

Adamawa Polls

Two Killed, 16 Arrested

From Muiyiwa Adeyemi,
Bayo Olu and Kelechi
Okoronkwo, Yola

TWO people were feared dead in the re-run governorship election yesterday in Adamawa State following attempts by suspected political thugs to snatch ballot boxes in Michika, home of former governor of the state, Mr. Boni Haruna and former Lagos State military administrator, Brig.-Gen. Buba Marwa.

But Deputy Inspector General of Police, Mr. Uba Ringim, at the state police command put the casualty figure at one and said another person sustained critical injury.

He said that the cause of

- PDP In Early Lead
- Atiku, Nyako, Bapetel Satisfied

the fracas was yet to be ascertained — whether it was a fight between political party supporters or other reasons, which police investigation would reveal.

Ringim said the identity of the person killed was

also yet to be ascertained.

Eye-witness account indicated that a notable politician from that part of the state hired thugs from Gombe State to perpetrate the act, adding that the hoodlums harassed a lot of

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How NPA Loses Billions Through Shady Practices

By Kayode Ogunbunmi

THOUGH many Nigerians are beginning to question the usefulness of the ongoing probe of some federal projects and its parastatals, a promised probe of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) is likely to turn up even more worms than the much-celebrated power projects probe, as indicated by documents available to *The Guardian*.

At the launch of the Vision 2020 programme of the Federal Government last week, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dimeji Bankole, expressed the desire of the House to probe the activities of the NPA.

Saying that the organisation collected about N100 billion revenue per year

without remitting any of it to the treasury, Bankole said, "how can they spend all that money without following Due Process?"

As it happened, an audit exercise conducted into the finances of the NPA in 2004 revealed a number of institutional weaknesses and corner-cuttings, which had led to loss of millions of Naira through unauthorised channels.

The firm of J.K. Randle and Co conducted the exercise — an examination of outstanding bills from the agency's creditors — and its purpose was to, among others:

- Determine the approval limits of all outstanding bills from creditors in compliance with various spending limit circulars.

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Court Cases Overheat System, Says FG

From Martins Oloja
Abuja Bureau Chief

THE federal government may have been feeling some scorching heat in its own kitchen of 'rule of law' mantra as 'fundamental objectives and directive of state policy' as its first major comment on the issue

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Kidnappers Threaten To

From Kelvin Ebiri,
Port Harcourt

KIDNAPPERS of the wife of the chairman of Lonestar Groups, Chief Humphrey Idisi, have threatened to kill her if he fails to pay them N500 million within 24 hours.

Suspected militants, according to the Joint Task Force, 'Operation Flush Out 3', yesterday attacked a Shell Petroleum Development Company facility at Ekulama in Rivers State.

The gunmen, who kidnapped Mrs. Margaret Idisi last Sunday and demanded N1 billion, have

also threatened to come after him and his children.

Chief Idisi told journalists yesterday in Port Harcourt that he was appealing to the kidnappers to be benevolent by releasing his wife unconditionally, because she had recently been diagnosed to be hypertensive.

The oil mogul, who was surrounded by scores of his staff, who joined him in solidarity, explained that during the last interaction he had with his over 50-years-old wife, she had complained of ill-health, particularly as she had been cut off from routine medication.

"They claimed that my wife begged them to come down to N500 million, which I doubt because my wife knew that there was no N500 million in the house or anywhere.

"If I don't provide the N500 million in two days, they said they would kill my wife and then, if I like, I should run to the (Aso Rock) Villa (in Abuja), they would come after me, they would kill me and kill all my children."

He explained that his wife has refused to eat since on Sunday that they took her hostage.

He said the gunmen told him that one of the reasons

they failed their wife. When they said due and a contr them "Th a N5 ates, told got This ago, been "T they they NI me, Idi nor stat cies wor rele ed and por tim "I bec me I d wo mo me tra be pa Na TH

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electorate from areas they suspected might not vote for their party.

The source said in the attempt to snatch the ballot boxes, police fired the shots that killed two of them while another which he claimed to be the personal assistant of the politician sustained injury.

The police authority could also not confirm whether the dead person was felled by police bullet, but said the matter would be investigated.

Ringim confirmed that 16 people were arrested in Michika while three arrests were made in Yola, stressing that the election was generally peaceful in most local governments except for skirmishes in few areas.

"Honestly speaking, this is a peaceful election," he told *The Guardian*. It is only in Michika that we had few skirmishes though there were few complaints that were handled by the electoral officers."

Meanwhile, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar cast his vote at 11.15am at Ajiya polling booth in Yola North. The Action Congress (AC) governorship candidate in Adamawa State, Ibrahim Bapetel, accompanied him.

After exercising his franchise, Atiku told journalists that he was satisfied with the preparations of the INEC and the way the electoral materials were distributed.

But he said he could not speak on whether the election was properly handled until it was concluded.

According to him: "I have

visited only one polling booth and that is where I cast my vote. So, I cannot talk of what happened in other polling centres until after we got reports of what happened in those places.

"Up till Friday, I was satisfied with the way they distributed the materials."

He said INEC has capable hands to conduct free and fair elections in the country, but that the commission needed sincerity of purpose and integrity to do that.

Bapetel, who voted at his Yelwa ward in Jimeta at about 11.18am, expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the election and the security arrangement.

He was also in high spirit and indicated confidence in the entire process.

And for the PDP candidate, Murtala Nyako, who cast his vote at the Hammanyero polling unit in Mayo-Belwa local government area of the state at about 10.35am, the turn-out of voters, the conduct of the polls and the security arrangement were adequate.

Nyako, whose election was nullified based on the petition filed by Bapetel, was optimistic that he would win the election because "power belongs to God and the people."

The election was generally peaceful in most of the local governments, including Girei, Gombi, Song, Ganye, Fufore, Demsa, Mubi, Shelleng, Yola, Jimeta and Belwa. There was a large turn out of voters in the straight battle between the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and AC.

Officials of the Independent Electoral Commission started distribution of voting materials early. However, the distribution was delayed in some areas while

there was a shortfall in others.

Voting did not end on time in some polling points where materials arrived late. INEC officials blamed the late arrival on logistics.

Security was heavy in all the voting centres where the state police command had drafted adequate policemen to take charge.

Voters started trooping out as early as 8am in Yola, Gombi, Lamurde and Girei local government areas where leaders of political parties were on ground to monitor the exercise.

Most of the politicians commended INEC and the police for adequate preparations. But Alhaji Youssouf Ahmad, PDP leader in Lamurde, frowned at the activities of some politicians, who were accused of thuggery.

Suspected political thugs, who attempted to disrupt the election in Guyuk, were dispersed by armed policemen whose timely arrival at a voting centre in the area helped in preventing what would have led to a major fracas between supporters of the two leading political parties.

Party leaders also intervened by calming down their supporters and urged them to be peaceful and orderly.

Alhaji Mamman Sanni of the Action Congress in Jada local government expressed the hope that his party would sweep the polls in the area because "it has worked very hard to mobilise its supporters for the exercise."

Besides, he said that the AC candidate, Ibrahim Bapetel, "is very popular and more accepted in the area."