

NEWS

NYSC confirms death of corps member in Rivers

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culties encountered with completing the elections and to take the conclusions into full account when making preparations for concluding the remaining polls in the state.

This came as the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) confirmed the death of a male corps member at Okogbue in Ahoada East Local Government Area of the state during the rerun polls.

The NYSC spokesperson in the state, Violet Apolo, disclosed that the corps member died on Saturday night due to gunshot injuries sustained during the polls. She didn't explain who was responsible for the attack on the deceased.

Besides, INEC yesterday announced the suspension of further action concerning the election into various seats in both the National and the Rivers State House of Assemblies conducted by the commission last week Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) says the conduct of the INEC and security operatives in the rerun elections fell short of the expected standard, given the level of mobilisation and preparedness.

This is coming on the heels of calls by APC chairman in Rivers State, Davies Ikanya,

for an outright cancellation of the elections. Ikanya told reporters in Port Harcourt that the entire rerun was marred by irregularities, violence and was highly compromised by fake INEC ad hoc staff.

Ekiti State Governor Ayo Fayose has restated his earlier allegation that the political violence in Rivers State leading to the halting of the election was the handiwork of the ruling APC at the centre.

Also, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), the umbrella body of Ijaw youths worldwide, has condemned the violence and killings in most parts of Rivers State during the rerun on Saturday.

The Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room is made up of about 70 Nigerian civil society organisations including Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), Election Monitor and Nigerian Women Trust Fund, Stakeholders Democracy Network, and Proactive Gender Initiative.

In a statement on behalf of the group, the Executive Director of PLAC, Clement Nwankwo, noted: "Overall, the polls have been highly disappointing at most levels - there was significant violence and loss of life, allegations of serious malpractice, and extensive delays. So far this has resulted in the sus-

pension or cancellation of 8 of 23 local governments.

According to INEC in a statement issued by its Director, Voter Education and Publicity, Oluwole Osaze-Uzzi, the decision followed a large-scale misdemeanor it said characterized the conduct of the exercise.

Specifically, the electoral umpire said threats, violence and intimidation of election officials and voters by well-armed thugs and miscreants allegedly acting on behalf of some politicians, marred the elections in some areas.

The commission said its returning officers were only able to collate and declare results in one federal and nine state constituencies where the disruption and malpractices were not so widespread.

However, INEC, in the statement made available to *The Guardian* in Abuja yesterday said that the suspension did not affect the constituencies where the exercise had been completed and the results already declared by the returning officers.

In a statement by its National Publicity Secretary, Chief Olisa Metuh, yesterday, the PDP said the nation and the international community should hold INEC, security operatives and the APC responsible



Advisory Leader and Economist, PriceWaterHouseCoopers Limited, Andrew Nevin (left); Representative of the Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Emmanuel Ameh; President, Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Dr. Nike Akande; Representative of Vice President, Jumoke Oduwole and Regional Senior Partner, West Africa, Price Water House Coopers, Uyi Akpata at the presentation of a book *Nigeria: Looking beyond oil in Lagos*
PHOTO: FEMI ADEBESIN-KUTI

should there be a breakdown of law and order in the state over the non-release of the final results.

The Rivers APC boss who described the election as worse than the earlier 2015 election noted that the military only provided security at some council headquarters thereby creating room for the PDP thugs to take over several wards and units and also disguised as INEC ad hoc staff returning officers.

While stressing that a peaceful election could still be held in Rivers State, Ikanya condemned an alleged assassination attempt on the APC governorship candidate,

Dakuku Peterside, and his Deputy, Honorable Asita on Sunday evening by alleged supporters of Governor Wiike.

He called on the Federal Government, the Department of State Security Service and the police to be interested in investigating the case.

Speaking to State House correspondents after attending the National Economic Council Retreat at the Presidential Villa, Fayose condemned what he called the militarisation of the electoral process in Rivers, saying it was an indication of the waning popularity of the APC.

The governor, who alerted

to the prospect of the declaration of a state of emergency in his state and Rivers, two PDP-controlled states, said it would not work because elections were no longer by might, but by the will of the people.

On the possibility of the declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers, Fayose said: "They have been insinuating that too in Ekiti. We have been waiting for them. Power has gone beyond the leaders, power has gone back to the people. You want to declare state of emergency, declare it and we will tell you that the state of emergency will not work too. This country belongs to all of us."