

South Africa's partial poll results show ANC falling under 50%; coalition Govt likely

JOHANNESBURG, May 31 (AP)

SOUTH Africa was heading closer to the reality of a national coalition Government for the first time on Friday as partial election results put the ruling African National Congress well short of a majority.

With more than half of votes counted across the country's nine provinces, the ANC had received just under 42% of the national vote, according to the early results as counting continued. That represented a huge drop from the 57.5% it received in the last national election in 2019, although the final results from Wednesday's election

have not yet been declared.

The Commission that runs the election said those would be announced by Sunday, although they could come sooner.

The count from more than 12,000 of the 23,000 polling stations raised the strong possibility that the ANC would need a coalition partner to form a Government and re-elect President Cyril Ramaphosa for a second and final term. The frenzied negotiations were likely set to start behind closed doors. The ANC was still leading the count and had the most votes by some way, as expected, with the main Opposition

Democratic Alliance on around 24%. The ANC is widely expected to still be the biggest party and to have the most seats in Parliament. The ANC has had a clear majority for all 30 years of South Africa's democracy since the party swept to power in a 1994 election which officially ended the apartheid system of white minority rule, leading Nelson Mandela to become the country's first Black President. It has been the dominant political force and its slipping below 50% would be a momentous change for Africa's most advanced economy.

The ANC's support has steadily declined from a high

of nearly 70% of the vote 20 years ago as South Africa grapples with deep socio-economic problems, including widespread poverty and now one of the worst unemployment rates in the world at 32%. Poverty and unemployment disproportionately affect South Africa's Black majority that make up 80% of the population and were the core of the ANC's support over the years.

While the inequalities of apartheid were always going to be hard to solve, the ANC has also been blamed for failures in basic Government services, numerous Government corruption scandals.

'Water level at India's main reservoirs ↓ to 23%'

NEW DELHI, May 30 (PTI)

THE water level of the country's 150 main reservoirs has dropped to 23 per cent and is also 77 per cent less than last year's levels at this time, according to Central Water Commission (CWC) data.

Last week, the live storage of these reservoirs was at 24 per cent.

The present storage is merely 77 per cent of last year's levels and 94 per cent of the normal storage, CWC data stated.

In its latest weekly bulletin, released on Friday, the commission said that "the total live storage available is 41.705 billion cubic metres (BCM), equating to 23 per cent of the total capacity". "This is a significant decrease from the 53.832 BCM recorded during the same period last year and the normal storage level of 44.511 BCM. Consequently, the current storage is only 77 per cent of last year's levels and 94 per cent of the normal storage," the commission said. The 150 main reservoirs monitored by the CWC have a combined live storage capacity of 178.784 BCM, which is around 69.35 per cent of the total storage capacity created in the country. Ten of the 150 reservoirs are located in the northern region -- Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan.

Wildfires flare up again in Uttarakhand after brief lull

DEHRADUN, May 31 (PTI)

FOREST fires have flared up again in various parts of Uttarakhand, with two major fire incidents in the Gauhari range of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve and the trek route to Nilkanth Mahadev temple in Rishikesh.

The blaze that broke out in Gauhari range of the reserve on Thursday evening affected around 1.5 hectares of forest cover, Rajaji Reserve Director Saket Badola said on Friday.

The fire in Gauhari range of the reserve has been brought under control but fire fighting continues in an area spread over one hectare in the forest near Pundrasu along the trek

route to the Nilkanth Mahadev temple, Badola said.

The forests in Barahat, Mukhem, Dunda and Dharasu ranges besides Varunavat hills in the border district of Uttarkashi are also ablaze, Uttarkashi District Disaster Management Officer Devendra Patwal said.

Forest guards, Quick Response Teams, NDRF, SDRF, police and fire brigade personnel are busy dousing the flames in Uttarkashi district.

After nearly a fortnight-long lull wildfires flared up on Thursday with fire incidents in 11 areas affecting more than 13 hectares of forest land across the State.

Assam flood situation grim, over 3.5 lakh affected

- Six people killed in 11 districts
- Road and rail communication disrupted

GUWAHATI, May 31 (PTI)

THE flood situation in Assam deteriorated on Friday as six people died and over 3.5 lakh people remained affected in 11 districts, while road and rail communication was disrupted following incessant rainfall in the aftermath of Cyclone Remal, officials said.

Three people died in Cachar, two in Hailakandi and one in Karbi Anglong, taking the total death toll to 12 due to floods, rain and storms in the state since May 28.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assured the State of the Centre's help to deal with the situation while Union Home Minister Amit Shah has called up Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to enquire about the flood situation in the state.

"Hon'ble Home Minister Shri @AmitShah Ji telephoned me to enquire about the flood situation in various parts of Assam, following the impact of Cyclone Remal," Sarma posted on X.

He said Shah has "assured us the complete support of the Government of India in these trying times. We are grateful for his proactive efforts".

A total of 3,49,045 people have been affected in the districts of Karbi Anglong, Dhemaji, Hojai, Cachar, Karimganj, Dibrugarh, Nagaon, Hailakandi, Golaghat, West Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao, officials said.

Cachar district is the worst hit with 1,19,997 people affected, followed by Nagaon (78,756), Hojai (77,030) and Karimganj (52,684).



Villagers waded through a flooded area following rains in the aftermath of Cyclone Remal, in Hojai district, Assam on Friday. (PTI)

Altogether 28,317 affected people have taken shelter in 187 relief camps, including 15,626 in Cachar, 5,308 in Hojai, 3,937 in Karimganj and 2,706 in Hailakandi, they said.

Rescue teams evacuated 615 people to safety, including 255 in Hojai, 152 in Cachar, 90 in Karimganj and 75 in Nagaon.

Swirling flood waters also damaged 11 roads and breached three embankments while urban flooding was reported from Kamrup, Cachar and Jorhat.

Rail and road communication have been severely disrupted in Barak Valley with the water of River Barak flowing above the danger mark, inundating several areas of Silchar town, including the railway station in Tarapur area.

The railway station was flooded and train services to Silchar, the largest town in Barak Valley, have been either cancelled or short-terminated, a North East Frontier Railway spokesperson said.

The Silchar-Guwahati Express and the Silchar-Rangiya Express were cancelled on Friday and Saturday from both sides. Six more trains were cancelled on Friday due to high water levels and speed restrictions between Juggan and Jamunamukh stations in Luming division, he said.

Barak Valley's three districts -- Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj -- along with Dima Hasao and Hojai are among the worst hit in the current spate of floods in the state.

Road communication of

Barak Valley with other parts of the state and the region have also been disrupted with vehicles stranded as 20 metres of road in National Highway 6 was washed away by heavy rain in Lumslum area of Meghalaya.

In Dima Hasao, normal life has been affected due to relentless rain, severely impacting road connectivity throughout the district.

The Haflong-Silchar road has been completely cut off after a section was washed away near Harangajao, while the Haflong-Harangajao route has been blocked by multiple landslides.

Train services, which were either cancelled or short-terminated due to landslides along the Haflong-Badarpur rail route, were yet to be restored, officials said.

Heavy rain leads to waterlogging at Raj Bhawan in Manipur

IMPHAL, May 31 (PTI)

WATERLOGGING has been reported at the Raj Bhawan in Manipur following torrential rain in the last few days in the aftermath of cyclone Remal, officials said on Friday.

Three persons have died, while thousands were affected by floods triggered by the downpour in the Imphal valley, they said.

Water accumulated at the Raj Bhawan premises after embankments of Imphal river were breached at various places, a senior official said.

"The situation at the Raj Bhawan has improved considerably compared to the last two days. The inundated areas will be cleared soon depending on the overall weather condition," he said.

Meanwhile, Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) spokesperson Ningombam Bupenda, sharing photographs on X, wrote: "Raj Bhawan is getting submerged in flood. It is rarest to see Manipur Governor personally checking water level in the Raj Bhawan."

The unprecedented flooding in Imphal has led to large parts of Imphal area being submerged in water. The flood level needs to be reduced swiftly, he added.

Reacting to Bupenda's post, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on X, and said: "And the outgoing PM is deep in meditation".

The Prime Minister embarked on meditation at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial at Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu on the evening of May 30, and he is scheduled to complete it on the evening of June 1.

Manipur's Minister for Water Resources and Relief & Disaster

Monsoon reaches northern WB six days ahead of schedule

KOLKATA, May 31 (PTI)

THE South-West monsoon reached sub-Himalayan West Bengal on Friday, covering most parts of the region, nearly a week ahead of schedule, the Met Department said.

The South-West monsoon normally reaches northern West Bengal on June 5 and the southern part of the State around June 9.

The faster movement of the S-W monsoon could have been caused

by the combined effect of cyclone Remal, bringing the southwesterly wind to the coasts from the Bay of Bengal, and thereafter the monsoon's movement was attracted by a trough existing over northern West Bengal, weather officials said.

Widespread rain in the sub-Himalayan districts of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, Kalimpong and Darjeeling, with the possibility of heavy downpours in one or two places, over the next five days.

GDP expands 7.8 pc in Q4, 8.2 pc in FY24

NEW DELHI, May 31 (PTI)

INDIA'S economy growth slowed to a four-quarter low of 7.8 per cent in the January-March period, but pushed the annual growth rate for FY24 to 8.2 per cent, mainly on account of good showing by manufacturing, official data showed on Friday.

The growth propelled the Indian economy to USD 3.5 trillion and set the stage for achieving the USD 5-trillion target in the next few years.

In the previous 2022-23 fiscal year, the economy grew 7 per cent. China has registered an economic growth of



5.3 per cent in the first three months of 2024.

The economic expansion was recorded at 7.8 per cent during the January-March 2024, while it was 8.6 per

cent in October-December 2023 and 8.1 per cent in July-September 2023. The growth was 8.2 per cent in April-June 2023, as per data released by the National Statistical Office

(NSO). The GDP grew 6.2 per cent in the January-March quarter of 2022-23.

The NSO, in its second advance estimate released in February, had projected the GDP growth for 2022-23 at 7.7 per cent.

According to the NSO data, real GDP, or GDP at constant prices, is estimated to attain a level of Rs 173.82 lakh crore in 2023-24, against the first revised estimates (FRE) of GDP for 2022-23 of Rs 160.71 lakh crore. "The growth rate in real GDP during 2023-24 is estimated at 8.2 per cent as compared to 7.0 per cent in 2022-23," it stated.

Donald Trump convicted of felony

■ By Lalit K Jha

WASHINGTON, May 31 (PTI)

DONALD Trump has been found guilty of all 34 charges of falsifying business records by a grand jury in New York, an unprecedented and historic verdict that makes him the first former President in American history to be convicted of a felony, as he makes a bid to return to the White House in November.

In a landmark verdict, a panel of 12 Manhattan jurors on Thursday said they unanimously agreed that Trump, 77, falsified business records to conceal a USD 130,000 hush money payment to adult film star Stormy Daniels to influence the 2016 presidential election.

Donald Trump becomes first former US President to be convicted of felony in hush money

It will ultimately be up to voters on November 5 to decide the significance of the guilty verdict delivered by 12 ordinary New Yorkers, which, on a legal basis, does not prevent him from being elected President again.

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