

International

'ZANU-PF to form govt no matter who wins in polls'

Final day of Zimbabwe polls threatens Mugabe's power

HARARE, June 25 : President Robert Mugabe's ruling party will form Zimbabwe's next government regardless of who wins parliamentary elections this weekend, party chairman John Nkomo told reporters today, says AFP.

Mugabe is not obliged under the constitution to appoint a government from the majority party in the 150-seat parliament.

"ZANU-PF will most definitely form the next government whatever the result of the legislative election," Nkomo told a press conference.

The president's Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front is facing a strong challenge in the elections from the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), led by 48-year-old trade unionist Morgan Tsvangirai and formed only in September last year.

It has attracted massive support, and turnout was huge Saturday, though subdued Sunday morning.

Meanwhile, voting resumes today in Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections which threaten President Robert Mugabe's 20-year stranglehold on power.

The weekend of polling began on Saturday with a largely peaceful day's voting.

Voters turned out massively in town and countryside after months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters to vote in a parliamentary election threatening.

The government party and its main opponents both voiced confidence.

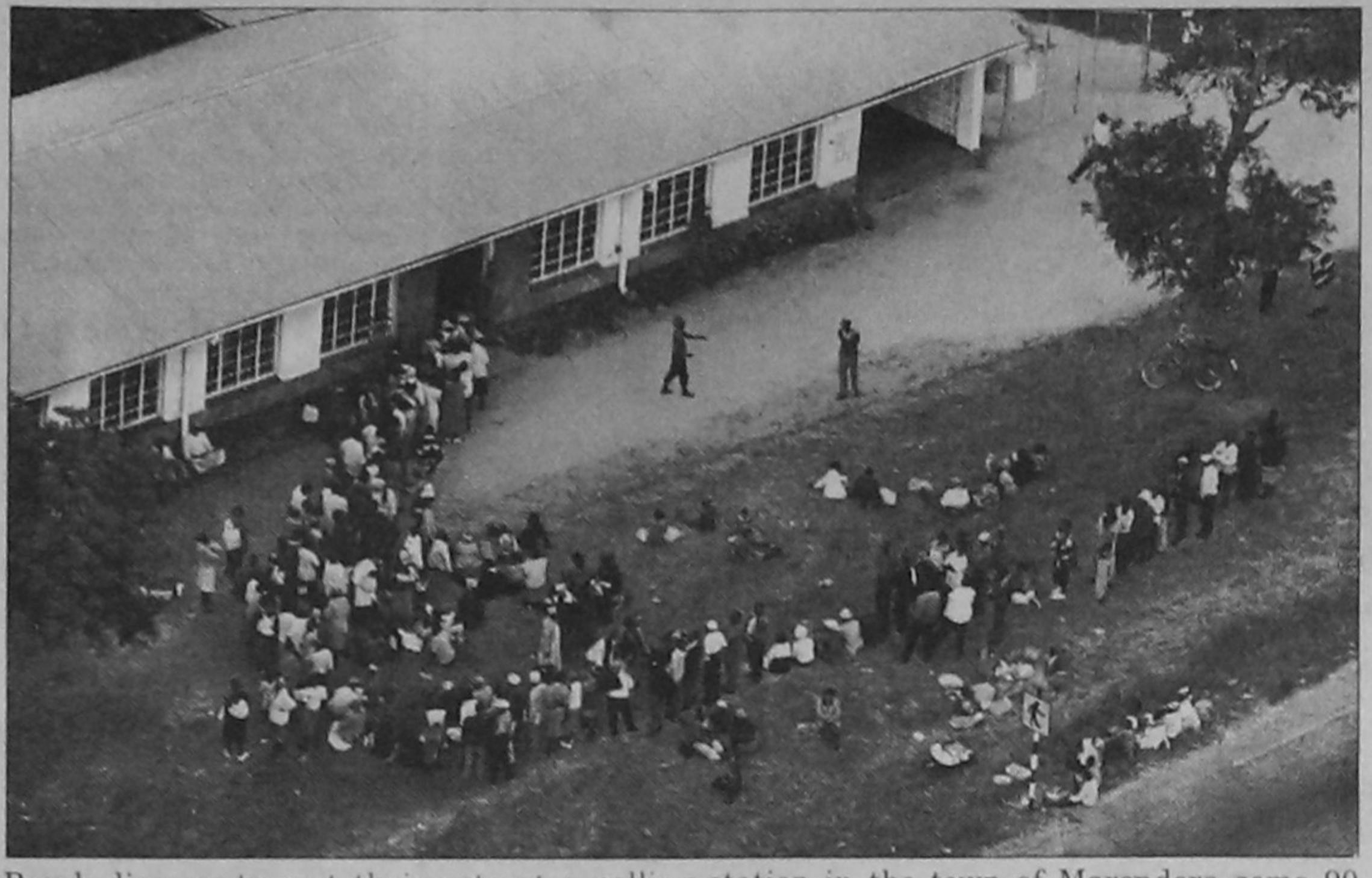
"We are winning... the prophets of doom are prophets of doom. Their prophecies are doomed," the president maintained as he voted Saturday in a working-class Harare suburb where he owns a house.

Morgan Tsvangirai, the 48-year-old trade unionist who formed the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in September last year, countered that he was "very optimistic."

"I will be satisfied with an overall majority," he said as he voted in Bulhera, 220 km south of Harare.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but the polling was generally peaceful, according to international observers.

However several monitors told AFP that Zimbabwe police



People line up to cast their vote at a polling station in the town of Marondera some 90 km southeast of the capital Harare Saturday. Zimbabweans started polling on Saturday in the parliamentary elections.

—AFP photo

had expelled election monitors from several polling stations in working-class suburbs of Harare on Saturday, saying they were not accredited.

"We were asked by the police to leave and not to come closer than 100 metres (yards) or be arrested," one monitor told AFP.

He was among 16,000 Electoral Supervisory Commission monitors who were to deploy at 4,000 polling stations in the weekend parliamentary elections after the government at the last minute reversed an order slashing the corps to 4,000.

The turnout was so large that supervisors in Harare had to send out for more staff and ballot papers, and some polling stations in the capital extended voting past the 7:00 p.m. (23:00 BST) cut-off time, even though polling continues Sunday.

The MDC had long predicted that a big turnout would favour its bid to take over the government.

It aims to replace Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), which has held huge majorities in parliament since independence from Britain in 1980.

had the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.

Bob Bwalya, the head of the Electoral Commission Forum of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community said: "We think it has been a very good start."

Voters turned out massively in towns and the countryside: some even sleeping outside polling stations to be sure to get to vote.

That kind of commitment laid to rest fears that months of brutal intimidation of opposition supporters would force many to stay at home.

Two opposition candidates reported attacks, and rural voters reported some intimidation, but polling was generally trouble-free, with many voters waiting patiently for hours in long queues.

"From the polling stations we've visited so far, we've found all of them peaceful," Bwalya told AFP.

Earlier, international observers monitoring Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections this weekend praised the first day of polling Saturday after voters turned out en masse across the country with few reports of violence.

"It's been a good day for Zimbabwe," Pierre Schori, the

leader of the European Union mission, told AFP.