

PHILIPPINES POLLS

Marcos Jr poised for triumph

REUTERS, Manila

Ferdinand Marcos Jr was headed for a stunning victory in the Philippines' presidential election yesterday with double the votes of his nearest rival...

An unofficial tally by the election commission showed Marcos, 64, was close to passing the required 27.5 million votes to secure a majority in a presidential election for the first time since the end of his father's 1965-1986 rule.

The count makes almost certain a previously unthinkable return to power of the Marcos family, 36 years after its humiliating retreat into exile after being toppled in a "people power" uprising.

"I hope you won't get tired of trusting us," Marcos told supporters in remarks streamed on Facebook, a platform at the heart of his campaign strategy.

"We have plenty of things to do," he said, adding "an endeavour as large as this does not involve one person."

Marcos Jr had 26.3 million votes, more than double the 12.5 million votes for Leni Robredo, the vice president, with 81.8% of the eligible ballots counted, according to the unofficial Commission on Elections tally.

The Marcos family returned from exile in the 1990s and has since been a powerful force in politics. Marcos Jr has served as a governor, congressman and senator, his sister, Imee, is currently a senator and mother Imelda, widow of the late dictator, served four terms in the House of Representatives.



Russian Ambassador to Poland, Ambassador Sergey Andreev reacts after being covered with red paint during a protest for peace in Ukraine in Warsaw, Poland yesterday, on the day of the 77th anniversary of the 1945 Soviet victory against Nazi Germany.

PHOTO: AFP

Putin 'mirroring fascism'

Says UK defence secy, calls for court martial of Russian generals over handling of Ukraine war

AFP, London

UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace yesterday accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of "mirroring fascism", as the country held an annual Victory Day parade on Moscow's Red Square.

Wallace, himself a former army officer, said in a speech that Putin's bemedalled generals should face court martial for their handling of the war in Ukraine.

He spoke after Putin defended Russia's offensive in Ukraine in an address to ranks of troops on Red Square for the May 9 holiday celebrating Soviet victory in World War II.



Wallace said in an address at the National Army Museum in London that "through the invasion of Ukraine, Putin, his inner circle, his generals, are now mirroring fascism and tyranny 77 years ago".

He accused them of "repeating the errors of the last century's totalitarian regimes".

For them, and for Putin, there can be no Victory Day, only dishonour and surely defeat in Ukraine," he said.

Putin has justified Russia's military actions by saying they are carrying out "denazification" of the neighbouring country.

Wallace said he wanted to "call out the absurdity of Russian generals resplendent in their manicured parade uniforms, weighed down by the gold braid and glistening medals".

"Their top brass have failed their own rank-and-file to the extent that they should face court martial," he said.



Members of Telangana Pradesh Mahila Congress take part in a protest against the recent price hike of petroleum products, in Hyderabad, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

EARTH'S DEGRADED LAND

COP15 talks open facing 'emergency'

AFP, Abidjan

Nine African heads of states attended yesterday's opening session of the UN's COP15 talks to fight desertification and land degradation that have devastated large swathes of the continent amid climate change.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), 196 countries plus the European Union -- is meeting for the first time in three years, in Abidjan.

Decades of unsustainable agriculture have depleted soils worldwide and accelerated both global warming and species loss, the UNCCD says, with an estimated 40 percent of land degraded globally.

"Our summit is taking place in the context of the climate emergency which harshly impacts our land management policies and exacerbates drought," Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara announced.

"Our people put great hope in us. We don't have the right to disappoint them.

"Let us act swiftly, let us act together to give new life to our lands," he urged.



Nigeria's Muhammadu Buhari, Niger's Mohamed Bazoum and DR Congo's Felix Tshisekedi were among the continent's leaders listening to the Ivorian host.

French President Emmanuel Macron was to address the gathering by videoconference later in the day.

Ouattara presented the Abidjan Initiative to raise \$1.5 billion over five years to restore Ivory Coast's "degraded forest eco-systems" and promote sustainable soil management.

Ivory Coast is among numerous African nations badly affected by desertification. Forest cover has fallen by 80 percent since 1900 -- from 16 million hectares to just 2.9 million last

year. "At the current rate, our forest could totally disappear by 2050," Ouattara warned.

COP15 runs until May 20 and is due to hear new proposals to try to halt the spread of desertification and deteriorating land quality.

The conference will pay particular attention to the restoration of one billion hectares of degraded land by 2030, future-proofing land use and drought resilience, the UNCCD said.

Debate is expected to include the question of the "Great Green Wall" scheme to restore 100 million hectares of arid land from Senegal in the west of Africa to Djibouti in the east by 2030.

2 Palestinians shot dead in West Bank

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli soldiers shot dead a Palestinian near the West Bank barrier and another was killed after infiltrating a Jewish settlement inside the occupied territory with a knife on Sunday, the Israeli army said, stoking worries a wider conflict may loom.

The incidents, along with the stabbing of a policeman in Jerusalem, came hours after Israeli forces caught two Palestinians who were suspected of sneaking into Israel and killing three people in the ultra-Orthodox Jewish town of Elad on Israel's Independence Day last Thursday.

COVID OUTBREAK

Beijing goes quiet

AFP, Beijing

Millions of people in Beijing stayed home yesterday as China's capital tries to fend off a Covid-19 outbreak with creeping restrictions on movement.

Beijing residents fear they may soon find themselves in the grip of the same draconian measures that have trapped most of Shanghai's 25 million people at home for weeks.

Officials there have said the eastern powerhouse is winning its battle against the country's worst outbreak since the pandemic began.

Yet the Shanghai lockdown has intensified, causing outrage and rare protest in the last major economy still glued to a zero-Covid policy.

That policy has winded an economy which just months ago had been bouncing back from the pandemic. Customs data released yesterday said exports in April slumped to their lowest monthly rate since June 2020, as key supply chains became knotted by restrictions.

DEMOLITION DRIVE

Protests erupt in Delhi's Shaheen Bagh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Protests erupted in Delhi's Shaheen Bagh locality yesterday, which was a key centre of a prolonged agitation against the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019-20, as hundreds of people, including women, opposed the local civic body's anti-encroachment drive with bulldozers in the presence of heavy police deployment. Following the protest, the BJP-controlled South Delhi Municipal Corporation officials, who were part of the anti-encroachment drive, returned without conducting the demolition of encroachments, an official said.

MIGRANT CRISIS

Over 40 drown off Western Sahara

AFP, Rabat

At least 44 migrants drowned on Sunday when their boat capsized off the coast of the Western Sahara, migrant aid agency Caminando Fronteras said. Twelve others survived the tragedy, which happened when the boat sunk off the coast of Cap Boujdour, the agency's Helena Maleno tweeted. The survivors were arrested, Maleno wrote. The bodies of seven victims were brought back to shore but the others could not be retrieved, she added. There was no immediate confirmation from authorities in Morocco. It was not clear where the boat was heading. Morocco is a key transit point on routes taken by migrants hoping for better lives in Europe.

Table with 2 columns: S.No and Details. Contains information about Bangladesh BSBK (www.bsbk.gov.bd) and various services like OTM, etc.