

Headline	ANC Takes Lead In South African Polls	Language	ENGLISH
Date	24. Apr 2009	Page No	12
Media Title	The Sun	Article Size	107 cm2
Section	National	Frequency	Daily
Circulation	174179	Color	One Spot Color
Readership	171000	AdValue	1514.28



ANC takes lead in South African polls

PRETORIA: South Africa's ruling ANC headed for election victory yesterday despite a reinvigorated opposition challenge and party leader Jacob Zuma was easily on course to become president weeks after beating graft charges.

Early results showed the African National Congress with 66.07%, battering the hopes of the Congress of the People (Cope) party, formed by ANC dissidents, that it might pose the first real challenge since the end of apartheid in 1994.

The latest results showed the ANC edging towards keeping its two-thirds majority, which would enable the party to change the constitution and entrench its power further. Results from a number of ANC strongholds were still outstanding.

Zuma portrays himself as a champion of the poor, and for many voters the ANC's credentials from the fight against white minority rule still outweigh frustrations with its failure to tackle widespread crime, poverty and AIDS.

"We have been talking about a decisive victory, which we think is in sight," ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe said.

Cope won just over 8% of the early votes counted. The biggest challenge came from the Democratic Alliance – led by a white woman – with 16.7%. The DA pulled ahead of the ANC in the Western Cape province – South Africa's premier tourist destination, which is currently controlled by the ANC – winning 51.54% of the votes counted by early afternoon.

"I feel very good about the national results ... We are just above 50% in the Western Cape, that is what we were hoping for because it means we have doubled our numbers since last time," DA leader Helen Zille said.

Opposition parties hoped to at least deprive the ANC of the two-thirds parliamentary majority that lets it change the constitution and entrench its hold, but with a quarter of the vote counted it was unclear that would be the case.

The final result is not expected before today but there is little doubt the 67-year-old Zuma will become president only three weeks after managing to get prosecutors to drop an eight-year-old corruption case. – AFP