

I'm not a robot



































Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and the 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi, yesterday met with northern political leaders from across the 19 northern states as coalition talks intensify ahead of the 2027 presidential election.The event, believed to have been convened by the secretariat of the emerging coalition, brought together hundreds of political figures under the banner of the National Political Consultative Group (NPCG) North, in Abuja. Apart from Atiku and Obi, other dignitaries at the meeting included former Rivers State Governor Rotimi Amaechi; former Kogi State governor Captain Idris Wada; former Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami (SAN), who delivered the opening address on insecurity in the North.SPONSOR AD Others were a former Senate president and chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party's Board of Trustees, Senator Adolphus Wabara; the Labour Party's 2023 vice-presidential candidate Yusuf Datti Baba-Ahmed; a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Aminu Wali; former Minister of Police Affairs, Adamu Maina Waziri; a former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir Lawal; a former All Progressives Congress' national vice chairman (North), Salihu Lukman; Senator Ben Obi and a former Minister of Youth Development, Bolaji Abdullahi, among others.Event though some of the people at the event said the essence of the meeting was to find solution to the teething problems afflicting northern Nigeria, curious observers believe it is about how to take over power from President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in 2027.There are suggestions that notable personalities like General Aliyu Gusau (rtd) were behind the latest group, which has added to the number of northern groups that have sprung up in the last few months.General Gusau has remained a power broker from the fringes since 1999; as he is rarely seen making comments in public.Aliu, the calibre of people from across the divide that graced yesterday's occasion, including the overtures extended to other stakeholders in the South East, South West and South South, added to the speculation that the group might ultimately be the rallying point for other groups ahead of 2027.In his remarks at the event, Atiku, who has been a leading advocate for the coalition of opposition to challenge President Tinubu in the 2027 election, reflected on his time in office with former President Olusegun Obasanjo, citing their early response to the Boko Haram insurgency. He said they had issued a decisive ultimatum to service chiefs to "either put it down or resign," an approach he claimed effectively quelled the nascent insurgency. "This ultimatum worked. The insurgency was put down within a few weeks or months. By the time we left, it was done. I was completely stunned. But after we left, it resurfaced," Atiku said.He also highlighted their efforts to address police inadequacy and streamline arms procurement during the Obasanjo administration."I read a United Nations report that Nigeria was terribly under-policed. I went to the president and said, 'Mr. President, Nigeria is terribly under-policed.' He asked what we could do, I told him we had many closed police colleges across the states, and suggested reopening them and hiring more officers. And we did just that," Atiku recounted.On security logistics, Atiku explained that when it came to procuring arms and equipment for the police, they decided to bypass the usual contract procedures, which were cumbersome."Instead, we consulted the police on where they sourced their equipment, contacted the ambassadors of those countries, and secured direct supply of the necessary items in record time," he said.Despite these efforts, he said Nigeria still grapples with a dire police-to-population ratio."Today, we have 340,000 policemen for a population of 240 million. How can they police effectively? In my local government, we don't have more than 15 policemen," he said. "Egypt, with nearly 100 million people, has one million police officers. How can we have peace? These are challenges we must face head-on."Atiku, obtiOn education, Atiku said the Obasanjo administration took deliberate steps to improve access in the North, citing a blueprint developed by Professor Paiko at his prompting."I invited all northern governors to Kaduna and handed them the blueprints for implementation. Not only that, we passed the Universal Basic Education Act, making primary and secondary education free and compulsory for every Nigerian child," he said.He added that the administration also introduced and collected an education tax, which was passed on to states to support education initiatives.Atiku became emotional while recalling a visit to Daura, President Muhammadu Buhari's hometown. "I nearly shed tears. I landed at Katsina airport and from there to Daura, there were hordes of Almajiri children. This is the home of the former Katsina College where many of our first republic leaders studied. Today, it's overrun by Almajiri—young boys in their twenties, thirties, and forties, from Katsina to Daura and back again," he said. "These are very serious issues. They're not just about us, but about our children and grandchildren."As I tell my children, 'I've lived my life, thank God. But this is about you and your kids. We must confront these challenges,'" he said.Solving Nigeria's problems must start from the North - ObiOn his part, Obi said Nigeria's transformation must begin from Northern Nigeria, which he described as the country's "greatest asset."He stressed that solving poverty in the North would significantly reduce insecurity nationwide. "The North can change Nigeria. The greatest asset of this country is the North. If we pull people out of poverty, we'll solve insecurity," Obi stated.Obi said poor investment in education and agriculture was crippling the region. Drawing comparisons with agrarian countries like Bangladesh, he noted that Nigeria produces less than six million tonnes of rice annually—less than 10 per cent of Bangladesh's output—despite the North's vast landmass and potential.He called for immediate redirection of resources, questioning the federal government's N15 trillion coastal highway project while insecurity and poverty persist in the North. "Why not invest N1.5 trillion into tackling insecurity in the North? Why not capitalise the Agricultural Bank with N1 trillion?" he asked.Obi urged northern leaders to move beyond ethnic and religious politics, and vote for competence and capacity. "We've tried voting religion and tribe. Let's vote for what works. Let's vote for capacity," he said.Earlier, Malami, in his keynote address, called for urgent collective action to rescue the North from worsening insecurity.Jigawa delegates disrupt meetingThere was a commotion during the meeting when delegates from Jigawa State attempted to disrupt the proceedings.The row reportedly began after a former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir Lawal, announced a delegate to speak on behalf of Jigawa. This triggered a protest by a faction of the state's delegation, who stormed the stage to prevent the selected individual from addressing the gathering.According to eyewitnesses, the dispute was between Mustapha Sule Lamido—son of former Governor Sule Lamido—and former Deputy Governor Ahmed Mahmud Gumei."There was a misunderstanding about who would speak for Jigawa between the two political leaders. However, calm was eventually restored, and both parties apologised. Fortunately, no harm was done," a participant told Daily Trust.Another participant explained that the protest stemmed from opposition to Mustapha representing the state. "The former deputy governor's camp did not want Mustapha to speak on their behalf, arguing that his father, Sule Lamido, is not aligned with the coalition and does not attend its meetings. It was a form of protest from that faction, but the situation was eventually brought under control, and both Mustapha and another delegate from the opposing camp were allowed to speak," the source added.Communications urged swift action at the end of the meeting emphasised the need for a united political front in Northern Nigeria, maintaining knowledge, resolve, and collective action as the three essential drivers for societal transformation.The gathering resolved that the North must act urgently to consolidate its political influence and avoid being sidelined in future national decisions. It called for the emergence of selfless leaders committed to justice, fairness, and national unity. "There was a strong resolution for united northern front in future political choices. The North must not be late to the game when national leadership is being decided," the communiqué stated.Participants also stressed the importance of expanding the initiative to subnational levels and establishing a clear direction for political engagement.To advance the coalition's goals, the meeting announced the formation of four key committees: Mobilisation, Blueprint Development, Peace and Reconciliation, and Publicity.Emergence of new groups positive development - ACFThe Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) has said the emergence of political groups ahead of the 2027 general elections is a positive development.The ACF Secretary General, Murtala Aminu, while speaking to Daily Trust yesterday, confirmed that the ACF was aware groups' meetings ahead of the 2027 general elections.He said the new groups would put government in check.He stated: "We are aware that groups are meeting and I think, in a political space, it is always important that there is activity and that people express their own view and interest."Like I will always say, ACF is not into partisan issues, yes, we maybe political but we are not into partisan issues, we do not promote or bring down any political party or government. What we do is to encourage people to join politics and express their views and also do the right thing. "When groups like this come in a political situation, it's always positive that people are given options and that will also make the government of the day brace up and do the needful, so it is not a bad thing but ACF is not part of it."Political scientists query meeting's motives, proliferation of northern groupsWhile insecurity, poverty and illiteracy in the north dominated the discourse at the meeting, political scientists say the gathering might be strategically cohesive. Dr Abubakar Kari, a political scientist from the University of Abuja, described the meeting as "politically significant but structurally weak," reflecting both the desperation and disarray among northern elites. "Meetings like the NPCG are becoming routine whenever elections approach," he told Daily Trust."It fits a familiar pattern—politicians come together, raise alarms over poverty and insecurity, capture public attention, then disappear. The sincerity of such efforts remains questionable," he added.Kari acknowledged the relevance of the issues raised but warned against reducing them to political theatrics. "It will be very difficult not to link the timing and tone of this meeting to the 2027 election build-up. The North is indeed in crisis, but are these actors ready to offer real solutions or just seeking leverage?" he asked.According to him, the meeting also reflects the broader crisis of leadership in the North. "So many groups are springing up, calling themselves all sorts of names, from the serious to the unserious. This cacophony of voices only highlights the absence of a widely accepted umbrella or unified agenda," he added.Professor Kamilu Sani Fage, another leading political analyst from Bayero University, Kano echoed these concerns, noting that the lack of coordination among Northern leaders could severely weaken the region's political influence."The North needs to present a united front, not be divided along religious, ethnic, or partisan lines," he said. "Unlike the more structured platforms in the South—such as Afenifere and Ohanaeze—the North appears increasingly fragmented."Page emphasised that while the region holds numerical strength in elections, this advantage could be nullified by internal division. "Any politician who thinks he can win on the basis of regionalism or ethnicity alone is deceiving himself," he said.On his part, Professor Saliman Jawando (SAN), emphasised that it is the opposition's democratic right to highlight national concerns, particularly insecurity and poverty. "The APC did the same when in opposition. Such agitation is part of Nigeria's political landscape," he noted.Sikiru Lanre Nurudeen, an associate professor from Al-Hikmah University observed that the coalition is partly motivated by a lingering belief they could have defeated Tinubu in 2023 had they united.Criticising northern elites, Nurudeen stressed that effective mobilisation requires a genuine, coherent platform, without this, their ability to inspire grassroots support may be limited.ADC to seal coalition talks in 2 weeks, meets Atiku, Obi, othersMeanwhile, the national chairman of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), Dr Ralphs Okey Nwosu, has said that coalition talks ahead of the 2027 general elections will be concluded within the next two weeks.Speaking with journalists over the weekend, Nwosu confirmed that ADC had been adopted as the preferred platform by emerging coalition groups seeking to challenge the ruling APC. He disclosed that committees set up by the party had already met with key political stakeholders, including former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, Labour Party's Peter Obi, and former Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai.According to Nwosu, the coalition is not being driven by personalities alone but by broad-based consultation with citizens and civil society. He explained that the dialogue process is structured in three parts: civil society engagement, inter-party talks, and direct consultations with political stakeholders.Nwosu dismissed fears that ADC would be used merely as an election vehicle by opportunistic politicians, saying the party is focused on transformation and inclusive governance. "At our summit in Arewa House, Kaduna, last year, we made it clear: any politician who sees ADC as a mere 'moule' for election convenience is mistaken. That kind of thinking is what has weakened political parties in Nigeria," he said.Coalition seeking more than just a party to contest election - LukmanSpeaking on Trust TV's 30 Minutes programme, set to air in full today, one of the leading figures behind the coalition effort, Salihu Lukman, said the coalition's immediate focus is not on choosing candidates but on identifying committed Nigerians who understand the urgency of the national crisis and are willing to make necessary sacrifices. "Our priority right now is to find people who genuinely recognise that this country—and our democracy—is in danger, and who are willing to come together and do the needful," Lukman said. "That's why, when people start seeing the coalition's candidate will be, we say 'no, we are not there yet. First, we want to define what we stand for. If you want to be part of the coalition, we'll tell you what it's about. And if you have political ambition, please put it aside for now. What we're negotiating is: let's even have a party. At the moment, we don't have one. All the existing options are compromised."Lukman stressed that the coalition had not settled for any political party, despite suggestions by some of its members that the group was leaning toward the ADC. "No party has been chosen yet. We've scanned the political environment and see only two realistic options. The first—and best—option is to register a new party. But INEC has stalled the process. Over 70 groups have applied for registration, but INEC hasn't responded. Many haven't even received an acknowledgement," he said. "By law, once INEC acknowledges an application, and 90 days pass without formal registration, the group is deemed registered. But many groups don't even have that acknowledgement, so the process is being obstructed—quietly, but deliberately. We see it as part of the broader state capture perfected by the current administration. INEC is being muzzled, just like the National Assembly. It's not immediately obvious, but it's happening."Lukman said some of the coalition-aligned groups have been engaging with INEC for over a year and a half, with little progress.He also outlined the coalition's second option: taking over an existing political party. He said discussions had begun with parties like the Social Democratic Party (SDP), but with strict conditions. "If we go with an existing party, its leadership must be replaced, the constitution revised, the name and symbol possibly changed. We want something completely new that reflects today's realities—not another disappointment," Lukman said. "This is not about just contesting elections. It's about building a credible platform that can convince Nigerians democracy can truly deliver. Many of us are still traumatised by past failures. We don't want to give Nigerians another disaster."He added that the coalition expects to reach a decision within the next three months, given the legal timelines leading up to the 2027 general election.Also speaking when he featured on Trust TV's Sunday Politics, a public commentator, Abubakar Najakku, said northern leaders alone cannot regain power without reaching out to the South. "Today's meeting (Sunday) is clearly strategic, considering how the northern leaders invited the likes of Peter Obi. You must appreciate the fact that since the exit of Dr Namadi Azikiwe, the South East has never produced someone with a large followership like Peter Obi. This is a man that defeated the incumbent president in Lagos during the 2023 election, and he made excellent outing in other states," he said.Najakku said he anticipates other groups to join the National Political Consultative Group soon.Additional reports by: Baba Martins, Musa Luka Musa (Abuja), Mumini Abdulkareem (Ilorin) & Maryam Ahmadu-Suka (Kaduna) Residents of some communities in Zamfara State have resorted to fleeing their homes every evening and returning only during the day.This is happening as a fresh wave of attacks by suspected bandits in Kaura Namoda Local Government Area of the state has left at least four people dead, while 26 others were abducted. Daily Trust learnt that the coordinated assaults, which occurred between Thursday and Saturday, targeted multiple communities.SPONSOR AD Eyewitnesses reported that Sabon Gari village bore the brunt of the latest violence, with one woman killed and around 20 residents kidnapped.A resident of Kaura Namoda, who requested anonymity, claimed the toll was even higher, saying four people—including a woman—were killed and 26 others abducted. Among the abductees were reportedly a man, his two wives, and their three children. It was learnt that the attacks took place in the early hours of Saturday, between 1:00 a.m. and 2:30 a.m., despite the presence of security personnel in Kaura Namoda town.Sources alleged that the assailants were loyalists of a notorious bandit leader, Bello Kaura, popularly known as Dan Sade, who has been linked to numerous atrocities across Kaura Namoda, Bungudu, and Maradun local government areas. "Dan Sade knows the area well. His father is Sarkin in Kaura Namoda. He has even built a mosque and shops in some villages. His camp is located behind Bakalori Camp, not far from Sabon Gari," the source said.Locals say they are puzzled by the apparent inaction of military forces in confronting the group.Residents fear Dan Sade's ultimate goal is to overrun Kaura Namoda, the second-largest town in Zamfara, file photo of attack in zamfara communityResidents abandon homes at nightNeighbouring communities such as Ungwan Sarkin Musulmi, Ungwan Rogo, and Yamitsawa—just a few kilometres away—were said to have been visibly deserted. "People now flee their homes every evening, returning only during the day. The bandits have intensified attacks on Sabon Gari, Kungurki, and other nearby villages," one source said. "We are pleading with the government and security agencies to establish a military base in Kungurki and sustain operations to halt the bandits' advance." he said.In a separate incident last Thursday, bandits reportedly killed four people and abducted one person in Kungurki village.The following day, it was gathered that they contacted the villagers, demanding a N3 million ransom but refused to allow any communication with the hostage, raising fears about his condition. "The villagers refused to pay the money because they are not sure whether he is alive or not," the source said.On Friday, the Secretary of Birnin Gajari Local Government Area was shot and injured along the Kaura-Gusau road.His elder brother and another individual were abducted during the same attack.In a related development, two commercial drivers were killed and an undisclosed number of passengers kidnapped along the route.The Zamfara State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Yazid Abubakar, said he could not confirm the incidents as he was attending a seminar in Akwa Ibom State. He promised to provide details after contacting the command headquarters.Communities identified as being under constant threat in Kaura Namoda include Dayau, Daba, Madira, Yankaba, Kagara, Sabon Gari, Banga, Kuru, Kasuwar Gari, Kungurki, Gidan Tanko, Unguwar Rogo, Gidan Sambo, Walo, Babbar-Saura, Bakin Dam, Katsauwa, Gabake, Barkeji, Maguru, and Magizawa. "These bandits attack us at will, even with security forces stationed in Kaura Namoda," a local lamented. "Life here has become unbearable. We desperately need help."In response to the escalating crisis, Governor Dauda Lawal pledged his administration's commitment to ending banditry in Zamfara. While donating 140 operational vehicles to security agencies, he promised to deploy all available resources to restore peace and security."This is a local lamented. "Life here has become unbearable. We desperately need help."In response to the escalating crisis, Governor Dauda Lawal pledged his administration's commitment to ending banditry in Zamfara. While donating 140 operational vehicles to security agencies, he promised to deploy all available resources to restore peace and security."This is a local lamented. "Life here has become unbearable. 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