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250 Fils



Kuwait's 'liberalish' governance yields another deficit budget

THE TIMES REPORT

Kuwait has a unique model of governance for the region, neither fully liberal nor fully monarchical. An appointed government and an elected parliament at odds with each other on most topics have been a recurring feature of parliamentary life in Kuwait, ever since the country began its democratic experiment soon after independence.

However, this 'liberalish' form of governance, as some in the media call it, has been a bane on Kuwait, hampering the adoption of much-needed market-oriented reforms necessary to fuel

economic growth and development of the country. Labelled as the most sluggish reformer among the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bloc, Kuwait has been reluctant to introduce much-needed economic and administrative reforms.

Attempts by the government to diversify the economy away from its over-reliance on hydrocarbon revenues, promote privatization and support greater private-sector participation, as well as encourage private firms to lighten the burden of a burgeoning public-sector labor pool by employing the growing number of young nationals, have been met with fierce resistance from parliament and public alike.



The government also stands accused of being ambivalent in applying subsidy cuts, too timorous to restructure the

public-sector pay scales and reluctant to impose a value added tax (VAT) on goods and services. For instance, the

government introduced price hikes on fuel in September 2016, only to turn around and offer citizens up to 75 liters of free petrol a month.

On the same lines, the authorities slashed subsidies on water and electricity in 2017, but the higher prices mainly targeted expatriates and commercial ventures.

Citizens who, by far, are the largest consumers of utilities, were charged only a nominal hike in tariffs. Similarly, although Kuwait signed up to the common five percent VAT agreement among GCC states in 2015, the country has now postponed its implementation to sometime in 2021.

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Dynamic air show from participants at the Kuwait's Aviation Show 2020 that highlighted the best technology and developments in the aviation sector.

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Philippines decides to impose total deployment ban to Kuwait

A total ban on deployment of Filipino workers to Kuwait has been imposed by the Philippines Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

On Wednesday, 15 January, the governing board of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) announced that a resolution

had been signed for the total ban on deployment of Filipinos to Kuwait in response to the brutal murder of Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) Jeanelyn Villavende by her Kuwaiti employer.

The deployment ban was recommended by Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III after the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) autopsy report showed that Ms. Villavende had been repeatedly tortured and subject to sexual abuse while working for her employers in Kuwait.

The deployment ban would cover all "newly-hired domestic workers or household service workers, semi-skilled workers, skilled workers and professionals, including crew changes and shore leaves of Filipino seafarers," in Kuwait.

Speaking to the media, POEA Administrator Bernard Olalia said that starting 16 January, the agency will no longer release

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



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PAM to impose punishment on companies hiring domestic workers

Statistics from the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) show that nearly half of those arrested for violating labor rules last year were domestic helpers holding article 20 residency permits in violation of law 6/2010, which was issued with regards to work in the private sector. They said after arresting those workers, legal action was taken and they were deported from the country.

Meanwhile, PAM authorities are said to be considering a proposal to impose strict punishments on private sector employers who provide jobs to domestic helpers in violation of the law. The authority is looking to block such employers and blacklist them so they cannot bring workers from abroad, or hire workers from the country.

Other numbers made available by PAM show that among 14 nationalities employed



as domestic helpers in the country, the most number of complaints against employers was from the Filipina workers. However, the figures also show that the number of complaints have dwindled in recent years from an average of 400 complaints annually to around 120 in 2019. Statistics released by the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), based on figures from the Ministry of Interior, show that there are over 727,000 domestic helpers in the country.

DDI establishes genetic testing to diagnose MODY

Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI) will be hosting members of an International Scientific Advisory Board, appointed by KFAS, to review progress and discuss future directions of diabetes research at the Institute during 14-15 January.

A major achievement at DDI during the last year is represented by the establishment of genetic testing to diagnose a rare form of diabetes, Maturity-Onset Diabetes of the Young (MODY), in Kuwait. The country has a high burden of diabetes and improved access to diagnosis of MODY represents an important milestone to provide optimal care to patients with diabetes. At the present time, MODY can be expected to represent a relatively small – but unknown – proportion of all patients with diabetes. However, accurate diagnosis of individual patients is critical for personalized management of the disease.

By providing improved access to genetic testing, and contributing to improved awareness of MODY among clinicians and patients, DDI will be well positioned to increase the understanding of MODY in Kuwait and beyond.

In particular, with the implementation of a nationwide national diabetes registry, an opportunity to address MODY at the population



level will be available in Kuwait within the near future.

Studies of MODY prevalence, as well as possible discoveries of new MODY variants, represent a major focus of DDI research agenda. In addition, DDI will expand collaboration in this field to neighboring countries with a similarly high prevalence of diabetes and high rates of consanguineous marriages to move the research agenda forward to unravel the genetic makeup of MODY and, most importantly, to contribute to improved personalized care to patients living with diabetes.

Jazeera Airways continues expansion into Saudi with direct flights to Abha



Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, announced that it prepares to launch a new direct service to its sixth destination in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Abha, serving the capital of the Asir Region with three weekly return flights every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.

Jazeera Airways CEO, Rohit Ramachandran, said: "We are very pleased to be launching the first direct service between Kuwait and Abha, connecting our customers to the popular Saudi tourist destination known for its unique scenic landscapes, historic monuments and breathtaking views from its surrounding mountains.

The city of Abha hosts events all-year-long, including the summer Abha Festival,

sporting events, shows, exhibitions and musical performances. Hilltop fortresses are a characteristic feature of the city. Visitors of the city can enjoy the Shadda Palace, built in 1927, which is today a museum displaying local handicrafts and household items, in addition to other notable buildings such as the Abha Great Mosque, the Abha Palace Hotel, and the fun park next to Lake Sadd.

Jazeera Airways' flights from Kuwait to Abha depart at 10:25 am local time on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and return flight from Abha at 13:20 local time.

Bookings for Kuwait-Abha flights are open and available on jazeeraairways.com. Fares start from KD70 for a return flight.

Court fines company for selling fake products

A cosmetic and accessories company has been fined KD 1,500 and closed for two weeks, on the orders of Judge Mohammad Al-Dousari of the Misdemeanor Court, who also referred the case to the civil circuit.

The court found the company guilty of deceiving customers and other retailers by selling fake eyelashes using the brand name of another company selling original. The company

was also accused of possessing a large quantity of imitation eyelashes which were intended to be sold as the original brand. Lawyer Sakina Al-Muslim representing the original brand name owners said the fake company violated the law for control of commercial fraud, as well as the law overseeing trade in goods and services and craft work and determining its prices.

She also submitted a memorandum and a portfolio of documents that included an extract from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry stating that the trademark imitated by the accused belongs to her clients and requested that the defendant be punished for being the cause for great material damages to her client.

LuLu Hypermarket Kuwait announces winners of 'Shop at LuLu & Win' promotion powered by Kalyan Jewellers



LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, announced the winners of its 'Shop at LuLu & Win' promotion, which was held in association with Kalyan Jewellers.

The promotion, which ran from 20th November to 10th January, saw six winners each walking away with a prize 250 grams of gold, for a total of 1.5kg gold, from Kalyan Jewellers. The promotion offered customers, shopping for a minimum of KD10 at any LuLu Hypermarket in the country, an e-affle coupon that entered them into the grand draw.

To add further delight to the shoppers taking part in the promotion, e-affle coupon holders were also eligible for other prizes like a gold vouchers/ diamond vouchers/ zero percent making charges on purchases from all outlets of Kalyan Jewellers in Kuwait during the promotion period.

The winners of the 'Shop at LuLu & Win' were announced at the grand draw held at the Ministry of Commerce premises on 14th January, in the presence of ministry officials and top officials from Lulu Hypermarket and Kalyan Jewellers in Kuwait.

Online system facilitates sick leave approvals

An online sick-leave system has been activated in all health areas, hospitals and specialized health centers, from Wednesday, 15 January, said a notification from the Ministry of Health.

The ministry has asked directors of all health districts and central departments to follow up the system's immediate activation and to ensure that all procedures are completed.

The procedures include registering all doctors working in hospitals and specialized health centers into the system, in addition to training employees and doctors on the use of the

system and its method of work, approving sick-leaves and submitting online medical reports by registered doctors and documenting in the e-health system.

The ministry added that as of 15 January it would no longer accept the printing of sick-leaves or medical reports except in emergency situations, or for people with special needs and the elderly.

In the event of any technical problem with the system, the information systems department in the concerned health zone should be contacted.

Civil ID corrections will incur charges

The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) has urged individuals to verify the details on receiving their residence permit from the Ministry of Interior, and to make any necessary amendments at the ministry, as it is responsible for entering or correcting the data. The authority pointed out that once the details are entered into the PACI system and the necessary payments are made, any rectification of details will incur additional cost to the user.

The authority also called on residents and citizens not to book tickets or make other travel arrangements without renewing their civil card, since many people apply for civil ID renewal just one day before the travel date and this causes unnecessary problems. It normally takes five working days to issue a civil ID and there is no delay in issuing the card, if all the data is correct and complete, said PACI.

Citizens and residents alike can now complete their civil ID related transactions



online without coming to PACI headquarters in South Surra, said a representative of the

authority. As people can now enter their data and pay the necessary fees online, this has reduced congestion at the headquarters, said the representative.

The authority receives on average 2,000 documents each day from citizens and expatriates at its headquarters, in addition to its branches in the government mall, at service centers and its branch in Jahra. A new branch is planned to open this year to serve the residents of Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Al-Ahmadi governorates, said the source.



PEFK & PSA executive teams meet with Pakistani Ambassador

Executive Teams of Pakistan Employment Forum Kuwait (PEFK) and Pakistan Sports Association Kuwait (PSA) met with the newly appointed ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait H.E. Syed Sajjad Haider at his office in the Embassy of Pakistan.

Various issues related to the Pakistani community were discussed

including visa problems. Ambassador Syed Sajjad Haider appreciated PEFK and PSA services to the community and assured all cooperation from the Embassy of Pakistan. PEFK team was led by Muhammad Irfan Adil, President of the forum, whereas PSA team was led by Maqbool Ahmed, President of the association.

Filipinos file the least complaints in 2019 among expats in Kuwait

Filipinos file the least number of complaints against their employers or compatriots, recent statistic have revealed according to a local newspaper.

Statistics issued by the Domestic Labor Department showed that Filipinos have the least number of trouble making expatriates who are subject to deportation, in spite of the intention of authorities in the Philippines to suspend export of labor to Kuwait after the recent killing of a Filipino domestic

worker by her sponsor, the paper stated.

Statistics indicate the rate of complaints filed by Filipinos declined by 33 percent in 2019 and from 36 percent in the previous year, indicating complaints filed by Filipinos in 2019 made up only 3 percent.

It also showed that Filipinos used to file an average of 400 complaints per year and they were the largest category among 14 different communities but 2019 witnessed the withdrawal of



several complaints and lawsuits filed by them as a result of stricter enforcement and better treatment by employers.

Kuwait expels 40,000 expats in 2019

Figures from the Ministry of Interior (MoI) reveals that more than 40,000 expatriates were deported from the country in 2019.

Of the total deportees, 13,000 were women and 27,000 men, and together they were from 20 different nationalities. Indians topped the list of deportees, followed by Bangladeshis and Egyptians. Most of the expatriates

expelled were for violating residence laws, engaging in criminal activity or for committing misdemeanors. While the General Administration for Investigation of Residence Affairs deported 17,000 people, the remaining 23,000 were deported from the government's deportation center.

Since November 2019, the authorities have implemented a new procedure for the deportation process, with anyone expelled from the country having to go through the deportation center where their fingerprints and other biometric data are recorded to prevent them from re-entering the country.

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In the event of any technical problem with the system, the information systems department in the concerned health zone should be contacted.

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Cook with a can of soup

You generally think of using canned soup for one thing and one thing only — soup. Pour it into a bowl, heat it up, grab a spoon, and you are done, right? Not so fast. While those cans are ideal for a quick-and-easy meal (especially when you dress them up), soup is actually great for adding flavor and keeping proteins from drying out.

Read on for five of your favorite dishes that benefit from a can of soup.

Meatloaf: Add Vegetable Soup

Condensed vegetable soup is a great way to add flavor (and extra veggies) to meatloaf. Use it instead of milk to



soak the breadcrumbs, then mix with your usual meatloaf ingredients, like diced onion, lean ground beef, egg, and seasonings. Bonus: It is dairy-free.

Sloppy Joes: Add Tomato Soup

Instead of ketchup or a combo of

tomato sauce and paste, use that can of condensed tomato soup. Just add to a skillet of cooked ground beef, onion, celery, and your favorite sloppy Joe spices, and let simmer uncovered for about 20 minutes. You can serve it as-is, on buns, on nachos, or stuffed in bell peppers and topped with cheese.

Dip: Add Chicken Tortilla Soup

A can of thick chicken tortilla soup can easily be transformed into a delicious, crowd-pleasing dip. Just add it to your slow cooker with some cream cheese and shredded cheese, and let it cook until thickened and bubbly.

Taco Skillet: Add Tomato Soup

If your taco night is feeling a little less-than-flavorful, add a can of condensed



tomato soup along with a half cup salsa and some taco seasoning to cooked ground beef or turkey and sliced bell peppers. Let cook until bubbly, top with cheese, and you've got yourself a 15-minute skillet dinner that packs a punch.

Burritos or Tacos: Add Black Bean Soup

If you've got a can of black bean soup you are not sure what to do with, use it inside your burritos and tacos. The black bean soup is already seasoned, so you won't have to add much to it, unlike with a regular can of black beans. Simply put it in a skillet with a can of spicy chopped chipotle peppers in adobo and let simmer until thickened.

Thought for the week

“Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do.”

— Steve Jobs

Benefits of eating raw liver

Ask Mira: Eating Right to Live Happy & Healthy



There is a lot of debate concerning eating raw liver. Some people say it is full of essential vitamins and minerals and we should consume it at least 3 times a week, others say it is not recommended as it can be dangerous to our heart and kidneys.

I was also surprised to learn that people can have raw liver for breakfast. I guess it is a matter of culture and taste.

It is well-known in all ancient societies that liver is a very nourishing food and contains many essential nutrients. More importantly, it is loaded with Vitamin A that helps promote healthy vision, fertility in males and allows for a proper embryonic development for females.

Moreover, liver is low in calories and fat while containing many vitamins and minerals.

Vitamin B12, Iron and Folic Acid are also very important for people who suffer from Anemia, so raw liver is a perfect supplement for them. The best thing for them is to eat raw liver once or twice a week.

However, you should know that raw liver is high in cholesterol, so if you suffer from high blood cholesterol levels and anemia at the same time, then you should be careful about consuming liver. In that case you need to focus on

plant protein food like grains, lentils, beans, and green vegetables like rocca and spinach, that are mainly high in iron, and has no cholesterol.



Another common concern about eating liver is that it contains toxins, but it is false.

The liver does not store toxins but through a process removes them from the body. But still, the best way to eat raw liver is to freeze it for 14 days to avoid any parasitic infection.

You should be very aware of the source of the meat you are buying, and there are a few groups who should stay

away from liver.

Pregnant women should definitely avoid any raw food as well those who suffer from gout.

Here are some ways to include liver in your diet:

- Cooked with a spoon of olive oil: Add onions.
- Spaghetti Bolognese: Chop or mince liver before mixing with regular ground beef. For this, calf or chicken livers work best.
- Burgers: Chop or mince liver before adding to ground beef to make nutritious burgers.
- Add plenty of seasoning as spices can add taste to liver.
- Soak the liver in milk or lemon juice before cooking.

To subscribe to my diet programs, don't forget to log in to: www.eatlikemira.com.

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



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Government once again offers apartment living to Kuwaitis

After the government's mega Sawaber Complex apartment blocks built in the 1980s for Kuwaiti families did a belly flop, the authorities are once again trying to entice Kuwaitis to choose apartment living, instead of waiting for government residences or private housing plot allotments.

The Sawaber Complex built in 1981 and located in the heart of Kuwait City, was advertised as luxurious apartments that allowed for intimate family spaces protected from the city, as well as zero commuting time with easy access to schools, offices, entertainment areas and government buildings.

The Sawaber Complex was Kuwait's first high-density living complex with 520 apartments in 33 multi-story buildings spread across an area of 240,000sqm. It was also Kuwait's first experience of what could happen when cultural preferences were not integrated into architectural plans. Though there was a strong initial enthusiasm for the project with buildings soon filling up with



tenants, the euphoria evaporated just as soon as it began.

Escalating land values in the surrounding area, gentrification, lack of maintenance, and most importantly, the lack of privacy and the need to be in 'touch with earth' — the feeling ingrained in Kuwaitis through generations of living in single floor houses or in desert tents — worked against Sawaber. Nearly 75 percent of the original tenants soon evacuated to housing plots when it became available. Sawaber has now been ear-marked for demolition.

Despite this experience, the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW), which implements government-housing policies, is once again encouraging citizens to live in apartment

buildings by advertising the many perks of spacious apartment and with facilities and services catering to their needs. The authority is calling for tenants to apartment blocks in Jaber Al-Ahmad City and in the northwest Sulaibikhat area. The authority said that there were 520 apartments in Jaber Al-Ahmad City, available at a cost averaging KD65,000 for a 400 sqm apartment, with citizens having to pay back the government an unbelievable low KD60 monthly installment.

Public reaction from citizens to the project have been varied, with some welcoming the idea and others saying it was not suitable for Kuwaitis. Those in support said that apartment buildings were an interesting option for those



unwilling to wait for years to acquire a house, and the repayment terms were far better than the high rents charged for private apartment.

On the other hand, those not keen on apartment living cited the lack of privacy, the inability to expand the apartment for improvements or if increased

needs arose. The lack of outdoor space of your own and noise from neighbors were also given as reasons for shying away from apartment blocks. One person said that most citizens would rather wait for housing or land allocated by the government than live in an apartment building.

Drivers of older model small vehicles to be denied residence renewal

Labor Department in the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) is said to be launching procedures designed to reject the renewal of work permits for drivers of old model small transport vehicles.

The move by the labor department is aimed at controlling the number of drivers employed in transportation companies. The new procedures will result in the residences of drivers registered with transportation companies not being renewed if they drive small vehicles that are older than 2011

models.

Since the residence nor the driving licenses mentions the model or make of vehicle that the driver is using, it is not clear how PAM intends to apply this new law. In the meantime, the authorities clarified that the residences of those driving heavy vehicles and machinery would not be impacted by the new procedures, since most of such vehicles are not new and usually are expensive.

Transportation company owners are



perturbed by the new decision as they would incur huge expenses to renew their vehicle fleet.

Criminal Court pronounces largest fine in Kuwait's history

The Criminal Court has sentenced a director from Jahra Municipality, who is absconding and is considered a fugitive from justice, and a Syrian expatriate to 7 years imprisonment with hard labor and a fine, which is the largest in Kuwait's history, of KD 740 million. The court also ordered the two to return a sum of KD370 million they had pilfered from the state, bringing the total amount the two have to repay the state to over KD1.1 billion.

The director is accused of tampering with the land licensing system of the municipality and issuing licenses for several pockets of land in Sabbiya and Salmi areas for quarry purposes to concerned companies, and later canceling them in a manner that was not apparent to auditors and inspectors.

The pockets of land in question involved were about 400,000 square meters area divided into four plots, and another 500,000 square meters area. Those sites were operational for about two years and during that period extensive looting of sand and stones worth millions of dinars took place from the quarries.

Family visit visas to be liberalized for Hala festival

With 'Hala February' Festival and the national holidays coming up, the residence affairs departments in all Kuwaiti governorates have been instructed to facilitate the issuance of visit

visas for those who plan to bring in their families to be part of the celebrations.

Hundreds of visit visa transactions have been approved so far, however, citizens of some countries who wish to come to

Kuwait to take part in the celebrations will still need the approval of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

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Aviation Show 2020 concludes successfully

Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Aviation Show 2020, was held from 15 to 18 January at the Kuwait International Airport. The event saw the participation of 37 countries, 200 companies and more than 70 commercial and military aircraft, and was witnessed by over 60,000 visitors.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Khalid Al Sabah paid a visit to the exhibition, during which performances were conducted by Kuwait Air Force, the Saudi Hawks team, the Emirati cavalry team, and the US and British Air Force, as well as the Skydive team from Qatar.

During the opening of the event, President of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah said that



the launch of Kuwait Aviation Show 2020 represented an opportunity to witness the latest in the world of aviation. He pointed out that the event coincided with the completion

of major state projects to develop the air transport sector, and developments at Kuwait International Airport, amid significant investments aimed at raising the efficiency of operation, and improving aviation services.

Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah also affirmed Kuwait government is keen on empowering women in civil aviation sectors, and mentioned that the civil aviation directorate supports women with all available resources.

The latest versions of military and commercial airplanes were on display at the show, including private aircraft, air ambulances and helicopters, in addition to equipment related to aviation, engines and navigation, as well as specialized requirements of civil and military airports. On the sidelines of the event, several workshops were held on the latest aviation technology.

Crime Beat

Son robs residence of father

In an apparently not so weird case in the country, police have arrested a young Kuwaiti man for robbing from his father's house. Case papers indicate that the son, who lives separately from the family, took advantage of the absence of his father and the rest of the family while they were on vacation and robbed the family residence. When the father returned from holidays he found his house broken into and that the safe with expensive watches, jewelry and thousands of dinars had been stolen. He promptly informed the police, who conducted an extensive investigation to conclude that the thief was the son. On raiding the young man's apartment, the police found the stolen safe and much of the loot, along with two bags of drugs. The young man was reportedly short on money to fund his expensive drug addiction and decided that the easiest way was to steal from his father.

Professor and brother arrested for financing terrorism

An unnamed university professor and his brother have been arrested and are being interrogated for allegedly financing terrorist groups in Syria. The siblings have been accused of financing elements in Syria that have been classified as terrorist groups by the National Assembly. They are reported to have transferred over half a million dinars in cash collected through donations to these groups in Syria. The ministry of foreign affairs had earlier requested to freeze the financial accounts of the professor as he was suspected of financing terrorist groups.

Bangladeshi sentenced to five years for molestation

A Bangladeshi who allegedly molested a minor has been sentenced to five years in prison with hard labor followed by deportation, by the Court of Appeals presided over by Judge Nasr Salem Al Hayd. The case papers show that the defendant, who operated a grocery store, was accused by the minor child's parent of luring his daughter into the shop and molesting her. The defendant denied the charges.

Immigration official jailed for helping wanted Egyptian to escape

A security official working at the Immigration office at Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 4 has been sentenced to four years in prison for facilitating the escape of an Egyptian who had been placed on a travel ban. In sentencing, the man, the Court of Cassation heard that in exchange for a bribe of KD700, the Kuwaiti official allowed the Egyptian to exit the country despite a travel ban against the man. The court sentenced the Kuwaiti to the jail term and KD1,400 to suspend the execution of the jail-term.

KKK holds AGM and 'Gaana Sanchaya'



Kuwait Kannada Koota (KKK) conducted its annual general body meeting and 'Gaana Sanchaya' recently at the Indian Community School, Khaitan auditorium.

Dr. Shashi Kiran Prabhu, the president of KKK welcomed the members and appreciated the contributions of various committee and member volunteers during the past year. The sports and cultural competitions held during



the year saw Nethravati emerging as the winner while Sharavathi was the runner up. Sports committee convener Girish Shenoy presented a report on sports activities during the year. 'Marala Mallige', the events' magazine of KKK was released.

The main attraction of the evening was the musical bonanza by 'Kanfusion' the team from Bangalore, India..

Tunisian singer dazzles at concert



Multi-talented Tunisian singer Syrine Ben Moussa performed at a concert titled 'Tunisian Musical Night' at the Yarmouk Cultural Centre



on 15 January. Her stellar performance received applause from the large gathering of music lovers.

Artist, singer and musician, Syrine Ben Moussa is passionate about music and is deeply involvement in many projects in Tunisia and France.

She is all about discovering, bringing together and above all using her performances to move beyond the preconceived ideas between cultures. She is one of the rare voices of Arab-Andalusian music scene in Tunisia.

Flag-hoisting ceremony for 71st Republic Day of India

The 71st Republic Day of India will be celebrated at the Indian Embassy premises at Daiya Area, Gulf Road, on Sunday, 26 January, 2020. The unfurling of the National Flag will take place at 08:30 am, followed by the singing

of the National Anthem. Also, school children from Indian schools in Kuwait will present a few patriotic songs. All Indian nationals, people of Indian origin and friends of India in Kuwait are cordially invited to attend.

Kuwait to witness 'Week of Ukraine'

A'Week of Ukraine' will be organized in Kuwait from January, 19-24 to highlight the country, with a variety of events encompassing business, culture, education, arts and sports.

On 19 January a range of sporting activities will be held at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium such as a Men's Artistic Gymnastics lecture and Ukrainian-Kuwaiti friendly football match. Fit Ball & Gym workout for Kuwaiti and Ukrainian kids will be held at Om Kalthom secondary school for girls under the auspices of School's Principal Ms. Maha Al-Mutairi and Social Studies teacher Ms. Sara Al-Rashidi.

The next day will be filled with appreciation for arts and culture with a piano concert by Ukrainian composer Evhen Khmara, a photography exhibition titled 'Unity of Ukrainian People Throughout the Ages',



Katsianova Yuliia Vladimirovna

Bringing stylish Ukrainian aesthetic to Kuwait

Fashion House VoleeYu was created in 2014 by Katsianova Yuliia in Kiev, Ukraine. A successful architect and designer with 16 years of experience, Katsianova has created a unique fashion house of her own. The fashion house has combined all the directions in the world of design, which include the design of clothes, accessories, interiors and designer expensive gifts.

VoleeYu is a powerful brand that quickly walks around the world and wins the hearts of millions of fans.



Please tell us about yourself and your work?

My name is Katsianova Yuliia Vladimirovna, I am the owner of the international brand VoleeYu, a designer and architect with 16 years of experience, a TV presenter on Ukrainian television channels of the country, an artist, author and creator of unique accessories that are unique in the world.

Fashion House VoleeYu - was created in Ukraine, an authentic fashionable Ukrainian brand with its own special philosophy based on the centuries-old cultural heritage of mankind. VoleeYu is a combination of aristocratic fashion, designer accessories, expensive tableware design and royal interiors in one brand. VoleeYu is the style of new aristocrats and a whole philosophy of life!

What is the most distinctive feature of your products?

First of all, as an architect, I see the creation of products and accessories from a different angle. Characteristic recognition VoleeYu - the author's diverse and unique embroidery, it is this feature of decorating fabrics and genuine leather that has become recognizable all over the world. Embroidered birds, people, architectural masterpieces, elements of the Baroque style, patterns from the walls of Versailles and much more, comes to life on fabrics in the collections of the VoleeYu brand.

What lead you to the eastern countries?

I have long dreamed of getting to the East and

creating beautiful elegant dresses and abaya for eastern women. My style is not like anyone else, so when my products were first shown in Dubai, they immediately found their customers. When creating collections for the East, I carefully studied and delved into the ornaments and traditions of the East. I created Middle Eastern dresses, but as a European designer, with my characteristic style and most importantly, embroideries, which is what my brand is famous for, were made in combining French ornaments from Versailles with Middle Eastern ornaments from the architecture. Such things carry in themselves, not only a very beautiful aesthetic component, but also an educational idea, because this is the union of two cultures.

What have you created especially for women of the East?

I can brag that I am probably the first Ukrainian designer to be hosted in the house of Arab sheikhs. I am invited as a full-fledged member of the family in an Arab home, and this is important, because I see the needs and desires of Middle Eastern women, I see their traditions and communication, this gives me a unique opportunity to create original products for individual orders. Now I was invited to an Arabian wedding, from which I just flew from Abu Dhabi, I saw a real Middle Eastern feast, but most importantly, a large number of women were present at the wedding, to whom I created designer dresses and they were not like one another, but this important!

What brought you to Kuwait?

Yes, this is an interesting story! My visit to Kuwait was planned long ago with the help of our wonderful Ambassador of Ukraine to Kuwait, Alexander Balanutsa. I am proud that we have such wonderful state diplomats who contribute and help expand cultural ties and establish joint work with the state of Kuwait. Alexander Balanutsa introduced me to Bushra Alaidan, a famous Kuwaiti designer of wedding dresses, a meeting that took place in Dubai. And today, I brought a chic designer embroidered Middle Eastern dress for the bride on the second day of the wedding. Unfortunately, I could not attend the wedding, because I was invited to another wedding in Dubai.

What are your plans for Kuwait?

"I have high hopes for a long-term cooperation in Kuwait, and I try very hard and make efforts to make my dresses and style like the women of Riyadh." We also have an agreement with designer Bushra Alaidan that my dresses are perfectly suited to the style of Middle Eastern women, especially on the second day of the wedding, so my products will be placed in the salon of wedding dresses that can be seen by everyone. I really hope that my products will be in demand in Kuwait.

devoted to the Day of Unity of Ukraine, and a Children's Art Exhibition titled 'Happy Child - Prosperous Ukraine'.

On 21 and 22 January, a two-day Business-Forum will be held at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry to serve as a platform for special presentations on the business potential of the country, including in its commercial, economic, agricultural and high-tech sectors, as well as its medical and tourism fields. 'Ukrainian Arts Night' exhibition, slated for 21 January at the Prestige in The Avenues (7 p.m.), will showcase a vibrant collection of dresses and jewelry by Ukrainian designers VoleeYu Fashion House and S.Moroz, whose aim is to promote Ukraine as a leader in creative and unique fashion ideas. Visitors can also taste delicious Ukrainian Monaco ice-cream.

On 22 January, a Kyiv Classic Orchestra Concert will be held at the at the Abdul Hussain Abdul Ridha Salmiya Theater (7 p.m.), featuring

the renowned Ukrainian composer and pianist, Evhen Khmara accompanied by conductor, Maestro Herman Makarenko, UNESCO Artist for Peace, Ambassador of Ukrainian Culture, People's Artist of Ukraine, Doctor, Professor, and Conductor of the National Opera of Ukraine. The Kyiv Classic Orchestra will share the beauty and the depth of musical history of traditional Ukrainian songs.

On 23 January, international conference, planned to be held at Kuwait University (Shaddadiya campus) will see the participation of Ukrainian and Kuwaiti students, as part of the 'Ukrainian and Kuwaiti student national identity'. Embassy of Ukraine will also hold the Diplomatic Reception, devoted to the Day of Unity of Ukraine.

On 24 January, a celebration program at the Embassy of Ukraine for the Ukrainian community will bring the 'Week of Ukraine' to a close.

Travel to Ukraine

Ukkraine is steeped in history and architectural innovation with big and small towns harbouring hundreds of historical landmarks from majestic fortresses to ancient palaces and magnificent cathedrals. Add to that open-space museums, opulent city squares brimming with heroic past, breath-taking views and markets bursting with quirky local color.

Ukraine has a fantastic array of natural wonders such as the mighty Dnipro river, while in the south-west the enchanting Dniester meanders among fantastic canyons. The picturesque Carpathian Mountains await tourists as do beautiful beaches in the seashores, both crowded and secluded. No matter where you wind up - in the bustling Kyiv or the 'seaside pearl' that is Odessa, in the venerable Lviv or trend-setting Dnipro - you will always have something to see, a place to stay and delicious food to taste.

Some of the brightest annual events in Ukraine:

GogolFest (Spring/Fall, Kyiv) - a comprehensive cultural festival whose lineup includes, but is not limited to, visual arts, film, literature, music, performance art, dance and theatre.



Z-Game (March/August, Bukovel / Odessa) - a series of athletic/music festivals, the largest of its kind in Eastern Europe. These parties, concerts and adventure sports competitions are always unforgettable.

Humorina (1st April, Odessa) - an annual festival and parade of humor, jokes, costumes, tricks and silliness which is considered to be one of the most cheerful and joyful masquerade holidays in Ukraine.

Ukrainian fashion week (Spring/Fall, Kyiv) - a sartorial gala conducted in accordance with the world standards of

prêt-à-porter. Under the festival's aegis are also the annual best fashion awards, holiday fashion week, young designer competitions etc.

Atlas weekend (early July, Kyiv) - a young festival that has already become one of Ukraine's largest, it runs the gamut of musical genres and also incorporates into its program theatre and poetry from local and international performers alike.

Sorochyntsi fair (late August, Poltavka oblast) - a colourful extravaganza where you can purchase wares from thousands of artisans, as well as attend art shows and concerts.



Cultural Landmarks of Kuwait



In the cultural and arts scene of Kuwait, two remarkable landmarks stand out as providing a platform where a variety of artistic endeavors shine.

As a remarkable piece of architecture with four glistening gigantic buildings, the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC) was established with the aim of continuing Kuwait's regional legacy as the custodian state for arts and culture. Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC) inaugurated by His Highness the Amir Sheikh



Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on October 31, 2016, to become one of the largest cultural projects in Kuwait, witnessing about 1.5 million visitors since opening. JACC theaters and halls also saw more than 250 cultural and artistic events, with the participation of more than 6,000 artists varied between musicians, singers, dancers and lecturers, representing more than 35 countries around the world.

Head of financial and administrative affairs at the Amiri Diwan, Abdulaziz Saud Ishaq, said

Kuwait has always been a forerunner in the field of culture, art and literature, as this civilized project is reflective of Kuwait's identity through modern creative engineering means. JACC an architectural masterpiece, through its design and implementation, as the center's design inspired by the distinctive Islamic architecture, and with its location on the Gulf Road that gave tourism importance to the center, he said.

The JACC consisted of four building with one housing the main stage, which accommodates some 2,000 attendees. Drama theaters and rehearsals spaces could house some 900 people. The second, third, and fourth buildings consisted of a 1,800-capacity musical facility, a 1,072-capacity cinema and multi-purpose space, and a 354-seats conference hall and parking for 3,200 cars.

With its amazing colors and lighting JACC fountains becoming an additional attraction to

this touristic site.

Among the list of fantastic events that occurred, JACC hosted PKF-Prague Philharmonia on November 19-20, 2019 most recognized orchestras in the world, that included three classical evenings for music lovers, featuring a selection of classical pieces and Kuwaiti composed pieces on the first two nights, and a selection of film gala scores on the third night, the Kuwaiti 10-year old pianist Rawan BahBahni who won the hearts of the audience for her professional manner of playing piano behind the lead performer, French national Emanuel Vioum.

On the other hand, the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center (ASCC) has so far attracted over 580,000 visitors generating around KD 1.750 million income, promoted the civilized development to be a cultural, intellectual and educational beacon.



A statement by head of the Amiri Diwan's Financial and Administrative Affairs Abdulaziz Ishaq said that the Center has organized 88 activities, which ranged from exhibitions, lectures and workshops to festivals, camps and plays, touching on interests of different segments of the society. Ishaq -also chairman of the executive committee for the Establishment and Management of Cultural Centers - added that around 500 international organizations visited ASCC, which was also keen on establishing partnerships with embassies and similar international agencies.

ASCC held cultural and scientific workshops about rocks, recycling, plants and energy sources among others, a camp for children during Ramadhan, summer camps, space academy, Eid festivals and events in the Planetarium. ASCC participated in two events abroad, the first was in Venice, Italy, in 2019 and the second was last October in Berlin, Germany. The center won the prestigious ABB LEAF award as the Public Building of the year 2018, as well as four international awards. ASCC, named after late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, overlooks at the Arabian Gulf and was built in the same place of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem High School, one of Kuwait first government schools. Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, addressing the inauguration of ASCC that was attended by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah, said the Kuwaiti leadership has always been supportive of the cultural and intellectual movements.

ASCC, occupying 127,000 square meters with a parking lot for 1,231 cars, consists of eight buildings, six museums and one conference hall and documents' facility. The Center, which has 25 water fountains scattered in the vicinity, comprises 22 display halls with over 1,100 pieces. ASCC, built in 20 months, consists many facilities like theaters, green areas, gift shops, restaurants, coffee shops and outdoor sitting areas. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Theater houses local and international events, in addition to specialized conferences and exhibitions. The Theater is designed to trigger inspiration for exhibitors, artists and students.

Visitors will roam through the six family-friendly exhibitions, exploring historic, cultural, intellectual, scientific and technological worlds. ASCC also has six rooms for training and workshops, a Fine Arts Center comprising galleries, exhibition spaces, library, and artist studios.

Aimed at renovating the fine arts platform in Kuwait, it also hosts fairs, festivals, workshops, and conferences.

Kuwait's 'liberlish' governance yields another deficit budget

...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

However, in defense of the country it needs to be said that, unlike the other five GCC states, Kuwait is encumbered with a contentious parliament leery of any reforms that could potentially impact the pockets of citizens, or the 'entitlements' that they have become accustomed to. Handicapped by parliamentary obstructionism, Kuwait is unlikely to introduce any meaningful reforms anytime soon. At best, we could look forward to seeing more committees being formed, studies conducted, reports filed, recommendations made, and eventually nothing implemented.

In its latest assessment of the economy in Kuwait, as part of the 2019 Article IV Consultations, the International Monetary Fund warned that while efforts by the government to strengthen the fiscal accounts are welcome, more ambitious reforms will be needed to secure adequate savings for future generations and reduce financing needs. Reforming the public wage bill, subsidies, and transfers, raising non-oil revenue, and enhancing the fiscal policy framework and governance would support fiscal consolidation and increase the efficiency of spending on human and physical capital.

Without a strong commitment to implement economic reforms and compelled to continue indulging in financial extravagances, the government will be forced to resort to deficit financing, and to dip into the General Reserve Fund (GRF) to meet its consecutive budget

deficits, as it has been doing in recent years. The latest budget for fiscal year 2020/21 is no different and reveals that the country is sliding into its sixth consecutive deficit budget.

Announcing her inaugural budget on 14 January, the new Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs, Mariam Al-Aqeel, said that the State budget for fiscal year 2020/2021 envisioned revenue at KD14.8 billion, expenditure of KD22.5 billion, and a consequent deficit of KD9.2 billion, after the mandatory 10 percent deductions from revenue were made to the Future Generations Fund (FGF).

The projected budget deficit is higher than the KD8.27 billion deficit estimated for the current fiscal year that ends in March 2020. The deficit amounts to around 22 percent of the country's GDP of KD42 billion according to external sources. However, budgetary figures are being based on estimates of Kuwaiti oil exports at US\$55 per barrel. With the international oil benchmark, Brent crude, averaging \$64 per barrel for the past year, and expected to remain in this range for 2020, the actual deficit could eventually be lower.

Other figures from the announced budget show that KD12.9 billion, or 87.3 percent, of the income will be from oil-based revenues, while KD1.87 billion (12.7%) comes from non-oil sources. Total revenue is down KD1 billion from the KD15.8 billion in the last fiscal due to a drop in oil income by the same amount, from the KD13.9 billion projected in fiscal 2019/20. Meanwhile non-oil revenue is expected to be up by about KD600

million, from the KD1.3 billion estimated in the ongoing fiscal year. The minister maintained that budget shortfall for fiscal 2020/21 will be financed largely by withdrawals from the treasury or the country's GRF. Unfortunately, repeated drawdowns from the GRF have slowly depleted its reserves. To clarify, the GRF is separate from the country's Future Generations Fund, which is managed by the country's sovereign wealth fund, Kuwait Investment Authority. The authority invests most of its funds and returns abroad, and the government cannot access these funds unless in a national emergency or through parliamentary approval.

On the bright side, though the minister pointed out that the State did not plan to increase total spending in the new fiscal year, capital spending could go up marginally from the 14.5 percent set aside in the ongoing fiscal. In his remarks on the new budget, the Chief of Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Khaled Mehdi, said that the 2020-21 budget is a balanced one and that the percentage of capital expenditures has been maintained despite the budget deficit.

Pointing out that Kuwait's expenditure from budget allocations for development in fiscal year 2019/20 had reached 38 percent thus far, Mr. Mahdi said that this reflected the country's commitment to the New Kuwait 2035 development plan. Noting that legislative and infrastructure requirements that were required in the first five years of the plan have now been completed, he added that the next five years will

focus more on private sector partnerships.

Analysts fear that stagnant oil prices, rising government spending and the lack of measures to boost non-oil revenues will result in an average funding gap of around KD5 billion annually for the next four years. Continued drawdowns for the GRF, which is estimated to currently hold around KD20 billion, raises the risk of it being depleted, unless the government can implement meaningful reforms, including getting parliamentary approval for the public-debt law to borrow on the international market has been stymied by parliament since 2017.

Expressing optimism about the government's ability to keep expenditure in check in the new fiscal, Minister Al-Aqeel said this would help avoid having to withdraw from the GRF. She added that the finance ministry considers the public-debt law to be among the critical reforms that need to be implemented. "The government will fight for getting this law approved in parliament since the cost of borrowing is less than the cost of withdrawing from the reserves," said the minister.

We wish the minister good luck with her hope of passing the debt law through parliament, especially given that this is a parliamentary election-year. Lawmakers are more likely to lend their weight to popular issues and play to the galleries during the remaining parliamentary sessions, given that many of them will be seeking to return following elections slated for the last-quarter of this year. Mundane development issues or the country's economic welfare are likely to take a back seat.

Inspection campaign nets labor law violators

Ceremony welcomes new Air India Country Manager



The management of Air India and House of Travel (GSA of Air India in Kuwait) organized a dinner banquet to welcome the new Country Manager designate of Air India Sanjeev Suri at the Crowne Plaza on 14 January.

In his welcome speech, Abraham David, Vice President & CEO of House of Travel, gave a short introduction wherein he said Mr. Suri joined Air India in 1992 and has already built an illustrious career while working for 27 years in various departments of Air India, including Finance, Commercial, Marketing, Hajj Operations and others, as well as at various

stations in different capacities.

He noted that Mr. Suri's experience made him a great asset to Air India and to the large Indian community and travel fraternity in Kuwait.

Yousef Al Bader, the President of House of Travel expressed his hope that Mr. Suri will elevate Air India's operations in Kuwait to a memorable height. Mr. Al Bader also thanked the top selling agents of Air India for their support over the years without which, the GSA would not be in a position to achieve its targets.

Mr. Suri remarked that he looking forward to the support of the travel agency representatives.

The Joint Committee formed by the Council of Ministers launched an expanded inspection campaign on cafés in Hawally region to eliminate certain 'negative phenomena', believed to be growing in the area.

The inspectors arrested a large number of labor law violators, many of whom were domestic helpers who had been reported absconding by their sponsors. Female domestic helpers were also arrested from cafes that were licensed to provide services to men only.

During the campaign the inspectors also issued citations to a number of café owners and



warned that if the violations are not corrected before re-inspection, necessary legal action would be taken against them.

Indonesian Diaspora Soccer League Tournament kicks off



Forum of Indonesian Diaspora in Kuwait (FDIK) launched its annual soccer league tournament 2020 named 'Liga Bola Diaspora Indonesia' on 17 January at the Al Saheel Sports Complex in Abu Halifa with participation of six teams from different Indonesian communities and professionals who are living in Kuwait.

Indonesian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Tri Tharyat inaugurated the annual event, which was attended by hundreds of Indonesian Nationals. The soccer league got off to a great start with a traditional kick-off to the goalpost by the Indonesian Ambassador.

"This annual event is a very important event for Indonesian Community in Kuwait and is always awaited by the Indonesian community in Kuwait. It creates an opportunity for the Indonesian people to meet each other and to strengthen their bonds

while also enjoying traditional Indonesian food. I congratulate and give a great appreciation to the organizers for their great effort and hope the event will end safely and successful," said Indonesian envoy, Ibnu Munzir chairman of FDIK.

The Football league is to win the Ambassador Cup Trophy, which is fully supported and sponsored by Indonesian Embassy. The six teams participating in the event are PPK FC, Volmaks FC, Mangaf United FC, Koffeinesia FC, BBK FC and PIP FC.

The events will run for one and a half months on every Friday morning along with games for kids and Indonesian traditional culinary stalls. A consular post opened at the venue by the Indonesian embassy will help bring easy access to embassy services for the community. The final match is scheduled to be held on 20th March 2020.



Traffic law violators to be dealt with strictly



Traffic law violators, including those who park their vehicles in non parking zones and in a haphazard manner endangering lives and flow of traffic, will be dealt with strictly, said the General Traffic Department of the Ministry of Interior (MoI).

The ministry said it has video clips of motorists who violate the laws and will continue to follow

up such acts either through monitoring cameras or by posting police patrols at vital junctions throughout the country.

Sections of the video clips presented to the media by MoI show violators being monitored by surveillance cameras as well scenes of traffic obstruction violations.

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Qatar ranked first in food security in Arab world



Concerted efforts by the government and private sector has bolstered Qatar's strategic position in the food security field, with the country being ranked first in the Arab world and 13th globally in terms of food security in 2019.

The ranking in Global Food Security Index, prepared by the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) of the Economist Group, shows that in terms of affordability, availability, quality and safety of foods, Qatar outranked other Arab states and was also ranked in the top-20 of

the 113 countries that appeared in the index.

The private sector's role in helping achieve food security for Qatar was highlighted by Qatar's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Ali bin Ahmed Al Kuwari, while attending a panel discussion on food security at the Kuala Lumpur 2019 Summit held in late December.

Speaking during the panel discussion, Minister Al Kuwari said the government boosted partnerships with the private sector, which contributed to the implementation and development of food security projects. He pointed to Doha-based dairy production leader, Baladna Food Industries, which had contributed significantly to Qatar's self-sufficiency in terms of dairy products at 100 percent.

Baladna Food Industries, Qatar's largest dairy and beverage producer, is one of the most successful national ventures in the country's industrial sector, the Minister said. He added that Baladna recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Felcra Berhad, which is wholly owned by the Malaysian government, to raise the industrial production capacity of both countries. He also commended Baladna for planning to

expand to other Southeast Asian countries and Africa in 2020.

In the panel discussion on the theme 'The Role of Development in Achieving National Sovereignty', Minister Al Kuwari said that Qatar had laid the foundations of the National Food Security Strategy 2019-2023 to unite efforts among concerned authorities, optimise the use of the country's natural and water resources, fortify the food security system against shocks during emergencies, identify priorities in terms of food security initiatives and projects, protect and promote local production, improve food quality and safety and maintain a safe and healthy strategic stock.

He added that a set of mechanisms have been established to take advantage of Qatar's advanced infrastructure and strategic location to locally manufacture and produce food and agricultural products among other items, and to export these products into regional and international markets.

Qatar, which puts food security as a top priority for the country's development, has increased its investments in the food

industries sector by 126 percent to QR5.2 billion (US\$1.4bn) in 2019 from QR2.3 billion (\$630 million) in 2016, Al Kuwari revealed during the discussion.

For his part, Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Salahuddin Ayub said that Malaysia was prepared to contribute and share its prosperity in terms of food security to other countries, which is in line with the country's Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 (SPV 2030).

"We should think globally and forward on how we can contribute our SPV 2030 to the world with regards to food security," said Minister Ayub. In this regard, Malaysia should adopt Qatar's way of preserving its food chain supply, as well as share that knowledge and resources with other countries. "We have signed a memorandum of understanding with Qatar to help us further build and strengthen the agriculture and food industry," he said, adding that Malaysia should implement the skills and practices shown by countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Uzbekistan, in adopting organic farming practices.

UAE to invest \$23 billion in Indonesia

Indonesian President Joko Widodo arrived in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi last week in a visit aimed at strengthening the extensive ties between Indonesia and the UAE. The visit allowed both sides to not only improve their diplomatic bonds but also to contribute to efforts to address global issues posed by violent extremism, radicalism, terrorism and energy security.



During the visit, the Indonesian president met with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and the two sides inked an agreement that will see the UAE invest nearly \$23 billion in infrastructure projects in Indonesia.

The investment, directly through a sovereign wealth fund set up President Widodo, will go for mega infrastructure and energy projects, including for building Indonesia's new capital and to develop properties in Aceh province, as well as in energy and telecommunication sectors.

The UAE joins SoftBank Group and the US International Development Finance Corporation

as investors keen to participate in the sovereign fund that will fund toll roads, ports and petrochemical projects in Indonesia.

President Widodo, who is into his second and final term, has pledged to double down on an ambitious infrastructure building program that will require more than \$400 billion in the next five years to modernise the archipelago which is home to more than 260 million people. During the visit, the two sides also signed 16 agreements, including 11 business deals in the areas of oil and gas, petrochemicals, ports and telecommunications.

The UAE and Indonesia, which share a vision of moderation and sustainable energy, took their bilateral relations to new heights during the official visit, with the Indonesian president delivering a keynote speech at the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW) conference.

During the ADSW keynote speech, President Jokowi reiterated the need to find the middle way to build bridges between development and the solutions to climate change. President Jokowi said he was also convinced that there will be no green growth without sustainable development and there will be no sustainable development without sustainable energy as there will be no sustainable energy without sustainable cooperation.

It is in this spirit that both leaders agreed to the two countries' sustainable cooperation over new and renewable energy. In a concrete example of this cooperation, the UAE renewable energy company Masdar and PT Pembangkit Jawa-Bali signed a contract to construct the world's largest floating solar photovoltaic power plant — generating clean energy and reducing the carbon footprint of the region.

from the airport, and a SAR 1 billion contract for ground services has been signed with Flynas to provide ground handling services with the airline.

Additionally, Al-Ruasa revealed that the customers will now receive a 50 percent discount on parking tickets if they are paid through self-service machines. The move follows a wave of complaints over the SAR 10 per hour price of parking at the airport, compared to SAR 3 at Jeddah's old airport.

Meanwhile, it has been reported that Saudi Arabia recently launched a campaign to recruit as many as 20,000 nationals to replace foreign drivers working for the likes of online taxi services such as Uber and Careem. According to sources at the Public Transport Authority (PTA), the number of Saudi nationals driving taxis had risen from 100,000 in 2016 to over 600,000.

New airport in Jeddah ready by Ramadan

The new King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah is likely to become fully operational by Ramadan, according to the General Authority for Civil Aviation (GACA) spokesman Ibrahim Al-Ruasa.

He pointed out that since the airport's Terminal One began operations in May 2018, over 2.5 million passengers have been transported on board 30,000 flights. Currently, Saudia is the only carrier operating

Philippines decides to impose total deployment ban to Kuwait

...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Overseas Employment Certificate (OEC) to those covered by the ban. However, applicants who were able to secure their OEC on or before January 15 will still be allowed to fly to Kuwait. The POEA also clarified that Filipinos already working in Kuwait may stay to finish their contracts.

POEA had in early January imposed a partial deployment ban, which covered newly-hired household service workers.

An embalming certificate from the Kuwait government has confirmed that Villavende, who was reportedly beaten "black and blue", died of "acute failure of heart and respiration" as a result of shock and multiple injuries in the vascular nervous system. However, a separate autopsy by NBI showed that Villavende's brain, heart, and some internal organs were missing; and that she also suffered multiple, severe traumatic injuries including genitalia injuries that indicated she had been sexually abused. Responding to the total deployment ban, Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs Ambassador Samie Al-Hamad voiced Kuwait's dismay at the Philippine government's decision. The move by the Philippines came despite the legal action taken by concerned Kuwaiti authorities in the aftermath of the killing of a Filipino in Kuwait, Al-Hamad said in a press statement.

"As we express our extreme sorrow at this appalling crime, which is uncommon in the Kuwaiti society and even against our Islamic values, the legal action was taken against the culprits, including arresting them and filing a case with the Public Prosecution. This reflects Kuwait's keenness on applying the law and ensuring justice to guarantee the safety and protection of all those living on its soil, and that's why it is a favorable destination for people of different nationalities, including Filipinos who are nearly a quarter-million workers in number," he said.

Al-Hamad queried as to why the Philippine officials are handling this case through mass media, rather than official methods, consultations and meetings. The Kuwaiti official said that such meetings are the optimum way to address the problems of workers, revamp agreements and assess measures taken, thus averting any decisions or stances that could undermine bilateral relations.

Domestic labor offices have been witnessing very few applications for household workers, following the decision by the Philippines to deploy a partial ban on new household workers coming to Kuwait. This could be aggravated with the decision to introduce a total ban, said the Head of the Kuwaiti Federation of Owners of Domestic Labor

Offices, Khaled Al-Dakhnan. He said that 85 percent of the domestic labor offices have been empty of applications for weeks since the partial ban came into effect, following the murder of a Filipina household worker at the hands of her Kuwaiti employer. He added that the offices are in real crisis and could end up with many having to close down if the deployment ban exceeds two months.

At the monthly union meeting of the office owners, Al-Dakhnan hoped the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs would move quickly to resolve the current crisis through dialogue with relevant authorities in the Philippines. He pointed out that the crisis currently being witnessed in the sector is the result of Kuwait's reliance on one main country for the recruitment of its workers, which is the Philippines. He pointed out that the union has requested time and time again to open new countries and diversify the sources of recruitment to no avail.

For his part, Vice-President of the Kuwaiti Federation of Owners of Domestic Labor Offices Abdullah Al-Azmi said the Filipino domestic worker incident is just an accident that cannot be generalized, especially as domestic workers in Kuwait enjoy all their rights and live in security and safety. He called for revamping the sponsor system as it had become ineffective.

He noted that the solution is to operate a system where households 'hire' domestic helpers from offices that recruit the workers and sponsor them. He explained that a citizen will be able to 'hire' workers based on a quarterly, semi-annual, or annual basis, in accordance with the employer's compatibility with the worker.

Speaking on the ongoing situation with the Philippines, Kuwait's Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs Maryam Al-Aqeel said that Kuwait needs to recruit domestic workers from several markets, not just the Philippines.

She added that the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) is coordinating with certain entities in the country and abroad to facilitate the recruitment of domestic workers from several countries to avoid the possibility of any shortage of domestic workers in Kuwait.

The number of domestic male and female workers in the country is estimated at about 730,000, she said, pointing out that there are very few complaints regarding this category in relation to the large number. Revealing that 2805 grievances were registered last year, she said that most of them were resolved cordially and that only 704 complaints were referred to judiciary, stressing Kuwait's keenness on maintaining and protecting the rights of domestic workers in the country.

Australia Is Burning



Ramesh Thakur

A former United Nations assistant secretary-general, is Emeritus Professor at the Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University.

Owing to the smoke from nearby wildfires, the Australian capital Canberra this month has had the world's worst air-quality index, with readings 20 times above the official hazardous threshold. The city also recently experienced its hottest day on record (111°F/44°C). Meanwhile, Delhi had its coldest December day on record. Both are evidence of growing climate volatility, confirming the reality of global warming.

In assigning blame for the blackened skies and burning landscapes of Australia's southern summer, however, some critics, including the editorial board of the Financial Times, have lazily pointed a finger at climate denialism. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has been criticized vehemently not just for his slowness to help fire-ravaged communities, but also for attempting to enjoy a family vacation (since aborted) in Hawaii.

Anger on the part of bushfire victims, including a woman who refused to shake Morrison's hand, is understandable. But much of the broader criticism is misplaced, and reveals a willful ignorance of Australia's long history with bushfires. Those who have rushed to condemn Morrison's government have downplayed the failings of state governments, some of which are alleged to have prioritized the transition to renewable energy over prudent forest-management practices.

“On a hot continent dominated by dry eucalypt landscape, anthropogenic global warming has aggravated the background conditions for fires, which now occur more often, in more places, and for longer periods.”

Moreover, the armchair critics have chosen to disregard the long lead times between greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions and climate change, and to overstate what we know about the links between global warming and specific weather events.

In its relatively short history as a nation-state, Australia has suffered through several heat waves and fire seasons far deadlier than the current one. In January 1896, over 200 people died in the space of three weeks from heat- and fire-related causes; and in January 1939, 71 people died just in the state of Victoria. Australia's aboriginal communities, meanwhile, have been living with the continent's harsh climate and terrain for tens of thousands of years. Contrary to earlier myths, recent research on these societies' sophisticated land- and bush-management practices show that fire plays an important role in forest regeneration.

For example, the Queensland-based fire researcher Christine Finlay has long warned that reduced burning of fuel loads (the dry, combustible wood that builds up on forest floors) during the winter could increase the frequency of firestorms in the summer. Finlay, who studied the history of bushfires from 1881 to 1981 for her PhD, shows that bushfire-reduction operations since 1919 have



been departing from traditional indigenous practices such as low-intensity cool-weather burning. And, according to her data, there is a direct correlation between the increased frequency and size of fires since 1919 and the accumulation of catastrophic levels of fuel load.

Controlled burning, which is conducted over large areas and under favorable wind and temperature conditions, is cheap and highly effective in reducing the incidence of bushfires as well as the likelihood that they will spread uncontrollably. And, unlike drastic efforts to reduce GHG emissions, it does not threaten livelihoods and living standards. “For years, I energetically sent this predictive model to government agencies, in particular bushfire services, the media, coronial and parliamentary inquiries, and so on. Horribly ignored, it proved horribly accurate.”

Why were these warnings ignored? The reason, one suspects, is that the traditional, commonsense approach to managing the problem is not as sexy as high-profile climate activism. Of course, bushfires have both structural and direct causes. Australia's average surface temperature has increased by about 1.5°C since the early 1900s. On a hot continent dominated by dry eucalypt landscape, anthropogenic global warming has aggravated the background conditions for fires, which now occur more often, in more places, and for longer periods. The 2019-2020 summer fire season started unseasonably early in November.

But the precise relationship between local weather patterns and global warming is unclear, and current climate conditions cannot be attributed to current emissions, which will have their full effect not this year but decades from now. Moreover, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change finds only limited evidence of direct links between human-induced climate change and droughts, bushfires, floods, and hurricanes. Even if Australia had achieved net carbon neutrality in 2019, it would have suffered through the same fire season. Of course, to avert a crisis in several decades' time, action must be taken now.

Still, there are some things the Australian federal and state governments can do to reduce the current fire toll. Fire-management authorities should identify the direct causes of individual fires, educate the public on the risks, and track down and prosecute arsonists. In 2019, 183 people were charged with deliberately lighting fires.

More broadly, Australia needs better land- and fuel-load-management practices, and more funding for firefighting services. One hopes that the inquiry commission that Morrison is contemplating will help to evaluate whether state and local governments have carried out controlled

burning of fuel loads in national parks over the past few seasons, and ascertain if this would have helped to reduce the spread and intensity of the fires.

To the extent that climate policies would help lower the risks of bushfires, they must be implemented at the global level. Australia accounts for less than 1.2 percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. The big four emitters are China (27.21%), the United States (14.58%), India (6.82%), and Russia (4.68%). Yet, given Australia's exceptional exposure to the risk of bushfires, its government should be leading the effort

to negotiate binding emissions-reduction targets globally.

Instead, Australia has been a climate laggard. Like former Prime Minister Tony Abbott's government, which often gave climate deniers a nudge and a wink, the Morrison government lacks the credibility or moral authority to press for stronger climate action by others. Morrison cannot be blamed entirely for this fire season. But, having taken a page out of US President Donald Trump's anti-globalist playbook, he should not be surprised to find himself on the receiving end of criticism.






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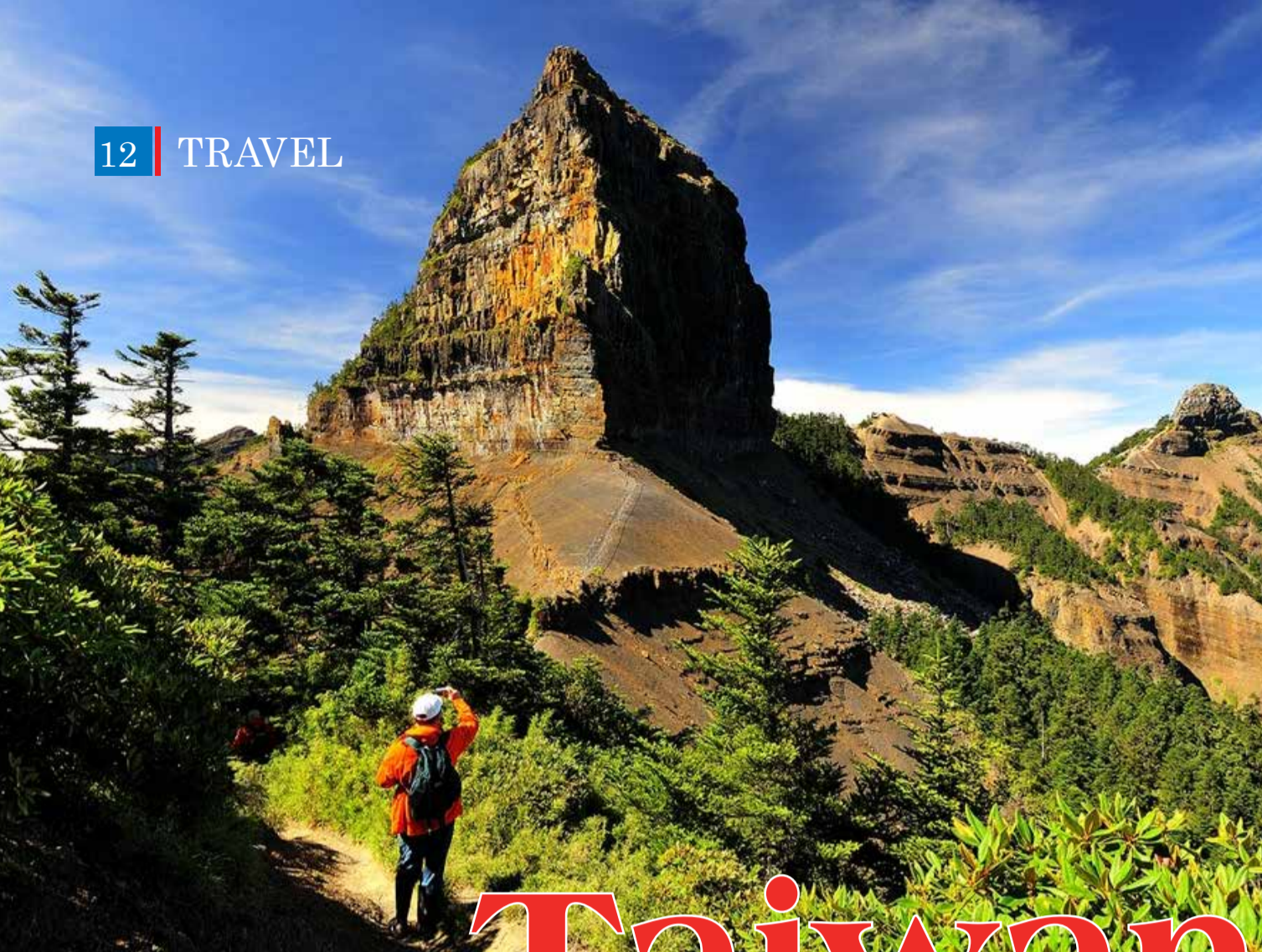
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A hiker's paradise

Taiwan is an island with a great network of hiking trails. Spanning across coastal views and dense forests, up in the high mountains or down in the valleys, Taiwan's hiking trails will allow you to see the best the country has to offer. Ready to get fit and healthy this year?



Yushan National Park: Mount Yushan, also known as Mount Jade, is the tallest peak in Taiwan and in Northeast Asia. From the trailhead, you can reach the summit in two days. Spend the night at Paiyun Lodge before starting on this trail which is bucket-listed by most people to see the picturesque panoramic views.



Taroko Gorge National Park: Taroko Gorge is one of the amazing natural wonders of Asia offering plenty of opportunities for adventure seekers. Whether you're hiking along a turquoise river at the bottom of the thousand-foot-high marble walls or along a tiny path clinging to a steep mountainside, you will come back with stunning pictures and great stories. Quingshui Cliff is the place in Taroko National Park where you can witness the three distinct color tones that make up the Pacific Ocean.

Alishan National Forest Recreation Area: To the west of Yushan National Park is the Alishan National Forest Recreation Area: Located in the middle between Taichung and Tainan, Alishan's sunrise is different during the four seasons. Lush green forests that go far beyond, mysterious changing clouds, rushing waterfalls, hillside tea farms and indigenous villages are enough to amaze the tourists. Alishan can be explored through three main themes. 'Alishan Highway' 'Northwestern Corridor' and 'Tso villages. Early risers will want to book the early morning train to Zhushan to witness the sunrise over Alishan's famous



sea of clouds. A very popular destination, it offers easy to moderate hiking trails as well as plenty of opportunities for leisure and relaxation.



Hehuanshan National Forest Recreation Area: Driving on the Central Cross-Island Highway up to Wuling Pass, you will find yourself in the 'saddle' between two of Mount Hehuan's most picturesque peaks: East Peak and Main Peak with access to their trailheads. Another accessible and popular leisure hiking trail in the forest recreation area leads up to Mount Shimen, which requires just 30 minutes to an hour to hike and features exceptional views of the Liwu and Hehuan Rivers.

Jiaming Lake National Trail: One of Taiwan's other iconic lakes is located at the edge of Yushan National Park. Officially called Jiaming Lake, this glacier-carved lake is also known as "Angel's Tear" which you need to plan as a three-day hike. This trail is for experienced backpackers only, so you'll have to plan accordingly with passing over the cliffs.



Enjoy delectable Tea in Taiwan

Taiwan is known as the tea lover's paradise, and is Asia's best kept secret as one of the finest tea producers in the world especially in the category of Oolong. As the French have the wine, Taiwan has the tea! Here are some famous tea's below for all the tea lovers to visit Taiwan on their next adventure!

High Mountain Oolong Tea:

This name refers to any tea that is grown over 1000m elevation, and processed as a lightly oxidized, unroasted Oolong Tea. There



are many famous place names within this category that represent geographic growing regions.

These include Alishan, Shanlinxi, Lishan, and Dayuling. Virtually all High Mountain Oolong Tea is made with the Qing Xin Oolong cultivar.

Jin Xuan "Milk" Oolong Tea: Jin Xuan, also called Tai Cha #12, is a hybrid cultivar that has become increasingly popular since its inception in 1980's by Taiwan's Tea Research and Extension Station (TRES). It is a hardy, high yielding strain that is very versatile both in its cultivation and processing. Jin Xuan is mostly grown in Nantou and Chiayi Counties, but it can now be found all over Taiwan and beyond.

Dong Ding Oolong Tea: Dong Ding, or 'Frozen Peak' is the name of a mountain in Lugu Township, and now represents a traditional processing method, using the original Qing Xin Oolong cultivar that migrated from Mainland China. Dong Ding Oolong is the most popular traditionally made tea in Taiwan. Its distinctive qualities result from medium levels of both oxidation and roasting.

Oriental Beauty (Bai Hao Oolong) Tea: Oriental Beauty is the name that was given to this type of tea by the Queen of England. Bai Hao (white fur) Oolong is the name that is locally used to refer to this tea, based on the harvesting and processing methods.

The leaves are harvested very young, when they still have their protective fur. The fully processed leaves are slightly curled, and multi-colored. The leaves are heavily oxidized, to the point of resembling a Black Tea in character. A true batch of Oriental Beauty is only produced when the new leaf growth has been affected by the Green Leafhopper.

Sun Moon Lake Black Tea: Tea cultivation in the Sun Moon Lake area dates back to the Qing Dynasty (17-1800's) when Chinese settlers began cultivating the naturally occurring wild tea tree. In the early 1900's, the Japanese colonists developed large scale Black Tea production using the Assam strain here, following the British model in India. The pre-existing wild tea strain naturally cross-bred with an Assam strain. Taiwan's TRES spent 50 years refining this hybridization before it was publicly registered in 1999 as Tai Cha #18. In 2003, was given the name Red Jade at the 100 year anniversary of the TRES, and honoured as a Taiwanese specialty tea.

Four Seasons Spring Oolong Tea: Around 1981, a Muzha tea farmer in Taipei County discovered a naturally occurring hybrid oolong in his tea garden that proved to be particularly suitable to the climate in Taiwan. Since then, it has gained popularity for its prolific produce and unique flavour and character. Now it is cultivated extensively as a signature oolong tea that is unique to the island of Taiwan. The name Four Seasons Spring was chosen for the plant's prolific year-round leaf growth, allowing for at least four harvests annually that produce a fresh, fragrant character of tea that is unique among oolongs.

Bioresonance therapy for healing

BY HERMOINE MACURA-NOBLE
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES KUWAIT



By now, you've probably heard about Bioresonance therapy – an alternative form a treatment that is making waves across the world. Designed to help the body initiate a natural healing process – many people are turning to Bioresonance, which has proven to relieve the symptoms of various medical conditions or even make them disappear.

There are many mixed views about Bioresonance therapy, and some still do believe that this is not the best option for people with disease. However, a large number of scientific studies have already been conducted to reveal just how effective this service can be to assist in the management of certain conditions.

So how does it work? The short answer is that you sit in a chair and the non-invasive and painless technique measures the electromagnetic wave oscillations in various areas of your body via the BICOM machine. It detects potential disease or illness in the form of abnormal wave oscillations, separates the healthy and unhealthy waves, then strengthens the healthy waves and inverts the unhealthy waves.

Al Das Clinic's Internal Medicine and Bioresonance Specialist, Dr. Sevdalina Velizarova explains. "All cells in the body, as



well as viruses, bacteria, pollen and toxins emit electromagnetic waves, which can be detected by the Bioresonance BICOM machine. The device then uses the frequency patterns taken either from the body or from substances that are stressing the body and separates these waves into healthy and unhealthy components. The healthy waves can be boosted and sent back to the body to strengthen normal functions, while the unhealthy waves are 'inverted' to reduce their negative effect on the body."

What makes it so unique is that Bioresonance is part of integrative medicine that involves conventional medicine and a holistic approach rather than just targeting a symptom. And rather than aiming to suppress or mask a symptom – the treatment

focuses on removing the cause.

Over the years, Bioresonance therapy has been utilized to treat a wider variety of conditions. Due to the underlying mechanisms of the technology, scientists specializing in the therapy are increasingly looking at more ways the machines can be used to help the general population, whether they are suffering from something like pain or a more severe condition.

Often used in the treatment of asthma and allergic conditions, including hay fever and allergic rhinitis, the technology has also been shown to provide positive effects when used in the treatment of skin-related allergic conditions, such as eczema as well.

"Many patients have come to seek treatment for anxiety, depression, chronic

pain, jetlag, skin disease, migraines, rheumatoid arthritis and autism. Even though autism has no cure, there are a lot of ways that an autistic child can grow and develop as normally as possible. Bioresonance therapy has proven to help reduce symptoms and improve brain function," says Dr. Velizarova.

In one study seen, Bioresonance therapy was used to treat an allergic condition in 213 children. In 52.5% of the treated patients, symptoms completely disappeared, and others experience significant improvements in the symptoms that they were suffering from.

"There are plenty of examples from the past where conventional medicine failed or delayed introduction of traditional methods into cure programs.... The universities did not propose the studies to recognize acupuncture. The pressure from patients and therapists became so great that it was no longer possible to avoid tackling the subject...But it took nearly 40 years. So, it's not surprising if a relatively new method is not welcomed easily, especially if it means the scientific world view will have to be corrected," concludes Dr. Velizarova.

Hermoine Macura-Noble is the first Australian English speaking News Anchor in the Middle East. She is also the Author of Faces of the Middle East and Founder of US based 501c3 charity - The House of Rest which helps to ease the suffering of victims of war. For more from our Contributing Editor, you can follow her on Instagram @Hello_Hermoine

Pesticide linked to increased mortality risk

Exposure to the pesticide pyrethroid could increase the risk of all-cause mortality and cardiovascular mortality, suggests researchers behind a new study, while calling for urgent follow-up on this issue.

Pyrethroids are among the most common pesticides with people using these chemicals in agriculture, for residential pest control, and in other household products, including household and garden insecticides, pet sprays and shampoos, lice treatments, and mosquito repellents.

Pyrethroids account for around 30 percent of all pesticides in use worldwide, and, since the phasing out of organophosphates for residential use, the use of pyrethroids has risen sharply in recent decades. Pyrethroids can enter the body via inhalation, ingestion, or absorption into the skin. Once inside, the body breaks them down into metabolites and excretes them in urine within a few hours. Because of

this quick turnaround, measuring these metabolites in urine is a reliable way of assessing a person's recent exposure to pyrethroids.

These chemicals are popular because they are effective against insects and have no short-term impacts on human health. However, the researchers caution that impact on long-term health from chronic exposure to pyrethroids has yet to be determined. Some studies have suggested that pyrethroid exposure may impair neurodevelopment, interfere with reproductive health, and increase the risk of major chronic diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and Parkinson's disease.

To investigate the impact of pyrethroids on mortality, the study team took data collected during a national health and nutrition survey in the US that gave them access to information from 2,116 adults aged 20 or older.

Each participant provided a urine sample at some



point between 1999 and 2002, which provided information about pyrethroid exposure. The researchers followed the participants until 2015. In total, there were 246 deaths during the trial period. After adjusting for a range of factors — including age, sex, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, dietary and lifestyle factors, smoking status, and body

mass index (BMI) — the researchers identified some significant trends.

They found that people with the highest levels of pyrethroid metabolite in their urine had a higher risk of death during the follow-up period. Individuals with the highest levels of pyrethroid exposure had a 56 percent higher risk of dying from any cause than those with the lowest levels of exposure. The researchers also found that those in the highest exposure group had three times the cardiovascular mortality risk of those in the lowest exposure group.

They also write that "in New York City and elsewhere, aerial spraying for mosquito control to prevent West Nile virus and other vector-borne illnesses is largely based on pyrethroids. This study challenges the assumption that such exposures are safe." The researchers concluded that the results of their study, while not conclusive, necessarily warranted further investigation.



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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

A Transformative Deal for Nature



LINDA KRUEGER
Senior Policy Adviser at The Nature Conservancy.

This October, representatives of the 196 parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will gather in Kunming, China, to finalize a new Global Biodiversity Framework. Like the 2015 Paris climate accord, this new agreement could mark a turning point in how we manage our relationship to nature.

But biodiversity advocates must learn an important lesson from climate activists. Global climate action gained momentum only after it became clear that the issue was about more than the environment, and would require a transformation of transport, energy, agriculture, infrastructure, and many industries. Likewise, the rapid loss of biodiversity that we are witnessing is about much more than nature. The collapse of ecosystems will threaten the wellbeing and livelihoods of everyone on the planet. Accordingly, the CBD must move beyond traditional notions of 'conservation' to engage with all relevant sectors of the economy and civil society.

Since its creation following the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the CBD has been largely successful in pushing countries to establish new protected areas, such that nearly 15 percent of global land areas are now under



As matters stand, all of our economic incentives are geared toward encouraging activities that drive biodiversity loss. Agriculture, infrastructure, and urban areas are all rapidly expanding, as are extractive industries like forestry, mining, and fishing. In addition to converting landscapes directly, these practices can disrupt natural habitats and degrade much larger areas, by creating access points for illegal hunting, logging, and other activities. Pollutants, runoff, and industrial and agricultural water usage cause still more damage.

A mere 5 percent of the planet's land surface remains unaltered by human activities, and that share is likely to shrink further unless we institute changes soon. A 2015 study by scientists from The Nature Conservancy finds that if current trends hold, the construction of roads and energy infrastructure (including renewables), together with mining and agriculture, threatens to double the conversion of remaining intact wild areas in South America, and to triple converted lands in Africa by 2050.

Responsibility for protecting the natural world has traditionally fallen to environment ministries, park managers, and conservationists, all of whom will be at the negotiating table this year. But to be truly transformational, the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework must also involve

finance, planning, transportation, energy, and agriculture officials, particularly those with the clout to effect change across entire economies.

Agriculture ministries, for example, are critical for maintaining natural habitats and protecting biodiversity corridors for pollinators and other wildlife. To slow habitat conversion, governments can make agricultural subsidies conditional on environmental considerations, and require foreign agribusinesses to prove that imports are produced without converting natural habitats.

Similarly, energy generation, transportation, and infrastructure are all major drivers of biodiversity loss, requiring more robust planning and mitigation efforts by ministries far beyond those charged with conservation. Whether by regulation or incentives, governments must do more to minimize the impact of these activities on nature. And when avoidance is impossible, projects should be required to compensate for biodiversity loss by investing in the restoration of degraded or deforested lands. To that end, the new framework should establish guidelines for how specific sectors can improve over time.

Ensuring real accountability and transparency requires a clear agenda. But what, specifically, should countries be accountable for? The Nature Conservancy

has proposed a metric based on the 'net gain for nature', which would enable parties to show year-on-year improvements in the condition of natural habitats, and of biodiversity within production landscapes such as agricultural lands.

Admittedly, this kind of indicator is harder to measure than are more standard benchmarks such as protected acreage. But with new low-cost spatial technologies such as global positioning systems (GPS), geographic information systems (GIS), and remote sensing, the data needed to measure progress is well within reach. Ideally, we would assess the conditions of every habitat at a global scale, forming a detailed understanding of all ecosystems. And with these data, we could then monitor progress in habitats by country, ecoregion, or biome.

Saving nature is not a task for government alone; it must be a whole-of-society effort. Even with optimal legislation and enforcement, governments probably cannot eliminate all of the main drivers of biodiversity loss. Support from business, local governments, indigenous communities, civil-society groups, and faith-based organizations will be essential. A sector-based approach that supports 'net gains for nature' can be a platform whereby all stakeholders will make voluntary commitments to our broader goals.

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To be truly transformational, the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework must also involve finance, planning, transportation, energy, and agriculture officials, particularly those with the clout to effect change across entire economies.

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some sort of park designation (though the share of protected marine areas is much smaller). But despite this relative success, biodiversity loss has continued, suggesting that the creation of nature refuges is necessary but not sufficient. To slow and halt the rapid decline of species and habitats, we must address how human societies manage land and seascapes and the resources that are being extracted from them.



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Google Assistant now on a billion devices

Realme officially launched in UAE



Realme, the fastest growing smartphone brand, announced its official entry into UAE with three premium products: realme X2 Pro – 64MP Quad Camera Full-Speed Flagship, realme 5 Pro – 48MP Quad Camera SpeedMaster, and realme C2 – Entry-Level King with mega display and mega battery. With realme X2 Pro and 5 Pro, the brand will bring Leap-to-Quad-Camera experience.

Inspired by Dare-to-Leap spirit, realme has made it to the TOP 7 in 18 months and has already achieved 25 million users since its founding in May 2018. UAE has significant influence over the world, also is one of the most tech-advanced markets, especially in the 5G network era. realme sees great opportunities here for a tech company, and all ready to disrupt UAE.

Realme comes to UAE with a strong strategy of three products for the different price range. Each one with the aim to appeal its own target: realme 5 Pro, the SpeedMaster, realme X2 Pro, the first truly affordable flagship in the market and realme C2, the entry-level quality king.

Realme 5 Pro is a SpeedMaster priced at AED 699 onwards. It combines outstanding performance and beautiful design to make a powerful mark in the mid-range.

Realme X2 Pro, the brand's Full Speed Flagship arrives with the aim of becoming realme's truly flagship model. It combines speed, power and performance, with a very attractive design. With Snapdragon 855+ mobile platform -that ensures a powerful

performance-its 50W SuperVOOC Flash Charge -that can be fully charged in 35 minutes- and a 90hz refresh rate screen -that will give users a totally fast and immersive experience.

Realme C2, the entry-level king, is of 4000mAh battery and 6.1" HD+ display. With 19.5:9 display, the screen body ratio, reach up to 89.35%. With the mega display, you could more enjoy the fun of gaming and video. The realme C2 is priced at AED 399 onwards.

Josef Wang, President of realme Middle East and Africa, said on the event: "We are very happy to be launching this whole portfolio of products in UAE. Following our motto, Dare to leap we arrive in UAE -and GCC- hoping to provide young consumers with more surprising products within at each price range, and exceed their expectations, whether in design, performance, or quality. We want to offer a full range of dare-to-leap experiences in terms of performance, design, quality and service realme is committed to leap for the future with UAE together, bringing Quad-Camera experience for everyone. Also, we will soon introduce 5G and AIoT (AI + IoT) products to be a tech popularizer." To be a tech popularizer, realme will continue to encourage the young in UAE to pursue their dreams, just like it did in many markets. Believing changing the world doesn't need seniority, realme launched 'Proud to Be Young: realme Design Contest' and 'Shot on realme Global Contest', aiming to help the young show their talents and inspiration all over the world.



fabric. Instead of an adjustable stand at the back of the keyboard, the Ergo K860 features hidden pop-out clips at the base of the palm rest to lift the front of the keyboard higher, with two angle settings.

The keyboard itself can connect to a Mac or Windows PC either through a direct Bluetooth connection or through an included USB dongle, with support for up to three devices at once. The downside is that it is not rechargeable, but Logitech claims that the Ergo K860 should get up to two years of battery life from a pair of AAA batteries. It also lacks an integrated backlight for the keys, both of these shortcomings are disappointing in a keyboard priced at \$130.

At the recently concluded CES 2020 tech show, Google made several announcements regarding the Google Assistant. The company claimed that the Assistant is now available on more than one billion devices, and is used by more than 500 million people every month.

The voice-based assistant, which is active on several devices such as smart speakers, phones, TVs, cars, smart displays, and more, is now being endowed with several new features. Google announced that the new features being introduced include the ability to schedule actions for later, the ability to read screen articles out loud in a more natural sounding manner and in over 42 languages, and with easier access to privacy settings now.

Scheduled actions will essentially let you order Assistant to do a task in the future, offering more granular control. You can ask Google Assistant to turn on/ off or start/ stop a compatible device at the time of your choosing. For instance, you can say, "Hey Google, run the coffee maker at 6 am" and the connected smart device should do the task at the mentioned time. You can control more than 20 new devices, including AC units, air purifiers, bathtubs, coffee makers, vacuums and more, from the Google Home app. This Scheduled Actions feature is rolling out later this year.

With screen reading, an Android user can now say "Hey Google, read it" or "Hey Google, read this page" when you are viewing an article, and the Assistant should read it out loud to you. Using new voice datasets, the Assistant is able to create a more



expressive and more natural sounding voices, so it is easier to listen for a longer period of time. The content can also be translated into 42 languages. This feature is expected to launch in the second half of this year.

Easier access to privacy settings allows users to ask Assistant questions to get answers to the most common privacy and security questions. People can also use voice commands like, "Hey Google, delete everything I said to you this week" and all the Assistant activity from your Google Account will be deleted easily.

Google also expanded its Interpreter Mode feature, which provides real-time translation to new places like airports, airport lounges, banks, organisations managing live sporting events, organizations aiding humanitarian efforts, hospitality management, and more hotels. Interpreter mode is designed to help people communicate better with others of varied dialects, as well as to help businesses remove language barriers.

Logitech launches new keyboard

Logitech, which has been making its way into the ergonomic mouse space, is now looking to expand its ergonomic accessories into the keyboard space with the launch of the split Ergo K860 keyboard.

Logitech says that the Ergo K860's design "reduces muscle strain on your wrists and forearms" compared to traditional keyboards due to the wrist rest and split-key, curved design. The Ergo K860 is designed to pair with the company's MX Ergo and MX Vertical mice, with the aim being to offer an integrated pair that is comfortable to use and reduces stress, while still maintaining the look and feel of a high-end, professional product.

The integrated wrist rest is made up of three layers of material: one of high-density foam, one of memory foam, and the last of an easy-clean coated

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EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

Addressing Africa's Skills Mismatch



HANAN MORSY
Director of the African Development Bank's Macroeconomic Policy, Forecasting, and Research Department.

While much of the world struggles with rapid population aging, Africa is experiencing the opposite trend. With 60 percent of the continent's population under the age of 25, African leaders must ensure not only that a sufficient number of quality jobs are available, but also that young people receive the education and training necessary to fill these positions. And when it comes to the latter imperative, much action is needed.

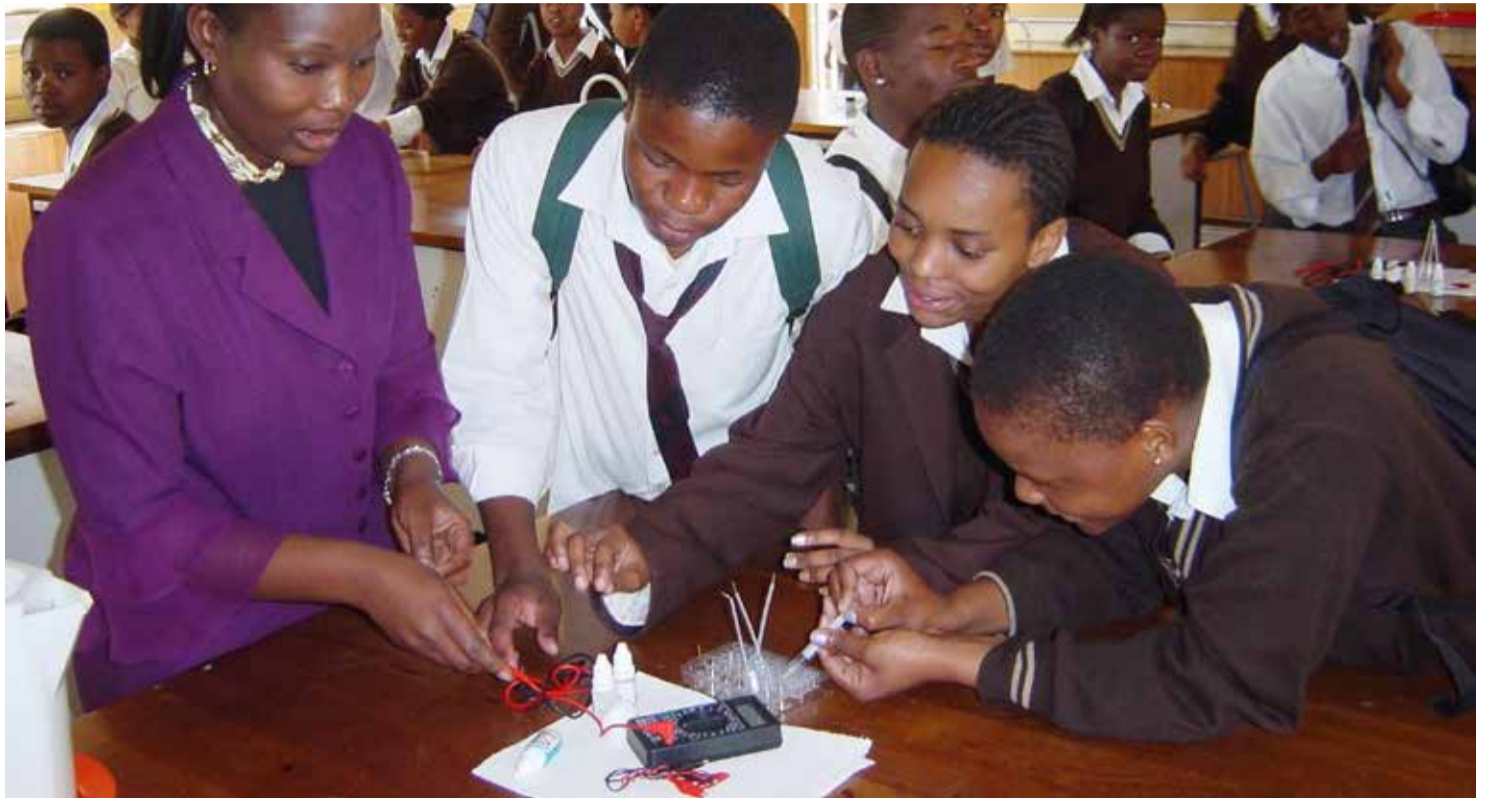
Mismatches between available jobs and the skills and qualifications of the workforce are widespread across Africa. According to a recent African Development Bank study of ten countries — Benin, Republic of Congo, Egypt, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia — a majority of young Africans are undereducated for their jobs, and nearly one-third are under-skilled. Moreover, young people who are over-skilled or overeducated for their current positions are underpaid and frustrated by their limited career opportunities and wasted or deteriorating talents.

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Though many African countries have made significant progress in boosting education rates in recent years, many young people, especially girls and rural dwellers, receive only limited schooling, or none at all.

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Undereducated youth do enjoy a wage premium, but it comes at the cost of job satisfaction. The underskilled suffer from the pressure of trying to keep up with the requirements of their job, and from the constant fear of losing it. Eventually, underskilled youth suffer 'scarring', or lasting damage to their economic circumstances and prospects. They accept mismatched jobs out of desperation



rather than waiting, unemployed, for more suitable positions that may never come.

Given the magnitude and persistence of job-skill mismatches, and their adverse effects on individuals and economies, reducing them should be a top priority for African governments. The first step is to improve access to education.

Though many African countries have made significant progress in boosting education rates in recent years, many young people, especially girls and rural dwellers, receive only limited schooling, or none at all. Furthermore, even 38 percent of employed youth never attended school for economic reasons, and another 12 percent because there was no school nearby.

Governments can make a difference by investing in educational infrastructure: building new schools and renovating old ones, improving working conditions for teachers, and upgrading school equipment, including information and computer technology. At the same time, they should eliminate primary-school fees, limit the costs of secondary and tertiary education, and finance scholarship programs.

African governments must also do a better job of supporting young people in their transition from education to

employment. As it stands, very few young Africans, employed or not, receive job-seeking advice from the government or employment agencies.

To improve young workers' prospects, governments should help to disseminate information on available jobs, and create incentives (such as tax breaks or subsidies) for firms to offer internships and apprenticeships to graduates. Where such arrangements already exist, governments should strengthen their impact by broadening their reach and mandate, advertising them more widely, and investing in monitoring and impact measurement.

Finally, for such programs to work, young graduates need the knowledge and skills that the labor market demands. African employers often complain about the difficulty of finding candidates with specialized training in the so-called STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and math), as well as complex problem-solving and communication skills. And nearly 40 percent of those surveyed did not consider their education useful in finding employment.

The African Development Bank has taken the lead in creating opportunities for African youth in ICT by providing

financing to Carnegie Mellon University Africa in Rwanda, which was established in 2011 to serve as a center of excellence and a regional ICT hub for East Africa. This institution, in collaboration with the Rwandan government, has established an innovation incubator to help students create their own businesses.

Addressing the mismatch problem will require African governments to foster more demand-driven, forward-looking education and skills training. For example, they can create forums for companies to communicate their needs regularly to educational and training institutions, which would then adapt curricula accordingly. The result would be a new generation of attractive local candidates, thereby mitigating a severe constraint on firms' ability to expand output and create jobs.

Africa's youth bulge is a major asset, with the potential to drive economic growth and development for decades to come. But if the continent's young people are unproductive, frustrated, and desperate, it could become a major liability that undermines economic prosperity, social progress, and even political stability. The outcome in the coming years will depend on the policies that African governments adopt now.

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