

Turkey referendum: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declares victory

17/04/2017 18:24 by admin

Ankara: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has claimed victory in a Sunday referendum on granting him sweeping new powers, saying it was won by a clear majority.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declares victory

The Turkish Election Commission has yet to release its official results and the two main opposition parties are challenging the results, but according to the state-run Anadolu Agency, with more than 99 per cent of the ballots counted, "Yes" was on 51.36 per cent and "No" on 48.64 per cent.

"Today... Turkey has taken a historic decision," BBC quoted him saying in a briefing at his official Istanbul residence, the Huber Palace.

"With the people, we have realised the most important reform in our history."

Deputy Prime Minister Veysi Kaynak said the results were not what they expected. "The 'yes' votes are lower than what we expected, but still they are ahead," Xinhua news agency quoted him as saying.

But declaring victory for Erdogan, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said the Turkish nation gave its final word by voting "Yes" in the country's constitutional referendum.

Speaking at the Ankara headquarters of the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, that Erdogan founded, Yildirim said: "I thank and express my gratitude to all our citizens who went to the ballot box with a high turnout, and who protected our democracy."

"We have said different things in (rally) squares; we have voiced different things to the nation but the nation gave its final word by saying 'Yes'," Anadolu agency quoted him as saying.

Saying that Turkey's new government system would be put into practice in the 2019 general elections, Yildirim said: "Our nation made its choice, and it confirmed the presidential system."

The leader of Turkey's Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Devlet Bahçeli, who supported the "Yes" campaign, said the outcome of the referendum was an "undeniably successful achievement" and should be respected.

"The Turkish people have gone to the polls with a great dignity and decided on shifting to the presidential system of their own free will.

"This is a very significant achievement and cannot be ignored or rejected," Anadolu quoted Devlet Bahçeli as saying in a statement.

Bahçeli said everybody "should respect and approve" the result in which Turkish citizens voted "Yes" to moving to an executive presidency.

However, Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) said they would challenge the results of the referendum due to claims of irregularities and demand a recount of up to 60 per cent of votes.

The main opposition party also said they will object decision of the Supreme Election Board (YSK) that it would accept unsealed ballot papers, Xinhua news agency reported.

It received many complaints that the voters were given envelopes without stamps from officials, the board said in a written statement while people were casting their votes on Sunday.

The pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) suggested "an indication of a three-four percentage point manipulation of the vote".

The new administrative system will take effect after the elections in 2019 when Erdogan's current term ends, yet immediate changes are enabled for the President to head the AKP while serving as the President, and make high-level appointments including members of Turkey's top judicial body without the parliament's approval.

The charter change will abolish the office of the Prime Minister and hand all executive power to the President,

According to the amendments, the President is enabled to select, without the approval of parliament, as many government ministers and Vice Presidents as he likes. Parliament's oral questioning duty and authority to acquire information from the executive body will be lifted with the amendments.

The President is given the authority to annul parliament and declare an election, according to the charter change.

The charter change introduces accountability before law for the President, but makes it more difficult for the President to be referred to the Constitutional Court for trial.

The number of lawmakers at the parliament will be increased from 550 to 660 and the minimum age to be elected will be reduced to 18 from 25.

- IT