

PDP GOVERNORSHIP PRIMARIES

Agagu, Oyinlola, Osunbor get tickets

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) second term seeking governors and some new entrants into the race yesterday picked the party's governorship tickets for the 2007 elections.

Governors Olusegun Agagu, Gbenga Daniel, Olagunsoye Oyinlola, Bukola Saraki, Danjuma Goje and Ibrahim Idris won in their respective states of Ondo, Ogun, Osun, Kwara, Gombe and Kogi, while Senator Oserhiemen Osunbor who emerged victorious in Edo led the pack of new entrants to pick the governorship tickets

DELTA

THE Delta State Governorship Primaries of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were postponed yesterday following intelligence reports that the exercise might lead to a breakdown of law and order.

Despite the postponement, tension still pervaded the state, as delegates thronged Ogwashi Ukwu, the headquarters of Aniocha North Local Government, where the primaries were initially scheduled to hold.

Already, five of the seven governorship aspirants cleared by the PDP screening committee have raised alarm over AN alleged "mock congress" by the Urhobo Political Forum (UPF), a pressure group within the party.

The screening panel which sat in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, had disqualified 15 of the over 20 aspirants.

Addressing newsmen on Friday at the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Press Centre, Warri, a disqualified candidate, Chief Power Aginighan, described the screening and his subsequent disqualification as, "a purely voodoo declaration designed to call a dog a bad name in order to hang it".

Aginighan said his disqualification on grounds of inexperience and failure to resign his appointment before the mandatory 30 days was "laughable and untenable."

Meanwhile, Chief Pius Ewherido, Olorogun O'tega Emerhuo, Chief Charles Obule, Olorogun Oskar Ibru and Napoleon Gbinije have dissociated themselves from the mock primary conducted by the UPF at Osubi, Okpe Local Government Area of the state on Friday.

KWARA

Kwara State Governor, Dr. Bukola Saraki was yesterday returned unopposed as the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial candidate for the 2007 polls in the state. He polled 5056 of the votes available for affirmation at the primaries held at Ilorin Stadium.

Chairman of the Electoral Panel, Dr. Ibrahim Lame, described the event as unique and recommended the consensus arrangement in the state to other parts of the country.

He denied claims by former aspirants who decamped from PDP that the primaries were more of imposition than election.

The elated governor, who attributed his success in politics to the efforts of his father, Dr. Olusola Saraki, promised to continue with the programmes and policies of his administration, which he noted, had again been approved by the people through the primaries.

He dismissed threats by the

By our Correspondents

opposition to defeat him in the election in 2007, saying it would be unimaginable for a party without representation either at the local, state and federal levels to beat an administration that is seen as performing.

Like Lame, he appealed for support to concretise the victory during the 2007 election, pointing out that he was aware much still needed to be done in some areas where his political structure was perceived as weak.

Lame had warned members of the party not to allow their differences at the primaries to divide them, noting that failure to achieve cohesion out of anger arising from the primaries would spell doom for the party in 2007.

EKITI

In spite of protests by former presidential aide, Akin Osuntokun and three others who were disqualified from participating in the Ekiti State Governorship primaries, the exercise held yesterday with over 5000 delegates voting for aspirants of their choice.

Those who contested the primaries were Professor Adesegun Ojo, Femi Ajepe, Deji Adesua, Yinka Akerele, Dr Michael Ogunniyi, Dele Afolabi, Banji Olowofela, Segun Oni, Prince Adeyinka Oni, Kayode Otitoju, Peter Obafemi and Chief Ayo Olafin.

Besides Osantokun, others disqualified were former deputy governor of the state, Chief Abiodun Aluko, Chief Ishola Filani, former National Publicity Secretary of the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Kehinde Agboola, Chairman, Ikole Local Government.

Yesterday, it was gloomy at the campaign headquarters of Osuntokun who was believed to have the best chance of clinching the PDP governorship ticket on the strength of the number of delegates on this side.

He made frantic efforts to pull strings in Abuja where he made representations to PDP National Chairman, Senator Ahmadu Ali, over his disqualification.

Osuntokun's undoing was said to be his lateness in resigning his post in the Presidency to join the gubernatorial race.

Aluko, the former deputy governor was axed by the party on account of his impeachment from office on September 27, 2005 by the State House of Assembly over alleged disloyalty to his former Governor Ayo Fayose and the case he had with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Agboola was disqualified from the race over the EFCC indictment of all the 16 council

chairmen in the state over their roles in the alleged deduction of council funds and the poultry project executed in collaboration with the former state government.

There were also controversies over his age as the youthful council chief is said to be under the stipulated age of 35 years for those seeking election as governor.

Voting was in progress at the Ekiti State Trade Fair Complex venue at press time yesterday.

OSUN

Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola has emerged winner in the Osun State Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial primaries.

Oyinlola polled 8,377 votes to defeat Senator Kolawole Ogunwale who got no vote in the election which was conducted by Senator Ike Nwachukwu under a peaceful atmosphere in Osogbo yesterday.

The number of accredited voters during the primaries was 8,380. Three of the votes cast were voided, while all the delegates from Ogunwale's local government (Boripe) voted for Oyinlola.

Ogunwale sneaked out of the venue of the primaries at 11.40a.m., while the election started at about 12.45 p.m., under heavy security by a combined team of armed policemen and men of the Nigerian Civil Defence Corp.

In his reaction, Oyinlola thanked the party men for reaffirming confidence in him and members of his team, adding, his victory was an indication of PDP's success in the next general elections.

While pledging to continue his good work if he wins the 2007 gubernatorial election, the governor said all hands must be on deck to ensure the party's victory in 2007.

Chairman of the electoral panel, Nwachukwu said the primaries were conducted in accordance with the party guidelines and urged Ogunwale to accept the verdict in good faith.

ABIA

The Abia State Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Governorship Primaries has been postponed to Tuesday, December 12, Chief Olishah Metu, Chairman of the state National Electoral Panel, said yesterday.

Speaking to newsmen in Umuahia after the panel held a meeting with the governorship aspirants at the PDP Secretariat, Metu said the postponement was in the interest of the party and as agreed upon by the aspirants.

He disclosed that an aspirant, Chief Marc Wabara, had been disqualified from contesting the primaries slated for Tuesday.

He said Wabara was disqualified because of his in-



• Governor Bukola Saraki and wife, Toyin at the PDP primaries in Ilorin... yesterday

Winners	
Borno	Kashim Imam
Yobe	Adamu Waziri (Ex-PTDF scribe)
Zamfara	Mukhtari Abdulkarim
Kebbi	Bello Gwandu (Ex-NPA MD)

volvement in the liquidation of Hallmark Bank PLC and purported indictment by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in its investigation report.

Metu assured that the panel would do everything possible to ensure that the governorship primary was successful and violence-free.

Speaking with *The Nation* on the development, another aspirant Chief Onyema Ugochukwu, welcomed the decision, and enjoined party supporters and leaders to eschew peace to make the exercise violence-free.

BENUE

No fewer than seven persons were feared killed in Aliade, Gwer Local Government Area of Benue State between Friday and yesterday as violence erupted over the annulment of the results of the state House of Assembly primaries.

Dr Ayar Gwer had initially been declared winner of the primaries before the results were reversed in favour of Asema Achado.

The incident marred the conduct of the state gubernatorial primaries which has now been postponed to Tuesday.

Trouble began when demonstrators numbering over 200 blocked the federal highway linking Enugu from Makurdi and made bonfire with old tyres and woods. They smashed vehicle glasses and prevented motorists from passing through the town.

Most of the luxury buses conveying passengers from Onitsha and up north were parked in the nearby towns of Oturkpo and Makurdi.

At press time, teams of mobile policemen were being

drafted to the town to clear the busy highway, which remained impassable up to 6.30 p.m. on Saturday.

Some of the angry demonstrators who spoke to the nation said the road would remain close until the results of the election which favoured Gwer were upheld.

But Achado, in an interview with *The Nation* said he first lost the election due to malpractices and as such he petitioned the state electoral panel and won. Achado accused some politicians of being behind the crisis and appealed to his supporters to remain calm.

Yesterday, there was confusion in the state following the call for the postponement of the gubernatorial primaries by an aspirant Professor Iorwuese Hagher, who also accused another aspirant, Gabriel Suswam of giving N3 million to each local government to buy delegates.

Addressing a crowded press conference in his Hudco Quarters residence in Makurdi, Hagher, a former Ambassador, also called on security agents to probe the source of Suswam's money which he said was lavishly distributed to delegates for the purpose of buying votes.

He further alleged that apart from distributing money, Suswam heated up the system with rumours that he had been endorsed by the governor and the Tiv traditional council.

ADAMAWA

Deputy Senate Leader, Senator Jonathan Silas Zwingina, yesterday crashed out of the governorship race as he was barred from taking part in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) primary in Adamawa State.

The primaries have been

postponed to Wednesday.

The senator was one of the five aspirants disqualified by the screening committee of the party which met in Bauchi State.

Others included Senator Halilu Girei, Chief Joel Madaki, Dahiru Bobbo and Awwal Tukur.

Their disqualification is causing ripples in the state as their supporters believed there was a foul play.

Chairman of electoral committee, Mr. Saheed Salawe, who announced the postponement of the primaries,

Although Salawe cited logistics and late arrival of election materials as reason for the action. Observers however, believe that it was connected with the disqualifications as to enable the party work out plans to calm frayed nerves.

EDO

Senator Oserhiemen Osunbor yesterday defeated former presidential aide, Professor Julius Ihonvbere, to pick the Edo State governorship ticket of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for the 2007 elections.

Osunbor, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, was the candidate of the state party leadership.

Before his Osunbor's emergence, Ihonvbere's agent, Sani Imuedemeh, had protested against what he called the "teleguiding of delegates" from Edo Central on who to vote for.

Osunbor's emergence was made easier when former Solid Mineral and Natural Resources Minister, Elder Odion Ugbesia, stepped down for him.

The primaries kicked off at noon with the state Chairman of PDP, Prince Solomon Aguele, introducing the leaders of the party to the delegates.

He said only Osunbor and Ihonvbere submitted their names to agents, thereby leaving Ugbesia out of the race primaries started with delegates from Akoko - Edo Local Government Area (LGA) in Edo North casting their votes, followed by Edo Central and Edo South Senatorial districts.

Continued on page 7