

Two killed, 26 arrested as violence rocks Adamawa election

MUSIKILU MOJEED

Two persons were feared dead and three others injured in an orgy of violence that gripped Michika Local Government Area of Adamawa State during the governorship election re-run in the state on Saturday.

Our correspondent reported that the incident happened after a group of dreaded thugs, allegedly imported into the state from neighbouring Gombe State by the Peoples Democratic Party, clashed with their

Action counterparts.

The thugs, who reportedly went around disrupting voting, were allegedly accompanied by riot policemen.

At a point, they were reportedly confronted by some AC supporters following which a violent clash took place.

Eye-witnesses said the policemen, in their bid to disperse the feuding thugs, shot into the air.

Two of the thugs, who were said to have been hit by bullets, died instantly while another, an aide of a PDP

topshot in the state, was badly injured and taken to an unknown hospital.

Calm was, however, restored to the area after security operatives overpowered the thugs and chased them away.

Also in Michika, a party chieftain was said to have gone around with thugs disrupting voting in polling booths populated by those opposed to his party.

Reports from Madagali Local Government Area also indicated that ballot papers were being thumb-printed in the residence of a chieftain of the PDP.

Former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar also told journalists that he received report that a retired colonel was going round Maha Local Government Area of the state with soldiers, chasing away voters from polling centres he felt might go the way of the AC.

He said following fears that they might be harassed, voters stayed away from the Maina polling unit in the town.

The Assistant Inspector General of Police in charge of Zone 3, Mr. Sunny Uzoma, confirmed that there were skirmishes at Ngilari in

Magadali Local Government Area and Pallam in Michika Local Government Area.

He did not say whether anybody was killed or injured in the clashes.

"Some persons wanted to snatch ballot boxes but the situation was brought under control by security operatives."

The Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Altine Daniel, an Assistant Superintendent of Police, however, claimed that only one person died and another injured in the violence in Michika.

He said 16 persons had been arrested in connection with the incident.

But in Yola, the state capital, voting was peaceful and orderly.

By Friday evening, the Independent National Electoral Commission had dispatched voting materials to the 21 local government areas of the state.

As early as 8 am on Saturday, polling officials had arrived their duty posts and voting had commenced.

Our correspondent reported that in Ajiwa,

Gwadabawa, Doubeli and Jimeta Central, voting went on well without any incidence.

There was, however, rowdiness in Jimeta Central polling unit following high turnout of voters in the area.

Voting materials meant for Luggere ward in the town were initially erroneously diverted to another polling station but correction was made after voters complained.

The exercise was also disrupted in Kapo unit in Yola allegedly after a brother to a former deputy governor invaded the place with thugs.

Abubakar voted at Ajiya ward in Yola at 11.05am.

He was accompanied to the polling unit by AC candidate for the election, Alhaji Ibrahim Bepetel.

After casting his vote, he told journalists that he was impressed by the way INEC handled the distribution of materials.

"There is no problem with the election in my polling unit but it is still too early to say that all is well. Before I can say that it was free and fair, I have to get reports from all parts of the state," he said.

He added that if the election were free and fair, the AC would win because Adamawa State was an AC territory.

The PDP candidate for the election, Admiral Murtala Nyako (rtd.), voted at Hammayero ward 1 in Mayo Belwa Local Government Area at 10.35am.

After casting his vote, he expressed satisfaction with the high turnout and called on residents of the state to remain peaceful.

He also expressed confidence that he would win the election.

N'Delta governors to meet Yar'Adua over seized

CHIAWO NWANKWO,
JOHN ALECHENU and
JIDE BABALOLA

FOLLOWING Federal Government's reluctance in releasing the N327bn arrears due to the Niger Delta Development Commission from its statutory allocation, governors from the region have decided to meet with President Umaru Yar'Adua on the issue.

About N224bn out of the amount was owed by former President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, who did not comply with the NDDC Act in terms of funding.

The governors' decision to seek a political solution to releasing the funds came just as the South-South parliamentary caucus at the National Assembly may have resolved to go to court over the matter.

The Chairman of the South-South parliamentary caucus in the House of Representatives, Chief Andrew Uchendu, disclosed these to *SUNDAY PUNCH* in

N327bn NDDC funds

INVESTIGATION

one of the issues that would put his conviction to test.

Uchendu said, "The House of Reps Parliamentary caucus had a retreat in Yenegoa recently on the matter, and it came to the conclusion that the Federal had not discharged its responsibility, and we decided to seek the option of going to court."

"We have ever since been informed that the forum of South-South governors would wish to adopt a political solution to the matter."

"This will be accepted by our caucus provided it will succeed; and meeting the president is the high point of this political solution."

"We expect that the governors meet Mr. President on this matter. The Vice-

House committees: 70 per cent of chairmen face sack

JOHN AMEH

THE Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Dimeji Bankole, and principal officers may have come under pressure over the delay in the planned reconstitution of the membership of the 70 standing House committees.

Investigations by *SUNDAY PUNCH* showed that over one month after Bankole set up a selection committee to carry out the assignment, it had been unable to give a comprehensive progress report to the anxious

performance.

"There are committees that exist but nobody hears about them, while some committees are simply overpopulated."

"We have situations where some members also have no committees while there are those that belong to eight committees," a House source said.

Under the new arrangement being proposed, members are allowed the liberty to select any five committees they would want to serve on.

The fate of a committee

President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan will be there; and judging by the nature of his person, we are not in doubt that he will play a key role."

Also, Senator Victor Ndoma-Egba, leader of South-South Parliamentary caucus, said the N327bn arrears owed the NDDC was a statutory allocation; and by virtue of this fact, it was obligatory for the Federal Government to release the funds.

chairman depends on the assessment of his performance by the members, who will vote to retain him or remove him.

The new arrangement is said to tactically remove Bankole from blame should a committee member lose his seat, as he would be seen to have no hand in the removal.

"Again, that is part of the anxiety; we think that the approach is subject to abuse."

"There is no guarantee that some desperate chairmen will not use money to induce their members just

to remain in office even though it is clear that they are not performing," the source added.

The renewed flurry of activities in the committees, especially those that have been dormant since 2006, is believed to be part of the plot by some chairmen to remain in office.

When our correspondent sought the reactions of the Minority Leader of the House, Alhaji Mohammed Ndume, he denied that Bankole and other principal officers of the House were under pressure.