

REMEMBER WHEN

Local Architecture

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 new British Residency was nearly finished when Alan Villiers took this photograph of it in 1939. A highly modern building in Kuwait at the time, it was located on the waterfront near the ruler's palace at the eastern end of the walled city. It later became the British Embassy in Kuwait.

The architecture in old Kuwait is characterized by its success in "transforming the local values and way of life into architectural terms," as stated by a contemporary architect of Kuwait. The Kuwaiti master builder, known locally as *ustad*, drew no plans on papers; he figured the proportions and made the plan in his mind. His success, however, in using traditional techniques with locally available materials such as mud, gypsum, coral and mangrove poles, is all too evident.

A house or a mosque in old Kuwait

was always built around a courtyard where a brackish water well or a fresh-water cistern stood. In daytime, there would be plenty of sunshine throughout the house. Invariably, a few stairs led to the roof, a much preferred place for sleeping during hot summer nights. Close to the house stood the *divaniya*, or men's meeting place, with its private entrance and coffee-herth in the center. It was there that the men of the house would entertain their guests.

In nearby villages, however, houses were less sophisticated and blended beautifully with the surrounding environment. Some were fishermen's homes; others, such as the romantic *kubar*, were retreats that belonged to city dwellers. They resided there in the spring when the desert bloomed after the winter rains. (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

'No solution except democracy ... must stick to it, develop it'

"THE former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill is credited for saying: 'Democracy is the worst system humanity has known, but it has never known a better system'. Consequently, I believe, there is no solution for humanity except to continue this system, stick to it, build on it and develop it. The role of upholding this system rests with the governing institution, the legislative and executive authorities, and the combined political, cultural and social forces and the elite," columnist **Bassam Al-Asousi** wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"Since democracy rule by the people, of the people and for the people through their representatives who are elected via the ballot box to protect the institutions, oversight, legislation, and defend the inherent rights and freedoms of people from injustice. Although democracy has many benefits, it sometimes has side effects and foul secretions.

"In the current Kuwaiti scenario, we find there is a group of elements which has managed to sneak in through the ballot boxes and took advantage of the state of popular discontent and anger at the government's performance and reached the Parliament and not only started to make noise and disturbance, but also violated the rules of the game and used insults and threats and practiced all kinds and forms of bullying and political blackmail to attract attention, sabotage and work for the early dissolution of the Parliament.

"This happened because the results were not to their liking or for implementation of the aspirations and desires of some parties that are not in their interest to continue the Parliament in the exercise of its role and work, so we have not seen or heard that those elements have a program, plans or reform project, so there is no difference between them and the government. They are two sides of the same coin and all of their speeches were populist and demagogical for which some common mobs cheer.

"The world has witnessed what happened in the past two days in the National Assembly – non-ethical transgression on democratic values, norms and regulations, and before them social morals to the extent that the guards intervened to impose order inside the Abdullah Al-Salem Hall and without that intervention the hall may have resembled a wrestling arena.

"It was a continuous thrilling movie filled with suspense, and I can almost assure you that entire Kuwait and the entire Gulf have followed what happened in that movie on the social media. It is painful that the heroes of that terrifying movie are a group of MPs led by some doctors, lawyers, former policemen and businessmen, meaning that they are the elite in society but set a bad precedent to the current gen-

eration in terms of political and parliamentary work.

"Unfortunately, the Kuwaiti democracy has lost its glamour and this is part of the state of decline that has affected state institutions, and perhaps that is also due to the desire to bring people to a state of despair or disbelief in democracy and parliament, but I am completely and firmly sure that democracy cleans by itself and what happened on that day could occur in all parliaments and old democracies, but it is important for the MPs to know that democracy primarily means construction, work and production and it is not a clowning, stubbornness, challenge, or imposing the matter by force. This gives us a serious indication of how the situation would be if these elements were able to take over power or authority, God forbid.

"Unfortunately, in the midst of the turmoil that occurred in the Parliament, issues such as reform and development of education, housing, financial reform and the budget deficit were lost. Cases and personal and vengeful battles took over the center stage.

Also:

"Today, Kuwait looks isolated from the Gulf reality, while its sisters appreciate its credit and historical position, and internationally it is far from its allies Britain and the United States and it relies on old agreements with each of them without moving to revive them and renew them in proportion to the confused and dangerous conditions of the region, Kuwait is not very interested in enhancing its investments in the two countries in order to renew its connection with them and the trust between each of them," columnist **Dr Ali Al-Huwail** wrote for *Al-Rai* daily.

"Locally, the executive and legislative authorities are floundering without precedent. The former does not have a program for development and the second does not know the way to monitor and reform, and the government seems incapable of performing the simplest tasks entrusted to it.

"The streets of Kuwait are hit with heavy rainfall revealing corruption in the road works while the state (the Ministry of Public Works and the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport) is still busy with its preparations for roads work, sitting on the 'billion' budgets, and the armies of workers are unable to repair them in time with required quality, and neither the National Assembly nor the government intends to change the law so the state could directly contract with international companies, taking advantage of the opportunity to expose the corruption of many of the private companies and the current popular anger against as a result of its modest performance and corruption.

"The services in general are all flawed and declining in quality while the Parliament is bent on itself. It wants to lay down laws to naturalize illegal residents by

labeling them 'bedoun' in a relentless effort to preserve an electoral bloc at the expense of the homeland.

"On the internal front, the society is divided in light of the continuous escalation against the heads of the legislative and executive authorities, disrupting the work of the latter by opting not to cooperate with it and refusing to work with its president.

"This happens at a time when a quarter of the nation is groaning and moaning under the weight of consumer while the government has turned a deaf ear to these moans and groans flattening the gravity of their demands, missing out on itself a golden opportunity to buy an inner calm that will extend for a long time by rescheduling their debts. Continuing to ignore them will help to demolish the temple on everyone's head.

"What the country is going through is the result of mismanagement of the state of affairs by the former government and the same situation continues to date."

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"It seems the winds of a new Arab Spring have begun to blow in the region. The first of these winds blew in the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan," columnist **Mubarak Mazeed Al-Moasherji** wrote for *Al-Rai* daily.

"Thanks to God, the wise Hashemite leadership, along with the people who gathered around the leadership that they have trusted for decades, made these winds dissipate and their hope was shattered. In Kuwait, we have started to see, hear and smell some of these poisonous winds.

"A lawmaker called for dragging people into the streets, another called for demonstrations to hold merchants accountable, and others demanded for a democracy tailored to their size.

"Rumors are transmitted by the hour, the last of which is about a piece of land owned by a Sheikh who passed away that has been divided, priced and distributed.

"This rumor was denied through an advertisement published in all daily newspapers. If the three authorities in the country and the honest national media did not stop this torrent of malicious rumors, as well as the enormous lies and ridiculing of the symbols of the country and its national constants, then we will not be safe from the Arab Spring winds.

"We support a constructive democracy that knows its limits. We reject chaos in the name of democracy. We welcome personal freedoms and expression of opinions, provided that differences in opinions are neither provocative nor aimed at weakening national unity which could lead to suspicion and betrayal of various components of the Kuwaiti people."

— Compiled by Ahmad Al-Shazli



Al-Asousi

'Patrols cannot breach areas'



Photo by Bassam Abu Shanab
A couple of young men are out with their guitars to spend the spare time at the beachfront.

Beating boredom at beachfront

To beat the boredom and escape the near imprisonment situation imposed by the spread of Covid-19 infections, most people prefer to go to the beaches, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

In light of the precautionary measures, including less working hours in government institutions and even private companies, citizens and residents

have a lot of free time on hand and don't know to spend this time so a majority of them take to the beach during the non-curfew time. The beaches in all the governorates and the waterfronts witness a remarkable presence of people of different ages who prefer to spend time enjoying sea water and sunlight, cycling or various types of exercises.

Health steps cause: fishermen

'Low turnout, fish rates still high'

KUWAIT CITY, April 18: Fish prices increased remarkably at the beginning of Ramadan due to the lack of supply of various types, which made the market witness low demand despite the availability of all types of local fish in small quantities so they were replaced with imported fish," reports *Al-Rai* daily.

The daily's staff visited Sharq Market recently to observe the fish selling movement, during which they noticed the low turnout of buyers while the prices are high. They cited the market administration's

implementation of health regulations as one of the reasons behind the low turnout of fish buyers.

Jaid Fadel, a salesman, disclosed that due to the partial curfew; the market opens from 7:00 am to 4:30 pm so the revenue is lower than the previous years when the market operated until 10:00 pm.

He clarified all types of local and imported fish are available, but the prices are high because of the low supply brought about by the lack of fishermen and decisions to ban catching fish and shrimp in certain areas.

'Deal firmly with beggars'

KUWAIT CITY, April 18: Assistant Under-secretary for Public Security Affairs at the Ministry of Interior Major-General Faraj Al-Zoubi said public security patrols are forbidden to enter governorates which do not fall within their jurisdiction to prevent unfortunate accidents that result from security chases and cause loss of life and leave behind innocent victims (bystanders and pedestrians) who happen to be present during the chase, as well as to protect the patrols vehicles from damage, since many patrol cars and other vehicles get damaged during the chase, reports *Al-Qabas* daily.

This came on the sidelines of the field tour of security points in the areas of the Ahmadi Governorate of Al-Zoubi who was accompanied by Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled to follow up the efforts exerted by securitymen to implement the partial curfew.

Major-General Al-Zoubi has told the securitymen to deal firmly with beggars who are active especially during this time.

He said instructions have been issued to all police stations not to release the beggars from prisons and not to accept any mediation on their behalf.

He pointed out the public security sector has adopted an urgent security plan to curb all kinds of thefts, especially theft of vehicles and homes by increasing patrols in areas which are prone to theft.

On another issued, the senior Interior Ministry officials said the public security sector in cooperation with the Kuwait Municipality removes abandoned cars which have become a major source of crisis in several aspects, which the criminals may exploit to disturb public security.

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55% hold top jobs: EFG Hermes Financial Group revealed that Kuwaitis hold 55 percent of managerial positions in local banks and these banks are now planning to increase this percentage, reports *Al-Rai* daily.

The group cited the annual reports of Kuwaiti banks for the year 2020, stating that 55 percent of the management positions (excluding middle management) are occupied by Kuwaitis. In Kuwait Finance house (KFH) and Boubyan banks, 70 percent of management positions are held by Kuwaitis, the group disclosed.

Earlier, the Central Bank of Kuwait issued a circular to all local banks to nationalize jobs in upper and middle departments; in addition to obligating them to increase the percentage of Kuwaitis in upper and middle positions by up to 70 percent.

Other Voices

2 stories and football match

By Ahmad alsarraf

These are two inconceivable stories that are almost half a century apart between their fictional events, brought together by a round piece of leather called soccer ball.

The events of the first inconceivable story began when the security authorities revealed that a football player was involved in a scandal of immoral assault on a girl, and the player was referred for investigation and was taken into custody.

The incident of this crime coincided with the imminence of the Kuwaiti national football team traveling, when it was at the height of its glory, to participate in a decisive tournament in a GCC state, and since the player is one of the top players of the team, demands have been made by a group of "honorable people" for his release to represent his country and to achieve victory for his team and then return with the trophy and back to his cell pending his trial.

The "honorable mediators" justified that the matter "will be done in secrecy", then everyone went to perform the noon prayer with the innocence of the children in their eyes.

As for the events of the following inconceivable story occurred when a police patrol received a complaint about a group of reckless people hunting for birds in a reserve where hunting is forbidden. Upon arrival, the patrolmen found there were five cars and the men were hunting using hunting rifles and their vehicles had no number plates.

The perpetrators got into their vehicles and fled, and after a long and dangerous chase, a vehicle was stopped and it turned out, horrifically, that one of the perpetrators was a police officer and the other a teacher.



alsarraf

The defendants were charged with reckless driving, failure to comply with the police orders to stop and attempting to escape law, intentionally removing the vehicle plates to conceal their identity, hunting for birds in a populated area, hunting illegally, failure to obtain hunting license and verbally abusing patrolmen.

The men were taken into custody, but after about an hour an MP went to the police station and requested their release and after a tug-of-war between the executive authority and the MP of the legislative authority, the latter won and an order was issued to release the defendants without a case registered against them, perhaps after it became clear that whoever was entrusted with protecting the law had a relationship with the 'football' as was the case in the first fictional incident and that his father was an electoral manager.

Consequently, it deserved the intervention of influential parties for his benefit and his companion in the crime so that their arrest would not affect the performance of our national football team which was scheduled to meet the England in the World Cup tie in the midst of Ramadan.

Here, too, after the order to cover up the crime was issued, everyone went to perform the noon prayer. The patrolmen went with them to perform an additional rak'ah to thank the Lord because they are still alive and were not killed in the accident and they were not arrested, because they risked their lives while performing their duty.

The question: Is it our right to wish a dear and higher authority to intervene to put a happy conclusion to the second inconceivable story especially since our football situation is already hopeless.

Kuwait was traumatized by the crime of a patrolman manning the checkpoint run-over. Honorable Minister of Interior, what about the culprit? And when will the ministry issue a clear statement that puts an end to gossip?

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