

You're on your own!

* Obasanjo tells PDP presidential aspirants, others

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PRESIDENT Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday said that he would support whoever emerged as the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, in the 2007 polls, insisting that he would not be involved in the emergence of any candidate for any post.

Obasanjo who spoke during the House of Assembly primaries of his constituency, Abeokuta North, held at Adebisi Omohinmi Hall in the Ogun State capital said that he would support only candidates that emerged from the party primaries. The president, who handed over his delegate accreditation to the secretary to the state

government, Alhaji Sarafadeen Tunji Ishola, to be used to vote for the winner after the votes had been counted said he was not interested in supporting any aspirant.

He explained that after the votes of the 685 delegates at the congress would have been counted, and the winner declared, his vote should be added to that of the winner whom he said would automatically become his candidate. "I have decided that after every congress, a candidate will emerge and that candidate will be mine", he said.

Obasanjo, who arrived the venue of the congress at about noon clad in blue attire,

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Gov Peter Odili with the Alake of Egbaland, Oba Adedokun Gbadebo during the governor's Presidential campaign in Abeokuta at the weekend.

BY OUR REPORTERS

THE Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, House of Assembly congresses which took place in all the 16 local governments areas of Ekiti State yesterday were marred by violent protest in Ikere Local Government Area, a situation which led to three people being hospitalised due to gunshots allegedly fired by the police.

Trouble was said to have started when a group loyal to the former deputy governor of the state, Mr. Abiodun Aluko, barricaded the gate of the College of Education Guest House, Ikere Ekiti, venue of the congress, insisting that the election would not hold because last week ward congresses which took place in the local government were manipulated by the group loyal to a member of the PDP Board of Trustees, Chief Dayo Okondo.

But the local government chairman, Mr. Banji Aluko, and some party chieftains loyal to Okondo insisted that the election would hold.

When it became apparent that the former deputy governor's group would not allow the election to hold, the council chairman was said to have invited the police to help restore order.

In the melee that followed, the police allegedly opened fire on the Abiodun Aluko group, leaving three of them badly wounded and rushed to the State Specialist Hospital, Ado-Ekiti.

On why he insisted that the election should take place when the party had given a directive that the exercise should not take place, the council chairman said materials for the election would not be there if the PDP had given a contrary directive.

However, the former deputy governor told newsmen that on no account should the election had been held yesterday since the ward congresses which took place in the council last week were inconclusive.

The violence in Ikere, prompted the state administrator, Brigadier General Adetunji Olurin, to summon all the PDP leaders in the council and the party chairman in the state, Mr. Ropo Adesanya, for an emergency meeting yesterday. The outcome of the meeting was not available at press time.

The exercise was generally

peaceful in other 15 local governments in the state, except initial skirmishes which the exercise witnessed in the early hours of yesterday.

In Rivers, 7 feared dead

In Rivers State, violence almost marred the PDP primaries with about seven person feared dead and several others injured. At Elembe, around Etou, a youth whose name was given as Chutte Jorkaaka was reportedly shot dead while about twenty others sustained various degrees of gun shot wounds. Sources told *Sunday Vanguard* that the deceased and his group said to be loyal to one of the aspirants for the House of Assembly ran into a rival group loyal to another said to be seeking a third term in the House of Assembly. And an exchange of gun fire ensued. The corpse of the deceased youth was said to have been deposited at a morgue in the area.

Contrary to expectation, the clash did not disrupt voting in the local government. One of the delegates told *Sunday Vanguard* at about 4pm that he voted shortly after the incident. And as at that time, he said, voting was still going on.

At Ogubolo, party sources said that a commissioner in the state and a chieftain of the party fled with voting materials. So election could not hold. The state chairman of the PDP in the state, Chief Tamuno Jonah, the source said, was arrested on the order of an orderly attached to one of those behind the fraud because he made attempt to resist the electoral manipulation. When *Sunday Vanguard* met the state police PRO, Mrs Baresua Ireju, on the congress, she said the police would only speak on the exercise after they had collated information on the election.

At Nonwa in Tai Local Government, another source told *Sunday Vanguard* that about two persons were killed. The source which confirmed the death of a civilian said a soldier may have also been

Congress of crises!

- 3 PDP chieftains shot in Ekiti
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killed. But an army source denied the death of any soldier.

In Degema, Okrika and PHALGA areas, when *Sunday Vanguard* went round at about 3pm, there were fears among delegates that the election had been concluded even before the exercise took off. In Khana Local Government Area, the car of a Senator was reportedly smashed by an angry mob.

Along Onne Road, a source said an ambush was laid for some politicians which claimed two lives.

Around Abua quarters, very close to the seat of power in the state, a fracas ensued among some PDP loyalists reportedly waiting for materials. There were fears that they may have inflicted severe injuries on themselves since very dangerous weapons were freely used.

Protests in Anambra

In Anambra, protests marred the primary election in some parts of Anambra State. Reports said in Onitsha South and Onitsha North Local Government Areas, the election witnessed widespread protests following alleged use of illegal delegates' list to conduct the election.

In Onitsha North, Dr. Alex Obiogbolu, a governorship aspirant, protested what he called manipulation of the approved delegates' list. He alleged that the Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Mr. Mike Balonwu, who is from the area, and who is alleged to have already secured the ticket for the House of Representatives, had been going around, boasting that the names of the winners of the election had been written and that nobody could change it.

In Onitsha South, the stronghold of Senator Joy Emodi, fake delegates' list was also said to have been used which caused her teeming supporters to be left out of the election. Consequently, two different elections were said to have been held in these local government area, a case said to have attracted the attention of both the monitoring team from Abuja and the party's state executive council.

Supporters of Emodi, apparently feeling cheated, wanted to take to violence but for the quick intervention of Emodi herself who pleaded with them, with a promise to look into their grievances.

The situation in Oyi constituency was not different, as the delegates' list brought for the election did not reflect the result of the ward congress result held last week forcing the people to disrupt the election. To forestall breakdown of law and order the election was stopped.

In Ihiala 1 Constituency, the election was stopped following irregularity in the delegates' lists. Even names of aspirants like the incumbent, Hon. Theophilus Nnorom, Prince Kenneth Emeakayi and Ikenna Obidiegwu were not found on the list. The atmosphere was so charged that the election had to be stopped on the advice of the divisional police officer in the area who was said to be there in person.

Tight security in Kaduna

In Kaduna, the primaries election were conducted peacefully.

The congresses which took place in 22 out of the 23 local government areas of the state were however held amidst tight security.

Sunday Vanguard gathered that the congress did not take place in Lere Local Government Area of the state due to the alleged arrest of the local

government chairman by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for alleged misuse of funds.

The party in the area, it was learnt, postponed the congress indefinitely though the chairman was said to have been released on bail last Friday.

In Kaduna North local Government, the congress was conducted under heavy security at the Ranchers Bees Stadium with only accredited delegates being allowed into the stadium where they cast their votes. Heavily armed police were drafted to the stadium just as armed mobile police were deployed to the metropolis on patrol.

Congress in Edo peaceful

In Edo, the PDP primary election was generally peaceful throughout the state.

In Oredo West Constituency where the local government chapter is located on Murtala Mohammed Way, Benin, delegates conducted themselves in an orderly manner, even as security was tight.

At Emokpae Primary School along Mission Road, Benin City, venue of the primary election for Oredo East constituency, the scenario was the same. Also at Olua primary school at Uselu, venue of the election for Egor Local Government, it was also very peaceful.

At the time of going to press, the results of the PDP primary election in the state were yet to be announced.

In Enugu, Ken Nnamani, others stay away

The primaries in Enugu State were peacefully conducted.

The primaries witnessed massive turn out of party delegates but some chieftains of the party including Senate President Ken Nnamani did

not participate in the exercise and no reason was given for their absence.

Distribution of materials to electoral officers was concluded at about 1 pm owing to late arrival of materials from the party headquarters in Abuja and the officials moved out immediately with security men to conduct the elections.

However, 60 persons picked nomination forms for the 24 State House of Assembly seats out of which 10 were disqualified for various reasons, including not having authentic party cards. 21 members of the State Assembly including the Speaker, Chief Abel Chukwu, bought the forms seeking re-election into the assembly. But three members of the assembly, including Mr. Joseph Onoh representing Enugu North, were dropped from the list of contestants.

In Bayelsa, aspirants jolted by primaries suspension

The news of the postponement of the House of Assembly primaries of the PDP in Bayelsa State yesterday jolted members of the ruling party, especially the aspirants who had mobilized their supporters for the exercise.

The PDP leadership had earlier announced the postponement of the election in five states of the federation including Bayelsa State.

It was gathered that the postponement of the exercise in the state was sequel to the conflict in the result of the last ward congress held in the state.

Sources told *Sunday Vanguard* that three different lists were forwarded to the national secretariat of the party by the contending factions battling for the soul of the state.

It was however learnt that the committee set up by the party headed by Ebenezer Babatope recommended that the three lists be harmonized in the interest of peace.

Primaries in Abia shifted

THE primaries for the election of candidates for the House of Assembly poll in next year's elections could not take place in Abia State yesterday due to what the party chairman, Dr. Rex Otuka, described as logistic problems. He was not specific on what the problems were, but the state chairman of the party's congress committee, Chief Olisa Metuh, said the exercise would take place today in the 24 state constituencies.

Already, chieftains of the party have arrived their constituencies to ensure that their favoured candidates won the PDP ticket for their constituencies. Among those sighted in the state are the party's presidential aspirant, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe, former chairman of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Chief Onyema Ugochukwu, former national secretary, Prince Vincent Ogbulafor, former deputy governor, Chief Enyinnaya Abaribe, among others.

There was last minute rush on Friday by the aspirants to collect the nomination forms and *Sunday Vanguard* gathered that no fewer than 50 persons were gunning for the 24 seats.