



A fresh dawn

Voters 'overwhelmingly excited' to perform their democratic duties

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His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty the King's Representative for Humanitarian Works and Youth Affairs, yesterday cast his vote at the polling booth in the Bahrain International Circuit.

After voting, HH said, "The Bahraini democratic experience, which is unique in the world, is becoming more and more solid."

"Bahrain is among the most advanced countries on the democratic level."

"The wide participation indicates people's awareness on the importance of their role in the elections," said HH Shaikh Nasser.



Zahra Ayaz

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The Kingdom yesterday witnessed a grand celebration of its democratic process with legions of citizens across the nation casting their political rights to elect their parliament members and municipal councillors.

The electoral process could lead to run-offs in many districts on November 19 as independents and former lawmakers challenge incumbents for a seat in the chamber.

As per the electoral rules, a candidate must obtain more than half of the votes in a constituency to be elected. If no candidate achieves more than half the votes, the two candidates with the highest number of votes will go head-to-head in a run-off election.

Out of 507 candidates contesting polls, the largest number in the Kingdom's history, 107 are women, reflecting the Kingdom's women empowerment journey under the great leadership. Bahrainis over the age of 20 who meet the legal require-



107

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Supporters of incumbent MP Hassan Bukhamas at their campaign booth on Election Day

ments are eligible to cast their vote. There were 55 voting centres across the Kingdom yesterday enabling the citizens to exercise their democratic rights.

Citizens who constitute the country's over 344,000-strong electorate who live overseas were able to cast their ballots at 37 diplomatic missions around the world on Tuesday.

"The number of Bahrainis who cast their votes at diplomatic missions exceeded the figures of the last elections in 2018. The high turnout is a testament to the sense of responsibility and positive commitment of Bahrainis to exercise their constitutional rights and elect their representatives to the parliament," said Nawaf Hamza, chairman of Bahrain's high elections committee.

The next House of Representatives will have at least eight new faces after seven current members chose not to seek re-election and one was disqualified from contesting.

Speaking to *The Daily Tribune*, Bahraini citizen Talal Al Malood, 45, said he is very proud to participate in the Kingdom's democratic process. "We have many candidates who have achieved milestones in various fields and I am pretty sure that the upcoming Parliament will be the best in history in terms of efficiency and accountability to the people."

Another voter Saud Ali Azeez Ahmed said he is hopeful that almost all citizens would cast their democratic rights, for it is their important duty to elect their representatives.

"This is one part of the civilian

right, where you have the choice to elect the representatives, who will be drafting laws for the nation. Let's all perform this task effectively and wisely so that we have the best policymakers who are capable of drafting laws that will serve good to the citizens."

First time voter Mohammed Bilal was overwhelmingly excited to cast his vote. "This is one of the proud moments of my life. The next parliament must focus more on the youth of this nation as they are the future. The Kingdom's youth are the brightest in the region and they have unmatched capabilities."

"With right policies in place, it can be turned into an IT hub of the region. The basic Information Technology infrastructure and availability of talent serve as a prerequisite for the nation to rise and emerge a pioneer in IT and IT-related services."

The voter turn-out in 2018 was 67 per cent, the highest level since the parliamentary and municipal elections began in the Kingdom in the year 2002. According to a survey conducted by the Bahrain Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Derasat), between 63 per cent and 69 per cent of voters were planning to cast a ballot on the election day. The survey said 85pc of the participants believed that



I vote, therefore I am

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If the headline resembles what Rene Descartes wrote years ago in the Discourse on the Method - 'I think, therefore I am- know that it is not just a coincidence.

As it's what a differently abled man from Muharraq told Tribune while waiting for his turn to vote on a wheelchair.

His words were different, but the essence was all there.

"My only goal is not to vote for someone but to vote for Bahrain," he said with a sparkle in his eyes.

And continued: "Because it is all we have."

What better way to become a part of democracy, especially when every vote counts? Isn't it?

This man, a senior citizen from Muharraq, knows that better than anyone and has proven the same.

So, when he decided to vote, nothing could stop him - not even his age or disabilities.

He, however, was not alone.

Many such motivating sights were seen from almost all parts of the Kingdom.

One such sight was of a citizen arriving at a polling station to cast his vote, holding an oxygen cylinder in one hand and a passport in the other hand.

He is ailing, but that didn't matter.

"I am out here for the nation and to achieve a better reality for our dear Kingdom," the man said as he walked away with firm steps after exercising his rights.

In fact, polling stations all over the kingdom yesterday witnessed such brave sights, where people of all ages eagerly waited for their turn.

Some walked in, while others rolled in on wheelchairs, smiling and inspiring others to exercise their rights.

Polling stations in the Southern Governorate had set aside two tracks for differently-abled voters.

Organisers at the polling stations were also keen to help them and assist elderly and differently-abled people, ensuring privacy and transparency.

