

## Local

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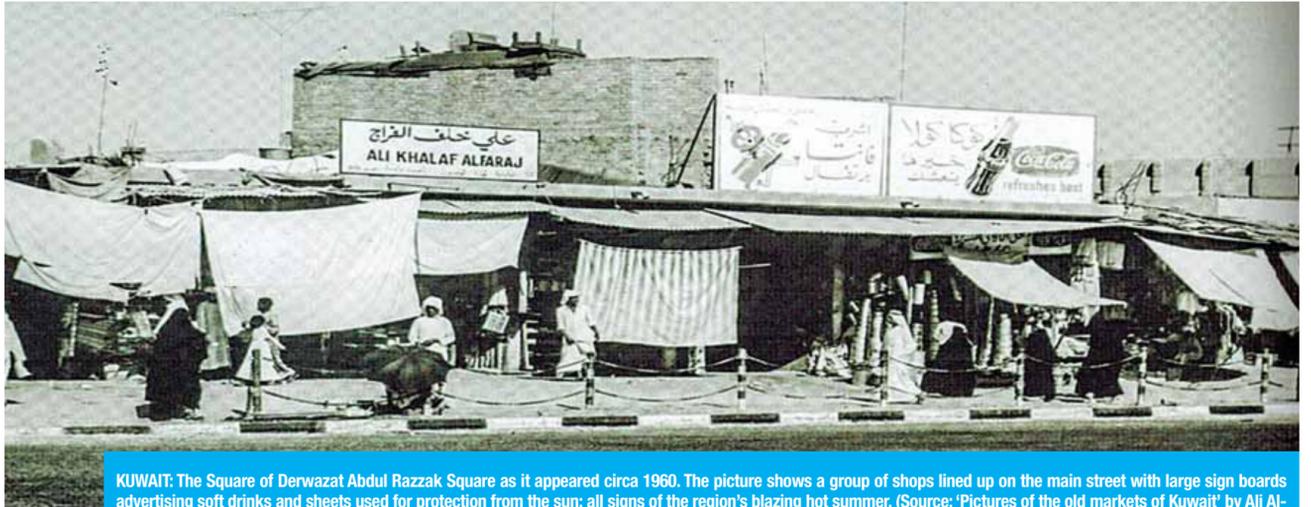
Founder and Publisher  
**YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN**

Editor-in-Chief  
**ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN**

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FAX : 24835620/1  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125  
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

## Kuwait Heritage



**KUWAIT:** The Square of Derwazat Abdul Razzak Square as it appeared circa 1960. The picture shows a group of shops lined up on the main street with large sign boards advertising soft drinks and sheets used for protection from the sun; all signs of the region's blazing hot summer. (Source: 'Pictures of the old markets of Kuwait' by Ali Al-Rais, Center of Research and Studies on Kuwait 2017. Prepared by: Mahmoud Aakarria Abu Alella, researcher in heritage, Ministry of Information)

## Defense Ministry delays loans

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense (MoD) Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah on Sunday issued a decision delaying for six months the payment of loan installments for the military personnel, due for the army fund. The General Staff of the Kuwait Army said in a statement that the move came in recognition from the Ministry of Defense for the military personnel's national role in such emergency health conditions. —KUNA



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Sabah

## Cops' loans delayed

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Sabah has issued a decision delaying for six months payment of loan installments for the police squad, due for the police administration fund. The MoI Department of Public Relations and Security Information said in a statement, on Sunday, that the minister's decision came due to the extraordinary conditions caused by combating the novel coronavirus at the local level. Moreover, the minister has taken the decision in appreciation for the national role undertaken by the personnel amid the emergency health circumstances. —KUNA



Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah

## Ramadan Diwaniya

## Picking up the pieces slowly to face the pandemic: Bangladesh Ambassador

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** Various ambassadors in Kuwait were interviewed by Kuwait Times to learn more about their local traditions and culture during Ramadan. We also asked about the current coronavirus situation in their respective countries and how they are handling and reacting to this pandemic. The following are excerpts from our interview with Bangladesh Ambassador to Kuwait Md Ashikuzzaman:

## Global threat

**Kuwait Times:** As the ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait, how do you assure your nationals that they are being cared and protected against the global threat of coronavirus? What are your thoughts and views about this pandemic, comparing the current situation of both countries, Kuwait and Bangladesh?

**Md Ashikuzzaman:** Both Bangladesh and Kuwait plus a number of other countries have witnessed an increase in the number of cases. In Bangladesh, we have recorded 5,000 plus daily cases of infection. This is alarming because many weeks back, the number was declining. As more people get infected, the number of deaths also increases. So it's very unfortunate. As the days and months passed, we came to realize that this virus is very powerful and we are all impacted. Economically, we were not spared and we are picking

up the pieces slowly to face the difficult situation.

I was appointed as ambassador during the days when the coronavirus was devastating many countries around the world. I was assigned to this position in August 2020, after Ramadan. This will be my first Ramadan outside my country as ambassador. Many countries around the world are grappling to fight this virus and we have to admit that we were all caught red-handed.

In Kuwait, they are very much in control and they are managing it very systematically. Communication by the Kuwaiti government to the expat population has been channeled through embassies. We are delivering it to our people here and we are doing all we can to help out. We have been convincing our people here to abide by the government's rules and regulations and follow instructions, from lockdown to curfews to shopping and even processing documents at government institutions.

In Kuwait, we meet community leaders or members on a very limited scale because of restrictions. These are all observed by our community obediently. I even come out on Facebook to communicate any information needed to inform our people. I am doing this not only for COVID-19, but for almost everything. In Bangladesh, we are happy that we started vaccinations that we took from India. We started from the poorest communities and we are going to give the vaccine to at least 70 percent of Bangladesh's population of 160 million.

The problem in Bangladesh is densely populated areas, especially in Dhaka. It is a challenge for the government to control, but we are trying to do our best! There are curfews in other areas, but what is clear to our people is the instructions to follow to avoid being contracted with the virus. Our economy in the 2019-2020 fiscal year grew by 5.2 percent against our normal growth of 7 percent. Economies of countries of the world plummeted to negative, but we have the best result so far.

## Ramadan celebrations

**Kuwait Times:** How will Ramadan celebrations differ this year?

**Ashikuzzaman:** I think the celebration will be the same as last year. We observed Ramadan last year in almost the same period. Last Ramadan was difficult for everyone, while Eid Al-Fitr was not celebrated like before. The celebration of Ramadan here and in Saudi Arabia is the same. It is marked with festivities. Here, Ramadan is vibrant, markets are open until midnight and work hours are shortened.

But in Bangladesh, although we are majority Muslim, everything is open - markets, malls, even restaurants are open, but only to non-fasting people. We are proud to inform everyone that we are a secular country - all religions are welcome and we respect them. The government sets holidays for minority religions too, which is how we respect the beliefs of one another.

We do not have ghabqas; only the breaking of the fast. After offering prayers, people go to their jobs, shops and some return to work. Ramadan is not limited to celebrations, shopping and food - it's the purification of our souls; feeding our souls spiritually. That is

the meaning of Ramadan.

The question is whether we have lost anything during this pandemic as we do not enjoy the same religious activities - my answer is no!

We haven't lost anything because anywhere we go, we can offer prayers, give charity and fast. Yes, we have lost some freedoms; for example, to celebrate with the community and families. But we have not lost our sense of being Muslims and followers of the Prophet's (PBUH) teachings. If you are susceptible to disease, do not go to the mosque. I have a friend who hasn't gone out since the pandemic because he is afraid he might get it from the mosque. It doesn't matter - you can perform your prayers at home.



Bangladesh Ambassador to Kuwait Md Ashikuzzaman

**Kuwait Times:** Is zakat obligatory for all Muslims?

**Ashikuzzaman:** If you are an able man and have assets of a value of KD 200, you are obliged to give 2.5 percent of that amount to charity. Zakat always starts with the immediate family before going out to others. Don't just give - give so that they will be lifted out of poverty. Zakat is a duty for every Muslim, and one of the pillars of our religion. But many Muslims are not abiding by the teachings of Islam. Kuwait has been doing this exceedingly well - in fact they are known as humanitarian champions.

**Kuwait Times:** Is your family with you? How do you observe Ramadan with the family?

**Ashikuzzaman:** My family is here - I have two daughters, and we are celebrating Ramadan here. I thank God because I can give them full attention as they are all with me. I thank Allah for His blessings and keeping us all safe - it is good that in a time like this, we are all in one place.

**Kuwait Times:** Do you prepare food for the family, especially during Ramadan?

**Ashikuzzaman:** No. Normally in Bangladesh, women prepare food for the family. We provide the ingredients, but traditionally, we leave it to our wives to prepare it for us. Rarely, we have families who are wealthy and hire domestic helpers, so they give all the responsibility to the housemaid.

**Kuwait Times:** Which prayers are important?

**Ashikuzzaman:** All the five daily prayers are important. But what is also important is that we all attend Friday prayers. If we have community prayers, more blessings will be given by Allah. During Ramadan, I prefer to break the fast at home with my family. Women are not obliged to go to the mosque because they are to be protected. They can go to the mosque, but they have their own area to pray. Our religion teaches us to pray five times daily, read the Holy Quran and be good to people. But we are encouraged to do more, especially during the month of Ramadan.

## Blind association appreciates ABK's contributions



**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently welcomed the Kuwait Blind Association's Board Members, Fahad Al-Enzi and Mohammed Al-Abdullah, who handed a token of appreciation to Fawzy Al-Thunayan, ABK's General Manager of Board Affairs, for ABK's contribution towards its 2021 Ramadan relief packages. The contribution

from ABK will assist Kuwait Blind Association to provide relief packages containing necessary items to 50 disadvantaged visually impaired families during the holy month of Ramadan. ABK's support falls under the bank's Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, which aims to promote equality among Kuwait's communities.

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**Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz**

8- How many gates Heaven has?

6

7

8

**Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz**

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