

Meeting with Mr. Kawa Wali

Kawa Wali Muhammad Ali, an economic analyst and academic in the faculty of business and economy at Saladin University in Erbil, says that the investment law encouraged investors by protecting their interests. "After the parliament approved the law and the regional government ratified it, many foreign companies made investments in the region," he told *Al-Monitor*. "Today, hundreds of projects are being implemented by foreign companies or investors."

Article 5 of the investment law provides that a project is exempt from all customs-related taxes and fines for ten years from the start date of providing services or starting production.

The article also provides a tax exemption for spare parts imported for a project, as long as their value doesn't exceed 15% of the value of machines and tools. Imported raw production materials are also exempted from customs duties for five years.

The investment law in the Kurdistan Region differs from the one governing the rest of Iraq, where the Iraqi government continues to impose taxes on foreign investors.

Foreign investments in Iraqi Kurdistan constitute between 37% and 47% of local investments, in addition to roughly 15% of shared investments. "We are bullish, but our ambition is for the rate of investments to increase even more," Ali says. "The Kurdistan Region of Iraq has wide spaces that are suitable for agriculture, in addition to natural touristic regions that can attract tourists, especially during summer."

Ali adds that the region's new interest in agriculture, industry and tourism is very important, and he says investors should launch industrial projects in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk. "The government must focus on profitable industries and facilitate the conditions to implement such projects," he says.

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