

# Violence mars Edo council election again

## EMMANUEL OBE

**L**OCAL government by-elections in two local government areas in Edo State took place on Saturday amidst pockets of violence and complaints of irregularities by opposition parties.

In Oredo Local Government Area, electoral materials were personally shared out by the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Chris Dega, to presiding officers.

When complaints were made to him about the incomplete materials, he asked the polling officers to go on as more materials would be made available during voting.

The Deputy Governor, Mr. Lucky Imasuen, went round the polling stations to supervise activities in spite of the fact that he was not from Oredo local government area.

His conduct and use of government and security agents to move round the wards did not go down well with leaders of the Action Congress who accused him of perfecting the rigging arrangements of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party.

A drama ensued at the Institute of Continuing Education, Ward Five, where the AC councillorship candidate, Ms. Susan Obayagbona, dried out the deputy governor, asking to know why he had chosen to go round to perfect his party's rigging.

But the deputy governor, whose aides were eager to arrest the AC candidate,

merely waved and asked her to go and relax as there was no cause for worry.

But Imasuen told reporters later that he had actually gone round to ensure that there was peace and security.

He said he thanked God that everything was going on smoothly.

The whole area was tense as government deployed soldiers to strategic points in the state capital, particularly around the headquarters of the Edo State Independent Electoral Commission and the polling wards of the AC chairmanship candidate, Mr. Osaro Obazee.

Some thugs hired by the PDP went around town intimidating people. They even shot and wounded one supporter of the AC in Ward Five.

Meanwhile, the AC polling agent was fear dead when we went to press at 9pm.

The deceased, whose identity, could not be immediately ascertained, was shot at close range from behind at Ward Four of Oredo Local Government area.

Reports from Afuze, the headquarters of Owan East Local Government Area, the entire place was held up by soldiers and policemen, who the AC candidate, Mr. Pally Iriase, said assisted in jeopardising free balloting.

"I am not under any illusion that the referee will allow a free and fair election. I do know that they have never committed themselves to fair play. The role of the

police in all of this is suspect. They know the areas that the PDP sent their thugs to but they closed their eyes to all of that.

Obazee who spoke to newsmen later on condemned the entire exercise as a charade and blamed the former governor, Chief Lucky Igbinedion, for empowering touts and illiterates who were now being used to perpetrate violence in politics.

The situation was not much different at Owan East Local government area where electoral materials were shared out by security agents to leaders of the PDP despite protests from the opposition parties.

The entire area was militarised with soldiers and policemen drafted to all the wards. The election there is being contested by Mr. Pally Iriase of the AC and Mr. Kashietu Ohiwere of the PDP.

## Militants abdu

### FEMI MAKINDE

**M**ILITANTS operating in the Niger Delta Region have kidnapped no fewer than 216 foreigners in the last two years.

The figure was contained in the travel alert issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of Britain.

The travel advice was made available through electronic mail to our correspondent in Akure on Saturday.

It read, "Since January