



Opening of the 12th Jordanian Parliament by His Majesty King Hussein (photos by Yousef Al 'Allan)

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state, the King said the Kingdom was taking "foolproof, wisely-regulated steps" towards a peace settlement "confident in the ability of our government, of your assembly, and of our courageous people to face the challenges of the future negotiating phase." But, the King warned, a "just and comprehensive peace will not be realised and completed until Jerusalem becomes the city of peace."

The Monarch, a descendant of the Prophet Mohamad, vowed that "we will recognise no sovereignty over (Jerusalem) except that of Almighty God," and renewed his call for a "non-political" pan-Arab body representing all the seven sects of Islam to supervise the holy shrines in Jerusalem.

"We pledge our support to this body with all the means at our disposal and we pledge not to cede or give up our religious and historical responsibilities in Jerusalem and towards Al Aqsa and Islamic holy places in Palestine," said the King. The King called for a dialogue among Muslims,

Christians and Jews to work out a formula to address the three faith's concerns over their links to Jerusalem. The Monarch said the government remained committed to settling inter-Arab differences. "Our faith in the unity of this (Arab) Nation and in future generations requires us to seek to revive mutual confidence among Arab brethren, to transcend the obstacles and shortcomings which have beset the

course of Arab solidarity, to renounce quarrels and disagreements and to reinstate amity and mutual understanding," the King said. The King also called for amendments to the charter of the Arab League saying the changes were needed to "achieve a greater measure of cooperation and coordination among all Arab States." Addressing the assembly of mostly conservative, pro-establishment politicians and

armed continued support for the Armed Forces, "our country's shield and security and ... a source of pride and admiration to us all." The Monarch pledged that the government would continue its moves to replace outdated legislation and administrative reforms while upholding total respect for the judiciary as an independent authority. Paying tribute to "most newspapers" for adhering to the new Press and Publication Law, the King said the government information media, including television, would seek to further extend its coverage to Europe and the Americas. The government will also seek to expand postal and communication services and to offer them to rural regions and will also upgrade and modernise education. The government has also made major strides in addressing the economic problems of Jordan, the King said, referring to reduced budget deficits and increased local revenues, success in rescheduling foreign debts and restructuring the Kingdom's monetary policies over the past four years (see story below).

See page 4 for full text of the King's Speech from the Throne

is options on

Masri elected House speaker with more than 70% of votes

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Former Prime Minister Taher Al Masri Tuesday became the speaker of the Lower House of Parliament after defeating Islamic Action Front (IAF) candidate Abdullah Al Akaileh. Mr. Masri achieved his landslide victory at a first round of secret balloting, scoring 57 votes compared to the 22 votes that Dr. Akaileh received. One ballot was empty. The IAF 18-member bloc suffered a second defeat when its candidate for assistant speaker Mohammad Al Haj lost his bid to Deputy Samih Al Farah at a second round of balloting. Mr. Taha Hababbeh became first assistant speaker after winning 35 votes at the first round of balloting while Mr. Farah

and Dr. Haj tied, with each scoring 30 votes. Mr. Farah won 41 votes compared to the 38 votes that Dr. Haj received at the second round of balloting. Both Mr. Hababbeh and Mr. Farah are close to Al Ahd Party which is headed by Deputy Abdul Hadi Al Majali. Independent Islamist Abdul Razzaq Tubeishat won his bid for the first deputy speaker at a second round of balloting when he defeated Deputy Hashem Al Dabbas with a margin of nine votes, winning 44 votes. Three candidates had originally contested the position but the deputies went into a second round of balloting when neither of the contenders achieved the absolute majority required by the internal regulations of the House.

Former Minister of Health Mohammad Adoub Al Zaben went out of the race when he came third with 20 votes, trailing Mr. Dabbas with three votes and Mr. Tubeishat with 16. Deputy Abed Mousa Naher was uncontested in his bid for the position of second deputy speaker. "I promise you to lead, with your help, the serious march of your House... to emphasise the importance of this position which has (great) responsibilities and role in the Jordanian political system," Mr. Masri told deputies after taking the chairmanship of the House's session from Abdul Baqi Jammoo, who chaired the meeting as the oldest deputy before the election of the speaker.

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policy which seeks to activate process. Agreement has been

Masri sweeps to speakership

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Masri said the responsibilities of the House will be greater due "to the absence of some current national issues (from the election campaigns) with rendered the debate between the candidates and the voters incomplete." Mr. Masri pledged to strengthen the performance of the House and work to provide its members with the technical and administrative help they would need in performing their duties. Emphasising that Jordan has a parliamentary political system, Mr. Masri urged the executive authority to cooperate with the legislature and to address "the people through their representatives." "His Majesty King Hussein has on various occasions emphasised the necessity of renewing the content of the Hashemite Jordanian political message... but until now the official and popular agencies, institutions, parties and individuals have not sufficiently responded to this call which is urged by" local, regional and international changes, said Mr. Masri. "This makes the House responsible," for helping bring about that change, he said. Emphasising the strength

the oath that deputies are constitutionally required to take before the requirements for their membership in the House are met. To the pledge for loyalty to the King and country and service to the nation, Mr. Jaber, followed by all IAF deputies, added the phrase "within the dictates of God and His Prophet." Sheikh Jammoo requested Mr. Jaber to repeat his oath and stick to the phrasing as specified in the Constitution but Mr. Jaber and other Islamist deputies insisted on adding the phrase. Mr. Jaber also took the oath sitting down but other members of the IAF agreed to stand up after Sheikh Jammoo pointed that the "norm" required so. Deputy Abdul Raouf Al Rawabdeh then proposed to go ahead with the session and refer the dispute to the Higher Council for the Interpretation of the Constitution. Mr. Jammoo agreed to the proposal. The first woman deputy in the Lower House, Toujan Faisal, took the oath without using the feminine pronouns "in order to stick to the oath as spelled out in the Constitution."