

Jordan votes on new parliament

by UPI

AMMAN, Jordan -- Polls for national parliamentary elections opened Tuesday in Jordan, where 885 candidates were vying for one of the 110 lower parliamentary seats. A national holiday was declared to spur nearly 2.5 million eligible voters to go to the polls as police and soldiers were dispatched to areas feared to become violent, Alalam Satellite TV reported from Amman. There are a record 199 women running for seats in the house, where six are reserved for females. Many of the campaigns focused on the country's economic problems, where the unemployment rate swings between 14 and 30 percent and the monthly minimum wage is set at about \$156, the report said. The main opposition Islamic Action Front fielded 22 candidates. The group won 17 seats in the last election in 2003. Members of Jordan's 55-seat Senate are all appointed by King Abdullah II, a Western-educated monarch and close ally of the United States.

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