



شركة التنمية النفطية  
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## Assembly blocs gear up for battle over thorny issues

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Various Assembly blocs geared up to determine priorities for the rest of the current term which ends in June after the formation of the new government that is due to take oath in the Assembly on Monday. The government is set to finalise its programme for the period during its weekly meeting tomorrow. The northern oilfields project and the new press draft law are expected to top the list of priorities. The controversial oilfields investment, known as Project Kuwait, which has been stalled in the Assembly for 12 years, has been sent back to the financial and economic affairs committee for further consideration.

The committee approved the project last June and submitted its report to the Assembly which decided it needed further revision on the basis of a report by the Audit Bureau which raised some arguments on its constitutionality. But former head of the committee, MP Yusef Al-Zalzalah, has been appointed commerce and industry minister and the Assembly must elect a new member to replace him. Three members of the committee tried in vain last week to convene a meeting to elect a new chairman before the new member was elected. The attempt was

turned down by Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi.

Parliamentary sources expect that former justice minister, Salafist Islamist MP Ahmad Baqer is the likely candidate and is also expected to be the new chairman. Coordinator of the Independents Bloc - a group of mostly pro-government lawmakers - Talal Al-Ayyar said the bloc has not yet taken a decision on Project Kuwait. The bloc will meet to evaluate the project's economic and political aspects and take a decision in the country's national interests.

The Popular Action Bloc, headed by MP

Ahmad Al-Saadoun, has strongly opposed the project in its current form and has called for modifying it to include stricter constitutional guarantees. The bloc wants that after signing agreements with foreign oil majors, the government should bring them to the Assembly for ratification, an opinion supported by the Audit Bureau. The Islamic Bloc is mostly in favour of the latter opinion though some of its members back the government's viewpoint.

*Khannah, Roumi trade verbal barbs*