The rich and famous vote in India’s election

Billions and Bollywood stars urged Indians to go to the polls on Monday to elect a new parliament that will chart their future, in one of the world’s biggest election campaigns.

India has the world’s largest electorate with more than 900 million eligible voters. The election, which began on April 11, will run for seven phases over five weeks, with the results to be announced on May 23.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been in power since 2014 and is expected to be the main challenger to the ruling Congress party.

In this file photo actor Artem Tkachuk (left) and cast member pose on the red carpet at the 69th Berlinale film festival in Berlin. — AFP

As in previous elections, the mood was festive as millions of Indians cast their votes, with celebrations and election rallies by candidates and party leaders.

India’s film and finance capital Bombay took center stage in the third of seven rounds of voting. According to early returns on March 19, with 90 percent of the votes counted, the BJP was leading in 27 of the city’s 40 seats.

The election is being closely watched by global investors and policy-makers, as the outcome could have significant implications for India’s economy and its relationship with the West.

According to the National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence, 6.5 percent of children and adolescents in India suffer from depression, which is one of the most common mental health issues among children.

The election is significant as it will determine the direction of India’s economy, with the country’s economy growing at a rate of around 7 percent per annum.

In this file photo actor Artem Tkachuk along with his wife and film director Kiran Rao. — AFP

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