

Egypt begins second day of voting as Sisi coasts towards victory

27/03/2018 07:56 by admin

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A girl holds an Egyptian flag during the second day of the presidential election in Cairo, Egypt, March 27, 2018. REUTERS/Amr Abdallah Dalsh

Cairo: Egypt began the second of a three-day presidential election on Tuesday with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi set for an easy victory, after authorities urged people to cast their ballots to provide a strong mandate for the former military commander. Sisi faces just one challenger, who is expected to barely register against the incumbent, whom he supports. Critics have slammed the election as a charade after more serious challengers were forced to step down.

Egyptian authorities hope that three days of voting will be enough to produce a decent turnout for Sisi. The president still has many supporters, but his austerity measures in recent years and a fierce crackdown on security have eroded some support.

Egypt's election commission said the election would be free and fair, and Sisi said he would have liked more candidates running.

Polls opened on Monday, with those who cast ballots saying they were voting for stability.

Sisi, an ex-general who in 2013 led the military overthrow of Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood, is trying to defeat Islamist insurgents in the Sinai Peninsula and complete a series of mega-projects inaugurated with great fanfare since he came to power.

Sisi has said he will not seek a third term, but critics expect him to remove a two-presidential term limit.

He won nearly 97 percent of the vote in 2014, but less than half of eligible Egyptians voted, even though the election was extended to three days.

- Reuters