

How history will remember Yakubu as INEC Chairman

By Emmanuel Aziken

Of course, nearly everything negative has been written about the stewardship of Prof Mahmood Yakubu as chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC that little remains to be said about a man that may go down in history with an inglorious tag on his head. It is more remarkable that Prof Yakubu is a professor of history. What a pity for his descendants in years to come when they come to peruse the events of the last week. They will find that their progenitor was on the dark side of history given his catalytic role in the disruption of what was envisaged as a smooth Nigerian renaissance. The Yakubu led Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC did not just abort the popular wish of Nigerians. The commission by its action also cost many otherwise innocent Nigerians time and resources by its duplicity.

There are several Nigerians who believed Yakubu in his repeated assertions that votes would count and because of that took laborious efforts to vote. The gist has been told of a lady abroad who took three trips from her base abroad to exercise her vote. She first came to register for a PVC. Then came a second time to pick it up, and then made a third trip to come and vote. She was just one of many. The indication of gloom of the foreign based Nigerians was reflected in the case of one who posted on twitter his picture in the aircraft heading back to his base with a sense of abandonment of Nigeria once indications emerged that the election result was being rigged. There were many other Nigerians in the country who took journeys to distant places where they registered to make their votes count. This election also recorded a record number of first-time voters who believed the chorus that votes would count. As has now been repeatedly shown on television, Prof Yakubu gave his word that the BVAS would be used to upload results from the polling units. The crucial fact is that by uploading election results at the polling units, the system circumvents the axis of evil at the collation centres where the manipulations of votes is done. Yakubu and INEC commissioner for information, Festus Okoye repeatedly assured Nigerians on this point and many who believed them including many based abroad came home at great cost in order to exercise their votes.

But as we now know, a "technical glitch" occurred on election day disrupting the upload. This technical glitch had been feared last September or so when Dr Oby Ezekwesili in a tweet observed the reposting of the top IT staff by the INEC management. Ezekwesili at that time wondered why those who had managed a successful process with the BVAS were being reposted. Now we know. However, in its insufferable arrogance, the commission proceeded to announce results while upload of results was ongoing bringing to light insinuations of a script to deceive Nigerians. For your correspondent, the takeaway from the development is that we must begin to look forward to a system that puts the hope of the country beyond the foibles of an individual. Many established democracies do not have the kind of centralized money gulping election management body as we have in Nigeria. We must do away with the system of an individual taking the responsibility of recounting the votes that have been cast and counted by the people in a unit. We should look forward to a system as in the United States where communities and local authorities take charge of their votes and cascade it upwards towards larger constituencies independent of a money gulping bureaucracy as we have in INEC. There should be no need to have a situation as Prof Yakubu is wont to, to sit in judgment and preside over a perfunctory drama on national television. Going that way as in America would also not just do away with INEC, but also the hangers on such as the Inter-Party Advisory Council, IPAC and other NGOs who are said to depend on patronage from the election management body. Was anyone shocked that many IPAC members were about the first to prod Prof Yakubu to go on with his night duty last Tuesday after controversies arose on the malpractices.

Many of them who have no electoral stake are simply maintained by the election management body for such public relations jobs as they are doing presently. It is shocking that Prof Yakubu in his determination to execute what some have described as a script forged ahead to declare the results in the wee of the night. That underscores the fact that the work of darkness that Yakubu as INEC chairman and his collaborators foisted on the nation would for a long time be remembered on the wrong side of history of Nigeria.