

REMEMBER WHEN

Photograph courtesy of The Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait and the work of Dr Yacoub Al-Hijji in the book *Old-Kuwait: Memories in Photographs* first published in 1996.



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The local souks

A group of men relax at a clothing store while a friend stops for a chat. They were as happy talking as selling.

Kuwait's traditional markets, or *souks*, were an integral part of the old city. Souks were colorful and diverse, some being highly specialized. They were the meeting place of merchants, men, women and the people of the desert. After a light breakfast and a cup of coffee, shopkeepers left their homes and headed for the souk. They stayed in their shops buying, selling and receiving friends until noon when they went home for lunch and the noon siesta. In the afternoon they returned to their shops where they stayed until sunset. Although the souks then became deserted, the shops were

well-guarded.

To wander through the souks was a pleasure for a visitor to the old city. He would enjoy walking through the narrow and covered markets teeming with activity. He would pass by a group of bedouins from the desert sitting near an arms shop waiting patiently for their guns to be repaired, or hear a group of women bargaining with a textile vendor, or watch an old man waiting calmly for his turn to get a free cup of fresh water from an earthen jar provided by a wealthy citizen. These were but a few interesting sights the old souk had to offer before modernity changed the spirit of the souk and hastened the disappearance of most of them. (From the book *'Old Kuwait: Memories in Photographs'*)

Courtesy of The Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait

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A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Budget deficit solutions ... stop waste, diversify, rationalize spending'

"THE Council of Ministers has referred to the National Assembly Decree No. 16 of 2021 referring the draft law to amend some provisions of Law No. 106 of 1976 concerning reserves for future generations, that allows taking an amount from the fund not exceeding 5 billion dinars annually to meet any deficit in the general reserve to the state," columnist **Abdullah Al-Abd Al-Jader** wrote for *Al-Anba* daily.

"Before 2014, we had surpluses of between 18 and 19 billion dinars due to high oil prices and their revenues compared to the size of budget expenditures, and after 2014 oil prices began to fluctuate between 30 and 40 dollars after reaching \$100 per barrel, so the government began to estimate oil prices in the annual budget at between \$40 and \$45.

"Nevertheless, the oil prices during 2020 and the beginning of 2021 stand at between 50 and 60 dollars a barrel and still there is a deficit in the budget because of our dependence solely on oil. Since 2014 there have been trends for alternative sources of income and economic reform, but unfortunately nothing has been implemented and by the time of the Corona crisis, expenditures increased, the deficit soared, and for this the government proposed withdrawing from the Future Generations Fund to meet the deficit.

"There were proposals from the government, the private sector and the National Assembly for alternative sources of income, but unfortunately, none of these proposals and economic reforms have been completed because we have no interest and no serious thinking about what we will face in the future in terms of financial problems, and there are those who are concerned more with their interests and personal interests inside the government and outside, and to add insult to injury we are plagued with the theft of public money which clearly showed its ugly hood during the Corona pandemic.

"Therefore, the solution does not lie in withdrawing billions from the Future



Al-Abd Al-Jader

Generations Fund, but to stop waste, rationalize spending, and create alternative sources of income such as corporate taxes, public-private partnerships, privatization, manufacturing industries, the use of renewable and alternative energy and foreign investments, and the most important thing is to learn from the experiences of other countries that have delved into alternative sources of income and succeeded such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

"Also, the funds granted to other countries from the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development and the Arab Fund for Economic Development must be stopped until Kuwait solves the problem of its financial deficit and revive the local economy and demand countries which borrowed from Kuwait to return because for several years the money has not been paid.

"We must also recover millions of dinars which have been embezzled from the public treasury while the thieves of public money inside and outside continue to bask in 'glory' because there are influential people who put obstacles in the legal procedures to delay and disrupt work in this area."

Also:

"The economic reform must be consistent with the general frameworks of the Constitution without any deviation, by adhering to articles related to national wealth and the nation's ownership of it. In 2016 the government announced its project to reform the economy and took it away from the essence of solution, as it focused on selling -- not privatizing -- a group of the most important sectors of the state and their producing companies which are associated with national security and others that are part of the country's main income and constitutionally protected," columnist **Dr Ali Al-Ruwaihel** wrote for *Al-Rai* daily.

"The government has kept pace with its measures with a view to reducing the subsidies provided to the citizen and announcing the intention to implement the income tax system, starting with companies at a rate of 10 percent of their income, subject to increase. This high figure would have led to the death of the project before its implementation as the state does not have the necessary and

adequate monitoring devices to calculate and collect this tax, and the corporate tax has a negative impact on prices as it will rise artificially upon the announcement of its implementation due to the lack of a highly efficient body to control prices and merchants will avoid paying the tax, and the citizen will end up bearing the cost of artificial increase to the merchant instead of the state.

"The real and comprehensive treatment which the government should implement must be based on the following -- controlling corruption and reducing expenditures by limiting government waste and reducing budgets of ministries by canceling the added items, restricting the expenses of independent institutions such as oil and investment and reconsidering their reward systems and the salaries and allocations to senior officials, reducing the expenses of conferences and external tasks, and controlling unforeseen expenses such as electricity costs in view of expanding use of alternative energy.

"This is in addition to increasing national income and the income of individuals by evaluating and reviewing the distribution of state property, limiting it to producing and service agencies, developing the price control sector and establishing a college to graduate a highly trained apparatus for tax collection work.

"Then paying attention to the imposition of tax in accordance with the constitution regulations and involve the citizen in supporting the economy after raising the level of performance of state institutions, in a gradual and progressive manner, so that it is not a sudden obligation that cannot be fulfilled.

"Add to this the comprehensive treatment of the economy and major development projects by pumping sufficient liquidity into the market to motivate it to provide liquidity for borrowing from the global and local markets to benefit from low interest rates and to protect high-cost investment assets, and the development of petrochemical and other industries, refining plants, and entering the field of marketing, the international trade in oil and its derivatives, and encouraging foreign investment beginning with the Silk Road, developing the Northern Oil Fields, Mubarak Port and the islands."

— Compiled by Ahmad Al-Shazli

Garages see huge rush

Mixed opinions on lockdown

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Automobile workshops in Shuwaikh Industrial Area witnessed a huge number of motorists who were keen to repair their vehicles prior to the start of the partial curfew from Sunday, reports Al-Anba daily.

There was congestion in garages, auto shops and car wash stations, as well as car decoration shops which attracted a large number of customers, especially the youth.

Despite being a weekend, many shops were open to receive customers who wanted to repair their vehicles or buy spare parts.

The number of motorists who repaired their cars complained about the high prices, indicating that some shops took advantage of the current situation and the advent of the curfew to raise the prices.

Imposing

Regarding the imposing of a partial curfew, the opinions of motorists differed. Some consider the decision as positive, and part of the precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, while others saw it as an exaggerated and ill-considered decision, and called on the government to reconsider it.

The Directorate General of Public Relations and Security Media Department of the Interior Ministry stated within the framework of implementing decisions issued by the Council of Ministers to confront the spread of the new Corona virus, a decision has been taken to amend the entry timings for Kuwaitis, their first-degree relatives, their companions of domestic workers into the country through the land ports which has now been set at 9:00 am until 3:00 pm, reports *Al-Qabas* daily.

The ministry pointed out it is



Photo by Bassam Abu Shanab

Bohra community members donating blood.

Bohras blood donation drive

The Bohra community in Kuwait organized a blood donation campaign on the occasion of the National Day and Liberation Day holiday at the Salwa Al-Sabah Center in the Al-Sabah Health District, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

In a press statement the organizers said the campaign came in the belief that the members of this community consider Kuwait as their

second home.

More than 400 men and women participated in the blood donation campaign.

The press statement pointed out the representative of the Sultan of Bohra in Kuwait, Sheikh Yahya Badri, thanked the community for their participation in the campaign and urged them to take part in such campaigns in future.

mandatory for all to produce the PCR certificate at the point of entry in line with the health requirements. This is in addition to adhering to all health requirements, including social distancing and wearing gloves and face masks.

The security sources stressed no one will be permitted to enter the country beyond the specified times.

The Kuwait Municipality, in cooperation with the ministries of Commerce and Interior represented by the Technical Inspection Department, toured the Shuwaikh Industrial Area and placed 350 stickers on the vehicles some of which neglected and others parked for long time on government property, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

The inspector of hygiene in the Capital branch of the Kuwait Municipality, Salah Al-Farhan, indicated that all cars 'parked' outside the garages and shops, in addition to the cars let in the public squares, will be lifted.

He added, there is a comprehensive campaign to lift these cars, even if they are old or new. He also said the Municipal authorities have issued 26 citations against the shops, for violating the hygiene rules and exploiting state property.

The ministries of Commerce and Interior also toured the shops that install special exhausts, particularly in sports cars that generate irritating noises and sounds.

Featuring a new concept, the store is one of three located in Kuwait

JYSK Launches Flagship Store at the Avenues



JYSK, the Scandinavian furniture brand for sleeping and living franchised by Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW), has officially opened its new flagship store in Kuwait at The Avenues, the country's largest shopping destination.

Building on the success of its other branches, this is JYSK's third store opening in Kuwait and comes as the Scandinavian furniture brand celebrates its three-year anniversary since opening in the country. It is part of the brand's strategic expansion plan into the furniture sector in Kuwait and comes in response to high customer demand on simple, modern, and affordable Scandinavian furniture.

The new 1,700 sqm store is located at The Avenues, and offers a wide collection of simple, modern and affordable Scandinavian furniture including bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms, outdoor furniture, textiles, and home accessories. With its new concept, the store features a new modern layout including room set displays, stronger decor, much better lighting and wooden flooring, offering customers more inspiration for interior design.

Like other JYSK stores in Kuwait, JYSK at The

Avenues follows the guidelines set by the local public health authorities and ensures that all safety precautions are adhered to. These precautions include daily sanitization of the showroom, daily temperature checks for employees and customers, and providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves and hand sanitizers at the store.

As part of its social responsibility, the brand recently introduced the "Shop Safe" initiative to encourage customers to shop online on the JYSK website (JYSK.com.kw). All products will be delivered to them safely by the companies' drivers who follow protective measures and guidelines outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO).

JYSK is a global retail chain of stores and e-commerce websites that delivers a great Scandinavian offer for everyone within sleeping and living. In total, they have more than 3,000 stores in 51 countries. In 2017, the brand launched the first JYSK furniture store in Kuwait and the Middle East in the Al Dajeej area.

The new flagship store is located in The Avenues Phase 1 on the ground floor and is open seven days a week from 8:00am to 8:00pm. JYSK Shuwaikh is open Saturday to Thursday from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, and Friday from 2:00pm to 8:00pm, and JYSK Al Dajeej is open daily from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm.