Putin Won the Presidential Election

MOSCOW - Russia's presidential candidate Vladimir Putin announced here Sunday that he had won the presidential election.

The incumbent Prime Minister and President Dmitry Medvedev went to the Manezh Square, where around 100,000 supporters were celebrating the victory.

"We have won!" Putin claimed with tears in eyes. "We won thanks to the support from the vast majority of our voters."

He said this was "a pure victory," which was gained in an "open and honest battle," and calling on all Russians to unite around the interests of the people and the country.

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Change is essential for Putin, for much of the Russian public now see him as a "very successful leader of the past" and hardly associate any new achievement with him, Dmitriev said.

But the core task at hand - reconciling the interests of the majority of Russian society with those of vested groups - is "very hard", he said.

Putin himself on Friday admitted that he does not yet have a formula to restore social justice destroyed during the process of privatization in the 1990s.

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Supporters gathered at the square after the voting was concluded, holding Russian flags and banners.

"This was a test of (our) political maturity and independence. We have shown that no one can bestow anything upon us," the prime minister was quoted by RIA Novosti news agency as saying.

Medvedev told the crowd: "Our candidate is leading confidently, and I have no doubts that we will win. All of us really need this victory."

Putin has won about 64 percent of the votes after 99 percent of ballots was counted early on Monday, official figures from the Central Election Commission (CEC) showed.

The latest official counts posted on the CEC website showed that Putin has kept the leading position with 63.82 percent of the votes, enough to avoid a second round, while none of the other four candidates have garnered more than 20 percent of the votes.

Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov pocketed 17.18 percent of the votes, while independent candidate Mikhail Prokhorov gained 7.77 percent.

about 6.23 percent of the votes went to Liberal Democratic leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky and 3.84 percent for A Just Russia leader Sergei Mironov.

Some 64 percent of the 109 million eligible voters cast their ballots in the presidential election on Sunday.

Putin served two terms as the country's president from 2000 to 2008.

In his election manifesto, Putin promised to develop innovation- oriented economy that benefits the people and implement political reforms on the premise of stability. He also called for rearmament and modernization of the Russian forces.