

Violence, deaths, voter apathy, suppression mar process

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in the lead.

"Some of the hoodlums, who were armed, told everyone us at our polling units to leave and go back home if we are not voting their candidate," she said.

Sunday Telegraph learnt that the arrival of the hoodlums at every polling unit created fear and panic as voters ran helter skelter for their lives. The voters, it was learnt, were told to go home if their votes were not for Babajide Sanwo - Olu the governorship candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC) on Lagos State.

Our correspondent also gathered that those casting their ballot for the APC were allowed to vote more than once as an elderly woman was seen voting three times. An APC party agent was also seen telling voters that members of his party must vote before any other person.

As if these were not enough, some political thugs brazenly attacked and chased away non-Yoruba-speaking voters in Oshodi-Isolo area of Lagos because they would not cast their ballots for Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who is seeking re-election.

The attackers, wielding iron rods and sticks, invaded polling units across wards on Ajao Estate in Oshodi-Isolo Local Council Development Area (LCDA) where voters were waiting for the arrival of electoral officials as at 8:53am.

Delta State

Three persons were shot dead as violence erupted at a polling centre in Mosogar, Ethiope West Local Government Area, Delta State. The three persons were reportedly shot dead during a gun duel between some thugs and security operatives. In the confusion that ensued thereafter, the home of a former Chairman of Ethiope West Local Government council, Dr. Wilson Omerie, was set ablaze by some irate youths.

There was also violence in Evwreni, Ughelli North Lo-

cal Government Area, as another gang of thugs attacked INEC officials, destroying about three Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machines and other election materials at a polling centre. Some of the INEC officials were said to have sustained injuries, while voting was disrupted at the polling units in the area.

At Amukpe, Sapele Local Government Area, one of the youths lost his hand during a clash with thugs at one of the polling units.

Meanwhile, voting commenced early at some polling units in parts of the state, as polling materials arrived at the various RAC Centres the previous day and officials of INEC commenced the distribution of the items to the various units as early as 7:00am.

The governorship candidate of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Chief Great Ogboru, who spoke to journalists commended the peaceful atmosphere at the polling unit, where he voted and expressed hope that the exercise will be peaceful across the state.

"The verification in the voting process was okay because the BVAS worked. My thumbprint was captured.

"Until this time, it has been peaceful. So, let us see the situation later in the day. Let us hear the results if the uploading of the units results will take place before we can start to judge," he said.

Also, the gubernatorial candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Delta State, Rt Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, who voted at Oha Ward 1, Unit 33, Osubi, Okpe Local Government Area of the State at exactly 9:30am, expressed optimism that he would win because his party had worked so hard for it.

Oborevwori said it was also expected that the exercise would be properly conducted and peaceful across the state, stressing that every critical stakeholder must strive to further strengthen

the democratic process in Nigeria.

Governorship candidate of the APC in Delta State, Senator Ovie Omo-Agege, who cast his vote at his Orogun Ward 2 Unit 19, Ughelli North LGA at 11:11am, also expressed optimism that his party would win the election.

Omo-Agege said: "We believe that we are going to win at the end of the day, no doubt about that; this has been the feelers for more than a month and the momentum was there all along coming into the polls today, so I expect that at the end of the day, we would be declared winner.

"PDP entered into this contest with a determination to ensure that attacks are launched on polling units across the state, most especially in Delta Central to destroy the votes.

"We have received reports of those attacks in polling units in Evwreni, Ughelli South, Oteri and of course, there are some mischief going on since last night in Gbaramatu and Oporoza in Warri South West Local Government Area."

On their parts, the governorship candidates of the SDP and LP, Olorogun Kenneth Gbagi, Mr. Ken Pela respectively, also expressed optimism that they would win the election. Pela however, said his enthusiasm had been dampened by reports of vote buying by some political parties and violence in some parts of the state.

Benue State

Military forces drafted to ensure the peaceful conduct of the elections, reportedly shot dead two political thugs who stormed polling units to snatch ballot boxes in Gboko South Local Government area of Benue State.

The military men also beat up a serving member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Kpam Sokpo, who represents the Buruku Federal Constituency of Benue State. *Sunday Telegraph* gathered

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