

Northern oil fields project approved

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti parliamentary committee has approved a controversial project to develop the country's northern oil fields.

Parliament's Financial and Economic Affairs Committee has approved a plan for foreign contractors to develop four oil fields in northern Kuwait. The panel approved Project Kuwait after a series of meetings with Oil Minister Ahmad Fahd Al-Sabah and leading oil executives. The panel, however, reduced the period of any contract with foreign companies from 30 to 20 years.

Officials said the northern oil project, first proposed in 1995, would include \$9 billion in investment and increase daily output of these fields to 900,000 barrels per day. Current production has been about 500,000 barrels.

The parliamentary committee still contains opponents to the project, which would be debated by the full parliament in October. They argued that Kuwait's oil sector would be controlled by foreign interests.

But parliamentarian Mohammed Al-Saqer said Kuwait lost at least \$12 billion by delaying the launch of development.