

Peru headed for runoff election

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Alberto Fujimori, Peru's iron-fisted president, was within a hair Monday of a majority of votes needed to win an unprecedented third term and avoid a runoff against an upstart contender, early official returns showed.

Alejandro Toledo, a U.S.-trained economist who had appeared to be headed toward a second-round showdown with Fujimori, has complained of election fraud and warned he would lead street protests if he lost.

Exit polls and unofficial vote tallies by independent monitors on Sunday had indicated Fujimori would likely fall short of the 50 percent plus one he needs. But on Monday, with

just under 40 percent of the ballots counted, the first official results indicated Fujimori had 49.8 percent, while Toledo took 40 percent.

The national elections board released the results after delaying them for more than 12 hours. The board had promised to release first results Sunday night.

The delay raised suspicions among Fujimori's opponents that the government might attempt to tamper with the outcome. The doubts led to violent street protests early Monday.

"They took too long to count the ballots," said Renzo Lopez, a 28-year-old manager of a food wholesale company. "That delay gave them the time to manipulate the numbers. It's a fraud."

Unofficial vote counts Sunday night by Transparencia, an independent citizens group monitoring the elections, and by three private polling firms had given Fujimori at the most 48.7 percent.

"If a second round is ruled out, we have every right to believe that there was a well thought out fraud," said Transparencia director Rafael Roncagliolo.

Pollster Giovanna Penaflor cautioned that the official results released Monday were not definitive. She said the early returns were most likely from Lima, Fujimori's stronghold, and later returns from other cities could show a drop for him.

Opposition candidates have been strong in provincial cities, but Fujimori has shown strength in rural areas, where he invested heavily in schools, health clinics and market roads.

Fujimori, known as "The Emperor" for his autocratic style, is seeking an unprecedented third five-year term in power. He already is the longest serving president in South America.

In Washington, State Department spokesman James P. Rubin called on Peruvian authorities to make sure that if a runoff is held, it meets democratic standards.

Like many Peruvians, Elizabeth Rojas, a 35-year-old housewife, said she supported the idea of a runoff.

"I think it's good that we go to a second round and it is clear who the winner is," she said.

Toledo, who battled his way out of poverty

in an Andean village and went on to become an international economist, warned Fujimori on Sunday night not to "twist the will of the people" with vote fraud to block a runoff.

Hours later, accompanied by six other opposition candidates who threw their support to him, Toledo led 4,000 demonstrators to the presidential palace to protest any attempts at vote tampering.

Protesters lobbed rocks into the courtyard and onto balconies of the building, and six people were injured before police were able to disperse the crowd with tear gas.

"If these had been free elections from the start, I think we would be seeing Toledo win in the first round," political scientist Fernando Rospigliosi said.

"Toledo has capitalized on anti-Fujimori and anti-government sentiment that is tremendously strong."

Fujimori, 61, is popular for having crushed leftist insurgencies and ending economic chaos. But the 54-year-old Toledo capitalized on a deep two-year recession to cut into Fujimori's bedrock support among the poor.

He has promised to create at least 400,000 jobs by lowering taxes to spur business investment. The pledge has strong appeal to voters in a country in which only half the labor force has steady work. Fujimori has slammed the promise.

Transparencia said monitors had discovered pre-filled ballots favoring Fujimori and his party. Transparencia's electricity and phone lines also were cut and its computer system was attacked Sunday by a mysterious virus.

Before the election, the U.S. State Department had urged Fujimori's government to complete an investigation into accusations that Peruvian election authorities helped oversee the forgery of more than 1 million signatures to register his candidacy.

International election monitors also had criticized Fujimori, saying he was manipulating the elections to guarantee another five years in office.

Opposition candidates accuse Fujimori and his military intelligence service of disrupting rallies with rock-throwing thugs, sponsoring lurid tabloid newspaper attacks and blocking their access to television and radio.

Peru's election turmoil

Amid charges of government fraud and the failure of one candidate to win an absolute majority, Peru is headed for a runoff presidential election.

The vote
President Alberto Fujimori
On the verge of winning an unprecedented third term in office.
48.7%



Others: 10.3%



Alejandro Toledo
Former shoeshine boy turned economist

Preliminary results provided by Transparencia, a private citizens group working for clean elections and endorsed by the U.S.-based National Democratic Institute and Carter Center as an accurate measure of the final results.

Source: Compiled from AP wire reports AP

Scrub-a-dub-dub



Mary Ceppi, a freshman general studies major, helps clean up St. Mary's Catholic Church before Mass. The church is under renovation and is getting new carpet and pews.

News in Brief

African nations ask to lift ban on ivory sales

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Four southern African nations on Monday called for an end to the ban on selling ivory, arguing that their elephant herds are healthy, growing and can be economically exploited.

Zimbabwe, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia have submitted proposals to the U.N. conference on endangered species to be permitted to sell ivory collected from the culling of their elephant herds or from natural deaths.

"Habitat for wildlife will only be preserved on a large scale if this preservation benefits people, and it is therefore critically important that we reconcile nature and legitimate human needs in ways that serve both humans and wildlife," Simon Khaya Moyo, head of the Zimbabwe delegation, told a news conference.

Kenya and India want elephants to remain on Appendix I of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES, which would ban all commerce in the species.

At the opening of the 10-day conference Monday, Kenya's President Daniel arap Moi said Kenya would oppose lifting the ban until poaching is

brought under control.

"We hold the view that no ivory trade should be permitted under any circumstances such as a time as an effective monitoring system is established and is operational," Moi said.

6-year-old killed by lion at Brazilian circus

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil (AP) — A cage lion snatched a 6-year-old boy from his mother's arm, dragged him through the bars and killed him, police in northeastern Brazil said Monday.

Jose dos Santos Fonseca and his son apparently got too close to the lions caging the Sunday night show of the Vostok Pernambuco State police said.

"He dragged my son away, and when he saw my son was in his mouth," a weeping father said in a televised interview.

Police and circus employees were unable to remove the body from the cage, which had other lions. Police then fired on the lions with rifles and handguns, killing three.

A circus employee who declined to be identified said in a TV interview that the lions were famished and had not been fed since the

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