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Violence, apathy mar polls

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EFCC officials arrest a middle- age man, Abdulkareem Abdulsalem for allegedly sharing money to voters at unit 7, Kwara State College of Education in Ilorin yesterday Photo: EFCC

- **2 Security Officers Killed, 20 INEC Staff Kidnapped in Katsina**
- **Rep Shot Dead in Oyo**

The governorship and state assembly elections yesterday were characterised by pockets of violence and low voter turnout across the country.

A total of 29 state governorship seats were up for contest, alongside hundreds of state houses of assembly seats.

Voting started early in many places as electoral officials arrived polling units in time for the exercise.

But the take off of voting was delayed in parts of Lagos State due to a protest embarked upon by members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) deployed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as ad hoc staff. They delayed voting at some polling units for alleged non-payment of their allowances by the INEC.

At the Lagos West senatorial district distribution centre, Ikeja, corps members refused to leave for their different assigned polling units until they were paid their allowances, even as many ballot boxes were seen abandoned on the ground.

“No pay, no work! We won’t move out from here expect the N20,000 due to each of us is paid in full. We had received N7,000, but we are not ready to be taken for granted again like they did during the presidential election,” one of the corps members, Musibau Ibraheem said. He added that they had to take the action because INEC officials refused to pay them for the presidential and National Assembly elections held on February 23.

But INEC spokesman in Lagos, Mr Femi Akinbiyi, told Daily Trust on Sunday that the corps members protested when they got information that an unnamed politician was sharing money to some of their colleagues. He said the commission paid allowances of corps members through bank transfer, saying each corps member was entitled to N13,000 for each election. He maintained that INEC had paid ad-

hoc staff their allowances for last elections. According to him, the only time the corps members were paid in cash was after training when each participant was paid N4,500.

Contrary to fears that the exercise would be marred by violence in the state, it was peaceful. However, there was voter apathy.

As voting was still on, business operators opened their shops for customers. Bread hawkers could also be seen plying their trade. This is even as youths of voting age were seen playing football in the streets instead of going to vote.

One of the youths, who simply gave his name as Mohammed, told our correspondent that he had lost confidence in the electoral process and would not waste his time voting for anybody.

A voter, Mrs Mirabel Uba, told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that many people did not turn out to vote for fear of the unknown.

In places like Surulere, Animashaun, Coker/Aguda, Ajangbadi, Ojo and Okokomaiko, electoral officers were seen sitting idle, with few voters in sight. However, in some sections of Ijanikin, Iba and Alaba in Ojo Local Government Area, there was substantial turnout of voters.

The police, however, said they were able to avert what could have been major incidents by arresting those it called social miscreants between Friday and Saturday morning. Policemen on the entourage of the commissioner of police on election duty in Lagos West, Kenneth Ebrimson, arrested 10 persons at Ojo and its environs, while 12 other persons were arrested at Oshodi, over unlawful gathering.

The chairman, Lagos State Taskforce, Olayinka Egbeyemi, told our correspondent that his team also arrested two persons at Agege and another two suspects at Iyana Ipaja.

There was tension at the Ogudu collation centre over alleged missing nine ballot booklets meant for ward 4 polling unit in Kosofe. According to an agent of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Kunle Aladiyan, the booklets went missing yesterday morning while INEC officials were distributing election materials to wards.

“That is how we lost the 2015 election. We participated in the exercise thinking it would favour us, only for the missing booklets to find their ways to the ballot. We don’t want to be fooled again,” Aladiyan declared.

An assistant commissioner of police in charge of Area H, Ogudu, Miller Dantawaye, who led other security agencies to provide security for the centre and the Kosofe area, confirmed that he was at the collation centre when the booklets were discovered to be missing.

In Ilorin and other parts of Kwara State, it was also observed that many people were going about their activities while others chose to remain in their homes.

There was heavy security presence in the streets of Ilorin and its environs while the exercise lasted.

In Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, it was gathered that as a result of voter apathy, an imam in Dogo Karfe community, Hudu Adamu, used the public address system in a mosque to plead with voters to go out and exercise their franchise. He said his action was necessitated by complaints from elders of the community who expressed disappointment over the level of voter turnout.

The same situation was witnessed in Bauchi State where many of the electorates stayed away from polling units.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Yakubu Dogara, said the low turnout witnessed in the state might not be unconnected with the fear that people's votes may not count.

"The fear that people's votes may not count is the reason why people did not turn up. We saw that in the last election. The problem was not with the voting, people came out to vote, the problem started at the collation level, especially at the ward level," he said.

The exercise was equally marred by low turnout of voters in Mubi North and South local government areas of Adamawa State.

Voting started between 8:00am and 8:20am at polling units in the two areas despite hitches at some of the units.

Also, the House of Assembly election in Kogi State witnessed low turnout of voters, amidst cases of ballot box snatching by armed thugs.

There were cases of shooting and ballot box snatching at polling units in Adankolo, Crowther Memorial College, Paparanda Square, Ganaja Village and AEDC areas in Lokoja, the state capital.

At a polling unit opposite Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Cathedral, Lokoja, some hoodlums in fake police and army uniforms shot sporadically and scared away voters.

Also, at Oke Egbe polling unit 01 in Yagba West Local Government Area, a man was shot in the leg when some people invaded the polling unit to snatch ballot box and other materials. The victim, identified as Tunde Oladipo, was said to have joined hands with others at the polling unit to prevent the armed thugs from snatching the ballot box. The invaders were, however, prevented from going away with the ballot box.

The exercise also witnessed voter apathy in Dekina/Bassa, reportedly due to overnight sporadic shooting that scared people away from polling units.

The INEC postponed the state House of Assembly election across Mopamuro Local Government Area of the state. An electoral officer in the area, Mr Opanachi Ojodale, said the election was postponed to Sunday, March 10, because wrong ballot papers were taken to the area. According to him, ballot papers belonging to Ankpa Local Government Area in Kogi East, were taken to Mopamuro. This development was discovered in the early hours of Saturday.

In Katsina, an officer of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) was feared killed, just as 20 INEC staff were kidnapped during yesterday's gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections. The electoral officials were kidnapped when armed bandits attacked some polling units at Maidabino ward in Danmusa Local Government Area of the state. However, 10 of the kidnapped victims regained freedom in the evening.

The NSCDC officer, whose name could not be ascertained at the time of going to press, died at Garagi ward in Kankara Local Government Area.

Meanwhile, the police have confirmed the killing of Cpl Mannir Usman attached to Danmusa division during yesterday's gubernatorial election in Danmusa Local Government.

The spokesman of the command, SP Gambo Isah, said the officer was killed after a patrol team along Gobirawa Falale -Maidabino feeder road in Danmusa Local Government Area, was ambushed by armed political thugs, led by one Mani Doro, 40, of Dunya village.

Also, police authorities in Kano State impounded a vehicle loaded with ballot papers. The spokesman of the command, DSP Haruna Abdullahi, said the vehicle was intercepted at Magwan polling unit in Nassarawa Local Government Area.

“The vehicle is under police custody and investigation has commenced to ascertain the persons behind the act so that they can face the wrath of the law,” he said.

In Imo State, the exercise was characterised by pockets of violence, late arrival of materials and vote buying.

At Ngo Okpala and Nwageli, there were reported cases of violence and snatching of ballot papers. In some polling units, card readers failed and electoral officials resorted to manual accreditation. The exercise did not start in some polling units until 10am.

Also, in Oyo State, a serving member of the House of Representatives for Lagelu/Akinyele constituency, Temitope Olatoye, also known as Sugar, was reportedly shot dead by suspected political thugs in Lagelu area of Ibadan, Saturday evening. Following the bullet wound he suffered, he was immediately rushed to the Intensive Care Unit of the University College Hospital, Ibadan. He was said to be coming from his village where he had gone to exercise his franchise when the assailants ambushed and shot him.

A close aide of the lawmaker had told our correspondents that some suspected political thugs of a rival politician in the constituency carried out the attack.

Olatoye, who won the 2015 election on the platform of the All Progressives Congress, lost the last election to represent the Oyo Central senatorial district on the platform of the Action Democratic Party (ADC).

Similarly, a supporter of the Peoples Democratic Party, simply identified as Mudasiru, was shot dead by a police officer in the Iletitun area of Ibadan Southeast Local Government Area.

Mudasiru was said to be jubilating over the victory of his party when a trigger-happy officer fired a shot which hit him from the back and ruptured his intestine.

The police public relations officer, Oyo State command, Mr. Lawrence Fadeyi, confirmed the two incidents to our correspondents in Ibadan.

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