

《印度总统大选开始》

India's presidential election began Monday, with parliamentarians and state legislators voting to select between the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's contender Ram Nath Kovind and opposition nominee Meira Kumar.

Voting began at 10:00 a.m. and will end at 5:00 p.m. local time. A total of 4,896 lawmakers across the country are eligible to vote in the poll, with the results to be announced on Thursday.

The winner of the election will be sworn into office for a five-year term on July 27 and will replace incumbent President Pranab Mukherjee, a political veteran who has held the post since 2012.

On the eve of the presidential election, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Kovind "in advance" and assured him of his government's support -- given that his BJP and its allies have over 60 percent of the vote above the 17 opposition parties.

On the other hand, India's main opposition Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi said Sunday that the election is a fight against "narrow-minded communal vision."

"In these contests, the numbers may be against us, but the battle must be fought and fought hard," she said.

The Indian president is the ceremonial head of state, who plays decisive roles only in cases of a hung parliament after general elections.

(Source: Xinhua)