



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis cast their votes during by-elections held in the third constituency yesterday at ballot centers in areas including Adailiya, Khaldiya, Yarmouk and Khaitan.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Fouad Al-Shaikh

MODEST TURNOUT IN EARLY VOTING HOURS

By Faten Omar and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Polling stations in the third constituency opened doors yesterday at 8:00 am for voting in by-elections for a seat that fell vacant with the death of MP Nabeel Al-Fadhli last December. Twenty polling stations were set up in public schools in the electoral district. Few voters showed up in the morning at Mohammed Abdullah Al-Wahibi intermediate school in Jabriya, reserved for female voters. "We saw 16 voters out of 798, and expect to see more by the end of the day," said Deputy Attorney Shabeeb Al-Taflan of the main election committee.

T-shirts, pamphlets, water and juice were distributed by the candidates' supporters outside the school. Um Abdullah and Um Mohammad and their families were supporting Ahmed Nabeel Al-Fadhli to take up his father's seat at the National Assembly. "Like father, like son. We have hopes for Ahmed to make the right decisions like his father," Um Abdullah told Kuwait Times. Kazmia Al-Mo'men voted for Hisham Al-Baghli. "Baghli is an active young man who was elected several times and lost because he was short of two or three votes. He is also a board member of the municipal council," she said.

Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd toured the polling station to check on the progress of the electoral process and praised the efforts.

Larger turnout

The Khalil bin Ahmed intermediate school in Kaifan saw a larger turnout of male voters. "People will show up in the evening. Until now we only saw 25 voters out of 3,932. But because it is a by-election, turnout will be a maximum of 30 percent,"

said Khaled Abdulaziz Al-Khalid of the main election committee. Mefreh Al-Shammari voted for Osama Al-Tahous, whose election to the Assembly was nullified by the court. He told Kuwait Times that Tahous would be a great MP as he knows what is best for Kuwait. "My expectations is that turnout will be 25 percent. Abdullah Al-Kandari, Ali Al-Khamis, Osama Al-Tahous and Ahmed Nabeel Al-Fadhli seem to be the leading contenders," he said.

Thirty-four candidates including two women are contesting the sole seat in the third constituency, which has over 81,000 voters. Eligible voters must elect one candidate to fill the Assembly's vacant seat. Among the candidates are a number of those who contested the election earlier or were members of the dissolved Assembly.

Moderate numbers

The by-elections started with very moderate numbers of voters showing up to ballot centers, as only less than ten percent showed up by midday. However, organizers said that the numbers were expected to rise to 20-25 percent by the time of ballots closed at 8:00 pm. It was noted that most senior citizens came in the early morning hours as policemen were seen assisting those who arrived on wheelchairs.

Chancellor Khaled Al-Khaled, Head of committee number one in Al-Khalil Ahmed School in Kaifan, said that very few voters showed up and that only 80 out of the total number of 773 voters had casted their votes by noon.

Meanwhile, Chancellor Hani Al-Mai, head of committee number 2, said that 93 out of 1,059 voters showed up by noon, while it was reported that 102 out of 1,045 showed up by noon in committee number three.



INTERIOR MINISTER INSPECTS BALLOT STATIONS



KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah tours ballot stations in Kaifan district during by-elections held in the third constituency yesterday.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Fouad Al-Shaikh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior's (Mol) various apparatuses have put all available resources at disposal of securing facilities for the by-elections held in the third constituency yesterday, affirmed the Interior Minister.

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, also the Deputy Premier, in a statement as he toured ballot stations in Kaifan district, expressed satisfaction at orderly balloting at the electoral centers. He also lauded the security personnel for demonstrating a high sense of responsibility in enforcing the law at the centers and facilitating traffic on nearby roads.

The minister during the tour held brief and cordial conversations with a number of voters at the schools that have been converted into ballot centers. Meanwhile, the Mol's Undersecretary Lieutenant General Sulaiman Al-Fahad re-affirmed the Ministry's readiness to provide all needs and overcome any obstacles that may face the polling.

The Undersecretary, while touring the ballot centers accompanied by other senior officers of the Mol, lauded the noticeable cooperation between the security personnel and staff of other departments for ensuring trouble-free elections. He also heaped praise upon the participating young volunteers and the media personnel for "making a very impressive atmosphere at sites of this democratic ceremony." He inspected details of the field procedures and implementation of regulations at the centers, as well as voters' easy entry and exit at the premises.

Cooperation

Meanwhile, Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah inspected a number of ballot stations in Khaitan district and hailed the noticeable cooperation among all the apparatuses' personnel involved in organizing the by-elections.

In a statement during the visit, the Governor urged eligible voters to practice their right of voting, for such polling is not of less significance than the regular elections. "It is a national duty and complementary to the Kuwaiti democratic march," he said.

In the meantime, the Minister of Justice affirmed that the by-elections held in the third constituency proceeded easily with voters casting their ballots at the polling centers since the day's early hours in orderly fashion.

Yaqoub Al-Sane, also the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, said after inspecting a polling center in Kaifan that a substantial number of citizens showed up at the stations for practicing their political franchise during the morning hours.

A total of 34 candidates competed in yesterday's third constituency by-elections, including two females, to win one seat which was declared vacant following death of MP Nabil Al-Fadhli last December. Voting was held in 20 schools in a constituency featuring 81,218 eligible male and female voters. National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem had announced on January 21 late MP Fadhli's seat vacant, and informed the Prime Minister to hold by-elections within 60 days of the announcement. — KUNA



Interior Ministry officials led by Undersecretary Lieutenant General Sulaiman Al-Fahad arrive at a ballot station.



Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary Major General Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah (center) arrives at a ballot center.



Policemen stand outside the Mohammed Abdullah Al-Wahibi intermediate school in Jabriya.

INFO MINISTER COMMENDS SMOOTH VOTING

KUWAIT: Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah commended yesterday the smooth voting process in the third constituency by-elections, held among 34 candidates including two females. Sheikh Salman, also Minister of State for Youth Affairs, said that lawmakers have a great role to play hand-in-hand with the executive authority to carrying out development of Kuwait in line with the directions of His Highness the Amir. He said the ministry of information mobilized its staff for the coverage of the day-long voting. Sheikh Salman praised the state authorities for making the by-elections success. — KUNA