

Seven killed, others injured in PDP congresses

By Our Reporters

THE Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) congresses to elect members into the state Houses of Assembly held yesterday nationwide was characterised by violence in some states during which seven persons were killed and others injured.

There were also cases of disagreements in some states over allegations of manipulation of the exercise leading to postponements though relatively peaceful in others.

The seven deaths were recorded in Rivers State where the congress was marred by

crisis as many parts of the state witnessed violence during the exercise.

It was gathered that as early as 8 am, many party faithfuls had gathered at the State Party secretariat on Aba road to wait for materials for the exercise to be distributed while some also waited at their respective local government party offices for the arrival the materials.

With as many as 281 aspirants contesting for just 23 seats in the State House of Assembly and their numerous supporters being kept waiting

for too long, this led to a lot of friction in many quarters with violence erupting in several places in the state. In Eleme where Marcus Nle Aji who has been representing the Eleme constituency since 1999 is contesting to come back for a third term, about four persons were killed.

In Nonwa, Tai LGA, one person was killed while an Army Sergeant was wounded. In Tai community in the same Tai LGA, another person was killed and one MOPOL officer was also wounded. In Ogu/Bolo LGA, three vehicle were burnt and one person killed.

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However, the exercise which started very late in the state according to a party chieftain should not have been combined."

But Chief Azubike Nmerukini, Chairman of Port Harcourt City Council defended the delay saying that it might have been a strategy to douse tension which had been built up by those vying for the positions.

Nmerukini also condemned those who take laws into their hands by being violent.

In Osun State the primaries could not hold in seven local government councils in Osun state yesterday, but the exercise was peaceful in other parts of the state.

The primaries was postponed in Ife East, Ife Central, Ife North and Ife South local government areas of the state as a result of the Ife Day celebrations, while it could not hold in Ede South, Oriade and Osogbo councils due to intra-party crisis.

Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Adejare Bello said the postponement of the exercise in Ede, Osogbo and Oriade was considered to be impeorative by the state chapter of the party for security reasons.

"The situation in Ede particularly has taking a very dangerous dimension, especially in the last one week", he said adding that the party was making frantic effort to restore peace.

Former Executive governor of the state, Alhaji Isiaka Adeleke who is from Ede South council, also said that the exercise was postponed due to tension in the area.

Adeleke who said that the exercise will come up at a later date considered save by the party, appealed to members of the party to maintain peace in the interest of

the party.

Violence marred the exercise in Ikere local government in Ondo State which led to the shooting of three persons.

Ikere has been a flashpoint of violence among local power brokers in the state PDP as the ward congresses held there Saturday last week was also marred by violence as a video camera belonging to the state secretariat of the party was smashed by party loyalists protesting irregularities.

Three persons received gun shot wounds in the ensuing melee at the centre as armed anti-riot policemen stormed the centre to dislodge the party loyalists who were protesting the alleged irregularities going on in the centre.

One of the victims was shot in the mouth and he alongside others wounded had already been admitted at the State Specialist Hospital in Ado-Ekiti where they are presently receiving treatment.

The Ikere mayhem also prompted a meeting held yesterday by the State Administrator, Brig.-Gen. Adetunji Idowu Olurin (rtd) held with some PDP leaders which included a former Deputy Governor in the state, Chief Abiodun Aluko and the PDP Chairman in the state, Hon Ropo Adesanya.

At the time The Nation visited the state secretariat of the PDP at about 4.00 pm on Saturday policemen were standing guard at the secretariat with a competent party source revealing to or correspondent that Adesanya had been summoned to the Administrator's Office over the violence that marred the congress in Ikere.

The Protesting Ikere youths prevented a police Peugeot pick-up van marked PF-1070-EK from gaining entry into the voting centre who were insisting that the primaries for the House of Assembly was not supposed to be done.

They alleged that the former deputy governor had been schemed out of the process and also alleged that the Chairman of Ikere council, Mr Banji Aluko brought his loyalists to conduct the congress saying they had brought the prepared list of delegates and candidates to the venue which they noted was an illegal place "being a hotel".

They also alleged that the council chair had bribed police officers with N300,000 to ensure that the conduct of the exercise was manipulated to favour his candidates.

But the council boss pointed accusing fingers in the direction of the former deputy governor alleging that it was thugs sponsored by Chief Aluko that came to disrupt the peaceful conduct of the congress.

He maintained that the college of education guest house is the designated place which was duly authorised by the state secretariat of the party saying election materials were ready at the time of the visit.

It was a rowdy session yesterday at the College of Education Guest House venue of the congress along Igbara-Odo Road in Ikere-Ekiti as some youthful party members were alleging that no congress was being held saying that a prepared list had been allegedly

According to the irate protesters, the House of Assembly primaries were not supposed to be held as agreed to by stakeholders in the party maintain that only the national delegates were supposed to be elected in the town.

"No congress was held here, Banji just woke up and wrote the list of names and brought unknown people to conduct the congress", the youths protested at the gate of the guest house amid a very charged atmosphere.

However, the congresses were peaceful in other seven local government areas visited by our

correspondent. They included Ado, Ekiti South West, Ekiti West, Ijero, Efon, Ido/Osi and Irepodun/Ifelodun council areas which was the last area visited.

The Ekiti PDP Chairman Adesanya was not available to comment on the overall conduct of the exercise owing to his summons to the office of the Administrator on the violence that erupted at Ikere which led to the police shooting of three party members.

A police officer who asked not to be mentioned confirmed the incident just as all effort to reach the new Police spokesman in the state, Mr Sunday Oladimeji proved abortive.

Apart from the Shomolu local government, the congress held in other local governments of Lagos State.

The congress was generally peaceful although there was heavy presence of policemen to maintain peace and order.

President Olusegun Obasanjo took part in the exercise at Abeokuta and it was reported to be peaceful as well.

