

SENEGAL - BEACON OF PEACE AND STABILITY IN AFRICA

His Excellency Abdou Lahad MBACKE

Staff Report

On the occasion of his country's 54th anniversary of Independence and National Day, the ambassador of the Republic of Senegal to the State of Kuwait, His Excellency Abdou Lahad MBACKE, reiterated that the two countries enjoy a treasured and fruitful relationship built on friendship, cooperation, mutual respect and shared values.

Ambassador MBACKE, who has spent over a quarter-century representing his country as envoy in Kuwait, is Dean of the Diplomatic Corps for the past 16 years. For more than three decades this veteran diplomat has served his country with distinction at its missions abroad and representing Senegal at various international forums and conferences.

Recalling some of the enjoyable and interesting times he has had in Kuwait, as well as few of the painful ones, the ambassador said, "Most of my time in Kuwait has been interesting and engaging, and the one sad and painful period was during the invasion of Kuwait by the Iraqi forces in 1990. On that occasion, my president requested me to remain here as long as possible, and I was among the last batch of diplomats to leave this country."

"I was heart-broken to leave Kuwait, but then in 1991, just ten days after the liberation of Kuwait, I was ordered back to Kuwait. As there was no regular air service at that time, a special C-130 Hercules aircraft from the French army dropped me off at Kuwait airport. I was devastated to witness the wanton destruction inflicted on this beautiful country. Memories of thick black clouds



spreading darkness during daytime, and night skies lit bright orange by burning oil fires still remain vivid in my mind."

"During the period of occupation, our then president Abdou Diouf visited the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, at his temporary residence in Taif, Saudi Arabia. On that occasion, the president conveyed support of the Republic of Senegal and its people to the Kuwaiti Government-in-Exile and to its legitimate rights. The president also dispatched a contingent of 500 army commandos to Saudi Arabia. Sadly 95 of these soldiers perished in a fatal air accident."

"Following the liberation, Senegal participated in several projects related to the reconstruction of Kuwait and the strong personal relations between Sheikh Jaber and President Diouf were instrumental

in cementing closer bilateral relations between our two countries. These relations have only gone from good to excellent under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and our current president His Excellency Macky Sall."

Speaking about bilateral economic relations, the ambassador reiterated the growing view among the international community that Africa was the continent of the 21st-century. "Unlike many other countries which are only now beginning to realize the potential of Africa, Kuwait was among the first countries to invest in the African growth story. From the 1960s, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has had a significant presence in development projects across the continent."

"Senegal was among

the first countries in Africa to receive support from the Kuwait Fund. Over the years, the Fund has loaned on preferential terms more than US\$300 million to finance above two dozen different projects in Senegal, including for the supply and development of water sources, rehabilitation of roads and ports, irrigation and livestock development, as well as for supporting economic recovery programs," said the envoy.

While appreciating the large-scale investments in Senegalese economy by Kuwait's state institutions, the diplomat noted that this has not been paralleled by investments from the private sector. With the exception of a major project undertaken by the M.A. Kharafi Group, which is building a \$60 million mega tourism project in Dakar the capital, there is very little Kuwaiti private sector investments in Senegal. I would like to welcome Kuwaiti investors and businesses to Senegal; the scope for development in various sectors of our economy is truly phenomenal, said Ambassador MBACKE.

Pointing to one of the major attractions for investing in Senegal, the envoy said, "Senegal is a benchmark for political stability in Africa. When viewed against the African backdrop, we are among a handful of countries that has never witnessed a military coup d'état." Elaborating on the political stability in his country and underlining that no Senegalese president rode to his presidency on the top of an armored tank, the ambassador said, "Our first president was a poet, the second a bureaucrat, the third a lawyer and the incumbent president is a geological engineer by profession. Political stability in Senegal has

been marked by peaceful transitions of power from one elected government to another."

"We have not only kept the generals from power, we also have strict criteria when it comes to involvement of government officials in politics. For instance, as an ambassador I represent the people of my country and cannot be part of any political clique, until I retire. Also, while the majority of our 12 million people are Muslims and they are further divided along ethnic lines, none of the 160 or more political parties are allowed to represent any religious or ethnic factions. This dichotomy has ensured stable governments and a relatively peaceful political life for its citizens since the country gained independence in 1960."

Stating that his embassy is currently exerting all efforts to bolster Kuwait-Senegal trade on multiple levels, the envoy added, "We have invited and encouraged Kuwaiti business delegations to visit Senegal and promoted various trade shows and exhibitions in this country. A Senegal-Kuwait joint commission meeting is expected to further energize private sector investments between our countries."

Clarifying that Senegal has taken great strides in promoting foreign investments, the ambassador said that a separate entity named APIX had been created by the government specifically for this purpose. APIX is tasked with establishing a competitive business environment, improving investment conditions and providing multi-part support to foreign and national investors in various sectors of the economy, including in Agriculture, Tourism, ITC, Health, Training and other prior-

ity industries.

The envoy pointed out that Senegal receives Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) from over two dozen countries, and since 2011, there has been an appreciable increase in the number of FDI coming from Asian and Middle-East countries. He continued, "Investors from China, Turkey and India have made great headway in Senegal, and there is no reason why Kuwaiti investors cannot join their ranks and profit from the lucrative potential of Senegalese economy."

Elaborating on other factors that make Senegal a productive investment destination, the ambassador said, "Besides a liberal market-economy, we have a vibrant and competitive private sector, highly qualified human resources, efficient infrastructure, a strong judicial and fiscal framework, as well as privileged access to markets in North America, Europe and over 300 million consumers in the regional Economic Community of West African States. Today, Senegal has a per capita GDP of around \$2,000, a growth rate of close to 5 percent and a rise in inflation of less than 4 percent."

Noting that tourism is another area where Senegal has made major strides, the diplomat said, "With over 670,000 visitors in 2012, we are the fourth most-visited country on the continent after South Africa, Kenya and Morocco. Besides being a safe and pleasant place to visit there are numerous tourism attractions across Senegal, including deep-sea fishing that attracts world-class champions attempting to reel in the Blue Marlins, sailfishes, and swordfishes abounding off our 700km coastline. The embassy is

also promoting Senegal as an attractive tourism destination to citizens and residents in Kuwait, by holding exhibitions and conducting various cultural exchanges."

Realizing the importance of human capital, Senegal has paid special attention to education said the envoy. "Senegal current pool of qualified human resources is the result of spending over a third of our national budget on education and training. With compulsory and free education up to the age of 16, six government universities, including the University of Dakar with 40,000 students, and many more private institutions of higher learning, Senegal has a steady stream of highly qualified human resources that it can readily tap," he added.

In conclusion Ambassador MBACKE said, "As Senegal prepares to celebrate over five decades of independence, I would like to thank the leadership, government and people of Kuwait for extending their unwavering support and cooperation to my country in all domains. I have enjoyed my long stay in this country and during this time I had the privilege to meet and get to know prominent personalities in Kuwait, diplomats from around the world and ordinary citizens from every walk of life; I am truly thankful to God for this fine blessing."

(in association with "The Times, Kuwait")



Business

SPACE TECH PROVIDES ISLAMIC INSURANCE FOR HERDERS

AFP - The son of a camel herder, Hassan Bashir knows how tough traditional life in Kenya's arid north is, where pastoralists rely on livestock herds surviving boom and bust cycles of drought.

But Bashir is also an astute entrepreneur, developing Africa's first livestock insurance scheme to make payouts compliant with Islamic law, by bringing together Muslim scholars and number-crunching agricultural experts using NASA weather satellites.

"I've come from the community, and I understand its needs," said Bashir, a sharp-suited businessman respectfully greeting elders dressed in traditional flowing robes in his hometown of Wajir, where goats and donkeys wander the dusty streets.

Bashir, 48, set up Takaful Insurance of Africa three years ago, which unlike ordinary insurance schemes prohibited by Islam, takes only a management fee from clients.

"It is a fair and ethical way to protect pastoralist's livestock assets from natural hazards," said Bashir, whose 80-year old father



was one of the first to receive a payout this week for his herd of 50 cows.

Payments are assessed not according to deaths of individual animals as it would be impossible to provide proof, but according to an index drawn up by experts at the Nairobi-based International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), using satellites to measure vegetation coverage and thus the severity of drought.

The company is named after the Islamic concept of takaful, in which risks are shared among the com-

munity, rather than insurance where policy holders effectively gamble risks against the company.

Any surplus money after payments are made is distributed equally to remaining policy holders.

"It is a cooperative welfare basket for the community," Bashir added, who was inspired to switch from regular insurance broking to the Islamic system after "hot discussions" with his family who refused his "unethical" money.

"I wanted to do something to develop the people here," he said.

In 2011, fierce drought here in northeastern Kenya decimated herds with a devastating impact, and spiralled into famine in nearby war-torn Somalia.

Like elsewhere in the Horn of Africa, vast numbers of livestock are kept as a form of savings account. But these living investments face natural hazards. "The animals are our lives," said 65-year old Abdi Aden Bulle, who lost some 40 of his 50 cows, and eight of his 10 camels in the 2011 drought, a key driver in his decision to join the scheme.

Health

Stress hormone linked to risk taking in those who stay up late



UPI - Night owls, people who stay up late at night, compared to early birds, people who wake up early in the morning, tend to be unmarried risk-takers.

Study author Dario Maestripieri, a professor in comparative human development at the University of Chicago, said women who are night owls share the same high propensity for risk-taking as men.

"Night owls, both males and females, are more likely to be single or in short-term romantic relationships versus long-term relationships, when compared to early birds," Maestripieri said in a statement. "In addition, male night owls reported twice as many sexual partners than male early birds."

The researchers used data from earlier research of more than 500 graduate students at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, which assessed financial risk aversion among male and fe-

male students and found men more willing to take financial risks than women.

However, men with high levels of the male hormone were more similar to men in financial risk-taking.

The researchers took saliva samples of 110 men and 91 women provided saliva samples to assess their levels of cortisol and testosterone. Those levels were measured before and after participants took a computerized test of their tendencies for financial risk aversion. The participants also described their own willingness to take risks and gave information about their sleep patterns.

Men had higher cortisol and testosterone levels than women; but night-owl women had cortisol levels comparable to night-owl and early-morning men.

The findings suggests high cortisol levels may be one of the biological mechanisms explaining higher risk-taking in night owls.