

Bola Tinubu declared Nigeria's president-elect

Nigerians awoke to a new president Wednesday, with ruling party candidate Bola Tinubu declared the winner of the country's election.

As he thanked his supporters, he appealed for reconciliation with his rivals, who are already demanding a revote in Africa's most populous nation, AP reported.

The announcement by election officials overnight was likely to lead to a court challenge by the second- and third-highest finishers in the weekend vote, Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi. Abubakar also finished second in the previous vote in 2019 and appealed those results although his lawsuit was ultimately dismissed. Tinubu's ruling All Progressives Congress party urged the opposition Tuesday to accept defeat and not cause trouble after they had demanded a revote, saying

that delays in uploading election results had made room for irregularities.

Tinubu received 37% of the votes, or nearly 8.8 million, while the main opposition candidate Abubakar won 29% with almost 7 million. Third-place finisher Obi took 25% with about 6.1 million, according to the results announced on live television by the Independent National Electoral Commission.

The president-elect thanked his supporters in the capital, Abuja, after his victory was announced and struck a reconciliatory tone in a message directed at his political adversaries.

"I take this opportunity to appeal to my fellow contestants to let us team up together," Tinubu said.

"It is the only nation we have. It is one country and we must build together." The announcement of his victory came after 4 a.m.,

but celebrations already had started late Tuesday at the ruling party's national secretariat where Tinubu's supporters had gathered in anticipation of his victory. Tinubu, 70, is the former governor of Lagos state, home to Nigeria's megacity of the same name.

However, he lost the state in Saturday's election to Obi, who drew a strong following among younger voters eager for change.

The tightly contested election has redrawn Nigeria's electoral geography and produced results that are significantly different from those of past polls, with this being the first time that a president takes office with less than 50% of the vote and where four candidates won over a million votes, say analysts.

Tinubu "will have to strive to win the support of the larger majority who preferred one of the other candidates,



particularly the youth, the Christian groups that were opposed to his Muslim-Muslim ticket, and Igbos in the South East who again feel denied the presidency," said Nnamdi Obasi, senior adviser on Nigeria for the International Crisis Group.

Tinubu clinched victory in part because the opposition vote was split and because his party had the strongest push to get people out to vote, said Amaka Anku, Africa director at the Eurasia Group consultancy. Nigeria's current President Muhammadu Buhari congratulated his successor in a statement Wednesday but said the election was not perfect.

"Of course, there will be

areas that need work to bring further transparency and credibility to the voting procedure. However, none of the issues registered represents a challenge to the freeness and fairness of the elections," he said.

The parties now have three weeks to appeal results, but an election can be invalidated only if it's proven the national electoral body largely didn't follow the law and acted in ways that could have changed the result.

The Supreme Court of Nigeria has never overturned a presidential election, though court challenges are common, including by Buhari, who doggedly fought his past election losses for months in vain.



Bola Tinubu (C) of the All Progressives Congress celebrates with supporters at the party's campaign headquarters after winning the presidential elections in Abuja, Nigeria, on March 1, 2023.

● BEN CURTIS/AP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Türkiye's elections will be held in May



REUTERS – President Recep Tayyip Erdogan indicated on Wednesday that elections will be held on May 14, sticking to his previous plan for the vote with a date just over three months after a devastating earthquake killed more than 45,000 people in Türkiye.

There had been conflicting signals over the likely timing of the presidential and parliamentary elections since last month's earthquake, with some suggesting they could be postponed until later in the year or could be held as scheduled on June 18.

Blinken will not meet Russia, China at G20



● REUTERS

AFP – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday he will not meet the Russian or Chinese foreign ministers at this week's Group of 20 meeting in New Delhi, charging that Moscow was not serious about ending the war in Ukraine.

"I have no plans to see either at the G20," Blinken told reporters in Tashkent before flying out to New Delhi, while adding that he expected to participate in group sessions with them.

UN, Syria slam politicizing humanitarian aid response



People gather as rescuers search for survivors under the rubble of an earthquake in the town of Jandaris, Syria, on February 6, 2023.

● REUTERS

The United Nations and Syria have condemned attempts by certain parties to politicize the humanitarian response to the massive earthquake that caused tremendous destruction in the northwestern provinces of the war-ravaged country.

Nations must "depoliticize" the humanitarian response for victims of the February 6 earthquake in Syria, the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, told the UN Security Council on Tuesday, according to Press TV.

It is not the time "to play politics with crossings across borders or front lines ... this is not the time for military action or violence," Pedersen said.

He made clear that the situation is "unsustainable," and the status quo is "totally unacceptable."

Syria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Bassam al-Sabbagh, also stressed that the Damascus government strongly opposes the efforts to politicize humanitarian aid response to quake victims. "International efforts to address repercussions of the earthquake must now focus on reconstruction of the essential infrastructure and repair of the damage that utilities have suffered," Sabbagh noted.

He added that Damascus spares no effort to provide relief aid to people in quake-hit areas in northwestern Syria.

Vietnam's new president is nominated: Sources

Vietnam's Communist Party has nominated Vo Van Thuong as the country's new president, two party sources said on Wednesday, following the sudden forced resignation in January of his predecessor as part of a sweeping anti-corruption campaign.

Thuong, 52, is the youngest member of the party's Politburo, the country's top decision-making body, and is widely regarded as being close to General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, Vietnam's most powerful figure, Reuters wrote.

Trong is the main architect of the party's "blazing furnace" crackdown on graft, under which hundreds of officials have been investigated and many forced to quit, including former president Nguyen Xuan Phuc and two deputy prime ministers.

Thuong's nomination by the party's Central Committee upholds an earlier decision by the Politburo and will need approval by the rubber-stamp National Assembly, which is due to hold an extraordinary session on Thursday and a formal sitting in May.

Both the government and Communist Party said on Wednesday the party's Central Committee had agreed on a nomination for president, without naming the candidate.



Vo Van Thuong
● NA SON NGUYEN/REUTERS

'Panic Room'

Saeed Azimi
Staff writer



EXCLUSIVE

"Panic Room" is a 2002 film directed by David Fincher about a divorced woman and her diabetic daughter taking refuge in their newly-purchased house's safe room, where three men break in looking for a missing fortune. Its title accurately describes the Israeli cabinet meetings led by Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu.

With severe domestic and foreign policy tensions, Netanyahu's sixth term appears all the more difficult, with controversial cabinet picks, rash decisions, and a distance kept even from his closest ally such as Germany.

According to various news agencies, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock condemned on Tuesday Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied Palestinian West Bank. Her comments came

during a joint press conference in Berlin with her Israeli counterpart, Eli Cohen.

Baerbock was also concerned about Israel's planned judicial overhaul, as well as plans to execute Palestinian prisoners.

"I will not deny that we abroad are concerned about some of the legislative plans in Israel," she told the media during the press conference.

"Among the values that unite us is the protection of constitutional principles

such as the independence of the judiciary," Baerbock said.

Avi Maoz, the president of the Noam Party, announced his resignation from his role as deputy minister in Netanyahu's government, citing the Israeli premier's tardiness in executing coalition agreements that provide Maoz influence in the ministries of education, health, and social welfare, marking the first resignation in Netanyahu's cabinet so far.

This comes as Israeli forces

intensified their grip over towns in the West Bank on Monday night and Tuesday morning, while settlers resumed their attacks on Palestinians throughout the occupied territory amid heightened domestic tensions. On Wednesday, Israeli police fired stun grenades in Tel Aviv as scuffles erupted around the country in a "day of disruption," as lawmakers pushed through judicial measures that opponents see as a danger to democracy.

As traffic built up, Tel Aviv police on horseback attempted to stop demon-

strators from breaching barricades. Protesters yelled "shame" and "We are the majority and we are out on the streets," as police dragged them off the road, as recorded in live footage. According to authorities, at least nine persons were apprehended.

Based on all indications, Tel Aviv is on the verge of collapse. The Israeli president can call this collapse "constitutional," but it is not the only thing that is failing.

The name "Panic Room" aptly describes Israeli cabinet sessions these days.

Ukraine may pull back from Bakhmut

AP – Ukraine's military could pull back from the key eastern stronghold of Bakhmut, an adviser to the Ukrainian president said Wednesday, amid a relentless Russian offensive that has sought for months to capture the city.

"Our military is obviously going to weigh all of the options. So far, they've held the city, but if need be, they will strategically pull back," Alexander Rodnyansky, an economic adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, told CNN.

"We're not going to sacrifice all of our people just for nothing."