

## Officials exchange views on research, academics

# French Ambassador visits American University of Kuwait campus

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: The American University of Kuwait (AUK) president, Dr. RawdaAwad welcomed French Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Anne-Claire Legendre, and Academic Attaché, Dr. Benjamin Taunay to the University's campus to exchange views on research, academic and outreach-related opportunities that are of mutual interest. These long-term discussions remain ongoing and assist in the advancement of AUK as a liberal arts institution.

"Our American style education based on the liberal arts lends itself to global and multinational outreach and collaboration. We are excited on continuing these conversations that are integral to our institutional growth and development," stated Dr. RawdaAwad.

The Ambassador was provided a tour of the campus and its new building which houses the brand-new state-of-the-art communication and media center, recently developed art and graphic design classrooms, and the latest open computer laboratories. The new Center for Continuing Education (CCE) offices and the University library were also part of the tour.



French Ambassador, H.E. Anne-Claire Legendre receiving a gift from AUK president, Dr. RawdaAwad.

Over the years, AUK has been working closely with the French embassy with consistent meetings combined

with regular follow-ups to sustain the relationship and support mutual scholastic opportunities.

## University marks Francophone Day

# GUST's Global Studies Center hosts Dr Phillip Lane

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: The Global Studies Center at GUST hosted a virtual talk titled "France's Cultural and Scientific Diplomacy". The session discussed France's reach on five continents using soft power as a main tool of diplomacy. The talk, which lasted two hours, fell under the annual "Francophone Week" hosted by the Humanities and Social Sciences Department.

The main speaker of the talk, Professor Emeritus, Dr. Phillip Lane, is a specialist in French Scientific and cultural diplomacy. His work has been published in multiple languages including French, English, and Arabic. He has held several French diplomatic posts in Australia, the UK, and Jordan.

Professor Lane discussed that France has 150 culture embassy services and from that they numerous French institutes, science and research centers, and Lycees (French Schools).



Dr Phillip Lane

These institutes serve the French government in diplomacy and as form of soft power that has created on numerous relationships and affiliations. However, he also goes on to question their use and whether they are sustainable in the modern world, whether their cultural impact can stay relevant. The talk was also moderated by Di-

rector of the French-Arab Business School of the Arabian Gulf University, Bahrain, Dr. Arnaud Lacheret.

Chair of the Global Studies Center and Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences at GUST, Dr. Thorsten Botz, said "I am grateful for Dr. Lane for agreeing to do this, especially as the first official event of 2020/21, but more importantly as the first virtual lecture. The events success will lead to many more zoom lectures and hopefully more virtual events by the GSC."

The GSC was established in 2015 and has since brought a varied list of interesting academic topics to the GUST community. Their main areas of focus include Globalization and the Gulf, Culture and Media, and Kuwait-Asia relations. Bringing interesting topics during a turbulent time shows the dedication and commitment of the center to engaging its community and its peers.

## Event highlights India's rich diversity

# Indian Embassy marks harvest festivals with cultural program

By Paul Francis X. Fernandes  
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: The Embassy of India, Kuwait organized an event at the embassy auditorium in to celebrate various harvest festivals in India, including Vishu, Puthandu, Ugadi, Gudi Padwa, Bihu, Baisakhi, Vaisakhi, heralding the New Year in many States of India.

The event was inaugurated by the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait HE Sibi George with warm greetings to the Indian community and friends of India in Kuwait on the joyous occasion.

In his address to the invited guests, the Indian envoy said, today is an auspicious day. According to Indian calendar, it is Chaitra Shukla Pratipada – first day of the waxing moon fortnight of the month of Chaitra, the first month of Indian calendar. It is the New Year Day in many states of India, and in many parts of the country it is a harvest festival.

On this auspicious day, the Ambassador spoke about India's rich diversity and highlighted the unity amidst this diversity, which signifies the true beauty of Indian culture. The Ambassador also mentioned about the beautiful confluence of events as the occasion also coincides with the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan.

On this day which heralds the spring-time harvest in many parts of India and signifies a new beginning for all, "we must take a moment to pause and cheer ourselves up. This is all the more important in the times we are living in, where there are difficulties and challenges all around us and therefore, we must resolve to come together, even if virtually and make a new beginning towards health, peace and prosperity for all. Of course, we will do all this

by fully adhering to the protocol and guidelines associated with Covid 19 pandemic."

"In this special year when India begins its celebrations for 75th anniversary of India's Independence; and India and Kuwait celebrate 60 years of establishing diplomatic relations; the Embassy of India welcomes you all to celebrate India's cultural heritage and the very special, close and warm India-Kuwait cultural relationship," he said.

"Today we also have with us some students, who excelled in a Science contest called Shastra Pratibha Contest organized by Science International Forum, Kuwait. I congratulate all the winners for their effort and interest in science and technology.

"I commend the organizers for their initiative and hope that they will continue to work towards popularization of science among Indian students in Kuwait. Science and technology is our beacon for future and as you all are aware, the Government of India is making every effort to promote innovation, research and development. I wish more and more of you will take active interest in this field and continue with your passion even as you take up your higher studies. My best wishes to you all," Ambassador George said.

During the event the Indian envoy felicitated the winners. During the course of the event, audience quiz was conducted and prizes were distributed to winners.

A short cultural program showcasing India's diverse festival traditions was also organized. The cultural program included short audio video clips, live mesmerizing song and dance performances. The event was well attended virtually by people from different walks of life in Kuwait.



Some of the file photos from 'Pohela Baishakh' celebrations by Bangladeshis across the world.

## Bengali New Year festivities marked with 'MangalShobhajatra'

# Bangladeshis celebrate 'Bangla Noboborsho'

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Pohela Baishakh or Bangla Noboborsho is the first day of Bengali Calendar. It is celebrated on April 14 as a national holiday in Bangladesh. In Bengali, the word Pohela means 'first' and Boishakh is the first month of the Bengali Year. Bengali New Year is referred to in Bengali as Noboborsho where 'Nobo' means new and 'Borsho' means year.

### Traditional roots

During the Mughal rule, land taxes were collected from Bengali people according to the Islamic Hijri calendar. This calendar was a lunar calendar, and its new year did not coincide with the solar agricultural cycles. According to some sources, the festival was a tradition introduced in Bengal during the rule of Mughal Emperor Akbar to time the tax year to the harvest and the Bangla year was therewith called "Bangabda". Akbar asked the royal astronomer FathullahShirazi to create a new calendar by combining the lunar Islamic calendar and solar Hindu calendar already in use, and this was known as "Fosholi Shon (harvest calendar)". According to some historians, this started the Bengali calendar.

According to the Bangladeshi academic and folklorist, the origin of the Bengali calendar is unclear. According to one, it is called Bangla shonor shaal, which are Arabic and Persian words respectively, suggests that it was introduced by a Muslim King or Sultan. In contrast, according to other, its traditional name is "Bangabda". It is also unclear, whether it was adopted by Alauddin Husain Shah or Akbar. The tradition to use the Bengali calendar may have been started by Husain Shah before Akbar. However, regardless of who adopted the Bengali calendar and the New Year, it helped collect land taxes after the spring harvest based on traditional Bengali calendar, because the Islamic Hijri calendar created administrative difficulties in setting the collection date.

There is another theory about the origin of the Bengali Calendar. Some historians attribute the Bengali calen-

dar to the 7th-century King Shashanka. Because the term "Bangabda (Bangla year)" is also found in two Shiva temples of India many centuries older than Akbar era. These inscriptions suggest that the Bengali calendar existed before Akbar's time.

### Celebration of Bengali New Year

The Bengali New Year is observed as a public holiday in Bangladesh. It is celebrated across religious boundaries by its Muslim majority and Hindu minority. The festival became a popular means of expressing cultural pride and heritage among the Bangladeshis.

The day is marked with singing, processions, and fairs. Traditionally, businesses start this day with a new ledger, clearing out the old. Singers perform traditional songs welcoming the New Year. People enjoy classical Jatra plays. People wear festive dress with women decorating their hair with flowers.

White-red color combinations are particularly popular. People of Bangladesh prepare and enjoy a variety of traditional festive foods on Pohela Boishakh. These include Panta Bhat (watered rice), Ilish Bhaji (fried Hilsa Fish) and many special Bhortas (pastes).

The celebrations start at dawn with a rendition of Rabindranath Tagore's song "Esho he Boishakh" by Chhayanaut under the banyan tree at Ramna at Dhaka.

An integral part of the festivities is the "MangalShobhajatra", a traditional colorful procession organised by the students of the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka. "MangalShobhajatra" is a mass procession that takes place at dawn on the first day of the Bengali New Year in Bangladesh.

The Bengali phrase "MangalShobhajatra" literally means "procession for well-being". Every year, thousands of people take part in the procession that features gigantic replicas of birds, fish, animals, folk tale and other motifs. The rally symbolizes unity, peace, and the driving away of evil to allow progress of country and humanity. It is considered as an ex-

pression of the secular identity of the Bengali people, uniting the country irrespective of class, age, religious faith, or gender.

Different cultural organizations and bands also perform on this occasion and fairs celebrating Bengali culture are organized throughout the country. Other traditional events held to celebrate PohelaBoishakh include Bull racing, Wrestling, Boat racing, Cock-fights etc.

### UNESCO eecognition of "MangalShobhajatra"

In 2014 the Bangla Academy compiled a nomination file that was approved by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of Bangladesh and submitted to UNESCO. On 30 November 2016 the "MangalShobhajatra" festival was selected as an intangible cultural heritage by the Inter-governmental Committee on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO at its 11th session, which was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

### Boisabi Festival

Boisabi Festival is the celebration of the Bengali New Year by the indigenous communities living in Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh.

Some of the ethnic communities living in various parts of Bangladesh also celebrate the New Year but they each have a different name for it. The festivities get their respective unique approach. On this occasion the three hilly districts -- Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari -- wear a festive look. The people of the hills consider the first day of the year auspicious.

Three ethnic communities come together to celebrate PahelaBaishakh. "Boishuk" of the Tripura, "Sangrai" of the Marma and "Biju" of the Chakma are often celebrated together as "Boi-Sa-Bi". These differ from traditional PahelaBaishakh celebrations. Festivities in the hills begin on the last day of the month of Chaitra (last month of Bengali Year) and continue for three or more days. Religious rituals are often part of these festivals. The festivals are celebrated in many ways. Children and

youth people enjoy the day by wearing new dress, visiting friends and relatives house and take Panchan, a special vegetable dish prepared for the occasion.

In the Marma community, they also celebrate by playing some games called PaniKhela (Sangrai), Alarikhela and Dha-thu.

Goraia dance is very popular in the Tripura community. As a celebration of the festivals 10 to 100 artist perform the dance. The main theme of this dance is to show their daily lives and the steps of Jum cultivation.

The first day of the festival is called 'Phulbijhu' the second day is 'Mulbijhu' and third day or first day of the Bangla New Year is called 'GojijaPo-jija Din'.

On the day of Phulbijhu, boys and girls wake up early in the morning and take birth with their parents and clean up houses and its surroundings and they decorate houses with different flowers. They also float flowers in rivers, canals and springs seeking blessing to God for eternal peace and prosperity.

Though the festival is related to the ethnic people but anyone can enjoy it with much enthusiasm. Tourists have flocked to the region to enjoy the traditional festival of the tribal people.

Secularism is one of the four fundamental principles according to the Constitution of Bangladesh. Over 90.4% of Bangladeshis are Muslims, the rest being Hindus 8.5%, Buddhists 0.6%, Christians 0.4%, and others 0.2%. People in Bangladesh observe various secular festivals at different times throughout the year with social and religion harmony and tranquillity.

On this first day of Bengali New Year, On behalf of Bangladesh community in Kuwait and on our own behalf we extend our heartfelt greetings of "Bengali New Year" to His Highness The Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, brotherly people of Kuwait, our colleagues, friends and their families. "SHUVO NOBOBOR-SHO"



A dance performance.

**COVID -19 VACCINATION AWARENESS SESSION (IN HINDI)**

On Friday 16th April 2021  
At 2:00 PM (Kuwait Time) & 4:30 PM (Indian Time) UP NRI Forum-Kuwait

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STAY SAFE, STAY HEALTHY

A flyer of the event.

## Webinar on vaccination awareness

The second wave of Covid-19 pandemic is getting more serious. The only visible solution to minimize the risk is vaccination. But many questions doubt in minds about vaccination.

To answer such queries, UPNRI Forum Kuwait in association with

Indian Doctors Forum Kuwait are delighted to conduct a live webinar on COVID 19 vaccination. We request you all to attend this valuable live webinar on Friday, 16th April 2021 at 2:00 pm Kuwait time and 4:30 pm India time.