

Ballot box snatchers shot dead in Kogi as voters elect new governor

TWO suspected ballot box snatchers were shot yesterday as voters in Kogi State trooped out to elect a new governor.

The suspects reportedly lost their lives after they were shot by eagle-eyed soldiers following their attempt to snatch ballot boxes in Anyigba and Ankpa both in Kogi East Senatorial District.

The incident was the highlight of the pockets of electoral malpractices that attended the largely peaceful election.

In Ganaja village near Lokoja, voters chased away some men who rode in sports utility vehicles (SUVs) and attempted to snatch ballot boxes in their polling units, according to a viral video of the incident.

In Kogi Central, soldiers who mounted a barricade at Itakpe Junction near Okene town intercepted and arrested three black unmarked open back Land Cruiser security vehicles.

One of our correspondents, who witnessed the incident, reports that the unidentified occupants of the three vehicles were blocked by two Nigerian Army Armoured Personnel Carriers and were surrounded by soldiers.

The vehicles were later driven away from the junction after about an hour standoff during which telephone calls were exchanged with high profile officials.

The soldiers later arrested the vehicles and ensured that some of their men joined the vehicles before they were escorted from the scene policed by the two APC vehicles.

At Ogori/Magongo Local Government in Kogi Central, a non-governmental organization, YIAGA Africa, claimed to have received reports of some electoral officials pre-filling election result sheets.

In a post on its X handle, YIAGA Africa, wrote: "Dear @inecnigeria we received report of pre-filled results sheet discovered in PU 004, Eni Ward of Ogori/Magongo in Kogi State before commencement of voting."

"Kindly investigate and address this issue promptly to safeguard the integrity of the process."

Notwithstanding the presence of heavily armed security operatives, voters turned out in their numbers at the various polling units where elections took place.

Our correspondents, who monitored elections in Kogi Central, West and East Senatorial Districts, report that the election was largely peaceful, isolated cases of attempted ballot box snatching notwithstanding.

PDP candidate Melaye boycotts election, demands cancellation

In Kogi West, the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Senator Dino Melaye, allegedly boycotted the governorship election exercise across the 21 local government areas of the state.

Our correspondent who monitored the exercise observed that Melaye was not seen in his Unit 004, Ward 002, Iluafon quarters, Aiyetoro Gbede, Ijumu Local Government Area of the state to cast his vote.

The Nation reliably learnt that the PDP candidate, who was in his country home with some of his supporters, stayed away from the election.

Governor Bello hails 'peaceful, violence-free' election

PDP candidate Melaye boycotts election, demands cancellation

SDP candidate Ajaka hails INEC, raises alarm on 'missing result sheets'



• Governor Yahaya Bello with his wives after voting yesterday.

From Sanni Onogu and Rasaq Ibrahim, Lokoja

A chieftain of the PDP in the town, who craved anonymity because he was not authorised to speak, said Melaye did vote because he believed the results of the election were already predetermined.

The source said: "Oga (Melaye) deliberately stayed away from the exercise so as not to give the election credibility. We are quite aware where the pendulum will swing because the outcome is already predetermined."

Melaye later demanded the cancellation of the election in five local government areas of the state.

The local governments, according to the PDP candidate, are Okene, Okehi, Adavi, Ajaokuta, and Ogori/Mangogo.

Melaye, in a post on his X handle @Dinomelaye described the exercise in the five council areas as a coordinated scam by the INEC.

He alleged that the election results of the five local government areas of the state were compromised from the polling units.

He said, "INEC must cancel the election in the 5 local governments of Kogi Central."

"The election in Okene, Okehi, Ajaokuta, Adavi, and Ogori/Mangogo is a scam co-ordinated from the highest level of INEC."

The Nation reports that Melaye did not show up at his Unit 001, Iluafon Quarters, Aiyetoro Gbede, Ijumu Local Government Area of the state.

Governor Bello hails 'peaceful, violence-free' election

The Governor of Kogi State, Yahaya Bello and his three wives - Aminat, Rashidat and Hafisat - voted at Polling Unit 11 in Agassa, Okene LGA while the governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Usman Ahmed Ododo, voted at polling unit 1 at Upogoro, in Okene LGA.

Bello, during his interaction with the media after voting, declared that he would leave the state better than he met it.

The Governor described the governorship election as peaceful and violence-free contrary to fears expressed in many quarters prior to the

poll.

He expressed confidence that the APC governorship candidate, Usman Ahmed Ododo, would emerge victorious.

On his impression about the voting exercise, Bello said: "To the glory of God Almighty, myself and all of my family members, friends and relations and all the citizens in this particular ward, in the local government, Senatorial District and of course across the state, we are all enthusiastic about this civic responsibility."

"We all came out in our numbers to cast our votes. I have just cast my ballot along with my family members and others are casting their votes."

"It is timely. All materials were deployed within the time stipulated, and so far, I have not received any complaint from any quarters. The conduct of INEC so far has been fantastic."

On the security situation, he said: "All the security agencies have conducted themselves so far very professionally. All the citizens that are exercising their franchise are doing that freely."

"There are no hitches, no rancour. We are united and we are happy about this exercise and by the special grace of God, we are going to come out very triumphant in this particular exercise."

On his promise to bequeath a template of free, fair, credible and violence-free elections to the state, Bello said: "First of all, the issue of electoral violence in Kogi State in my own time is a media creation."

"For those that are not on ground here in Kogi State, go into history, go into records, and compare my own regime and the previous ones. You will discover that the regime of Governor Yahaya Bello's conduct of elections has been the most free, fair, and credible, and violence free elections."

"So the issue of violence in our election in Kogi State is a media creation. It is a figment of the imagination of all those who do not want good things to happen here in Kogi State."

"But to the glory of God, you are seeing the atmosphere: very tranquil, very, very peaceful and very harmonious."

"So there is nothing like violence, and the conduct of free and fair and credible election is in the hands of INEC, security

agencies and the citizens."

"We the citizens have conducted ourselves very orderly and very cordially."

Speaking about the performance of INEC, Bello said: "INEC are doing their job very well and the security agencies are equally assisting. The 2019 general elections went as far as to the Supreme Court and various other courts where one issue or the other concerning the election was contested and I was cited."

"The Supreme Court of the land has exonerated me that those who are mentioning me or are maligning me or associating me with violence cannot succeed, because I am peaceful. I am a peace loving citizen and a governor."

"You can see that issues of security have been tackled effectively here in Kogi State like never before."

"You know how it used to be: people travelling from

south to the north and from North to the South, and people sleeping with their two eyes open in the past. Now they sleep with their two eyes closed."

Issues like kidnapping, ISWAP, Boko Haram and other extreme groups have been decimated and they are no longer existing in Kogi State. That is the effort of this administration, or of my own administration.

"I am very, very sure that the next administration, by the special grace of God, that will be embraced by the people of Kogi State today will take over from me and continue to build on that."

"I know very well that you know where my heart is and you know where the citizens' hearts are, and we are going to come up with very triumphant results."

"So far, so good, no adverse report from anywhere."

"I want to urge the media not to listen to hearsay and not to listen to social media. Please wait till INEC comes up with their official report or position as far as this exercise is concerned here in Kogi State."

"I want to assure all of you that I am quitting the stage better than I met it."

SDP candidate Ajaka raises alarm on 'missing result sheets'

In Kogi East, the candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), Yakubu Murtala Ajaka, raised the alarm that result sheets for the governorship election for three local government areas were missing.

Ajaka, who spoke shortly after casting his vote in Idah Local Government Area of the state, listed the affected councils to include Okehi, Adavi and Okene, all in Kogi Central Senatorial District.

The SDP candidate claimed that staff of INEC in the three local government areas of the state had been compromised by those he described as undemocratic elements.

Kogi, Imo polls: Ododo, Ajaka in close race; Uzodimma ahead

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Eyewitnesses revealed that the armed security operatives fired warning shots into the air upon receiving an alarm from vigilant voters who detected the presence of the thugs.

The abrupt response compelled the assailants to retreat hastily into their getaway vehicle and flee.

The governorship candidate of Labour Party (LP), Athan Achonu, speaking at his Umunumo Ward in Ehimbe Mbano local Government Area, declared that he has great hope for the nation's democracy.

He said: "I believe that Mr. President wants to give us free and fair election in Imo State. So, I feel great and have great hope for democracy in Nigeria."

He attributed the low turnout of voters to the fear over the unusual movement of security personnel in the area.

Achon's party, LP, accused the members of the ruling APC in the state of hijacking the electoral materials meant for four Wards in the Ideato North Local Government Area of the state.

The state chairman of the party, Barr. Calistus Ihejiagwa, accused security agents of aiding APC members to hijack and divert the materials.

PDP, military molesting voters in Bayelsa, says Sylva

Most of the uploaded results from Bayelsa State also went in favour of Governor Douye Diri of the PDP. But his major opponent, APC's Timipre Sylva, accused PDP and the military of molesting voters during the election.

Sylva spoke after casting his vote at Polling Unit 4, Dukuraku Central Open Space, Okposama, Ward 4, Brass Local Government Area.

Sylva said the contest appeared to be between APC and the security agents, particularly the military, which he said had taken sides.

He said: "I am very confident that things will go for APC. But we have some issues in units 3, 5 and 9 because the registers are not uploaded. We have escalated it to INEC and they accepted that it was a careless mistake on their part. I know why units in my ward were not uploaded."

"So far in my unit, things are going well. But around the state we are following there is a lot of violence. PDP is doing quite a bit there trying to molest our voters with security."

"In fact in some cases it is believed that we are running this election not against PDP but against security. But we are contending with the situation and in the end we will come

He said the party had already reported the situation to the INEC headquarters in the hope that the issue raised would be looked into.

He, however, commended the electoral umpire for smooth conduct of the exercise, describing the arrangements as perfect.

Ajaka also applauded President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for fulfilling his pledge to provide security for voters during the election.

His words: "I feel happy. I thank God for this day. From what we are seeing, it is clear I'm the one having the majority. But the report I'm getting from Okene and Adavi (local government areas) have been forwarded to Abuja."

"They have not seen the original results sheet in Okehi, Okene and Adavi, and I am sure the INEC chairman is updated with this situation."

"There's no way we are going to an election that the original result sheets are not there. That is not in the guidelines."

"Everything about the INEC arrangement is 100 per cent perfect, but their men in Okehi, Okene and Adavi have compromised."

"They should question the returning officers in these local governments I mentioned."

On his part, APC governorship candidate Usman Ododo, speaking to the press after casting his vote at his Upogoro polling Unit 1, said: "As you can see it is just like a carnival, and I want to use this medium to commend the INEC management for putting in place a very transparent and hitch free electoral process."

"Again, the security agencies they are doing very wonderfully as you can see. The election is peaceful and orderly, so I'm happy about that."

"As you can see, I am on ground. This is my village. I am close to the people. I am part of them. You can see that everybody is happy and it is just like a carnival."

out victorious.

"This morning I woke up with the story of one of my APC members being shot in Yenagoa. In the afternoon we heard the situation the military personnel have taken over some areas. In fact in Biseni community, the military are there to snatch ballot boxes."

Diri inducing voters with money, says LP candidate

Mr. Udens Eradiri, governorship candidate of Labour Party (LP), accused Governor Diri of inducing voters with money.

Eradiri spoke after casting his vote in Ward 10, Unit 5, Ekpetiama, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State on Saturday.

The former President of the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC), Worldwide, said it was unfortunate that the government was buying votes with state resources that should be used in improving the lives of the people of Bayelsa State.

He said: "Some of us have decided that we will embrace the non-violent approach. But behind the scene, state resources are everywhere, money is being exchanged for votes, ten, fifteen, twenty thousand and so on. Money that would have been used in building good schools, standard hospitals and improving the lots of the people, they are buying peoples votes."