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Undemocratic

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Man In News



Akande in victory dance

Weather in Abuja, Nigeria

Current Conditions:



33°C

Fair

Wind: VAR 2 mph

THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
4/14	4/15	4/16	4/17
H:35 L:32	H:36 L:32	H:37 L:32	H:36 L:32

Last Update: 8:03:04 AM

Abuja

Cartoon for the day



LAST UPDATED AT Sat Apr, 09 2011

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25 killed as bomb explodes in INEC office

• *Uncertainty as NASS election holds today*
• *Parties kick against election in Ekiti*
• *Polls bigger than Jega – U.S.*
By Our Reporters



Genevieve

About twenty-five persons were killed as bomb explosion rocked the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) office located in the Kwamba area of Suleja, Niger State on Friday.

Most of the dead were National Youths Service Corps members who were at the commissions' office to check their names for the National Assembly election taking place today.

INEC broke the news on its facebook page when it announced that: "Reports coming into our situation room suggest that there has been a bomb blast at the INEC Suleja office."

No fewer than 400 people were seriously injured and were receiving treatment at the Suleja General Hospital while others were rushed to private hospitals within the town to ease congestion at the General Hospital.

The Niger state government has condemned in strong terms those behind the blast.

A statement by the Director General (Media Publicity and Public Affairs) to the Niger State Governor, Bala Abdulkadir, also expressed the preparedness of the government to foot the medical bills of all the victims.

As Nigerians vote today to elect National Assembly members, there is apprehension and uncertainty in many quarters over the preparedness of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the poll.

National Chairman of INEC, Prof. Attahiru Jega, stunned the nation last Saturday when he announced the postponement of the election when voting had begun in some states citing inability of the commission's vendors to deliver election materials to many states after reassuring the electorate that all was well a day before the poll.

Again, election will not hold in 15 senatorial districts and 48 federal constituencies today.

The reason advanced was that there was the need to re-print ballot papers as a significant quantity was used on April 2, in spite of the postponement.

Political parties in Ekiti on Friday kicked against the staggered election been proposed for the state by INEC.

This was the outcome of the almost seven-hour meeting held with the Commissioner of Police, Sabo Rinjim; Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Alhaji Hussaini Pai; and top security chiefs in the state at the Police Headquarters.

The parties said it was dangerous and politically unwise for the electoral body to hold election in two out of the nine constituencies in the state.

This is the first time all the political parties in the state spoke in unison on a particular issue. Leaders of nine political parties, in the presence of security chiefs, unanimously expressed disapproval of Saturday for the election.

When it was clear to the REC that the parties were not ready to shift

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Reflection on the campaign for accountability

grounds on their disapproval of Saturday, the REC, after consultations with the INEC headquarters later requested the stakeholders to make written commitment, which they all did.

Some of the reasons adduced by the parties included the fear of possible influx of voters and political thugs from areas where election would not hold to the two constituencies.

The parties however urged the electoral body to shift the election to April 26, when the governorship and House of Assembly elections would be conducted. Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) in the State, Chiefs Bola Olu-Ojo and Jide Awe respectively, who reacted to staggered poll, said such is dangerous for Nigeria's democracy.

ACN senatorial candidate for Ekiti Central Senatorial, Babafemi Ojudu has flayed Jega over the staggered election in the State Awe, while addressing reporters in Ado Ekiti said: "We have resolved that INEC should postpone the election until it is ready for the elections fully in the state. Since we are not conducting governorship election in Ekiti State it would be economically wise to hold National Assembly election with it on the April 26, 2011."

"I have met with the PDP chairman in the state and we agreed that staggered election is not good for our democracy"

In his own view, Ojudu said staggered election in the state is not good for Nigeria's nascent democracy, calling on Nigerians to reject the move.

When contacted on telephone to establish the veracity of Awe's claim, the PDP chairman said he was at a stakeholders' meeting

The United States of America (U.S) has said it is interested in the outcome of today's elections in Nigeria, described as a trailer to subsequent ones to come during the month, saying it is a situation of "grave and immediate concern" to the U.S.

In this regards, the U.S., in a pronouncement articulated by the State Department's Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Johnnie Carson, is deploying full attention to the elections, which according to them may be too overwhelming for Jega to handle alone.

Carson who made a defining speech on America's interest on the elections in Nigeria at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington DC, also disclosed that the U.S. is ready to take decisive actions against individuals who violate basic democratic norms.

Carson said the appointment last June of Jega as national electoral commissioner raised the expectations of Nigerians that this year's elections would meet minimum standards of credibility.

"Dr. Jega is a respected university administrator, professor, and civil society activist who brought well-needed integrity and competence to the position. He has inspired many Nigerians to become more actively involved in the elections process and to insist on greater transparency to combat fraud.

"Dr. Jega has also given international observers greater access to the electoral commission, and he has been open to advice from election experts from Latin America, Africa, and the United States."

Carson remarked about the competence of Jega as an individual, but added, "However, as we have seen this past weekend one man alone cannot overcome significant systemic and logistical challenges, nor can one person or one electoral event transform a political culture in which stolen elections and disregard for basic democratic principles have been the norm for decades."

Consequently, Carson said the U.S. would offer every level of support to Jega and other like-minded election officials in their efforts to achieve better election results.

"But, we are also monitoring the political environment closely. Democracy is important, and we are prepared to take appropriate measures against those individuals who violate basic democratic norms, as we have in places such as Cote d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, and Madagascar," he added.

Despite the poor start in the 2011 elections, the U.S. has urged Nigerians to be undeterred, as Carson said "We encourage all Nigerians to exercise their rights as citizens to vote and to have their votes counted openly and transparently."

According to him, reports of a significant and peaceful turnout of Nigerian voters last Saturday are a positive indication of their democratic aspirations.

Carson described the last elections in 2007 as deeply flawed and that it, in no way reflected the ability and capacity of Nigeria to organise and run successful elections.

"They were also a major embarrassment to many Nigerians. Rigging and theft of ballot boxes took place in full view of the public. Violence was rampant, and actual voting did not even occur in many places. The results announced by the electoral commission had no basis in reality."

However, former Governor of Anambra State, Emeka Ezeife, has blamed the commission for not justifying the huge sum of money invested in the electoral process insisting that Nigerians did not bargain for what they saw last Saturday.

"Well, though the blame might be difficult but if democracy fails in Nigeria blame the INEC. The failure of INEC to hold election last week showed lack of preparedness on the part of the commission. The decision Jega took to postpone the election to Monday, in the first instance, was laughable. There are lots of corrupt officers there and they are not showing commitment. It is either you sack them or you replace them," said Ezeife. Former presidential candidate and Minister of Finance, Chief Olu Falae has also given a panacea to the lingering election crisis in Nigeria.

He said until the Constitution is amended to accommodate government of national unity to take over from any government in power upon the expiration of its tenure and conduct elections to user in new government into power, elections in the country would continue to

be enmeshed in crisis. Falae, the current national chairman of Social Democratic Mega Party (SDMP) spoke with *Saturday Independent* in an exclusive interview.

"I foresaw the present election crisis since last year and I offered a solution but nobody listened to me. If an elder speaks with wisdom and warns on key issues, he knows best, because he had seen danger ahead. I was even more disappointed that I raised the issue at a press conference at my party's secretariat in Abuja and no newspaper reported it."



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Article Comments

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On Sat Apr, 09 2011 10:01 by Arumala jephthah

Am happy at last dat d election have come 2 pass.all am believing God for is a change.

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