

One dies, as violence mars Delta LG poll

- Okowa expresses satisfaction with electoral process
- 2 Electoral offenders caught with guns

From **Paul Osuyi, Asaba** and **Ben Dunno, Warri**

AN ad-hoc staff of the Delta State Independent Electoral Commission (DSIEC), whose identity could not be ascertained, was killed yesterday during the local government election held across the state.

Although details of the incident were sketchy as at press time, a source told Sunday Sun that the victim was killed by political thugs in Onicha-Ugbo, Aniocha North Local Government Area.

But Public Relations Officer of the state police command, DSP Andrew Aniamaka, when contacted, said the victim was not killed. He said that the man "slumped and died."

In other parts of the state, there were pockets of violence during the election, which was also marred by late arrival of materials in most of the polling booths monitored.

In Ughelli, headquarters of Ughelli North Local Government Area, the office of the DSIEC was set ablaze by suspected thugs in the early hours of the day.

The thugs who were armed with various weapons invaded the office about 8.20am, when officials of the electoral body were about to start distributing materials in the presence of some party agents and security officials.

They were said to have shot sporadically to scare people, who scampered for safety, before setting the building ablaze for reasons yet to be ascertained.

But an eyewitness, one

Enis Ogegere, a youth leader in Agbarha-Otor community said before the arrival of the thugs, there was argument over the inspection of electoral materials at the DSIEC office.

Ogegere said: "Upon inspection of the materials, we noticed that there were only ballot papers and thumb printing materials excluding result sheets, this was what led to the fracas."

Also, at Igbodo Ward 08 (Ilabor Primary School) in Ika North-East, two persons were arrested with guns while allegedly attempting to disrupt voting exercise. Ilabor Primary School unit is said to be the deciding factor with the highest number of registered voters in the Ward.

A voter at the unit alleged that the two persons suspected to be thugs loyal to one of the political parties stormed the unit with guns but were overpowered by local security operatives who handed them over to the police.

Although the election was peaceful in some areas, late arrival of materials at Ward 03 (Iselegu) in Ndokwa East almost marred the process in the area. However, voting later proceeded peacefully in the area.

Meanwhile, the state governor, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa has expressed satisfaction with the conduct of yesterday's council election in the state.

Okowa who voted about 10.05am in unit 03 of Ward 03 (Omi Primary School), Owa-Alero in Ika North East accused the opposition party in the state, the All Progressive Congress (APC) of causing crisis in Ughelli North.

"In Ughelli north, I heard about the incident and I have called the Commissioner of Police, he is trying to give me the full report. I heard that some thugs of the APC were able to move into the DSIEC to set fire on some of the electoral materials, but I don't have the full report," he said.

Okowa insisted that his opponents did not campaign and we're looking for one excuse or the other for their failure by coming up with allegation that election results had been pre-written.

"Election result can't be written when the process is ongoing. In this particular Ward, we don't have APC contending with us but we are still going through the process.

"You know when people are not prepared for election, they will give all manner of reasons but you will find out that I personally led campaigns in all 25 councils, and even went to Burutu town.

"During my election, I was unable to get to Burutu town, somebody went on my behalf, but this time, we went there. Thereafter, every ward, every village was visited by our campaign team, but I am not sure you saw the opposition team at all.

"They can actually come up with reasons why they are failing because they didn't actually make attempt at all. That is why the violence you heard about in Ughelli North is coming from them because they are not prepared for election," Okowa said.

The member representing Ika federal constituency at the House of Representatives, Mr. Victor Nwokolo, commended DSIEC, noting

that the materials arrived at his Igbodo Ward 08 early, and that voting went on peacefully.

Nwokolo said some hoodlums invaded Ilabor Primary School voting unit to disrupt the exercise but were arrested with guns and handed over to the police.

In Aniocha South Local Government Area, there were cases of alleged non-provision of candidates booklets in some units of Ogwashi-Uku and Ubulu-Uku areas while in Nsukwa and Ejeme axis, the returning officer and some polling agents were nowhere to be found.

Reacting to the developments, a staunch leader of the APC, Chief Hyacinth Enuha said: "The election in Aniocha South is below acceptable standard as most people who turned out for voting could not find their names on the voters' register."

But the chairmanship candidate of the PDP in the local government, Isaac Anwuzia said the election was peaceful and that the issue of materials that arrived late was resolved before voting commenced.

On his part, a former national deputy chairman of the PDP and now chief-tain of the APC, Dr. Cairo Ojougboh, said the election in the state was a fraud, stressing that voting did not hold in many polling units.

While blaming the state governor for allegedly instigating the perceived irregularities, Ojougboh called on the state House of Assembly to commence the impeachment process of the governor, who is his kinsman.

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