

Felix Nwaneri

Presidential/NASS poll:

18 killed, voters terrorised

Yesterday's presidential and National Assembly elections were marred by violence and intimidation of voters in some states across the country that left about 16 people dead.

Among states adversely affected in the orgy of electoral violence were Rivers, Delta, Lagos, Ebonyi, Imo, Bayelsa, Oyo, Kogi and Zamfara.

Rivers State recorded the highest number of casualties with seven deaths; three died in Delta; two Ebonyi; while Imo, Bayelsa, Lagos, Oyo and Kogi, each, recorded one death.

Among those who lost their lives in Rivers State were six suspected thugs and an Army officer. The suspected thugs were reportedly killed, when they ambushed troops of 6 Division of the Nigerian Army heading for Abonema, Akuku Toru Local Government Area of the state.

The Army, in a statement, said the "pre-planned attack occurred in between Charles and Bob-Manuel's compounds in Abonema Town at about 1:00pm." It however vowed that the perpetrators of the attack will be made to face the full wrath of the law.

The statement read in part: "The attackers barricaded a major road into the town and laid an ambush in the adjoining built-up areas from where they opened fire on our unsuspecting troops when they attempted to remove the barricade.

"The gallant troops fought their way through the siege

and in the process killed six of the assailants. However, we lost a lieutenant in the encounter.

"Preliminary investigation indicated that one Roland Sekibo - the Chairman Akuku Toru LGA, Omodo - the CSO Akuku Toru LGA and Kenneth of Kula currently at large were the masterminds of the unexpected/unprovoked attack."

The three persons killed in Delta were over attempt to snatch ballot boxes. The incident took place at Amope in Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State during accreditation and voting at some units in the area.

The suspected hoodlums emerged from an unknown place and started shooting sporadically to scare away voters and election officers and agents. Two voters died in the process, while the third person died at a hospital.

Police personnel manning the units, who could not withstand the hoodlums, took their heels, but a quick intervention by soldiers stopped the thugs from making away with ballot boxes.

The incident in which two persons lost their lives in Ebonyi State occurred at Amagu Ward 1, Ikwo Local Government Area Friday night.

The state's Police Commissioner, Mr. Awosola Awotunde, who confirmed the incident to journalists on

Saturday morning, said the deaths were as a result of a clash between supporters of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC) in the area.

In Zamfara, APC Ward Chairman in Yandoton Daji in Tsafe Local Government Area, Alhaji Yusuf Yahaya, was murdered by gunmen. The police said he was killed at about 1:00am, while on his way home from Tsafe.

In Lagos, voting was disrupted in some polling units in Ago Palace Way in Okota; that when suspected hoodlums believed to be loyal to one the political parties stormed the area in what non-indigenes described as an attempt to

stop them from voting.

One of the hoodlums, who attempted to snatch a ballot box, was lynched in the process. The state Police Commissioner, Zubairu Muazu, who confirmed the incident, said although the electoral process started well with only instances of late arrival of materials to some polling units, trouble started over alleged intimidation of voters.

"We had information that there was an issue in Ago Palace Way in Okota; that some people were being intimidated. There were also some issues in Somolu and there were some arrests made there. Some area boys were trying to disturb the process,

being unruly. Nine of them were arrested and they are being investigated. Otherwise, all is well."

The killing 19-year-old Daniel Usman at his polling unit in Ayingba in Kogi State was over his insistence that he has the right to vote for the candidate of his choice.

In Imo State, a chieftain of APC in Governor Rochas Okorocha's Ideato South Council Area of Imo State was stabbed to death.

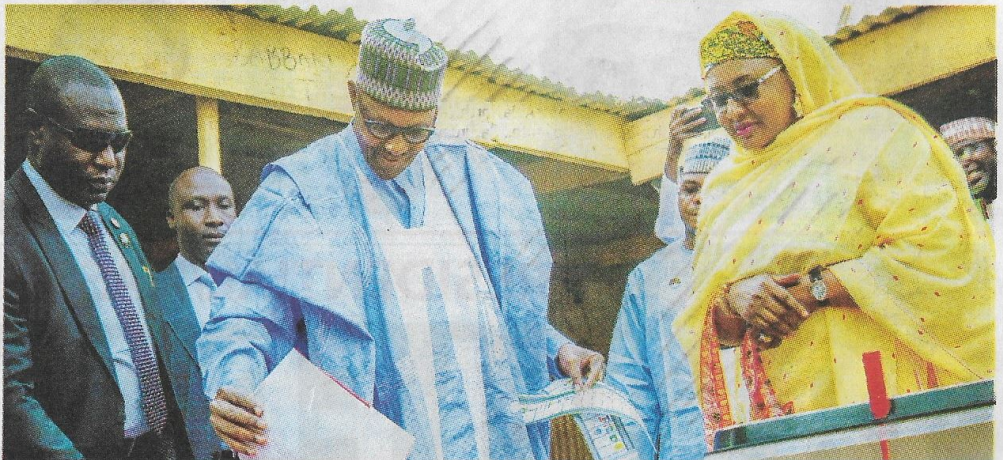
Community sources told our correspondent that the slain chieftain, Uzoma Nwagbo, popularly known as 'Babankpo', a village chief of Umuezedike, Umuohom in Ideato South Council Area

of the state, was killed following disputes that arose during the sharing of election mobilization funds for their polling unit.

The killing at Ward 2, Unit 13 and 14 Polling Centre in Ibadan South East Council of Oyo State, was over an attempt by thugs to snatch ballot boxes.

An eyewitness, who identified the victim as Monsuru Hamzat, said the hoodlums attempted to snatch the ballot boxes, while counting of votes was in progress.

Oyo State commissioner of Police, Shina Olukolu, who confirmed told the incident, said it happened around 2:30 p.m.



President Muhammadu Buhari and wife, Aisha, cast their votes for the Presidential and National Assembly elections in Daura, Katsina state... yesterday.

PHOTO:TIMOTHY IKUOMENISAN