline.

"A new OPEC-14 production target of 32.5mb/d as per 1 January 2017 represents a reduction of around 1.2mb/d from October production levels," said OPEC's December MOMR.

Earlier in the year when Nigeria lost its position as Africa's largest producer, its output fell to about 1.677mb, as against Angola's 1.782mb then.

The development was made possible by repeated attacks on Nigerian oil infrastructure by militants in the Niger Delta.

This dragged the country's daily oil production down by about 700,000bd as reported by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in July, and further confirmed by the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Dr. Ibe Kachikwu.

In dramatically young Africa, elderly are a valuable resource



In Novusumzi Masala's life, there are 13 of everything — 13 pairs of battered shoes scattered around her tiny two-bedroom house, 13 bowls stacked high above her sink, 13 stacks of homework to puzzle over every night. At age 78, Ms. Masala is busy raising a baker's dozen of her grandchildren, scrambling to keep pace with everything from the rap beats thumping from their tinny cell phone speakers to the schedule of their anti-retroviral medicines and doctors' visits.

Sub-Saharan Africa is, by global standards, a dramatically young region: 60 percent of its population is under 25, and there are 12.9 people on the continent between the ages of 20 and 64 for every one person over 65. (Compare that with Europe, where there are four young adults for every older adult, or Japan, where there are just two). Africa's population, meanwhile, is growing faster than any other region on earth, and by 2100 the UN predicts that one in four people on the planet will live here.

Depending on whom you ask, the continent's so-called "youth bulge" is either a spectacular opportunity — with the potential to be an engine for massive economic growth — or a ticking time bomb. If the continent's vast

supply of youth grow up to become a vast supply of unemployed adults, after all, it could spell social and political disaster across the continent.

But one solution for how to create opportunity for the continent's young people may be, ironically, to look in other direction, to its elderly — and particularly men and women like Masala.

"The lives of older and younger people are closely linked — there is a skills and knowledge transfer there that needs to happen for society to function," says Isabella Aboderin, a senior research scientist at the African Population and Health Research Center in Nairobi.

In South Africa, where nearly 1 in 5 people is HIV positive, the link between the old and the young is particularly intimate. The country has approximately 3.7 million orphans — half of whom lost their parents to AIDS — and 8 percent of all children here are being raised by their grandparents, according to Statistics South Africa. (Continent-wide, UNICEF estimates that half of Africa's 132 million orphans live with their grandparents.)

Although Africa's population remains tilted toward the young,

Masala's demographic is also rising in size. Africans, like people everywhere in the world, are beginning to live longer, and over the next 35 years, the percentage of the population over 65 here is expected to triple to about 10 percent, according to the UN.

But the continent's demographics also put it in a unique position globally. Unlike regions of the world where figuring out how to care for a rapidly aging population is already putting policy makers on the back foot, Africa has time. While there are halting signs that regional bodies like the African Union recognize the challenge ahead, on balance, however, the region remains unprepared, Ms. Aboderin says. "Unlike what's been happening in other regions where there's a very explicit recognition that an aging population is a very serious development issue that requires planning and actions, this hasn't yet been the case in sub-Saharan Africa," she says. "On the whole, I think, it's fair to say that at the national level issues of aging remain marginal, if they feature at all."

For the Masalas, however, there is little question of the essential connection between its younger and older members.





Bye Bye Obama

Obama offers optimism and warnings in farewell address

Popular but politically humbled, President Barack Obama said goodbye to the nation Tuesday night, declaring during his farewell address that he hasn't abandoned his vision of progressive change but warning that it now comes with a new set of caveats.

His voice at moments catching with emotion, Obama recounted a presidency that saw setbacks as well as successes. Admitting candidly that political discourse has soured under his watch, Obama demanded that Americans renew efforts at reconciliation.

"It falls to each of us to be those anxious, jealous guardians of our democracy," the President said. "To embrace the joyous task we've been given to continually try to improve this great nation of ours."

Obama also stressed solidarity despite a presidency sometimes at odds with Congress.

"Democracy does not require uniformity," Obama said. "Our founders quarreled and compromised, and expected us to do the same. But they knew that democracy does require a basic sense of solidarity -- the idea that for all our outward differences, we are all in this together; that we rise or fall as one."

In a concession that, for now, his brand of progressive politics is stalled in Washington, Obama admitted "for every two steps forward, it often feels we take one step back." He implored his backers to be vigilant in protecting basic American values he warned could come under siege.

"Democracy can buckle when we give in to fear," he said. "So just as we, as citizens, must remain vigilant against external aggression, we must guard against a weakening of the values that make us who we are."

And he warned against turning inward, telling Democrats that only by involving themselves in a real political discourse could they hope to renew the hopeful vision he brought to the White House eight years ago.

"After eight years as your President, I still believe that," he went on. "And it's not just my belief. It's the beating heart of our American idea -- our bold experiment in self-government."

Obama's speech is the capstone of a months-long farewell tour, manifested in extended magazine interviews, lengthy television sit-downs, and the White House's own efforts to document the President's waning administration. Through it all, Obama has sought to highlight the achievements of his presidency using statistics showing the country better off now than eight years ago.

As he spoke before a rowdy crowd of supporters, Obama was interrupted often with screams of "I Love you Obama." When a protester holding a "Pardon All of Us" sign,

chants of "four more years" drowned out the shouts. Obama sought to corral his crowd, listing the accomplishments of the last eight years ranging from health care to marriage equality, all while insisting that his work isn't finished. He recognized his successor Donald Trump, saying he was committed to a peaceful transition of power. But he warned that going forward Democrats shouldn't fall in line with their commander-in-chief.

Obama, who has addressed race with varying degrees of force during his time in office, used his farewell to insist Americans work harder to understand each other's struggles. After presiding over eight years that saw race relations enter a fraught new era, Obama demanded that differences be identified and reconciled.

"Brown kids will represent a larger share of America's workforce" in the years ahead, Obama proclaimed, calling for better rules that will help the children of immigrants succeed.

He warned that "laws alone won't be enough" in resolving persistent differences between Americans.

"Hearts must change," he said.

He called on African-Americans and minorities to view with empathy "the middle-aged white man who from the outside may seem like he's got all the advantages, but who's seen his world upended by economic, cultural, and technological change."

And he urged whites to regard the protests of minorities as a fight "not demanding special treatment, but the equal treatment our Founders promised." "Regardless of the station we occupy, we have to try harder," Obama said. "To start with the premise that each of our fellow citizens loves this country just as much as we do; that they value hard work and family like we do; that their children are just as curious and hopeful and worthy of love as our own."

Capitalize on goodwill

In coming to Chicago, Obama hoped to capitalize on a well of goodwill that's expanded in the final year of his tenure. He discarded the staid Oval Office or East Room for his last formal set of remarks, choosing instead the city where his political rise began and where he declared victory in 2008 and 2012.

Inside a vast convention hall packed with more than 20,000 of his most ardent supporters and former staffers, the mood was wistful. Ahead of his address, aides described the normally unsentimental commander in chief as nostalgic. Over the past several weeks, Obama has offered a rational view of Trump's election and rarely let on to any apprehension about his future as an ex-president. First lady Michelle

Obama has articulated a more candid view in a scaled-back version of her own farewell. She sat for an hour-long interview with Oprah Winfrey, frankly admitting that Democrats were now "feeling what not having hope feels like."

And she became emotional during her final set of formal remarks at the White House Friday, her voice quaking and eyes welling with tears as she told a crowd of educators: "I hope I made you proud." During his speech Tuesday, Obama voice quaked when describing his wife's service.

"You took on a role you didn't ask for and made it your own with grace and grit and style and good humor," he said. "You made the White House a place that belongs to everybody."

The President had been planning his speech

for months, aides said, formulating the broad themes while on vacation over the holidays in Hawaii and developing drafts starting last week.

He told aides months ago that he preferred to deliver his farewell address in his hometown, a first for a departing President. George W. Bush, unpopular and facing a financial crisis, delivered his final prime-time address in the White House East Room to a crowd of 200 supporters and aides. Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter all used the Oval Office -- a setting Obama has long spurned for formal remarks. George H.W. Bush traveled outside of Washington to West Point for a departing address after failing to secure a second term, though he didn't actually bill it as a farewell.

“Democracy does not require uniformity, Obama said. Our founders quarreled and compromised, and expected us to do the same.”

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Kuwait marks 11th death anniversary of late 'Amir of Hearts' Sheikh Jaber



It has been 11 years since the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah passed away; Kuwaitis still recall the deeds and achievements of the 'Amir of Hearts' who spent his life serving his country. Sheikh Jaber, who passed away on 15 January, 2006 after being at the helm for 28 years, was the 13th ruler of Kuwait, and the third Amir during the state's constitutional era that began with the signing of the constitution on 11 November, 1962 by the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.



Since he took over the reign in 1977, the late Amir, known to the people as "Abu Mubarak", led Kuwait to development and progress on all levels, gaining the country significant political and economic weight on the world arena.

He was very eager to establish balanced bilateral relations with the world. Though Abu Mubarak's years in office witnessed various hardships and major events, he managed through his wisdom and long political experience to overcome the crises and lead the country well.

Sheikh Jaber devoted most of his life to the nation and the Kuwaiti people, and survived a terrorist assassination attempt on 25 May, 1985. After the incident, Sheikh Jaber addressed the people, saying that despite the attempt on his life, "Kuwait will remain" and

that was the "most important fact." For him, youth was the "renewable current in a river called Kuwait" and a source of power that will never dry up.

Based on this view, Kuwait youth were given

remarkable attention and care.

In 1992, the Public Authority for Youth and Sports was founded and entrusted with caring for the affairs of the Kuwaiti young people and promoting their physical and mental capabilities. By the same token, Kuwaiti women were offered full support. In 1999, the late Amir issued a decree giving women citizens' full political support.

Kuwait, though a small country, continued to develop within the political and economic spheres until it was hit by another tragedy in 1990. Sheikh Jaber's long experience, sagacity, and relentless efforts to liberate his nation with aid from the international community garnered Kuwait its freedom.

Following the liberation, Kuwait carried on with the march of development thanks to a sagacious ruler and the support of the Kuwaiti people to their leadership.

On 19 June, 1991, the late Amir established the Martyrs' Bureau at the Amiri Diwan, to care for the families of Kuwaitis who were martyred during the brutal invasion.

On the political level, Sheikh Jaber was keen on bolstering efforts amongst nations of the Gulf, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was born of his wish to consolidate cooperation amongst the Arab nations in the region. Through his belief that the GCC was a "beacon" of true solidarity amongst Arab nations, Sheikh Jaber always made it clear

that developing the council's mechanism was paramount for the future of Gulf States. In the 1996 GCC Doha Summit, he proposed the formation of a 30-member consultative council to provide the GCC leadership with proposals likely to promote the process of decision making. Under the late Amir, Islamic causes were always given priority on Kuwait's agenda. Sheikh Jaber established the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) that was launched on 31 December, 1961.

He was chairman of board of directors of this first institution in the Middle East that offered financial support to development efforts not only in the Arab world but in many other developing countries as well.

Also, in the capacity of Kuwait's Presidency of the Organization of Islamic Summit (OIC) - later Organization of Islamic Cooperation - Sheikh Jaber addressed the 43rd session of the UN General Assembly in the following year, proposing measures to ease the pressures on developing and underdeveloped states through the formation of a just world economic system. He then proposed dropping debts due on poor countries.

In 1995, 'The Amir of Hearts' was chosen as the humanitarian personality of the year in a poll conducted by a London-based media institution, amongst five million Arabs, in recognition of his philanthropic initiatives and efforts around the globe.

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Europe's New 'Indispensable Nations'



Joschka Fischer

Former German Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor from 1998-2005, Fischer entered electoral politics after participating in the anti-establishment protest of the 1960s and 1970s, and played a key role in founding Germany's Green Party, which he led for almost two decades.



After the shock of the United Kingdom's Brexit referendum and Donald Trump's election as President of the United States in 2016, this will be a decisive year for Europe. Upcoming parliamentary elections in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and possibly Italy will decide whether the European Union will hold together, or whether it will disintegrate under the neo-nationalist wave sweeping the West.

Meanwhile, the Brexit negotiations will begin in earnest, providing a glimpse of the future of the EU-UK relationship. And Trump's inauguration on January 20 may someday be remembered as a watershed moment for Europe.

Judging by Trump's past statements about Europe and its relationship with the US, the EU should be preparing for some profound shocks. The incoming US president, an exponent of the new nationalism, does not believe in European integration.

Here he has an ally in Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has long tried to destabilize the EU by supporting nationalist forces and movements in its member states. If the Trump administration supports or turns a blind eye to those efforts, the EU - sandwiched between Russian trolls and Breitbart News - will have to brace itself for challenging times indeed.

The consequences for the EU will be even more serious if, in addition to setting the US relationship with Russia on a new foundation, Trump continues to call into question America's security guarantee for Europe. Such a move would be at the expense of NATO, which has institutionalized the US security umbrella for more than six decades. Europeans would suddenly find themselves standing alone against a Russia that has increasingly employed military means to challenge borders, such as in Ukraine, and to reassert its influence - or even hegemony - over Eastern Europe.

We will soon know what comes next for NATO, but much harm has already been done. Security guarantees are not just a matter of military hardware. The guarantor also must project a credible message that it is willing to defend its allies whenever necessary. Thus, such arrangements depend largely on psychology, and on a country's trustworthiness vis-à-vis friends and foes alike. When that credibility is damaged, there is a growing risk of provocation - and, with it, the threat of escalation into larger crises, or even armed conflict.

Given this risk, the EU should now shore up what it has left with respect to NATO and focus on salvaging its own institutional, economic, and legal integration. But it should also look to its member states to provide a second security option.

The EU itself is based on soft power: it

was not designed to guarantee European security, and it is not positioned in its current form to confront a hard-power challenge. This means that it will fall to its two largest and economically strongest countries, France and Germany, to bolster Europe's defense. Other countries such as Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Spain, and Poland will also have a role to play, but France and Germany are indispensable.

Of course, living in continental Europe means having Russia as a neighbor, and neighborly relations, generally speaking, should be based on peace, cooperation, and mutual respect (especially when one's neighbor is a nuclear power). But Europeans cannot harbor any illusions about Russia's intent. The Kremlin approaches foreign policy as a zero-sum game, which means that it will always prioritize military strength and geopolitical power over cooperative security arrangements.

Russia does not view weakness or the lack of a threat from its neighbors as a basis for peace, but rather as an invitation to extend its own sphere of influence. So, power asymmetry in Eastern Europe will lead only to instability. If Europe wants a stable, enduring peace, it first must ensure that it is taken seriously, which is clearly not the case today. Europe can credibly strengthen its security only if France and Germany work together toward the same goal, which they will have an opportunity to do after their elections this year.

EU diplomats used to murmur off the record that Germany and France would never see eye to eye on military and financial issues, owing to their different histories and cultures. But if security conditions take a turn for the worse, that may no longer be the case. Indeed, reaching a compromise on both sides of the Rhine should not be so difficult: France undoubtedly has the experience to lead on defense; and the same goes for Germany on financial matters.

If pursuing this European security option prompts the US to renew its own security guarantee, so much the better. Meanwhile, the EU should also forge a post-Brexit cooperative strategic arrangement with the UK, whose geopolitical position and security interests will

remain unchanged. The old EU developed into an economic power because it was protected beneath the US security umbrella. But without this guarantee, it can address its current geopolitical realities only by developing its own

capacity to project political and military power. Six decades after the Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community, history and current developments are pushing France and Germany to shape Europe's future once again.

“
The old EU developed into an economic power because it was protected beneath the US security umbrella. But without this guarantee, it can address its current geopolitical realities only by developing its own capacity to project political and military power.
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Perfect Quiche

Although you can certainly make one without the crust, a quiche is essentially a savory, rather than sweet, baked custard enclosed in a pie shell and usually includes cheese, as well as other ingredients. Since



it is a custard, it is more delicate in consistency than a frittata, as it is made with more liquid than eggs, usually 2 to 3 eggs per cup of liquid, which is traditionally cream, but is less usual these days.

If you get it right, without the quiche turning into weepy mass or ending up overcooked, it is a delicious dish full of cheese with the crust loaded with nutty whole grains.

When it comes to creating the perfect quiche, there are some simple tips and tricks to guarantee success.

Whether you are baking a brunch-friendly bacon and egg-filled treat or an elegant vegetarian dinner with a healthy side salad, quiche is extremely easy to adapt in a number of delicious ways.

Apply these to your favorite quiche recipe to take it from fine to divine.

Par-bake the crust: The trick with quiche is to preserve the delicate texture. This is achieved by removing it from the oven while it is still a bit uncooked in the center; it will continue to cook when removed from the heat. There is nothing worse than a quiche with a gummy, gooey crust. Avoid this and keep the crust's texture intact by par-baking. Since you are going to bake it with filling, a bake of 10 minutes or so in the preheated oven before baking the quiche should do the job. You are looking for a set, dull finish rather than browning.

This will serve you well once you add the wet ingredients, which can make the crust soggy. Think of it as a buffer to maintain an appetizing consistency in the crust which will flake, not become gluey. It will turn out velvety and smooth rather than chunky-style. Overcooked quiche has a tough, cracked texture around the outside.

Add a little flour to the custard: For another step of curdling insurance, whisk a little flour into your eggs and dairy. The flour helps absorb moisture and stabilize the entire custard while contributing even more creaminess.

Load it up with cheese: Good quiche stands fine on its own, and if you want to avoid excess cheese, it is fine. But taste is so much better when you savor the fat crumbles of soft cheese that lie across the bottom of the crust.

Use better flour for a better crust: An addition of whole wheat and spelt flours to this crust gives it a big boost of nutty flavor and a more sandy, interesting texture.

Keep your chunks of butter large: Even if you just stick with plain flour



for a simple butter crust, keep the pieces of butter in your crust as large as possible. Think butter cubes the size of dice that flatten out into eye-catching slabs. They will help make your crust as flaky as possible.

Cook the filling well: The fillings in quiche should typically be seasoned and cooked separately.

In the case of meats, it will bring out the flavor and ensure that they are fully and properly cooked. In terms of veggies, it allows you to add flavor and reduce excess moisture, ensuring they maintain flavor and do not become gummy once baked. Let the items cool, and then stir into your egg mixture.

A quiche filling should contain just enough eggs to prevent it from being soupy, but remember that the eggs are just a supporting player. It is the butterfat in the cream and milk that is responsible for a good quiche's disarmingly rich texture.

Give it room to grow: When filling the crust remember to fill them only up to three fourths full before baking. The eggs will rise as it bakes, and you do not want your crust to run over. Allowing a little room for rise will allow for a perfect texture in your finished quiche.

Of course, if you are still worried about overflow, you can place a sheet pan in an oven rack below the quiche.



Allow it to set: This is possibly the most difficult tip of all. Even though the top may appear tantalizingly and perfectly brown, the inside is still catching up, so be patient before cutting into your quiche. The inside will continue to bake even while the exterior reaches a warm temperature. A good rule is to wait at least 45 minutes, if you can. It will still taste good if you slice it sooner, but things could certainly get messy.

Serve with a side: Adding a side is an easy way to upgrade quiche from snack to meal. A lovely side salad can balance out the richness of quiche



and make for an elegant serving presentation. For breakfast, a side of seasonal fresh fruit can make it a brunch-friendly treat and give the plating a pretty pop of color.





Laos Ambassador hands over ACK chairmanship to Philippines

Ambassador of Laos to Kuwait H.E. Phouangkeo Langsy handed over the local chairmanship of Asean Committee Kuwait (ACK) in a grand ceremony held at the Laos embassy last week.

The handing over ceremony was attended by the ambassadors and their spouses of the nine member states in Kuwait marking the taking over by the Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait H. E. Renato Pedro O Villa.

Addressing the gathering, Ambassador Langsy gave a short overview of the local activities undertaken during the previous year, which included the ACK Futsal



Tournament, Bowling Tournament and visits to Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) and Asean Day celebrations.

He also mentioned the Asean summit held in Laos and the implementation of the Asean Community Vision 2025.

In conclusion, he thanked all the

ambassadors for their assistance, cooperation and support, while congratulating the new chairman Philippine Ambassador Pedro, Ambassador Langsy assured him of the wholehearted support and cooperation from all the ACK members.



US soldier commits suicide at Kuwait base



An American soldier stationed in Kuwait shot and killed himself on Thursday, 12 January at a US military base in the nation, the interior ministry said. The ministry said in a statement on its Twitter account that the soldier, whose name was withheld, used his personal gun to kill

himself while on duty. The ministry said the soldier was rushed to a public hospital in southern Kuwait, but was pronounced dead on arrival.

Several thousand American soldiers are stationed at Camp Arifjan, a military base about 70 kilometres (43 miles) south of Kuwait City.

2,880 cyber crimes in 2016

The Public Prosecution last year recorded 2,880 cybercrimes, reports a local daily quoting reliable sources.

This is considered to be the biggest number since the application of the Cyber Crimes Law in January 2016 especially after adding the publication and audiovisual crimes to the law.

The sources said the Prosecution, since the application of the law, is receiving complaints filed at the police station mostly related to abuse on WhatsApp and Twitter applications.

Kuwait says has cut oil output by more than committed



Kuwait has cut its oil output by more than the amount to which it committed in the global deal among oil producers to reduce output, Kuwaiti Oil Minister Essam Al-Marzouq said on Thursday.

"We intend as Kuwait to lead by example. We have already cut our production to more than what we have committed," he said at a conference

in Abu Dhabi. He did not give details of the cuts. Marzouq also said he was very happy with current oil prices. Brent crude is around \$55 a barrel. Based on statements by oil producing nations so far, there has been more than 60 percent compliance with production cuts specified by the deal, Marzouq added. Some countries may have complied but not announced that yet.



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Once again no Pravasi Samman award for Kuwait based Indians

The Indian community in Kuwait has once again been left disappointed as the government of India overlooked the immense contribution made by the Indian community in Kuwait over the past half century. More than 900,000 Indians work and live in Kuwait forming the largest expatriate community in the country.

The embassy of India recommended five Indians for the award this year and there was a strong feeling that members of the community that some of them would be recognized by the government for their services rendered to the community in various fields.

Minister of India Relief Fund. The community is vibrant and active, and is always applauded by the local leadership to visiting Indian officials for their hard work and sincerity. The Indian community has been the preferred choice across all forms of

Samman Award (PBSA) is the highest honor conferred on overseas Indians. PBSA is conferred by the Hon'ble President of India as a part of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Conventions organized annually since 2003 on Non-Resident Indians, Persons of Indian Origin or an organization or institution established and run by the Non-Resident Indians or Persons of Indian Origin in recognition of their outstanding achievements both in India and abroad.

The 14th edition of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention was held in Bengaluru from 7-9 January, 2017. The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards were conferred by the Hon'ble President at the PBD Convention on 9 January, 2017 in the valedictory session of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations in an impressive ceremony.

An 11-member Jury-cum-Awards Committee, with Hon'ble Vice-President as Chairman and Hon'ble External Affairs as Vice-Chairman and nine other distinguished members from various walks of life, considered the nominations for the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards, 2017 and had unanimously thirty awardees. Ms. Nisha Desai Biswal, Assistant Secretary of State, Department of State, delivered the acceptance speech on behalf of the awardees.



Speaking to The Times, several Indians expressed disappointment that Kuwait has been overlooked time and again. In spite of the difficult conditions and laws that are not expatriate friendly, Indians have managed to make a good impression among the local leadership. More than 300 associations registered with the Indian embassy actively participate in social, cultural, and charitable activities and also on contribute generously to calamities back home including national disasters and to charitable institutions through the Prime

employment and Indians contribution to the progress and development of Kuwait has been acknowledged and appreciated.

In the last 14 editions of the Pravasi Awards only two awards were handed out to the community, one for an individual doctor and one for the Indian Doctors' Forum association for their services to the community, whereas Indians in neighboring Gulf states have been recognized for their contributions in other fields such as business, culture, education and philanthropy.

The Pravasi Bharatiya

PBS Awardees-2017

	Name	Country	Field
1.	Dr. Gorur Krishna Harinath	Australia	Community Service
2.	Rajasekharan Pillai Valavoor Kizhakkathil	Bahrain	Business
3.	Antwerp Indian Association	Belgium	Community Service
4.	Nazeer Ahamed Mohamed Zackiriah	Brunei	Community Service
5.	Mukund Bhikhubhai Purohit	Canada	Business
6.	Nalinkumar Sumanlal Kothari	Djibouti	Community Service
7.	Vinod Chandra Patel	Fiji	Social Service
8.	Raghunath Marie Antonin Manet	France	Arts & Culture
9.	Dr. Lael Anson E. Best	Israel	Medical Science
10.	Dr. Sandip Kumar Tagore	Japan	Arts & Culture
11.	Ariful Islam	Libya	Community Service
12.	Tan Sri Dato Dr. Muniandy Thambirajah	Malaysia	Education and Community Service
13.	Hon'ble Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Mauritius	Public Service
14.	H.E. Mr. Antonio Luis Santos da Costa	Portugal	Public Service
15.	Dr. Raghavan Seetharaman	Qatar	Business Management
16.	Zeenat Musarrat Jafri	Saudi Arabia	Education
17.	Singapore Indian Association	Singapore	Community Service
18.	Dr. Carani Balaraman Sanjeevi	Sweden	Medicine
19.	Susheel Kumar Saraff	Thailand	Business
20.	Winston Chandrabhan Dookeran	Trinidad & Tobago	Public Service
21.	Vasudev Shamdas Shroff	United Arab Emirates	Community Service
22.	India Social and Cultural Centre, Abu Dhabi	United Arab Emirates	Philanthropy and Community Service
23.	Rt. Hon'ble Priti Patel	United Kingdom	Public Service
24.	Neena Gill	United Kingdom	Public Service
25.	Hari Babu Bindal	USA	Environmental Engineering
26.	Dr. Bharat Haridas Barai	USA	Community Service
27.	Nisha Desai Biswal	USA	Public Affairs
28.	Dr. Mahesh Mehta	USA	Community Service
29.	Ramesh Shah	USA	Community Service
30.	Dr. Sampatkumar Shidramapa Shivangi	USA	Community Leadership

ICSK Amman launches radio Amman

The Indian Community School (ICSK) Amman rejoiced during a historic event at the school – the launch of 'Radio Amman' – a live radio that will be exclusively aired on the ICSK Amman campus.

The Principal Rajesh Nair, C, in his welcome address explained the idea behind the launch of a campus radio. Chief Guest Vinukumar Nair inaugurated the newly-established Amman Radio with the unveiling of the logo along with Hon. Vice



Chairman, B.O.T, ICSK and Kuwait. The highlight of the show was the introduction of the RJs who did a flash mob.

KDNA launches Women's Forum

Kozhikode District NRI Association (KDNA) Women's Forum was officially launched during the Association's Christmas and New Year celebrations at Galaxy Auditorium, Fahaheel on 5 January.

The function was officially inaugurated by United Indian School Principal Sujata Shiva Krishnan and presided over by KDNA Women's Forum President Sandhya Shijith and General Secretary Jisha Suresh offered the welcome address.

The raffle coupon of the upcoming KDNA Mega Event Malabar Maholsavam 2017 was released by Sujata Shiva Krishnan and received by Azeed Thikkodi, Chairman Malabar Maholsavam, General Convener Sathian Varoonda and Raffle Coupon convener Mohammad Ali Arakkal. Non-



Resident Keralites' Affairs Department (NORKA) Registration counter was established for the members. A variety of cultural programs by association members, families and their children entertained the audience and the famous singers Rafi Kallai and Sameer Vellayil lead the musical portion of the event.

Pakistan Business Center and Pakistan Business Council host dinner for Islamic Relief World Wide



The Pakistan Business Center and Pakistan Business Council hosted a reception in honor of visiting delegation from the Islamic Relief World Wide at the Al Haitham restaurant, Farwaniya.

The high-level delegation who recently visited Kuwait comprised of the founder Dr. Hani Al Banna, Head of Micro finance section Dr. Mohammed Corazon and Islamic Relief World Wide-Middle East President Dr. Tariq Abdo and Islamic Relief Kuwait President Abdul Manan.

Director of Pakistan Business Center Hafiz Muhammed Shabbir introduced the Islamic Relief World Wide to the gathering and said that

they were the largest charity organization of Muslims currently working in 50 countries. He added that Dr. Hani Al Banna is the founder of the organization, who has received the highest award (OBE) from the Queen of Great Britain.

Dr. Corazon also paid tribute to the overseas Pakistanis, who have shown their generosity. During the program's conclusion, Hafiz Muhammed Shabbir, Muhammed Arif Butt and Majid Ali Chaudhary, and Ikhlq Malik on behalf of PBC as a team made a donation of 1 million Pakistani Rupees to the Islamic Relief World Wide for a micro financing project in Pakistan.

First-degree relatives may get e-visas

The Interior Ministry is considering granting visit visa to the first-degree relatives through the automated visa system (e-visa), reports a local daily quoting security sources. The same sources said the first degree relatives include the parents, wife and children.

However, the sources said the e-visa system in future will be expanded within the efforts exerted by the Ministry of Interior to activate the e-government services and relieve the pressure on all government departments.

Meanwhile, the Info Systems General Department of the Ministry of Interior continues its efforts in coordination with the Public Authority for Civil Information approval for finding a special secret number to each citizen and resident called the (pki) that can provide access to the electronic services website of the Interior Ministry.



Citizens and residents then can log in by using the civil ID number, followed by the pki to complete transactions electronically.

The Council of Ministers has instructed the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah to issue the e-passports to any category of citizens without the need to undergo the DNA test, reports a local daily quoting security sources.

However, the Cabinet said it is up to the Ministry of Interior to determine the timing of the issuance of the passport because of the need to put in place the mechanism which

is expected to be after the National Day holidays in February.

The sources pointed out the Ministry of Interior has received until date nearly 200,000 blank passport forms and is in the process of receiving the third batch next March which will be followed by other batches next May and August.

As for the DNA, the sources said the committee which was formed by the Cabinet to discuss and determine the cases that will be subjected to the DNA test will continue to work until it determines the categories and then decide the mechanism of DNA testing away from the project of e-Passport.

CRIME

Sri Lankan gets death in 'planned' murder of wife

A Sri Lankan was sentenced to death by hanging for the premeditated murder of his wife. According to case papers, the suspect and the victim were involved in disputes and the former decided to get rid of her. He reportedly punched a hole in the hose of the cooking gas cylinder and the gas leaked to the entire kitchen and the subsequent explosion killed the wife and another woman. The suspect then reportedly inflicted burns on his body to hide the crime. It has also been reported the suspect doused kerosene on his wife, and he admitted this during interrogations.

Woman forgets snake in taxi

A Kuwaiti woman reportedly forgot a 2-meter long snake inside a taxi before she boarded a flight to Kuwait from the Cairo International Airport. Egyptian security sources said a taxi driver handed over a bag which the passenger had left behind to the tourism police. After opening the bag, police found inside the bag a heavily drugged reptile.

Kuwait Airways Kuwaiti steward held with liquor, bag of drugs

A steward of Kuwait Airways tried to smuggle three bottles of imported alcohol with a bag full of cocaine and another bag of marijuana into the country. Customs sources said officers checking the luggage of the airways staff on their return from an undisclosed European country found the contraband hidden inside the bags of the Kuwaiti steward. He confessed to the crime and declared his intention to sell the illicit item in the country.

Thirty Kuwaitis accused of violating meter regulations

Undersecretary at the Ministry of Electricity and Water Engineer Muhammad Bu Shehri has assigned the concerned department to deal with house owners who changed the position of electricity meters without consulting the ministry during demolition or reconstruction of their houses.

Sources pointed out that the ministry investigated the issue and concluded that 30 citizens accused of violating the meter regulations were not actually aware of the law; thus, they will be required to sign pledges not to repeat the action. As per law, the citizens were to be referred to the Public Prosecution based on the allegation of stealing electricity and violating law.

Court sentences dirty dozen to jail for money-laundering

The Criminal Court, presided by Judge Mit'ib Al-Ardhi has sentenced 12 men to 10 years in jail with hard labor and fined them KD 198,000 each. The court also acquitted one man, citing lack of evidence, and another to two-year imprisonment for forging Visa, MasterCard and other credit cards. According to case papers the men — believed to be members of an organized local and international gang — were involved in money laundering activities.

The network is said to have reproduced more than 100 credit cards for amounts exceeding one million dollars by using sophisticated devices for the transfer of data of the stolen and counterfeit credit cards and deposited illicit funds through fraudulent manners in an accurate and professional manner. The gang comprises two citizens and expats who do business online and travel agencies linked with the mafia outside Kuwait that mostly depends on stolen credit cards.

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Health Ministry to review fees of healthcare services for expats - Official

A special panel is formed to review the fees of health services provided to expats in the country's state hospitals, the Health Ministry announced Wednesday.

The panel will study increasing the prices of some types of drugs prescribed to expats, Dr. Mahmoud Al-Abdulhadi, Assistant Undersecretary for legal affairs at the health ministry, said in a press conference.

The ministry will announce the updated prices next February after publishing them on the official Gazette, Al-Abdulhadi noted, affirming that the new prices is meant to cope with the rising cost of the



ministry's services such as sonar scan, laboratories, nuclear medicine, etc.

The new prices will also be 60

percent lesser than the health services provided in any private hospital, clinic, and center, he said,

affirming the ministry's keenness to provide high-quality health services to the expats at affordable prices.

He noted that the costly services such as bone scan, which costs the ministry KD 90, could be provided to expat patients for KD 40, cancer screening, which costs KD 480, could be provided for KD 250, and adrenal gland examination, which costs KD 270, could be provided for KD 70.

Moreover, the fees of 3D and 4D pregnancy ultrasound scans are projected to increase to from KD 10 to KD 25, he said. On the new health insurance system for the expats, the health official said that the projects

in currently in its final stage at the Audit Bureau, adding that the ministry has made preparations for the new system.

As soon as the ministry receives the Audit Bureau's approval, the health ministry will sign an agreement with the Dhaman-Health Assurance Hospitals Company to start the construction of three hospitals and 15 health centers across the country to provide health services for expats, he noted. Al-Abdulhadi also affirmed that the new insurance system will be mandatory to all expats, except for workers at state bodies, servants and maids.

Ethiopian Airlines to expand operations with new destinations



Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's largest airline group, announced that it has concluded preparations to start new flights to seven new destinations. Flights will begin to Conakry on 1 February, to Victoria Falls and Oslo on 26 March, to Antananarivo on 28 March, to Jakarta and Singapore on 1 June and Chengdu

on 3 June. This will increase their destinations in Africa to 54, in China to 5, in Europe and the Americas to 18, and in the Middle East and Asia to 28.

Ethiopian is a truly indigenous Pan-African global carrier that operates the youngest and the most modern fleet in the continent.

BAIA Arts Courses 2017

The British Academy of International Arts (BAIA) opened its first set of 2017 courses last Saturday and they will run for 10 weeks until the end of March.

During this term, boys and girls from 3 years of age can enjoy a wide range of theatre, dance, art and music courses from a highly experienced team of teachers and assistants.

Under the patronage of Mrs Alexia Lodge, wife of HE the British Ambassador, BAIA is an Academy which offers courses in many different aspects of Art including Ballet, Tap, Jazz & Modern, Contemporary, Speech Courses, Theatre Courses, Arts & Crafts, Musical Theatre and Musical Instruments.

Students are prepared for examinations with the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), the British Ballet Organisation (BBO), the National Association of Teachers of



Dance (NATI) and the Association Board of the Royal School of Music (ABRSM). Highlight of the season will be the annual Dance Gala coming up in February, "Once Upon a Time" featuring excerpts from Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Ballet.

For more details about BAIA Activities please check www.facebook.com/thebaia/.

KIDOBOTIKZ offers challenging courses for children



With the aim to nurture a love for robotics from a young age, the Kidobotikz program invites school students to experiment, learn and explore the various field of robotics and find their own interest. As with successive Kidobotikz offerings, kids will work together in small teams and take full advantage of the uniquely designed Kidobotikz's high-tech robotics development stations.

Open a new world of knowledge, enjoyment and standard of education with the kits as students complete the different levels, developing various skills along the way. The intent of Kidobotikz is to inspire kids to take on challenges confidently and show an understanding of engineering as they gain from hands-on experience. For more details, Contact: 66042428 / 66791258

Register for Team Kuwait 2017



The trials to select the National Schools' Debating Team which will represent Kuwait at the World Schools' Debating Championships in Bali in August 2017 will take place from 3:30pm-7:30pm on Wednesday, 1 February at the British School of Kuwait.

Interested parties must register their intention to attend no later than 25 January, 2017 in order to be considered.

To register your interest and to receive further details, please contact Abigail Bartholomew at q8debates@gmail.com

'Hala February' 2017 to offer various activities for all ages, prizes worth \$ 2 million

Continued from Page 1

events and activities, for all ages, including intellectual, literary, cultural, religious, entertainment and sports to promote Kuwait's civilized image, added Al-Saqa'bi, who is also head of the festival's media committee.

Over the past sessions, the festival has come to constitute a landmark event for promoting tourism and economy, as well as shedding light on the aspects of renaissance in Kuwait, consolidating the country's status on the regional and Arab tourist map, he said. Al-Saqa'bi noted that the 2017 version will also focus on youth's small

and medium-sized enterprises and initiatives. Four major private sector malls are taking part in the festival; one of the most successful shopping events in the Gulf, he noted.

The sector's participation in the Hala February is growing year after year, he said, expecting up to 10 million reward coupons to be offered over the month.

Hala February 2017 will offer prizes worth US\$ 2 million through a multitude of activities, including daily ones, cash and other kinds of awards. Many of the prizes will be handed over to winners live on and by Kuwait TV. Al-Saqa'bi expected a 20 percent increase in participation in the festival.

KAPP to move forward with several PPP projects

Continued from Page 1

new benefits such projects, including tax and fee exemptions. It also established the KAPP - previously known as the Partnerships Technical Bureau - as the main body responsible for implementing the state's PPP programs.

However, since the reforms, progress in PPP projects have been rather lethargic and the country's first PPP project awarded in 2013, for the initial phase of Az Zour North IWPP, has been the only project to have been awarded so far.

Phase One of Az Zour North IWPP is 40 percent owned by a private consortium that includes the French multinational utilities company

Engie, the Japanese trading company Sumitomo Corporation, and Kuwait's Abdulla Al Hamad Al Sagar & Brothers. The government has the remaining 60 percent stake in the project. Successfully launching new PPPs will be a top priority for the government moving into 2017, as it seeks to maintain momentum on its infrastructure plans, despite the general decline in oil prices since mid-2014 that will lead to the record deficit of KD8.7 billion projected for FY 2016/17.

According to Al Sane'i, the PPP model offers mutual benefits for private and public sector with private investors helping to offset the costs of mega-projects. It is the government's fervent hope that Public Private collaborations would help it balance its books and

generate new investment opportunities for private developers and contractors.

In a November report published by the National Bank of Kuwait, the state's projects market was maintaining healthy momentum during the third quarter, when KD1 billion worth of contracts were awarded - a 14.8 percent quarter-on-quarter increase.

This brought the total value of contracts awarded in the first nine months of 2016 to KD3.6 billion, of which KD1.5 billion were for oil and gas projects.

MEED forecasts an additional KD2.3 billion in contracts will be awarded by the end of the year, while the total value of awarded projects is set to rise to KD11.5 billion in 2017, surpassing last year's record of KD10 billion.

Kuwaitis invested heavily in Dubai's real estate last year

Some US\$544 million in Kuwaiti money was invested in Dubai's real estate sector in 2016, said a report Saturday.

A report by Dubai Land Department revealed that there were about 770 Kuwaiti investors in 2016, coming in third place GCC-wise behind their



counterparts from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who ranked first and second respectively.

The report said that the total of GCC investments in Dubai's real estate sector came at USD 9.5 billion.

The department noted that Indian investors, who amounted to 6,200, ranked first when it came to the total volume of money

invested, with over US\$5.7 billion, while British investors; about 3,300, came in second with around US\$ 1.58 billion.

Investments from China, Canada, Iran, Russia, the US, and France amounted to US\$11.9 billion in 2016, said the report, which indicated that the collective number of investors from these countries was at 22,000 people.

New Porsche Panamera range launched in Kuwait

A sports car and luxury saloon in one, the new Panamera launch phase has officially begun. Porsche Centre Kuwait, Behbehani Motors Company, marked the introduction of the new generation by unveiling two all-wheel drive versions: the Panamera 4S and Turbo to attendees at a special event in Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa.

In its second generation, the Panamera has been redeveloped down to every last detail. Modifications to the engine, transmission, chassis and overall design concept, make it a performance icon in the luxury class.

Speaking at the launch event, Roger Kyriacou, General Manager of Porsche Centre Kuwait, Behbehani Motors Company, said: "In the



new Panamera, our customers and enthusiasts will experience a fundamentally redesigned car with new turbo engines, sharper exterior design, intuitive interior features

and innovative technologies. All models launched here today are more powerful than previous versions, whilst also significantly improving fuel economy and reducing emissions."



TRASSK members participate in football tournament

Thrissur Association of Kuwait (TRASSK) organized a football tournament for members at Mishref Football ground on Friday, 6 December. The association President Sebastian Vathukadan inaugurated the tournament.

There were eight teams from different areas of Kuwait, and after a nail-biting match the Salmiya team

lifted the cup with the Jahra team the runners-up. The following people were nominated Mr. Mohsin (Salmiya) as player of the tournament, Mr. Shefeek (Kuwait city) as best forward, Mr. Sreelesh (Kuwait City) - best defender and Mr. Sujit (Kuwait City) best goal keeper. The trophies were presented by the association functionaries

ASSE organizes 'IOSH Managing Safely' training program



American Society of Safety Engineers, (ASSE) Kuwait Chapter organized 'IOSH Managing Safely' training program from 27 to 29 December, at Best Western Hotel, Mahboula.

The trainer for the program was Muhammad Alamgir, CSP, CRSP, CMIOSH. Around 16 ASSE KC mem-

bers from different sectors participated in this training and benefited from it. CH. Rama Krushna Chary, President of ASSE Kuwait chapter, welcomed the participants. He briefed about the significance of the training seminar and the importance of conducting the training program to help the

people get certification in the field of Health, Safety & Environment. The trainer Muhammad Alamgir effectively communicated to the gathering so they could comprehend and adopt high standard occupational health and safety principles and practices in their particular work culture.

SIS organizes fun Fancy Dress competition



The Smart Indian School (SIS) held a thematic fancy dress competition for Grade 1, on 9 January in the school auditorium. It aimed at sensitizing the students towards the

services that different community helpers provide to the public. The students came forward displaying their costumes and speaking confidently on stage.

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Accelerating the reform agenda in the GCC's financial markets

The year 2016 was difficult for GCC economies. Early in the year, oil prices fell below \$30 a barrel, fiscal deficits rose to nearly 9 percent of GDP and foreign exchange markets tested the dollar pegs of some GCC currencies. Growth slowed down to below 2 percent as lower oil prices and the required fiscal consolidation took their toll on economic activity across the region.

The damage could have been much larger should the GCC economies not have accumulated a robust level of fiscal reserves and the banking sector not have enhanced its risk management framework and capital buffers during the booming years.

But the year ended on a positive note, with oil prices recovering and an increase in external borrowing providing more fiscal flexibility. Stock prices recovered towards the end of the year as liquidity constraints

softened and volumes increased, particularly in Saudi Arabia. The fiscal and financial adjustments triggered by the fall in oil prices in the course of 2014 have now made substantial progress and the outlook for 2017 appears to be brighter, with the US economy on a steady growth path, China avoiding a hard landing and oil prices expected to stabilise above \$50 a barrel over the medium term.

But the most notable impact of the abrupt end of the oil price boom has been that it reinvigorated the reform agenda across the region. The case of Saudi Arabia is emblematic: a new leadership appears to be more determined than ever to push through an ambitious reform centered on gradually reducing the role of the public sector and making the private sector the motor of economic growth.

Privatisation of state-controlled assets, including a partial listing of Aramco, will play a key role in this strategy, with the potential to increase the share of economic activities controlled by the private sector.

Kuwait has also introduced structural reforms aimed at attracting foreign direct investment and improving the business environment. The UAE, the front runner in the Gulf in terms of diversification, is



also moving ahead with reforms aimed at enhancing productivity and supporting more innovative economic sectors.

The growing need for economic reforms will have important implications for regional financial markets. GCC governments are increasingly relying on external funding rather than accumulated wealth to cover fiscal deficits. In 2016, sovereign bond issuance exceeded \$50 billion for the first time in history. This is likely to continue in the future, making the GCC a more important player in the emerging markets bond markets. Corporate bond issuance will also increase and non-financial

corporates are likely to tap into an international investor base looking to diversify away from developed markets. Regional equity markets are very different in terms of size and liquidity. Currently only two markets – the UAE and Qatar – are included in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index. However, privatisation of public assets and the easing of foreign ownership restrictions are likely to accelerate the inclusion of additional regional markets over the next few years.

The Saudi stock market accounts for half of the regional stock market capitalisation and the Saudi authorities have already started a gradual opening of the Tadawul Stock

Exchange. The dual listing of Aramco in Saudi Arabia and a major Western stock exchange and the expected privatisation of other public assets will further boost capitalisation and increase the share of the non-financial companies listed in the local market.

This is likely to gradually raise the standards of the largest stock market in the region to international levels and attract a growing numbers of foreign investors.

Oil can be a blessing or a curse. Over the last 15 years, thanks to booming oil prices, the GCC region accumulated an unprecedented amount of wealth, reduced debt and maintained financial domestic stability. However, with few notable exceptions, it lagged behind in terms of economic reforms and diversification from oil.

The end of the oil price boom and the slow but steady advance of alternative energy production technologies puts the region in front of a new reality. Most governments across the region, with Saudi Arabia in the lead, appear to be ready to deal with these challenges and deep and comprehensive reforms are gradually being implemented. In such a scenario, regional capital markets are likely to play a bigger role in the future.



Dubai, Abu Dhabi rents said to suffer marginal decline

Apartment and villa prices in Abu Dhabi and Dubai dropped by under 1 percent quarter-on-quarter at the end of 2016, as expats' purchasing power was hit by currency issues and the lower oil price, new research shows.

Apartment and villa prices in Abu Dhabi and Dubai dropped by under 1 percent quarter-on-quarter at the end of 2016, as expats' purchasing power was hit by currency issues and the lower oil price, new research shows.

Real estate broker Cavendish Maxwell's Q4 2016 Dubai and Abu Dhabi residential reports showed that average rents declined moderately compared to the third quarter, and average sales prices also dropped.

It also said the majority of Dubai agents who responded to a residential survey it conducted for the first quarter of 2017 predicted rents would remain unchanged in the short term.

In Dubai, apartment rents declined between 0.4 percent and 2.2 percent, with an overall average decrease of 1.1 percent during the fourth quarter

of 2016. Investment yields for key apartment communities stood at 7.5 percent on average.

Meanwhile, villa rents in Dubai declined 1.1 percent on average in the quarter, with investment yields for villa communities averaging 5.08 percent.

In Abu Dhabi investment zones, apartment and villa rents declined by 1.1 percent and 1.8 percent on average respectively. "Rents at Al Raha Gardens declined more than properties at Al Reef and Saadiyat Beach, with a 2.2 percent drop in Q4 2016," said Manika Dhama, research manager at Cavendish Maxwell.

"However, five-bedroom unit categories at Al Reef and Saadiyat Beach Villas have registered declines of more than 2 percent this quarter."

Sales prices also decreased slightly, the reports showed. In Dubai, for example, apartment prices declined up to 0.3 percent quarter-on-quarter during the fourth quarter of 2016 – an average drop of 3 percent over the last 12 months.

UAE said to start background security check on expat workers

The government will start security checks on foreign workers soon as a Cabinet decision in this regard is expected shortly, a minister told the Federal National Council (FNC) on Tuesday.

Saqr Ghobash Saeed Ghobash, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation, said conducting background security checks on foreign workers was approved in principle by the Cabinet in October last year.

"A committee made up of representatives of the ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs and Human Resources and Emiratisation was set up and its findings will be submitted to the Cabinet in a few weeks. We expect a Cabinet decision to conduct security checks on all foreign workers will be issued soon," the minister said.

Ghobash was answering a question by Hamad Al Rahoumi, a member from Dubai, calling for stricter security checks on foreign workers as more details emerge about the case of a Jordanian man who was found guilty of kidnapping, raping and murdering an eight-year-old boy last year.

"There are more than 4.5 million expatriate workers living and working in the UAE, but no background checks for any past criminal activity are conducted on them," Al Rahoumi told the House. Emiratis want to make sure every worker is free of a criminal record – regardless of wherever they come from. "If a person has committed a crime in his/her home country and the person has a criminal record, there is no way for us to know unless there is security vetting," Al Rahoumi said, wondering how come security clearance certificates are



required from Emiratis but not from expatriate workers. Al Rahoumi said with the state of the world now, security vetting of workers and visitors has become more of a concern and certainly something that needs to be addressed in the UAE. He said he did not feel safe without knowing the background. He wanted to make sure every chauffeur that drives his family's car is free of a criminal record. "It comes down to authorities conducting security checks before issuing work permits," he said.

The Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation said concerns of all members will be taken into account.

Marwan Bin Galita, First Deputy Speaker of the House, put a question to minister Ghobash about how successful his ministry's efforts are in reducing the number of unskilled workers in the country.

Ghobash said there is a plan to increase the presence of highly skilled workers to 40 percent of the work

force in the country by 2021. "The UAE also aims at increasing productivity of workers in non-oil sectors by five percent annually," Ghobash told the House, spelling out other measures taken by the ministry that led to an increase in the number of skilled workers to 600,000 last year from 400,000 from 2015, whereas the talented workforce grew by 20 percent over the last five years.

"The UAE has been ranked first in attracting skilled workforce and second in retaining them internationally," Ghobash said, adding that the ministries of Human Resources and Finance were conducting a study on decreasing fees for businesses committed to increasing skilled workers. The number of registered employees at the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation reached about 4.7 million by the end of 2015, compared to 4.417 million workers in 2014, according to statistics released by the ministry.

Dutch public trains now powered entirely by wind

As of the beginning of 2017, all public transport trains in the Netherlands are being powered entirely by renewable energy sources, namely wind power.

Dutch railway company NS has announced all of its fleet of electric trains now run on 100 percent renewable wind power.

In 2015, Dutch railway companies, of which NS is the largest, collaborated with energy company, Eneco, to reduce emissions. The early completion of several

wind farm projects in the Netherlands, Belgium and Finland enabled the early transition of Dutch public transport trains to 100 per cent renewables – initially planned to be achieved by 2018. There are currently a total of 2,200 wind turbines across the country, supplying power to 2.4 million homes.

The country's train network alone requires 1.2 billion kWh of electricity each year, which is roughly equal to the total power consumed by all households in Amsterdam.



Michel Kerkhof, Account Manager at Eneco said: "What makes this contract and partnership unique is that a whole sector decreases its CO2 footprint enormously and sets an example for other sectors to follow."

Renewable energy advocates hope that this important step in reducing the environmental footprint of the Netherlands' rail network will inspire similar initiatives across the world, including the new high-speed rail projects in the United States.

UN works to make tourism more sustainable

The United Nations has designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

In the context of the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the International Year aims to support a change in policies, business practices and consumer behavior towards a

climate change and how emissions from the sector can be curbed, along with finding ways for the industry to better adapt to the inevitable impacts of rising global average temperatures.

More than one billion international tourists meanwhile travel the world each year, which means that tourism provides millions of jobs and is crucial for

restaurants and pools. The transport sector, including air, car and rail, generates the largest proportion, with 75 percent of all emissions. Part of the emissions from transport can be avoided by choosing the most sustainable form of transport at least for inland travel, which is rail.

Tourist and business travelers, along with companies and organizations, can offset the carbon footprint of their trips by plane or car by purchasing UN-certified offsets provided through the UN's Climate Neutral Now Initiative.

Climate Neutral Now is also active in helping entire sub-sectors of the tourism transport industry, such as airports, measure, reduce and offset their emissions. Kicking off the sustainable tourism this year is the International Tourism Fair in Spain (FITUR), taking place on 18-22 January in Madrid.

The fair comprises a number of events organized by the World Tourism Organization including the official presentation of the International Year on 18 January.

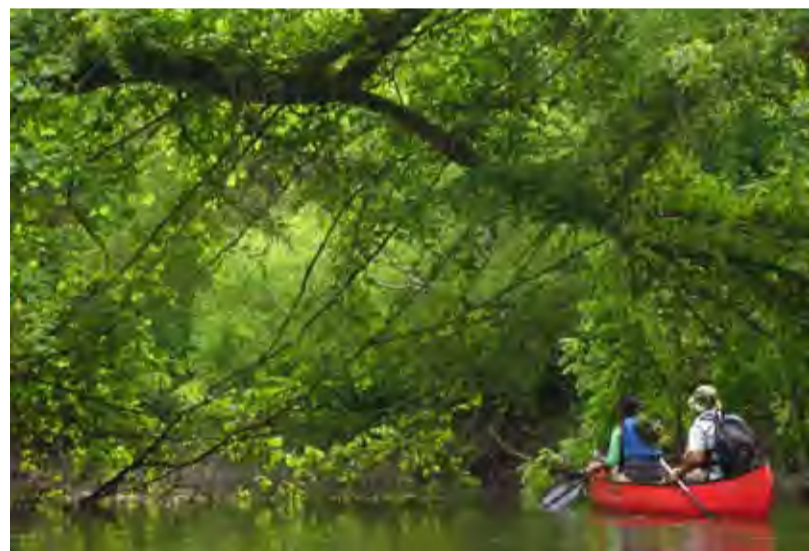
Also on 18 January is the 13th Edition of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Awards on Innovation and Excellence in Tourism. The awards will commend some of the best examples of sustainable tourism around the world.

In addition to the presentation of the International Year Sustainable Tourism for Development and the awards, more than 20 ministers of tourism from Africa will debate the opportunities that the sector can bring to the continent.

The potential of tourism in the MENA region (the Middle East and North Africa) and how to strengthen the resilience of tourism in the region will be also discussed at the fair by ministers.

national and local economies, not least in the developing world.

More than many other industries, tourism relies on a stable climate, and is already being impacted by increased incidents of storms and heat waves, desertification, fresh water loss, rising sea levels that threaten coastal resorts, and diminished snowfall in alpine skiing areas. The UN's World Tourism Organization estimates that tourism is responsible of about 5 percent of global CO2 emissions. Accommodation accounts for approximately 20 percent of emissions from tourism. This involves heating, air-conditioning and the maintenance of bars,



more sustainable tourism sector than can contribute to the SDGs.

The #IY2017 will promote tourism's role in the following five key areas:

- (1) Inclusive and sustainable economic growth
- (2) Social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction
- (3) Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change
- (4) Cultural values, diversity and heritage
- (5) Mutual understanding, peace and security.

To elaborate, this year is about looking at how tourism is affected by

India's solar capacity to double in 2017



In 2017, India's solar capacity is projected to double to 18 GW, with 14.2 GW of solar projects currently under development and tenders for approximately 6.3 GW are yet to be auctioned.

India's solar capacity is set to double as large projects are commissioned, despite the short-term challenges of power limitation and weak tendering in certain states, according to sector expert and power producers.

As of December, India's total solar capacity amounted to 9 GW.

During 2017, the solar energy sector is expected to add another 9 GW of capacity – elevating India's overall capacity to compete with other nations including China and Japan, says the cleantech consultancy, Mercom Capital Group LLC.

On 4 January, Mercom Capital released a report outlining that a total of roughly 14.2 GW of solar projects are currently under development and tenders for 6.3 GW are yet to be auctioned.

The renewable energy-focused consultancy, Bridge to India,

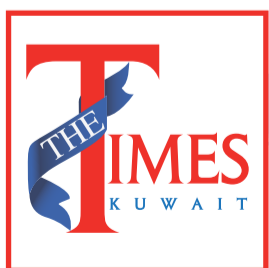
expects that the country's solar market will grow by 90 per cent in 2017, as India adds a total of 8.8 GW of capacity – including 1.1 GW of rooftop solar installations.

The solar energy sector is beginning to see the effects of the ambitious target set by the government.

Vinay Rustagi, Managing Director of Bridge to India, said: "The large capacity addition this year is purely a case of how timelines work for these projects. Because the government was formed in 2014 and they announced the new target in 2015 and the bulk of the large tenders started coming out toward the end of 2015. So these are the projects which will start getting implemented and commissioned in 2017."

However, there is still a long way to go as India has a target of setting up 100 GW of solar and 60 GW of wind energy capacity by 2022.

The growing energy sector will require \$250 billion in investments to reach this target.



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Significant health benefits attached to weekend exercises

A new study suggests that cramming all your recommended weekly exercise into one or two weekend sessions is enough to produce important health benefits. Being active without managing 150 minutes of moderate activity a week was still enough to reduce the risk of an early death by a third. The findings are based on a survey of about 64,000 adults aged over 40 in the UK.

Health experts said purposeful exercise was key to better health. Researchers analyzed data on the time people spent doing exercise and their health over 18 years. They found that no matter how often people exercised in a week or for how long, the health benefits were similar as long as they met the activity guidelines.

This is good news for people with a busy lifestyle who turned into 'weekend warriors' in order to fit in all their recommended physical activity. Compared with those who did not exercise at all, people who did some kind of physical activity - whether regularly or irregularly - showed a lower risk of dying from cancer and from cardiovascular disease (CVD), which could lead to heart attacks and strokes.

Weekend warriors, who did all their exercise on one or two days of the week, were found to lower their risk of dying from CVD by 41 percent and cancer by 18 percent, compared with the inactive.

Those who exercised regularly on three or more days per week reduced their risks by 41 percent and 21 percent.

Even the 'insufficiently active' lowered their risk by a significant amount - 37 percent and 14 percent, the researchers noted.

The study authors and experts in physical activity and health said the key was doing exercise that was "purposeful, and done with the intention of improving health". "You are not going to fidget or stand your way to health," they said.

They added that a commitment to an active lifestyle was usually accompanied by other healthy lifestyle options, which made a positive difference regardless of body mass index (BMI).

Child development linked to Parental obesity

Children of obese parents may be at risk of developmental delays, according to a study by researchers at the National Institute of Health in the US. The investigators found that children of obese mothers were more likely to fail tests of fine motor skill - the ability to control movement of small muscles, such as those in the fingers and hands. Children of obese fathers were more likely to fail measures of social competence, and those born to extremely obese couples also were more likely to fail tests of problem solving ability.

Previous studies in this area have focused on the mothers' pre- and post-pregnancy weight. The new study is one of the few that also includes information about fathers, and results suggest that dad's weight also has significant influence on child development.

The research indicated that about 1 in 5 pregnant women in the United States is overweight or obese. For the study, the researchers reviewed data collected from more than 5,000 women who enrolled in the study roughly 4 months after giving birth between 2008 and 2010. To assess development, parents completed the Ages and Stages Questionnaire after performing a series of activities with their children. The test were not designed to diagnose specific disabilities, but served as a screen for potential problems, so that children could be referred for further testing.

Children in the study were tested at 4 months of age and retested 6 more times through age 3. When they enrolled, mothers also provided information on their health and weight - before and after pregnancy - and the weight of their partners.

Compared to children of normal weight mothers, children of obese mothers were nearly 70 percent more likely to have failed the test



indicator on fine motor skill by age 3. Children of obese fathers were 75 percent more likely to fail the test's personal-social domain -- an indicator of how well they were able to relate to and interact with others by age 3. Children with two obese parents were nearly three times more likely to fail the test's problem solving section by age 3.

While noting that it is not known why parental obesity might increase children's risk for developmental delay, the researchers said that if the link between parental obesity and developmental delays is confirmed, physicians may need to take parental weight into account when screening young children for delays and early intervention services.

Latest research data suggests that 76 percent of the world's population, or nearly 5.5 billion people, This shows that more people on this planet are currently over-fed than undernourished.

More people over-fed than undernourished

The over-fat pandemic has not spared even those who exercise or even compete in sports, says researchers behind the study at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand.

The researchers put forth a specific notion of over-fat, a condition of having sufficient excess body fat to impair health, in their recent research hypothesis and theory article published in the journal Frontiers in Public Health. Based on a new look into current data, they argue how, in addition to those who are overweight and obese, others falling into the over-fat category include normal-weight people.

"The over-fat category includes normal-weight people with increased risk factors for chronic disease, such as high abdominal fat, and those with characteristics of a condition called normal-weight metabolic obesity," explain the researchers.

While the obesity epidemic has grown considerably over the last three to four decades, this work casts light on the much higher numbers of people who may have unhealthy levels of body fat.

"We want to bring awareness of the rise in these risk factors, where the terms 'over-fat' and 'under-fat' describe new body composition states. We hope the terms will enter into common usage, to help create substantive improvements in world health," says the team behind the study.

The researchers clarified that their work also indicates that 9 to 10 percent of the

world population may be under-fat. "While we think of the condition of under-fat as being due to starvation, those worldwide numbers are dropping rapidly. However, an aging population, an increase in chronic disease and a rising number of excessive exercisers or those with anorexia athletica, are adding to the number of non-starving under-fat individuals," they explain.

This leaves as little as 14 percent of the world's population with normal body-fat percentage, notes the analysis.

The study concludes that this is a global concern because of its strong association with rising chronic disease and climbing healthcare costs, affecting people of all ages and incomes.

The study brings to light that new terminology - over-fat - is important to replace the old notions of 'overweight' and 'obese'. While it is estimated that up to 49 percent of the world's population, or 3.5 billion people, are obese or overweight, the well-documented obesity epidemic may merely be the tip of the over-fat iceberg, state the authors behind the report.

The term overfat, as opposed to obesity and overweight, may be more helpful moving forward in addressing this global health problem.

Better terminology may lead to better awareness of overfat risks, and help healthcare professionals, public health officials and the public more easily address these problems.



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BRAZIL

Stunningly different

Famous for being home to one of the world's top football teams, the Rio de Janeiro Carnival and the remarkable Iguazu Falls, Brazil is an exciting world travel destination. As South America's largest country, Brazil covers a majority of the continent's northeastern region and borders all of its countries except for Chile and Ecuador. From the Amazon rainforest in the North to the tropical beaches along the Atlantic, to the Pantanal wetlands and the vibrant metropolises of the Southeast there are plenty of interesting places to visit in Brazil.



Sao Paulo: Located in southeastern Brazil, Sao Paulo is known for its skyscrapers, gastronomy and robust culture scene. It is home to many ethnic groups from all over the globe including the largest Japanese community outside of Japan.



Brasilia: Brasilia's modern day infrastructure is designed in the shape of an airplane in which each of its sections serve as different districts such as government, commercial, residential and cultural. The city's new and creative designed buildings attract many architecture aficionados. Most significant is the Three Powers Square, which houses the Presidential Palace, the Congress and the Supreme Court. Other important buildings include the Brasilia Cathedral with its glass roof that resembles hands reaching up to heaven.

Fortaleza: Nice beaches, dynamic shopping and lively culture all make Fortaleza one of Brazil's popular places to visit. The most popular beach is Praia do Futuro, but other favorites are Iracema, Mucuripe



and Meireles. Fortaleza also serves as the jumping-off point for many visitors to truly spectacular beaches, rolling dunes and idyllic fishing villages up and down the Ceará coast.

Paraty: A paradise of tropical forests, waterfalls, emerald sea and coastal mountains, Paraty is a popular tourist attraction located along Brazil's Green Coast in the Rio de Janeiro state. The heart



of Paraty is its historic center with cobbled streets and multicolored colonial houses, many of which now serve as bed-and-breakfast accommodations called pousadas. One of the most popular attractions are the colonial defense forts that still boast original walls and cannons.

Manaus: The capital of the Amazonas state in northwestern Brazil, Manaus is an important tourist destination because it serves as a gateway to the Amazon rainforest. As a result of the region's flourishing rubber industry during the early 20th century, Manaus today is one of Brazil's largest cities, featuring distinguished landmarks like the Amazonas Opera House, and the Rio Negro Palace. Another significant sight is the Meeting of the Waters, which is a natural



phenomenon where the two rivers of Negro and Solimões run side by side for more than three miles without fully mixing.



Foz do Iguacu: One of the world's most stunning natural wonders, Iguazu Falls is a series of magnificent waterfalls located on the Iguazu River, straddling the border



between Brazil and Argentina. The falls in and of themselves are a breathtaking spectacle, but their beauty is all the more enhanced by the surrounding lush forest teeming in exotic wildlife.



Rio de Janeiro: There is no destination on earth more animated and exciting than Rio de Janeiro. It is the most visited city of South America due to its famous mountains, landmarks, beaches and Carnival festival. Rio de Janeiro is situated on one of the world's largest harbors surrounded by natural attractions that include the Sugarloaf and Corcovado mountains and famous beaches like Copacabana and Ipanema. The city's iconic landmark is the enormous Christ the Redeemer statue sitting atop Corcovado mountain. Carnival celebrations here are among the largest in the world, with vibrant parades, costumes, dancing, music, fireworks and street parties.

Try Brazil's best cuisine

Aside from the thousands of miles of coastline and epic countryside, the hearty cuisine will have you in raptures. Here are some essential Brazilian dishes you should sample on your visit.



Brigadeiros: Brazil's answer to the chocolate truffle, the sweet balls are made by simmering condensed milk with cocoa powder, then whisking in butter and shaping the mix into balls before rolling in chocolate sprinkles. Guaranteed to give an instant sugar high, they are cloyingly sweet for some palates.

Quindim: A glossy yellow sweet made with nothing more than eggs, sugar and coconut (with butter a common addition). Baked in cupcake-sized moulds, the bottom is toasted and golden, dense with grated coconut, while the top is a smooth, firm custard that sticks pleasingly to the roof of the mouth. The recipe itself was inspired by the Portuguese love affair with egg yolks in sweets and pastries.



Acarajé: One of the most calorie-laden street snacks you will have the good fortune to try, acarajé is a deep-fried patty of crushed black-eyed peas, palm oil and pureed onions, deep fried in yet more palm oil and then sliced open and stuffed with dried shrimp and vatapá – a rich and spicy puree of prawns, bread, cashew nuts and other ingredients. Originating in Bahia, in Brazil's North-East, where the flavors have strong roots in African cooking, acarajé is at its best when made on the spot, served piping hot from the vat of oil, with a liberal dash of chilli sauce.





Gel manicure mistakes ruining your NAILS



It is essential that you are gentle as you remove your gel polish: your nails are likely quite soft from this process. You absolutely should not have to force the gel off with that orange stick; it should just come off with a very slight push. If you attempt to roughly slough off the lacquer, you will remove the top layers of your nails along with it, making them even weaker.

Avoiding cuticle oil: Dabbing on cuticle oil regularly will actually help prolong the time between appointments. Nails are like a sponge, if they get dried out too quickly, it can cause the nail to pull away from the gel. Instead, keep nails hydrated with cuticle oil and you will prevent this from happening.

Picking at the edges: Picking and fussing with the lifted area will not only ruin your manicure but likely remove the top layer of your nail. Instead you should either get it professionally fixed, or figure out how to redo your paint job more carefully.

Improper nail prep: You may try to swap out special nail prep formulas (as in the ones specifically made for the brand of gel polish you are using) with a cheaper, less expensive nail cleanser like pure acetone. Don't do this. Improper nail prep results in problems with how the gel cures to the nail. Every system comes with its own prep product that cleanses the nail's surface of oils, dirt, and dust.

Mixing and matching nail systems: Every gel nail system is designed differently. Each one features its own prep products, basecoats, topcoats, and color. These are all specifically engineered to work together to deliver the strongest and shiniest gel manicure possible. Mixing products from one system or another can mess with the results, making removal particularly challenging.

Gel manicures are a girl's answer to amazing nails in no time; they require less drying time, have zero probability of smudging, last for a longer time and present an enduring glossy finish. When applied and cared for correctly, these glossy lacquers aren't harmful to your nails at all. However, there is a downside, seemingly simple things can cause your gels and natural nails to prematurely crack and peel. Read on to discover the mistakes made with gel manicures.

Peeling off your gel manicure: To remove a gel manicure yourself, you can opt for an at-home removal system, or create your own with a 100 percent acetone solution. But whatever you do, do not pick and peel. Gels aren't what ruin your nails, it is the removal process, so make sure you take the time to do it the right way. To do so, use a gritty emery board to buff the surface of your gel manicure until you have dulled down its shine, then secure a acetone-soaked cotton ball atop each nail. Tightly wrap a square of tinfoil around each fingertip so no air can get in (which would let the acetone evaporate), and wait at least 10 minutes for the nail polish remover to work.

This could take a little trial and error — depending on the strength of the gel, you may need to wait up to 40 minutes for the gel to flake off. But if the lacquer looks like it is ready to lift away from your nails, use an orange stick to gently scrape it away from your nail's surface. Once you have completed these steps on every finger, nourish your dehydrated nails with cuticle oil.



Upgrade your WINTER WARDROBE

This winter, most women are just trying to stay warm. However, if you feel like you are walking around in a giant sleeping bag most days, you might need some creativity to improve your looks so you feel more confident. Polish and practicality don't have to be at odds, even in subzero temps. Keep on reading for the ways to refresh your style when you are bored with your winter wardrobe.

Expertly layer to beat bulk: It's easy to feel frumpy and weighed down once the temperature drops. Work with different fabrics that provide a good fit as keys to your new style. You can work around lightweight blouses and denim jeans teamed with classy print coats. You want something with a clean fit but not too tight. Remember, anything baggy will add lumps under your clothes. A great thing about strategic layering is that it has financial advantages as adding thin, heat-trapping layers saves money by letting you wear your lighter-weight pieces year round, thereby doubling the size of your winter wardrobe.

Highlight your waist regardless of your outfits: When winter strikes, avoid the bulky look by cinching your waist whenever possible. Belts flatter nearly every body type, and you can wear them with sweaters, blanket scarves, dresses, coats and other clothing items. Leather belts may cost a little more, but a good, classic one should last you a lifetime and

look better with age, while cheaper synthetic varieties will crack and show wear quickly. However, if you are not a fan of wearing belts go for high-waist bottoms and dresses with a defined waist that will show off your feminine curves even in the winter months.

Show off your legs with winter-friendly tights and over-the-knee boots: You may feel yourself slipping into a black-pants rut in the dead of winter, but your legs can come out to play. Nothing is trendier these days than a pair of black tights that can define your legs while keeping you warm. Also, tall, thin socks will fit inside your flats, saving you money by allowing you to continue to wear those comfortable shoes all year. On milder days, have some fun and flaunt your legs with over-the-knee boots.

Commit to regular maintenance: Winter clothes cost more, due in part to the expensive materials and multiple layers it takes to make them. By committing to regular maintenance, you will stretch your cold-weather clothing budget. From removing salt stains to smoothing scuffs, shoe shines makes everything you wear look refreshed and renewed. Also, invest in an inexpensive electric sweater shaver, or use a manual sweater comb as pilling happens to even high-end wools and cashmeres. Finally, keep your colors fresh by washing right.





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Latest TVs, laptops and more at this year's CES

While Samsung, Sony, Panasonic, LG and other big-name tech vendors were busy launching their latest products to the masses thronging the floors of CES 2017, lesser known names were equally eager to try and make a mark at the annual technology extravaganza.

While there can be little doubt that it was a TV gala this year, there were plenty of great smartphones, laptops, PCs and other gizmos to admire, including cameras, drones, robots, monitors, smart home device and more at this year's Computer Electronic Show in Las Vegas.

In no particular order, here are 11 highlights from CES 2017, covering everything from big name reveals to a few wild cards that really impressed the crowds.



LG's Signature W OLED TV is an absolute stunner

It was arguably LG that stole the show at CES 2017, showing off a slew of new high-spec sets, not least its amazing new LG Signature OLED W7, which the company describes as the "lightest, thinnest, and most beautiful TV on the planet."

Measuring a wafer-thin 2.57mm, it's a true "picture-in-wall" telly, as LG has chosen to describe it, and will come available in 65-inch and 77-inch models running a new version of LG's custom TV software, webOS 3.5 - generally regarded as the best on the market. Pricing and a release date have yet to be confirmed



Sony joins the OLED party in style

As expected, Sony finally joined the OLED party at CES 2017, announcing its first 'proper' OLED TV, the AE1 Quite apart from being an OLED TV, which is awesome; it has a 'unique' way of producing sound. Instead of speakers or a soundbar, which is the common way many slim

TVs give you sound, the AE1 literally vibrates the TV panel to produce sound.

In other words, the sound comes straight from the screen, which comes in 55-inch, 65-inch, and 77-inch models. It was arguably the most exciting TV to be launched at CES 2017.

Wireless HTC Vive is a VR game-changer

There were rumors of something big coming out from HTC at CES 2017, and the company did not disappoint. It significantly bolstered its Vive range with a slew of new accessories to play with, not least the semi-mythical TPCast-designed add-on that makes your HTC Vive VR experience completely wireless.

The company also launched a bunch of new software, most notably the world's first VR subscription service, which it claims will be "Netflix for virtual reality."



Samsung launches its 'QLED' TV range



At CES 2017, Samsung launched its new class of 'QLED' TVs. There are three new high-end sets coming in all: the flat Samsung Q9F, curved Q8C, and the Q7, which is available in both flat and curved models.

The QLED range replaces Samsung's SUHD TVs as the firm's flagship line, with the new models set to be available in four sizes: 55, 65, 75 and 88 inches.

Pricing and a release date have yet to be confirmed, but we understand the new QLED sets are likely to start shipping to select regions in March 2017.

Asus ZenFone learns to Tango

Handsets aren't front and center at CES like TVs are, but 2017 produced a few interesting new phones, not least the Asus ZenFone AR. Asus in fact unveiled two new mobiles, but while there is plenty to like about the ZenFone 3 Zoom, it was the firm's augmented reality effort that

really stood out, as it is just the second phone to integrate Google's Project Tango AR tech.

It also supports Daydream VR, and while Asus' insistence on adding a truly hideous skin to Android Nougat hinders the overall experience slightly, the new Asus device was a genuinely exciting draw, which is no small feat given the cavernous size of products on display at CES.

Honor 6X is the latest wannabe 'flagship killer smartphone'

While a new Tango phone is important for bringing AR technology closer to being a part of our day-to-day lives, the most immediately accessible new smartphone that broke cover at CES this year looks like the Honor 6X from Huawei sub-brand Honor.



The mid-ranger, which is set to retail for US\$250, features above average overall specs, with one major exception - the dual-camera configuration found on the back. At present, this is the kind of feature that's normally only found on high-end handsets, which is a good thing, because some of the other key talking points are less positive.

Namely, the 6X's dull design does not quite fit with Honor's strained, and at times, frankly embarrassing efforts to appeal to teens and millennials. But two cameras to Insta with, and a price point that the Bank of Mum and Dad will approve of; surely all can be forgiven.

Dell's 2-in-1 XPS 13 - the best Windows 10 laptop made even better?



Jumping the gun, Dell announced a major refresh of its XPS 13 laptop on the eve of CES 2017. Fast forward and it's still one of the clear standouts from the show. The new XPS 13 is a 2-in-1 convertible designed to rival some of the devices in Lenovo's Yoga range and features a touchscreen display - Full HD and QHD models will be offered - plus a foldable hinge that allows you to use it in a variety of positions. It will come packing the latest Intel Kaby Lake architecture (Core i5 or Core i7) and offer two USB-C ports, with a provisional release date of 5 January.

USB flash drives enter a whole new dimension

For an appreciation of sheer guts at CES 2017, look to Kingston, who, amidst the slew of snazzy new TVs, high-spec laptops, and shiny smartphones, announced a USB stick at CES. Except it is not just any old USB stick it is a big USB stick. A monster 2TB USB flash drive that is now the world's largest device of its kind.



Alexa steals the show

Virtual assistants were everywhere at CES this year, but it was Amazon's Alexa that stole the show by popping up in a bewildering array of devices including fridges, cars and robots.

Manufacturers are clearly interested in making their appliances voice-operable, and many see Alexa as a great way to do this. But having Alexa also allows the appliances to gain capabilities, such as streaming music and turning smart lights on and off. Amazon was quick to notice the potential of voice control following the rise of smartphone apps that could interact with appliances.

Manufacturers are able to design new 'skills' for the assistant - meaning the AI is not limited to what Amazon has built in. Alexa can, with a quick bit of programming, be adapted to lock car doors or tell you when your washing machine's cycle will finish. Perhaps this is how Amazon has cornered so much of the market - by explicitly designing a flexible AI that allows companies to implement it as they see fit.

However, it bears remembering that though Amazon is not quite as global a company as Google or Microsoft - the online retailer does not have a website for countries in Scandinavia, the Middle East or Africa, for example. And not all implementations of Alexa make the assistant easy to access, nevertheless, it was the first voice assistant to turn up in a compelling consumer product, the Echo speaker, rather than just on a smartphone. Although Google Home has now joined the fray it is clear who's in the lead. Across CES, you can hear Amazon's creation at work.

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