

Violence, ballot box snatching, apathy rock election

- 15 killed in Benue, Delta, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Lagos
- Thugs unleash horror on voters, ballot boxes snatched

From Kunle Oderemi and Dare Adekanmbi

YESTERDAY'S governorship and house of assembly election turned bloody in some parts of the country, leading to the death of 15 people.

① Six people attempting to snatch ballot boxes in Gboko, Benue State, were said to have been killed, while six people were killed in Akwa Ibom and Delta states, two in Rivers State and one person in Lagos.

② In some areas where the

election also turned bloody, security slack was said to have been observed even as security personnel watched while armed thugs unleashed violence.

Hoodlums loyal to desperate politicians in some states had a field day snatching ballot boxes and destroying ballot papers in polling units where people were perceived to be voting against their sponsors.

There was widespread voter intimidation in some states, a development observers said could also have account for low turnout of voters.

The election recorded a lower voter turnout in many states compared to the February 25 presidential and national assembly election.

Major stakeholders, including governors, leaders of thoughts and elder statesmen expressed shock and disbelief following the unprecedented voter apathy that trailed the election.

In most states, governors and other concerned personalities had to beg eligible Nigerians, who had permanent voter cards (PVCs) to come out and vote.

The leaders, especially gov-

ernors seeking re-election and outgoing ones keen on having their anointed candidates as their successors, resorted to social platforms, radio and television to implore voters to go out and cast their votes.

The anxiety among the leaders was heightened by the fact that a minute number of prospective voters were at most polling units hours after accreditation exercise had commenced.

Governors of Oyo, Edo, Osun were among the first set of leaders that expressed apprehension after casting

their votes in their polling units in their state capitals.

The election was rescheduled from March 11 to March 18 by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to reconfigure the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machines, after the February 25 presidential and National Assembly election.

While concerned citizens claimed that the poor turnout was a passive resistance by the people over issues the trailed the presidential election, others blamed it on the spate of violence that char-

acterised the last few days to the election resulting in the loss of lives and destruction of properties in some states.

The election was also marred by killings, unbridled display of political intolerance and destruction of ballot boxes, as well as disruption of polling by political thugs in parts of the country.

The violence unleashed by thugs on prospective voters at polling units necessitated INEC rescheduling the election in 10 polling units in Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State for today [Sunday].