



The commercial district in Kuwait

# Parliamentary Life

**D**EMOCRATIC practice in Kuwait is imbedded in the Kuwaiti entity itself. Kuwait's National Assembly is a unicameral legislature which is a reflection of the democratic aspiration of the people of Kuwait.

Indeed, Kuwait's parliamentary experience weaved its way through to the present form through gradual and steady development which characterised the growth of the Kuwaiti society and State system since its inception.

The Al-Sabah family, led by its patriarch, Sheikh Sabah I, always adhered to consultation practice based on tribal traditions in his efforts to shape the destiny of Kuwait, as far back as 1752. The Kuwaiti tradition encourages consultation and expression of ideas and opinions in Kuwaiti Diwanis among the different segments of the society, irrespective of their social status. What emerged as a consensus had an impact on the formulation of State policy which reflected popular will.

Thus, the Diwanis, numerous in number, served as a de facto consultative body in the earlier days.

As Kuwait entered the 21st century, the need of the time brought about further devel-

opment of the democratic institutions. Kuwait has known consultation system as the basis of government since 1920 when the first State Consultative Council comprising of 21 prominent citizens, was formed in the Gulf during the reign of Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber. It was a historical indicator of a serious attempt to create a democratic atmosphere.

This was followed by the Municipal Council comprising of 14 members of which 10 were elected by the people and the rest 4 were appointed. This Council made all types of decisions and recommendations.

In 1938, the first elected Legislative Assembly with 14 members was formed through general elections. This had a tremendous impact on the political life of the Kuwaitis. This was followed by a State Consultative Council.

After Kuwait gained absolute political independence on 19th June 1961 through the termination of the January 1899 Friendship and Cooperation Treaty between Kuwait and Great Britain, new parliamentary life was initiated through the election of a Constituent Assembly that was en-

trusted with the task of writing the State's Constitution.

Democratic experience in Kuwait became more mature, conscious and open with the establishment of the first Kuwaiti parliament in 1963.

The parliamentary experience passed through a process of trial and error with each new experience strengthening the democratic spirit and institution.

A Constituent Council, set up through an Amiri Decree in 1989 to recommend specific changes in the constitution to suit the need of the time, was in session when the country experienced a brutal aggression on August 1, 1990. Kuwaiti stint with parliamentary practice was a major target of this aggression. However, the invasion of Kuwait could not penetrate the democratic spirit of the Kuwaiti individual and consequently with the liberation of Kuwait on February 25, 1991, parliamentary life was restored through General Elections held on the basis of adult franchise on October 5, 1992.

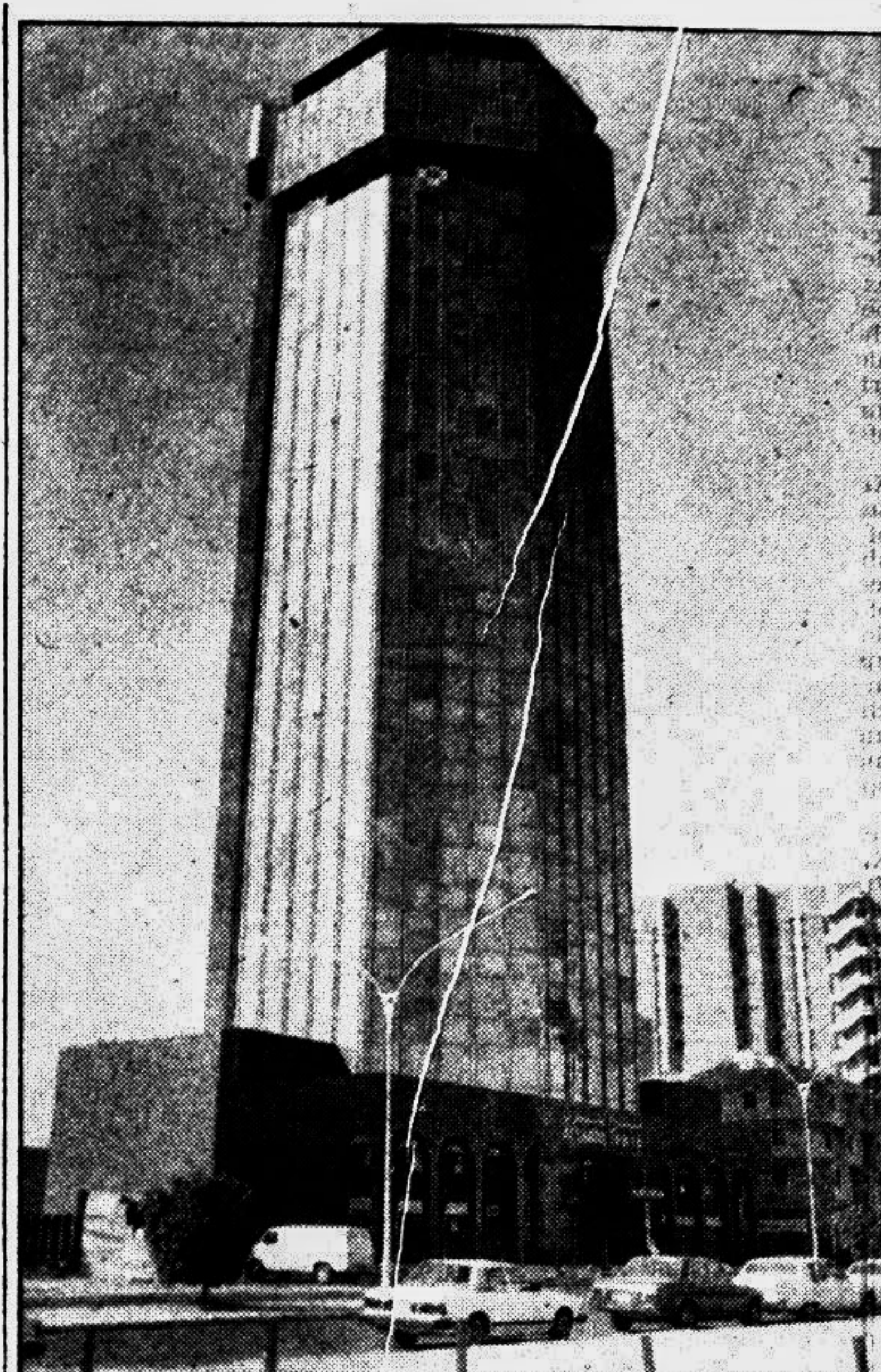
Seventy-five thousand registered and eligible voters in this tiny State elected 50 members through direct secret ballot. It may be mentioned here that presently,

voting is restricted to Kuwaiti males who attain 21 years of age. In recognition of the growing role of the Kuwaiti women in society, particularly their contribution and act of courage during the national ordeal as a result of the aggression, the right of suffrage for Kuwaiti women is only a matter of time.

A parliament Deputy must be at least 30 years of age on election day. Government servants have to relinquish their respective position prior to their joining the rolls as a candidate. The Ministers not elected in the National Assembly are considered members in it by dint of their positions.

Kuwait is divided into 25 electoral constituencies with each constituency electing 2 representatives in the Assembly.

The National Assembly is elected for a 4-year term starting from the first session after elections to the last session before new elections. Regular annual session is no less than 8 months subject to budgetary sanction. The Assembly Sessions are only valid when more than half of its members are present. Decisions are taken by absolute majority of the present members.



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## KFAED

Continued from page 8

Water and Sewerage — 8.80%  
Others — 0.70%  
The Fund continued its operation despite the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. It managed to complete all the procedures necessary for concluding 7 loans during the invasion period.

Further, in pursuance of the Amir's pledge at the UN General Assembly speech on 27th September 1990, to reduce the burdens of debt borne by some developing countries, KFAED took the initiative of

cancelling the due interests on the Fund's unsettled loans as at 27th September 1990 from which 26 African countries, 12 Asian countries and 9 Arab countries benefited.

It is worth mentioning here that Bangladesh is a major recipient of Kuwait Fund Assistance Programme.

Kuwait Fund has so far allocated a total No of 8 loans amounting to KD 49.084 million of which two are in the agriculture sector and six are in the energy sector. Recently, a new loan agreement has been concluded under which KFAED will assist Bangladesh in the construction of Dhaka-Sylhet-Jaffar Road system.



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