Political Coalition Unseats Ruling Party in Guyana

Georgetown, May 15 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Guyana's opposition coalition won the national elections on Thursday, ending the rule of the Indo-Guyanese party in the country for the last 23 years.

The Partnership for National Unity and Alliance for Change coalition, led by former army general David Granger, won the election by a small margin of 5,000 votes against the ruling party, the Indian-dominated People's Progressive Party (PPP).

"We are a six-party coalition and we are the closest Guyana has ever gotten to a government of national unity and that makes me very happy," Granger said at his Georgetown home after results were announced.

Late last year, President Donald Ramotar suspended parliament in order to avoid a vote of no confidence. However, mounting international pressure forced him to call for early national elections.

In 2011, Ramotar's PPP party lost majority in parliament after Granger's coalition managed to attract significant Indian votes. The elections were observed by international missions that included the Carter Center, led by former U.S President Jimmy Carter. International observers said that Thursday's elections were fairly conducted. However, the president said that the election was rigged and that he demanded a full recount.

"I cannot concede that I have lost this election," he told the Associated Press. When asked if he would refuse to give up power, he answered, "I have not closed any option as yet." The 15-member Caribbean Community (CARICOM) said it hopes the results of the poll will be accepted and respected.

Since its independence from Britain in 1966, the country has seen continuing ethically-fueled violence between Indian and African communities. Granger, who holds a degree in history and received his military training in the United Kingdom and Brazil, is set to become the country's next president. In his election campaign, he vowed to combat corruption, increase public sector salaries and lower individual taxes.

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