

Local

# Food helps strengthen our ties and friendship: Japan envoy

## Embassy hosts 'washoku' to celebrate 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Kuwait, the Embassy of Japan organized a washoku (Japanese cuisine) event to promote Japanese food culture in Kuwait. It was attended by owners, suppliers and representatives of Japanese restaurants in Kuwait. Speaking during the event, Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Takaoka Masato lauded his country's partnership with Kuwait, adding one of the connections that bind them dearly is food. "People in Kuwait and perhaps everywhere in the world, whenever we talk about food, we smile with gratitude. We want to smile back with gratitude to the people of Kuwait and to more than 100 restaurants and cafes serving Japanese cuisine," he said.

"The popularity of Japanese food in Kuwait is quite significant: we fully appreciate their efforts and our hearts are overjoyed with all their contributions to the growing love of Japanese food in Kuwait. Many of the suppliers and business owners are Kuwaitis and they appreciate our food culture. Food helps us strengthen our ties and friendship as

food is something that we always have all the time on our table," the envoy said.

Masato said Japanese food was introduced to Kuwait in 1981. "At that time, people in Kuwait didn't really eat outside food. We highly understand that because you have your own taste that are



### Japanese food introduced to Kuwait in 1981

accustomed to it. Therefore, a lot of effort has been made to introduce our food and acceptance of our taste to the people of Kuwait," he said. "The first Japanese restaurant in Kuwait - Kei - opened in 1981. Japanese food must have been very remote from the taste that the Kuwaitis were used to. Of course, it must have required enormous efforts and

commitment to bring good Japanese food supplies and talented people and match Japanese food to the taste of Kuwaitis. I am excited today to hear from you all the experiences, challenges and passions about Japanese food and Japanese food business," he added.

Masato also lauded Kuwait for a well-managed effort to confront the COVID-19 pandemic. His stint as Japan's ambassador to Kuwait began during the start of the pandemic. "It was hard for everyone, but we managed to overcome all those challenges and circumstances. We couldn't travel, we couldn't meet each other. I would like to congratulate Kuwait for successfully overcoming the challenge of the pandemic. The number of cases has drastically decreased and we hope it will stay low, and perhaps lead to zero cases," he concluded.



Takaoka Masato

## Kuwait's October trade surplus with Japan almost double

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan in October nearly doubled from a year earlier to JPY 67.0 billion (\$583 million) as exports remained strong, government data showed yesterday. The surplus soared by 189.1 percent, up for the seventh consecutive month, and Kuwait posted black ink with Japan for 13 years and nine months, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report. Kuwaiti overall exports to Japan surged 105.4 percent year-on-year to JPY 75.9 billion (\$661 million) for the seventh straight month of expansion. Imports from Japan fell 35.0 percent to JPY 9.0 billion (\$78 million), down for the second month. Middle East's trade surplus with Japan swelled 134.8 percent to JPY 610.6 billion (\$5.3 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region jumping 78.9 percent from a year earlier.

Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 94.2 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, inflated 80.6 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan declined 12.9 percent on sluggish car shipments. Japan posted a global trade deficit of JPY 67.4 billion 6 (\$587 million) in October, marking the third monthly red ink, as car exports plunged 36.7 percent due to supply chain disruptions in Southeast Asia. However, overall exports from the world's third-biggest economy still grew 9.4 percent from a year earlier, thanks to robust demand of steel, semiconductor production equipment and mineral fuels. Imports also rose 26.7 percent on higher bills of crude oil, coal and LNG. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. —KUNA

## Kuwait's cycling team wins first place in Arab tourney

CAIRO: Kuwait's national cycling team won first place in the men's competition during the fourth day of the Arab Championship in Cairo, Egypt. Meanwhile, Kuwait's cyclist Jaafar Al-Ali won the gold medal in the men's individuals' event, held yesterday at the Egyptian capital.

Kuwait's cyclists Latifa Al-Yaseen and Noura Al-Ameeri had won the silver and bronze medals in the women's individuals' competition the previous day during the same tournament. Earlier, Kuwait's national women's cycling team took first place in the time category during the tournament on Sunday. The team's win came after beating Egypt and the UAE whose teams finished second and third respectively. Kuwait is participating in the six-day tournament with teams in the men's, women's and juniors' competitions in various categories.



CAIRO: Members of Kuwait's team pose for a group picture.



## Kuwait oil up \$1.14 to \$82.96 pb

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti crude oil surged by \$1.14 during Tuesday's trading sessions to hit \$82.96 per barrel (pb), compared with \$81.82 pb the day earlier, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Benchmark Brent went up 38 cents to \$82.43 pb and West Texas Intermediate fell 12 cents to

reach \$80.76 pb. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) announced meanwhile that OPEC's daily basket stood at \$82.01 a barrel on Tuesday, compared with \$80.90 the previous day. It added in its daily bulletin that the annual average rate of the OPEC basket for 2020 amounted to \$41.47 pb. The OPEC Reference Basket of Crudes (ORB) is made up of the following: Saharan Blend (Algeria), Girassol (Angola), Djeno (Congo), Zafiro (Equatorial Guinea), Rabi Light (Gabon), Iran Heavy (Islamic Republic of Iran), Basra Light (Iraq), Kuwait Export (Kuwait), Es Sider (Libya), Bonny Light (Nigeria), Arab Light (Saudi Arabia), Murban (UAE) and Mercy (Venezuela). — KUNA

## KFF employee stole KD 2 million by inflating salary

KUWAIT: A senior officer at the salary department of Kuwait Fire Force became the "king of rosaries" among his colleagues and at Souq Mubarakia after stealing over KD 2 million in public funds and using it to start a business at the famous market, selling expensive 'misbah' prayer beads. The suspect reportedly embezzled money for two years and raised his salary several times, with his pay reaching more than the senior-most employee in the state, which went undiscovered, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday.

A security source said detectives received information about an official at the salary department of Kuwait Fire Force, whose spending raised suspicions. A senior colleague at work discovered a salary certificate of KD 4,000, although the suspect's actual salary did not exceed KD 2,000. The source said detectives intensified their investigations and planned the arrest after finding out that the suspect embezzled KD 2 million over two years after mastering a mechanism to raise his salary.

He said detectives found the salary raise was gradual - from KD 4,000 to 9,000, then three months later he raised his salary to KD 17,000. When he felt comfortable and no one had noticed

anything, he hiked his salary to KD 42,000, which is the highest salary any public official receives in Kuwait. Detectives arrested the official at work. During interrogation, he admitted to his crimes, adding he did not expect to be discovered as two years had elapsed. Kuwait Fire Force commented on the case, saying in a statement to the press yesterday that the suspect has been referred to the public prosecution for further action.



### Underage drivers

In other news, a local daily reported yesterday that 1,808 juveniles were apprehended, whose ages range between 13 and 16 years, for driving in violation of the law and endangering their lives and that of others, especially as they do not qualify to get a driving license. It is notable that this large number exceeds by nearly eightfold the number registered before the pandemic, as 435 juveniles were referred to the prosecution in 2019 for driving without a license, Al-Rai Arabic newspaper reported. According to statistics, juveniles arrested from Jan 1 until Nov 10, 2021 were as follows: 1,264 by the traffic department, emergency (najda) police arrested 479, while general security arrested 65 juveniles.

Security sources quoted in the report warned against the effect of the violations on the employment future of the children, especially those who plan to join the military, as the violation will be on their criminal record. "The ball is now in the court of parents who allow their children to drive at this age before obtaining licenses," the sources said.

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