



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti women show their passports as they arrive at a polling station to cast their votes for the parliamentary elections yesterday.



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti men supporting a candidate chat outside a polling station. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



A close up shot shows the hand of a Kuwaiti man casting his vote for the parliamentary elections at a polling station.

## INFLATION, HOUSING AND STABILITY TOP VOTERS' CONCERNS

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaitis of both genders, older and younger, headed to the polls yesterday to select a new 50-member parliament. Issues like inflation, housing, the rise of sectarianism and tribalism were main concerns for voters.

Wafaa' Al-Khala, a retired citizen living in Shaab, told Kuwait Times that she is optimistic about the new parliament. "As a Kuwaiti people, we are suffering from the high prices for almost everything, such as the rise of petrol prices and school fees. I hope they can reduce inflation and lower the costs of living, she said.

Hana Khaled Al-Sjari, 43, living in Al-Daiya, also decried inflation. She told Kuwait Times, "I hope that the MPs will care for bigger issues not just sectarian, tribal, and which party [grouping] they belong to. We must love Kuwait before anything else, and unite. Union is strength." She added that candidates must focus on local issues such as employment, housing, health care and education.

### Political issues

Some voters focused on solely political concerns. Haya Al-Maqrour, a 32 citizen living in Shaab was unhappy with the single-vote system. "I work at the Parliament and I want to talk about the single-vote system which encourages sectarianism and tribalism. There are a lot of families fighting because one member voted for candidate x and another family member preferred candidate z. The vote is no longer based on the electoral program or the efficiency of the candidate, but based

on sectarian or family," Maqrour explained. "Because I work in the political mainstream, I was able to study the candidates before I voted. I'm optimistic that the new National Assembly will take collective action to make a clear agenda that goes along with Kuwait's interest." For her, wasta (connections) and corruption are also major concerns and she called on the newly-elected lawmakers to focus on this issue.

Engineer Ali Al-Farsi, 42, lives in West Mishref, said that his main concerns as a voter included the dearth of services and the structural problems in the education and health care sectors in Kuwait. For Um Hussain, a 50 year-old housewife from Rumathiyah, the main issue driving her vote was a matter of politics. She voted for former lawmaker who was "known for his actions". "He was the one who stood for the wronged ones," she said without giving any specific names. "We have a big issue that no one is talking about, and it is closed because of political reasons. There are innocent people in Kuwaiti prisons, the files of those people should be open and have a second chance in re-trial," she said.

### Passing nationality

Hayfa Al-Mubark, who voted for the first time, called on the new elected parliament to work to change the law regarding women and passing nationality to their children.

"Kuwaiti women who are married to non-Kuwaitis suffer because they cannot pass nationality to their children. I hope the new parliament can make fairer laws to give our children the nationality of their

mother," she said. She also hopes that the parliament works on improving education and updating Kuwait's aging curriculum.

The parliamentary polls were originally scheduled for June 2017, the end of the four-year term of the parliament elected in July 2013. However, His Highness the Amir dissolved the parliament in October and, consequently, snap polls were scheduled for November 26. None of the parliaments elected in Kuwait since 2003 have managed to complete their four-year tenure, and there is a growing call from Kuwaiti citizens for more political stability so that challenges facing the country can be addressed more effectively.



A Kuwaiti woman looks for her name before casting her vote for the parliamentary elections at a polling station.

## CHILDREN INTERACT WITH ELECTIONS ATMOSPHERE

**KUWAIT:** With their spontaneous and innocent actions, Kuwaiti children are seen racing among the masses of voters to distribute identification cards of their candidates outside the polling centers interacting with this democratic process. Children are seen in front of polling stations with cards carrying pictures of their candidates to distribute them to voters, being unaware of their candidates' affiliation nor their trends. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** A Kuwaiti child gives a thumbs up while holding a candidate's card outside a polling station yesterday.



A child holds up a candidate's poster outside a polling station yesterday.—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# SHRIMP FIESTA COMBO



KD 5.600

45 pcs Fried Shrimp, Fries, 2 Tartar Sauce, Bread & Cola



DELIVERY 1802662

@SHRIMPYKW SHRIMPY.COM