

《广东乌坎选举新领导人》

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Lin Zulian has been re-elected head of a new village committee in Wukan, a village in Guangdong province.

Thousands of residents voted in the election for new leadership on Monday despite torrential rain and a series of recent corruption scandals that have dogged the local democratic process.

Sun Hanmin, general supervisor of the election, announced at 9 pm that Lin was elected as chief of the committee with 5,019 votes.

Another ballot will be held on Tuesday afternoon to elect six other members of the committee, as none of those candidates had won the needed half of the votes on Monday.

The voting venue was a village school with rain proof shelters to protect the iron ballot boxes and dozens of wooden ballot booths.

The polls were open from 9 am to 3:30 pm, followed by an open count of the vote and an announcement of the election results.

Wukan made headlines in 2011 when its residents staged three waves of large-scale rallies in four months against village officials' alleged illegal land grabs, corruption and violations of financing and election rules.

The rallies ended after an agreement in face-to-face talks with a senior Guangdong official to hold a direct election in 2012.

That election, hailed as a national test of self-governance and a promotion of the spirit of democracy and the rule of law, took place in March 2012. Lin Zulian became the head of a new village committee.

However, that did not put an end to the turbulence in Wukan. In April 2012, several former officials from the village were expelled from the Communist Party of China over corruption and election-rigging charges.

This March saw another local corruption scandal. Yang Semaoy and Hong Ruichao, who had been named deputy chiefs of the village committee in the 2012 election, were detained by police over allegations that they accepted bribes concerning public projects in the village.

Over the past two years, more than 330 hectares of land found to have been illegally transferred, allotted, or left idle has been returned to the village. Governments at the provincial and city levels have earmarked tens of millions of yuan to improving villagers' livelihood.

Monday's vote found villagers hopeful about democratic prospects. One such villager is Huang Yongqing, who works in Shenzhen, about 400 km away. Huang said he came home just to cast his vote.

"only by electing an unselfish leadership can the village get on the right track of development," he said.

Cai Zhou, a middle-aged villager, said many residents are hopeful about the elections but remain wary of new leadership.

"Some incumbent officials, though directly voted in by us, have not performed up to our expectations as corruption is still an issue," Cai said.

"At the same time, we are worried that the new leaders will also let us down in terms of leading a clean administration and their ability to protect our interests," he added.

