

# 3 kids die of suffocation, 4 women faint

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TRAGEDY struck in Mararaba, Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, during the elections on Saturday as three kids reportedly suffocated on the backs of their mothers at a polling centre.

*Sunday Tribune* also gathered that four other female voters, including a pregnant woman, fainted at the same polling centre marked '008 Mararaba' and were rushed to a nearby hospital where they were eventually revived.

According to eyewitnesses, the incidents followed the long hours the voters, who turned out in their numbers as early as 6:00 a.m., had waited without officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on ground to commence voting exercise until 12 noon.

## INEC card reader stolen in transit

It was also gathered that despite the officials' arrival at noon, voting could not commence until 1:30 p.m. as the electoral officers could not unlock the card readers

brought to the centre.

The officials claimed that one of the card readers meant for the voting centre had been stolen in transit.

"Following the long hours spent here waiting for the INEC officials to commence the voting exercise, the sad incidents occurred in succession and the three kids suffocated on the backs of their parents, while four other women fainted.

"The heat is too much and their mothers covered them with *hijab*. Before help could come their way, it was rather too late," an eyewitness told our reporter.

## Man nabbed with ballot box, thumb-printed papers

In a related development a middle-age man, described as a known political thug, was nabbed at the same centre for illegal possession of a ballot box already thumb printed and brought to the centre.

He was seen being whisked away with handcuff by security agents to an unknown destination.

A senior police officer told our reporter at the scene of the incident that the details surrounding the case of the suspect was still scanty and needed to be investigated

before any categorical statement could be made.

However, voting was still in progress as of press time (6:58 p.m.), due to the large crowd at the centre, shortage of the card readers and the insistence of the prospective voters that their votes ought to count.

## Electoral officer's disappearance stirs suspicion

While this was going on, the electoral officer in charge of the centre was said to have sneaked out of the environment to an unknown place, sparking suspicion of foul play among the voters.

The arrest of the suspect with the loaded ballot box was said to have fuelled the suspicion surrounding the sudden disappearance of the electoral officer.

When approached, one of the INEC officials said she was a youth corps member and as such was not competent to speak with the press.

Much later, report from the polling centre indicated that all the card readers eventually stopped working, while the electoral officers were suggesting head count, a suggestion the voters turned down, describing it as daylight robbery.