

2007 Guber polls



Gubernatorial elections: Lagos DPA candidate, Mr. Jimi Agbaje at the polling station on Bombay Crescent, Apapa



Lagos AC candidate Babatunde Fashola at Unit 9, ward G3, State Senior Grammar School, Surulere, yesterday



Anambra PDP candidate Andy Ubah at St. Peters Catholic Church, Uga-Aguata LGA, yesterday

Violence mars polls: 52 killed

AMID violence in many states of the country, Nigerians went to the polls yesterday to elect governors for the 36 states and members of the Houses of Assembly. About 52 persons lost their lives to the violence that characterised the polls with the highest toll coming from Rivers State where seven policemen and four soldiers were killed by suspected militants who attacked two police stations at Mino Okoro and Elenwo. The twelfth victim in Rivers State was described as brother of the running mate of a gubernatorial candidate who was murdered by suspected thugs while the deputy gubernatorial candidate's house was razed.

Although President Olusegun Obasanjo denied the killing of the policemen and soldiers by the militants Friday night was politically motivated, many residents of Rivers State believed that the fact that the militants snatched arms from the police stations was an indication that the militants may have intended using the arms during yesterday's polls. Obasanjo and the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Professor Maurice Iwu, described the polls as satisfactory. But the Action Congress, AC and the presidential candidate of All Nigeria Peoples Party, ANPP, General Muhammadu Buhari, protested alleged irregularities in the elections.

Rivers: Militants kill 7 policemen, 4 soldiers

Assistant Inspector General of Police in charge of Zone 6, Ade Ajekaiye arrived yesterday in Port Harcourt over the killing of the seven policemen and four soldiers in Rivers State by suspected militants. The state police commissioner, Mr Felix Ogbaidu, told journalists in Port Harcourt that the seven policemen were confirmed dead when suspected militants on Friday burnt two police stations.

Ogbaidu said the incident took place between 10 p.m. and midnight and that the affected police stations were situated at the Elenwo and Miniokoro neighbourhoods of Port Harcourt. According to him, three other policemen were abducted while several arms and ammunition were carted away by the militants.

He also said that in another attack, four soldiers were reported to have been killed by suspected militants at Degema.

Obasanjo, commenting on the killings in Abeokuta, where he voted, said they had nothing to

do with yesterday's elections. According to him, the suspected militants action was not political. The president also ruled out politics as the motive for Friday's killing of an Islamic cleric, Ustaz Jafaar, in Kano. The cleric, described as a former associate of Governor Rabi'u Kwankwaso, had been shot dead in a mosque alongside an aide.

Except for the killings by the suspected militants, the governorship and House of Assembly elections in Rivers State was largely peaceful. Nevertheless, the Andoni country home of the DPP gubernatorial running mate, Mr. Samson Ingreghara, was reportedly razed by suspected thugs, and his younger brother allegedly murdered. At Buguma, the home town of the AC gubernatorial candidate, Prince Tonye Prince will, the elections did not hold as sponsored thugs reportedly invaded the police station to destroy all the electoral materials for the exercise.

The exercise suffered low turn out at most polling centers. This some blamed on the tension generated by the Friday attacks on the police stations while others said it was largely due to late arrival of voting materials at election venues. At about 10.45 am, voting materials had not arrived most of the voting centers in the state. In Emohua local government area, voting started as late as 12 noon in some centers. The chairman of the local government, Hon Emeka Nwoke, told news men in a telephone chat that the delay in some of these centers in his local government was caused by the distance from the council secretariat where the election materials were distributed. At most centers like Rumualoga, Owhipa etc where elections held, complaints of lack of result sheets trailed the exercise. Voting materials got there without result sheets. Some party chieftains in these areas reportedly hijacked them. It could not be confirmed if it was in connivance with INEC.

At about 1.50 pm sources said voting had not started in places like, Bonny, Okrika, Degema, Rumudumayan, Borikiri, Krakrama etc. INEC officials however said no life was lost during the exercise which they described as 'violence-free'.

Harcourt, only a handful of voters turned up when INEC officials finally arrived the venue with election materials. The poor turn out of electorate on the campuses was linked to the ASUU strike. One of the voters who would not want her name on print told *Sunday Vanguard* that most of the students who registered for the elections on campus had gone home on forced holidays.

At Omagwa and some few other centers in the state materials meant for the wards were reportedly hijacked by suspected political thugs. There was absence of police men at some of the centers visited while in areas like Borikiri police men deployed to voting centers came in mufti. None of them was ready to give any reason for their action. But it believed that it may not be unconnected with the killing of some of their colleagues in the early hours of the day by some unknown gunmen.

Also of note was the way some adhoc staff of INEC went about the voting materials which left many voters to conclude that most of them were not thoroughly trained for the job may be because of the short time the Commission had for preparation. At Ojukwu field, ward 12 in Port Harcourt local government for instance, rather than make voters express their choice under strict secrecy they were made to thumb-print their choice under the watchful eyes of other voters who formed a circle round whoever was voting. Restriction on vehicular movement also affected the exercise. Some voters who could not find their names in a particular ward could not move to other wards in search of their names because of transportation difficulties. Though the time was extended beyond 3pm for voters who were already at the voting centers to vote it could be safely said that the exercise did not last up to four hours in most centers in the state.

Lagos: Three feared killed In Lagos State, three persons were feared dead while several others were seriously wounded at Agadagu area of Lagos Island few hours after the elections kicked off in the state. Police authorities however said no life was lost during the exercise which they described as 'violence-free'.

Though there were conflicting reports about the cause of the clash, a source said trouble started after supporters of some political parties disagreed over the placement of the parties logo

on the ballot. Another source however said the clash took place after thugs belonging to some of the parties confronted each other after a disagreement.

It was learnt that the disagreement degenerated into open confrontation which made the supporters engage each other in a fierce fighting that lasted for about two hours. During the clash, the supporters made free use of dangerous weapons including short guns, cutlasses, iron rods etc at the end of which three persons lay dead. Scores were also seriously wounded.

Sunday Vanguard gathered that the arrival of a team of policemen from Lion Building and other adjoining stations helped in checking the spread of the fracas which affected voting in the area. Unconfirmed reports said some of the supporters of the warring parties were arrested and taken to Lion Building.

At Makeinde area of Oshodi, the exercise was partially disrupted by hoodlums who stormed some of the polling stations and carted away ballot boxes. But the police from Makeinde Division promptly mobilised and gave the hoodlums a hot chase after which some of them were arrested. Two of the suspects identified as the arrowheads of the attack had already been moved to the state Criminal Investigations Department (SCID), Panti, Yaba for further interrogation. Similar incidents were recorded at Iyana Ipaja and Otto areas of the state before the situation was brought to normal. Several people were matched in Otto during the exercise. The police public relations officer, Mr. Ojajumi, told reporters that the elections were very peaceful and violence-free. He denied knowledge of pockets of skirmishes reported in some areas and commended Lagosians for maintaining peace during the exercise.

Delta: Killings, arson reign According to reports from Delta State, six persons were shot dead and about 19 others seriously injured during the polls.

There was violence in some parts of the state, forcing the state government to impose curfew in Uvwie Local Government Area, while the INEC office in Ughelli North was reportedly burgled overnight.

The elections were, however, suspended in Abraka, the country home of the gubernatorial candidate of the Democratic Peoples Party (DPP), Chief Great Ogboru, following the

tense atmosphere in the area over the absence of voting materials as at 11.00 am.

Besides, the homes of at least three chieftains of the PDP in the state, including Chief Omeni Sobotie, Chief Poge were razed. Two were burnt down in Abraka by armed thugs who set bonfires along the road, as well as in Idama Hotel area of Warri. It was also gathered that voting materials were hijacked by some thugs and taken to the homes of some prominent PDP leaders in the state, where, in the presence of security agents, thumb-printing of ballot papers was done.

Some vehicles belonging to politicians and a police patrol vehicle were also burnt by irate youths, who were protesting the conduct of the elections in Udu and Agbarho areas. In the three Warri local government areas, voting materials arrived late, between 11.30 am and 12.00 pm in some polling stations, while in some polling stations, voters complained that they did not find their names in the voter register.

PDP gubernatorial candidate in the state, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, who is from Abigborodo in Warri North local government area, said that he voted in his area and showed *Sunday Vanguard* his thumb-printed finger.

The Divisional Police Officer for Ekpan Police Station, Tony Ekong, a superintendent of police confirmed to *Sunday Vanguard* that a civilian police patrol van belonging to the station was burnt. At Aladja, voting materials also arrived late, while in Ovwian, INEC officials were chased away because they did not come with enough materials. In Udu, four persons were shot dead in a fracas at the house of a PDP chieftain, Barrister E.A. Esemiteje

told *Sunday Vanguard* that there was no voting in the area. Sporadic shootings also took place at Edjeba, where the constituency office of Hon Dennis Omowiewas vandalized and a car parked in the premises had its windscreen shattered by youths. A PDP chieftain, Chief O. Agbakara, however, mobilized after the incident to ensure that there was hitch-free voting in the locality.

Chairman of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), Barrister Oghenebor Ikimi, told *Sunday Vanguard* that voting materials did not come on time to Ovwian, and even when they came, they were inadequate. When *Sunday Vanguard* arrived Otu-Jeremi, the country home of the PDP deputy gubernatorial candidate, Prof Amos Utuama, at about 10.00 am, voting was yet to commence and two presiding officers that spoke to us said the voting materials were hijacked early that morning. A traditional chief in the area, however, said

that the INEC was only having logistic problem in the distribution of materials, adding, "I have just been to INEC office and they said that they will soon start distributing materials". At Ughelli, two persons were shot dead and seven persons injured as at about 11.00 am when we visited the area. There was no voting going on, as at that time. The ANPP gubernatorial candidate, Mr. Mike Ighofose could not vote because there was no ballot paper even though voting materials came.

At Abraka, there was no voting going on when *Sunday Vanguard* arrived the place at about 12.00 pm. The DPP gubernatorial candidate, Ogboru, told *Sunday Vanguard* that there was no voting in Abraka, Ndokwa, Warri, Ughelli and other parts of the state. Political thugs attacked journalists who came to the town to cover the elections, saying that they were government officials who came to rig the polls. They snatched two GSM handsets, belonging to the Guardian Correspondent in Warri, Mr. Chido Okafor and also smashed his eyeglass. The Tribune Correspondent, Mr. Sylvester Idowu, also lost his digital camera to the hoodlums.

Ogboru said he heard that the elections had been suspended in Abraka but pointed out that it should not be in Abraka only but in other parts of the state, as no election took place. Some restive youths in Udu/Sedeco axis also demonstrated against the delay in the voting and, in the process, allegedly smashed the windscreen of a car, belonging to the police at Ovwian. Before Sobotie's house was burnt in Agbarho, some women were said to have protested the conduct of the elections and in Effurun, the PRP gubernatorial candidate, Engineer Odafe Emmanuel, said he could not vote, because there was no voting material in his area.

Governor James Ibori admitted that there was minor problems in some flashpoints in the state but said that the elections were generally peaceful and orderly, adding that there was no election in Abraka due to logistic problems, and that, that was why the elections had to be suspended to be held another day. He said that election materials did not arrive early in most of the polling stations but not that they were not available in the INEC offices in the council headquarters, adding that in his country home, Oghara, he had to wait until about 10.00 am when the materials arrived before he could vote even though voting was supposed to start at 8.00 am.

Uduaghan said that reports available to him indicated that the elections went on smoothly in the state, including the Ijaw area

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victory in all the elections. He said it was okay to have soldiers in the volatile areas of the state but recounted that in the past, soldiers have been used to rig elections. "It is okay to have them in troubled areas as long as their roles don't go beyond

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of Gbaramatu. A source close to Chief Clark said that there was no election in his area and that the former Federal Commissioner for Information went home after waiting in vain. Former PDP gubernatorial aspirant, Olorogun Kenneth Gbogi, said in a statement yesterday that it was shameful that in a state like Delta, over 95 per cent of the people were not given the privilege to vote. "I went throughout the state, no INEC officials, no boxes," he said, alleging that voting took place a day before the elections.

Ekiti: 3 killed, 8 wounded

In Ekiti State, the polls were marred by electoral malpractices, as miscreants and supporters of candidates were seen snatching ballot boxes and stuffing them with ballot papers. Though the move was boldly resisted in some major towns like Itapa, Ijesha, Ishu, Ikere, Ilawe, Ise and Emure, three people were reported dead at Ikere and Ise, while eight others were seriously wounded when the miscreants attempted to hijack ballot boxes and were vigorously pursued and overpowered by youths in the two towns.

Even, the heavy presence of security operatives would not dissuade politicians from carrying out malpractices at the polls. At Ikere, supporters of the former deputy governor, Mr Abiodun Aluko, were intercepted at Ise junction in an unmarked mini-bus and pursued up to College of Education Road by the restive youths who were later arrested by a combined police and army personnel attached to polling centres and detained at Anaye Divisional Police Station in the town.

At Ise, the youths who protested what they described as high level rigging allegedly perpetrated by a prominent indigene of the town blocked the Ikere-Ado Ekiti road alleging that a reasonable number of ballot boxes had been carted away from some polling centres in the town. The situation was not different at Ijesha Ishu, home town of Chief Paul Alabi, former deputy governor of the state, where the exercise was disrupted by protesting youths for almost three hours, alleging that some PDP leaders in the town had stuffed ballot boxes with voter cards. But Alabi who was until few early this year a member of AC, now in PDP, debunked the allegation, saying it was AC members who had recruited

thugs to cause problem in the town. **Ogun: 2 dead: Obasanjo says polls satisfactory**

A heavy dose of violence which left at least two persons dead and about 25 other persons badly injured from machete cuts characterized the governorship and state Houses of Assembly elections in Ogun State. Ballot boxes were freely hijacked at different polling booths after scaring away voters by hoodlums wielding dangerous weapons including guns, machetes, cudgels, bows and arrows and broken bottles thus successfully marring the exercise.

The ballot boxes were reportedly stolen and stuffed in several places in Abeokuta, Sagamu, Ijebu-Ode Odogbolu and Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area where some of the ballot boxes were burnt by the hoodlums. A commissioner was said to have been arrested along with about 10 hoodlums when some arms and ammunitions were allegedly found in his possession and was detained at Sango police station but was later released.

But Obasanjo at the African Church Grammar School, Ita-Iyalode where he voted in the morning expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the elections, saying "so far so good". No fewer than 15 persons were reportedly arrested by the police for their involvement in the stealing and stuffing of ballot boxes across the state especially in Abeokuta, the state capital. While one Jelili Ogun was allegedly killed by gunshots fired at him at Moborode, in Ijebu-Ode, the other death was recorded at Ilugun Asalu in Abeokuta following several machete cuts.

Those who committed the Abeokuta killing were said to have been arrested by a team of anti riot policemen. Although materials for the elections arrived late at most of the polling booths, voters waited patiently to cast their votes. Former Ogun State Governor, Chief Olusegun Osoba and All Nigeria Peoples' Party, ANPP, governorship candidate, Senator Ibikunle Amosun, had to wait for about two hours at their different polling booths before officials came in with the election materials. However, while voting was going on, the hoodlums, wielding dangerous weapons and driving in buses, started storming the voting centres to

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scare away voters before stuffing some of the ballot boxes.

At Lantoro High School, a notable PDP leader from Abeokuta South was said to have led the hoodlums who fired into the air to scare away voters and substituted their ballot box with an already stuffed one while carting away the original in which the voters were exercising their civic rights. The hoodlums also stormed Abule Oloni, UAC Eleja in Ijemo, Ijemo-Agbadu, Oke Efon, Ita-Elega, Nawar Udeen and other areas where they had a field day until they met a stiff resistance at Oke-Itoku, very close to a police post, where some of them were said to have been apprehended. Simultaneously, the activities of the hoodlums were said to have been going on in other major towns of Sagamu, Ijebu-Ode and Ado-Odo area of the state.

In Ijebu-Ode, voting was immediately suspended in areas such as Otubu Primary School, Ita Osugbo and Moborode areas when the activities of the hoodlums heightened and the late Jelili Ogun was killed. Residents of the areas ran helter skelter and made several phone calls to newsmen and police stations asking for help as in some cases the areas were like war zones. Osoba, after waiting for over one hour before the ballot papers arrived at about 10.45am, blamed the disruption on the PDP thugs. He described the situation as terrible and the elections as unimpressive.

Osoba said that it was all a game plan by the PDP for undue advantage, saying "you can see that the materials are not even enough". Amosun in his own comment, said: "We look up to God and I hope that the security agents will live up to expectation because today is a very important day in the life of the whole nation. Openly, they are displaying all sorts of dangerous weapons, intimidating people, scaring them away, but we pray that the peoples' will should prevail. "They have brought about four of our people to us badly matched and we have directed that they be taken to the hospital".

But the secretary to the state government, Alhaji Sarafadeen Tunji Ishola, denied the involvement of his party, PDP, in the violence, saying that it was being perpetrated by the ANPP. Obasanjo, earlier in the day after voting, said that in spite of few incidents in some parts of the country, the governorship and House of Assembly elections were peaceful. The president, who spoke in an interview with journalists after voting at Ward 11, African Church Grammar polling booth, Itake-Eko, Abeokuta, said he was satisfied with the conduct of the elections.

He also commented on the incidents at Kano and Port Harcourt, saying they were not political. Clad in a blue Kampala, Obasanjo arrived at the polling station at 9:10 in company of the secretary to the Ogun State government, and the state commissioner of police, Mr. Joseph Apapa. He voted at 9:50 am. He said, "Well, very early this morning. I tried to get round the country to find out what the situation is throughout. One or two cases are happening. "There were few incidents over the night. I was told of what happened in Port Harcourt, but, generally the situation in the country is very satisfactory." Obasanjo said the killing of an Islamic cleric, Ustaz Ja'afar, in Kano State, had no political undertone. The president stated that the Ja'afar incident was intra-religious. He said it had nothing to do with the elections. Obasanjo said, "It (the killing in Kano) was very unfortunate. It is intra-religious crisis. Yesterday, I called the Sultan, who you know is the head of Muslims in the country and he is already doing something about it."

Gunmen attack INEC truck

Unidentified gunmen attacked an

INEC truck conveying polling materials to Lagos from Sagamu in Ogun in the early hours of yesterday. It was learnt that the vehicle, with registration number FG499-V01, was riddled with bullets, although the occupants escaped unhurt. The driver of the vehicle, Mr Samson Okome, said that they ran into an ambush at about 1 a.m. He said the attackers opened fire but fled after one of them was shot dead by an accompanying security agent. Okome explained that the truck was carrying electoral materials such as result sheets, caps and bags. The public relations officer of INEC in Lagos, Mr Femi Akinbiyi, confirmed the incident.

Osun: Three escape with gunshot wounds

Pockets of violence characterised the elections in some parts of Osun state with no fewer than three people receiving gun shots at different locations. Ballot boxes were stolen at gun point by people suspected to be political thugs. At Ila-Orangun, Isedo ward two, an AC supporter was shot while trying to prevent some hoodlums allegedly working for the PDP from carting away ballot boxes. It was gathered that the hoodlums who stormed the voting centre at about 11.00 am armed with dangerous weapons including guns shot into the air apparently to scare voters away from the polling booth. Another nine and a half year old girl, identified as Maria Olojede, was also shot at Ode-Omuwhen, some thugs invaded wards five and six and carted away ballot boxes. The two victims of gun shots were said to have been rushed to Ladoko Akinola University of Technology Teaching Hospital, Ogbomosofor treatment. Theft of ballot boxes was also recorded at Moore, Ojaja area, Aiyetoro and St. Peters in Ile-Ife, where some youths armed with dangerous weapons attacked the polling booths and went away with ballot boxes. Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola who alongside his wife cast his votes at about 8.45 am in ward one Oyekunle Primary School, Okuku denied the claim that the state was one of the flash points in the federation.

His challenger, the AC governorship candidate, Engr. Rauf Aregbesola, cast his vote at about 10.26am at his family compound in Ogbon Arogbo at Ilesa East Local Government Area. He told newsmen that going by information from different parts of the state and the overwhelming support of the people of the state for him, the days of the PDP government in the state were numbered. The AC candidate complained that his supporters were prevented from voting by PDP thugs in Ifewara, Ijebu jesa, Osu and Ile-Ife, and blamed the ruling party for the pockets of crisis witnessed in some parts of the state. Commenting on the exercise, the state commissioner of police, Mr. Sulaiman Fakai, who said he was yet to receive any reports of gun shot, described the whole exercise as peaceful.

Oyo: Violence as soldiers cordon off Adedibu's house

In Oyo, the general officer commanding, GOC, 2 Division, Nigerian Army, Major General Mohammed Sani Saleh ordered his men to cordon off the Molete home of Chief Lamidi Adedibu to recover ballot boxes allegedly smuggled there. This was disclosed to newsmen by the deputy Army Public Relations, Col. Chris Olukolade, in Ibadan who said that the army would ensure that all avenues to violence were blocked. Massive rigging and violence marred the gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections in most parts of the state.

Apart from the late arrival of electoral officials in most of the polling units, when they eventually arrived, voting did not start until past eleven in the morning. Immediately, thugs in many places of Ibadan metropolis invaded polling centres and carted away ballot boxes. The deployment of soldiers to major streets in the city, however, reduced the violence as they arrested no

fewer than 17 hoodlums with dangerous weapons. At Iwo Road, the GOC who monitored the elections in Ibadan metropolis, arrested two men including a top transport union official in a black KIA jeep with one pump action gun. At Ojoo, three boys who identified themselves as members of the transport union were caught with two cutlasses and charms. They confessed that they were given the weapons by their unit chairman who instructed them to assemble at Lagos motor park.

About 17 hoodlums were arrested in Army uniform and taken to the Letmauck Barracks at Odogbo while some men in police uniform were also said to have escaped with ballot boxes. A commercial bus was apprehended with thumb printed ballot papers in many boxes. Though the exercise appeared peaceful in the morning in some parts of the state, the situation changed in the afternoon. Seven men were also caught with thumb printed ballot papers in boxes at Dugbe area. A former council boss was also caught with 40 live ammunition. People were allegedly being forced to vote for PDP at the Green Springs Hotel. And most of the voters at Molete could not vote because they were allegedly being told to go and cast their votes in a PDP chieftain's house.

At Kisi, Saki and Iseyin in Oke Ogun area, it was reported that hoodlums suspected to be members of the PDP hijacked ballot boxes. A photojournalist who recorded the incident was allegedly attacked and had his camera forcefully taken from him. Besides violence, some voters could not vote in some parts of the state. As at 12.12pm, two INEC officials who were detailed to go to Mokoko village were stranded at Onikoko area, Sasa Ibadan.

Ondo: 9 lose lives

Reports from Ondo State said at least nine persons were feared killed and several others sustained serious degrees of injuries as the governorship and House of Assembly elections were generally marred by violence across the state. Also some presiding officers were matched by hoodlums who attempted to steal ballot boxes in some parts of the state just as a policeman was reportedly shot. In most centers visited, crisis started when supporters of a particular party snatched ballot boxes and the people resisted. Two vehicles including that of members of the state House of Assembly were damaged by youths for allegedly conveying snatched ballot papers.

Sunday Vanguard gathered that four persons were killed at Ugbe Ikare while attempting to steal ballot boxes; two at Idanre, two in Akure, the state capital and one in Akungba Akoko. Two Leaders of the Labour Party, Hon Remi Olatubora and Elder Dele Olatunji, a House of Representatives candidate were arrested a day to the elections at Irele. Meanwhile, Voting materials arrived late in most polling centers visited by *Sunday Vanguard* across the state as youths protest shortage of electoral materials. Although, the elections were peaceful in some area such as Ondo town, Owo, Ikaram-Akoko, Ile-Oluji, they were crisis ridden in Akure, Ikare-Akoko, Akungba, Ita-Ogbolu.

Centers affected by cases of snatching of boxes within Akure metropolis include Cathedral, Isikan, Ayedun, Owode High School, and Araromi. Voting materials arrived Ilaje, Ose and Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo local government areas of the state in the afternoon after voters had left voting centres in annoyance. Two vehicles a Honda saloon car marked Kano AG 41 KMC and a Nissan bus marked Ondo AG 241 KAA said to have been used by suspected hoodlums to steal ballot boxes were intercepted and destroyed by the people of Akungba Akoko. *Sunday Vanguard* learnt that the ballot boxes were later retrieved from the people, while the driver of the Honda car was said to have died of injuries sustained in the melee.

Speaking with newsmen in Ondo

town, the Labour Party governorship candidate Dr Olusegun Mimiko alleged that the elections were marred by irregularities due to the desperation of the Governor Olusegun Agagu administration. He however said that he would win the election by the grace of God. Contacted, the police public relations officer (PPRO), Mr. Adeniran Aremu, said the election were peaceful because according to him "we have provided adequate security".

Edo: Eight slain; Oshiomhole dissatisfied

EIGHT persons were shot dead in different parts of Edo State during the governorship and House of Assembly elections, when some armed thugs stormed polling booths in the North and South districts of the state. Two chieftains of the PDP from Edo north senatorial district were also arrested for alleged possession of fire arms.

Though the state commissioner for police, Mr Bala Hassan, confirmed only four dead, *Sunday Vanguard* observed seven bodies lying dead at Oba Akenzua Primary School, Erhunse after the

armed thugs opened fire on voters and electoral officials when the officials refused to hand over voting materials to them. In Akoko Edo, a youth leader was shot dead when he tried to resist some armed thugs who snatched away voting materials, making it impossible for people to cast their votes in most polling booths in the area. Voting was very peaceful in Edo Central Local Government Council where the governorship candidate of the PDP, Professor Oserhiemen Osunbor, hails from. The governorship candidate voted at Ogbomoide Primary School, ward 6 at about 10:40 am, expressing his satisfaction over the conduct of the elections. He expressed optimism that he would win because "of the reports I have been getting from other areas".

But, the elections were not peaceful in most areas in Edo North where the governorship candidate of the AC, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, is from. The entire area was flooded with soldiers while none was observed in the Central district. The AC governorship candidate described the elections as a sham, complaining that some PDP chieftains "came here with arms and they have been terrorizing my people. The whole thing is fraudulent and I cannot accept it. I am happy that they have been arrested but these people are robbing me of my victory but I will see it to the end".

No voting took place in Owan East Local Government Council, an area considered to be the stronghold of Oshiomhole, as armed thugs who were shooting sporadically invaded the area at the early hours of yesterday, depriving voters the opportunity to exercise their civic rights. Some AC agents at Uhumwonde, Igueben were beaten up by some thugs while ballot papers were snatched by armed thugs in most polling booths in the South and North districts. Two PDP chieftains were arrested in a hotel at Ihievbe by some soldiers while allegedly distributing arms to their thugs. They were detained in a military barracks in Auchi.

Anambra: INEC offices burnt

In Anambra State, there were pockets of protests from political parties other than PDP. Election materials arrived late in most of the local governments, and many voters complained that the materials received were not adequate. Officials complained that INEC result sheets were not supplied. In Ogbaru Local Government, reports said that elections were not held there as a result of crisis which forced the police to return materials to INEC office. But in the areas where elections were held, there were complaints, mainly on the ill preparedness of INEC.

Governor Peter Obi of Anambra state, speaking on the elections said, "there was no voting anywhere". According to him, his Amatutu ward polling booth "where I am supposed to vote no INEC officer is here", and it is few minutes to 3.00 pm when election is supposed to end". "As the governor of the state, I am

telling you that there is no election in Anambra state. It is supposed to start by 8am, it is now 3pm. It is clear that there is no election here", Obi said. According to him, an ash coloured jeep owned by a former local government chairman was arrested with already thumb-printed ballot papers. In a broadcast after going round to monitor the exercise, Obi said:

"Today, as the chief security officer of Anambra state, I went out in the morning to monitor the election exercise, and to cast my own votes as a law abiding citizen. However, what I saw were shocking and unfathomable. In all the polling stations I visited, there was no place where voters were voting, INEC staff were not there, where a few were seen, they have no result sheets and other materials. The story was the same from Anaocha Local Government to Anambra East, Anambra West, Awka North, Awka South to Nnewi South, Onitsha North and South. Surprisingly, reports were rife of different persons caught with INEC materials stuffed in ballot boxes in private houses.

Specifically, at Neni, a man working for a political party was caught with result sheets. I personally saw him and he confessed those he was actually working for". Also, in their reaction on the elections, six political parties yesterday rejected the election, saying that it was a charade. The parties are AC, PPA, Labour, Fresh, PMP, and APS. According to AC chairman, Chief Ndubuisi Nwobu, who spoke on their behalf, "our position is that elections in Anambra state did not hold. It is a charade. It behoves INEC to reschedule the elections. INEC wants to truncate democracy in Nigeria". But Anambra state PDP candidate, Chief Andy Uba, who with his wife voted in their Uga town, expressed satisfaction with the exercise and INEC's effort. He said he was happy that the exercise had come and gone.

Anambra state police commissioner, Mr. Oliver Osuchukwu, in his own reaction, confirmed the burning of the INEC offices and that three persons were injured in Awka North. Osuchukwu disclosed that a candidate of one of the parties who allegedly instigated the Awka North crisis was arrested and is in police custody. He however, said that the police were in control of the situation and that he had not recorded reports of any deaths.

Former governor of Anambra state, Dr Chris Ngige, whose name was not included as the AC governorship candidate, in his reactions, said that INEC did not disappoint him by not including his name and party in the ballot paper. He said that INEC was working according to the script written for it by the PDP and vowed that their plan would definitely fail. Three INEC offices in Onitsha north, Awka North and Nnewi South Local Government Councils were burnt down by aggrieved politicians while three persons were confirmed wounded with one of them admitted in hospital. The INEC resident electoral commissioner in the state, Alhaji Nasiru Ayilra, however said that the elections took place in about 95% wards in the state. He confirmed the burning of his offices in the three local government areas but blamed it on those bent on disrupting the elections.

Kogi: Area Commander shot dead; chaos over Audu

In Kogi State, the state police command lost one of its officers, a Deputy Area Commander of Idah, Mr Michael Abimaje (DSP), who was killed by political thugs, in an attack which also left the Divisional Police Officer in the town, Mr Maurice Yusuf, critically ill. Reports from Idah, in Kogi East Senatorial District, said that the duo were attacked by a team of gun-men and supporters of one of the main contenders in the gubernatorial election who were said to have alleged that the police in the area were working against the interests of their candidate.

Information on the incident was

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THE SUNDAY POLITICS



Lagos PDP guber candidate, Musiliu Obanikoro casting his vote yesterday

Violence mars polls: 52 killed

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sketchy and, when contacted, the state police headquarters said they had not received any such report and therefore declined any comment on the issue. Meanwhile, there was confusion in Kogi State over the candidature of former governor, Alh. Abubakar Audu, whose name was deleted from the INEC list pasted at the state office in Lokoja but his photograph and name were on the ballot papers. It was observed that supporters of Audu whose name was sixth on the ballot papers and printed against the logo of the ANPP continued to vote for him, oblivious of the disqualification by the INEC. Officials of INEC in Lokoja said they had to download the list of candidates from which Audu's name was deleted from INEC website and pasted same even when they accepted that there was no specific instructions on the matter from the headquarters.

An official who did not want to be quoted said the situation could have been created because new ballot papers could not be printed after Audu's disqualification. Earlier in an interview at the Lokoja Country Club, the state governor, Alh. Ibrahim Idris, said the elections were a walk-over for the PDP, as, according to him, most people in Kogi were supporters of PDP. Elections commenced about one and half to two hours behind schedule in all the polling stations visited in the state, with attendant inadequate electoral materials. There were no polling booths, which meant that voting was done in the full glare of people, as against the earlier arrangement where voters were told to go into a booth to thumb-print against the candidates of their choice before coming out to drop the folded ballot papers in the open. Most stations were rowdy, especially in the early hours of voting as the security personnel were too few to control the crowds. Some of the units were also merged, a decision that increased the number of voters in such locations.

Enugu: SSS arrests 3 soldiers, 40 armed thugs

In Enugu State, the State Security Services (SSS) and the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) arrested 40 armed men suspected to be political thugs including three soldiers working for one of the governorship candidates in the state. The armed men were apprehended by military personnel on patrol along Park Avenue, GRA, Enugu while heading to the Enugu Branch of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) where several candidates in the elections had converged to prevent movement of electoral materials to the local government areas. Dangerous weapons including 32 brand new sharp cutlasses, one locally made double-barrel pistol, live cartridges, small battle-axe, one Pump Action gun and charms were recovered from the fierce-looking young men.

The state director of SSS, Mr. Francis

Sonaiké, while parading the suspects, said that the three soldiers from the Garriki, Army Barracks in Enugu had been handed to the military authorities who were expected to court martial them before handing them to the police for prosecution in the law court.

According to Sonaiké, the suspects had confessed that they were working for one of the 17 governorship candidates in the state, and were heading to the CBN on the Abakaliki road, apparently to hijack election materials or do any other thing when they were intercepted.

The SSS director said that his agency would make sure that all the suspects were well screened so that the innocent ones, if any, would not be unduly punished. He said that thorough investigation was on to ascertain those behind the suspects, adding that everything possible would be done to uncover their sponsors.

ABIA: Ugochukwu injured
IN Abia State, violence was reported at Umuahia, the state capital, where the PDP gubernatorial candidate, Chief Onyeama Ugochukwu, was shot and wounded.

C-River: Stray bullet kills girl, poor voter turnout

POOR turnout of voters and complaints of rigging and lack of election materials marked the polls in New Bakasi and the entire Cross River State in the House of Assembly and governorship elections, just as a fourteen year old girl died from a stray bullet fired by a naval officer in a monitoring team. In Ikang in New Bakasi, there was poor very few turnout of voters at the different polling stations and electoral officers complained of lack of materials. In some other polling stations, the complaints were on the late arrival of voting materials.

In Calabar, very few people turned out for voting; those who refused to vote said they felt no need to vote as they feared there would be rigging. At many polling stations in Calabar, there were no result sheets even at the end of voting and in some polling booths where they had result sheets, they arrived late.

The resident electoral commissioner, Mrs. Rose Obuoforibo, explained that the commission deliberately brought the result sheets late to polling stations as a strategy to check rigging. Opposition parties in the state accused the ruling PDP of having rigged the elections and called for the cancellation of the elections in the state. Governor Donald Duke of Cross River State however said he was satisfied with the elections so far "according to reports reaching me. There were no incidence of violence."

Sunday Vanguard gathered however that a girl was killed by stray bullet from a naval officer in a monitoring team of the police, army and navy along Main Avenue in Calabar. The team had waved down a van full of suspected miscreants.

As the naval officer approached the

van, the suspected miscreants zoomed off and he pulled out his gun and fired at the tyre of the van but a stray bullet from his gun hit a fourteen year old girl who had a bucket of water on her head on her way home. The girl, an orphan, was rushed to the hospital where she later died. Attempts to reach the navy PRO in Calabar for confirmation failed as he would not pick his phone.

Benue: Gunmen storm polling station, kill 4.

In Benue State, the elections were marred by violence as four people were killed and six others seriously injured when armed men stormed a polling station in Buruku local government and shot the victims said to be supporters of the AC. And in Gboko, four officials of INEC were abducted by gun men who stormed a polling station in commando style and whisked them to an unknown destination. In the same Gboko, a personal assistant to the governor of Benue State was saved by the police from being lynched by voters as he allegedly tried to snatch a ballot box. He was being detained at the MTD police station in Gboko at the time of this report. And in Zaki Biam, the governorship candidate of the ANPP, Senator Daniel Saror, was said to have been prevented from voting as electoral materials meant for his polling station were snatched by unknown persons. But for these incidents and other minor skirmishes, there was large voters turnout in almost all the polling stations visited by *Sunday Vanguard*.

There was also a heavy presence of military men especially men of the air force whose intervention in places like Buruku where the shooting incident took place prevented an escalation of the crisis. According to eye witness account at the Nge ward in Buruku Local Government area, the gunmen who came in a Toyota starlet car stormed the area and started shooting at the voters who had gathered to cast their votes. After the shooting, four men were confirmed dead and six others sustained varying degrees of injury and were taken to Buruku General Hospital in a pick up truck when *Sunday Vanguard* visited the area at about 10.00 am. The names of those killed were given as Tersoo Igba, Aondohehen Anande, Ukaanaka Iorwa and Naibo Achire while those who sustained injuries were Joe Chia, Mtsenem Ayange Ortor Akaa and three others.

According to reports from Zaki Biam, the ANPP candidate was allegedly prevented from voting by thugs suspected to be supporters of the PDP. They were said to have arrived the polling station where the ANPP candidate was said to have registered and snatched the electoral materials meant for the ward. It could not be ascertained whether he was allowed to vote eventually or the materials returned to the polling station. Though the elections were generally peaceful, there were complaints of late arrival of polling materials and in some polling stations visited by *Sunday Vanguard*, up till 11 a.m. electoral materials had not arrived.

Niger: Isah out of ballot; IBB hopeful of peaceful polls

Voting in Minna the Niger State capital and in most local government areas started on schedule devoid of violence. This could not however be said of Bida, headquarters of Bida Local Government Area of the state where no fewer than twenty people were said to be seriously injured when supporters of Accord protested the exclusion of name and photograph of the governorship candidate, Senator Isah Mohammed, on the ballot paper. Our correspondent reliably gathered that supporters of the party got to the polling units only to discover that the name of the party and photograph of the governorship candidate were missing on the ballot paper. Tension immediately rose as the supporters attributed the exclusion to sabotage moreso when the candidates to the House of Assembly had also been denied of their rights to be voted for.

It was reliably gathered that election materials at the Wadata ward in the

BCC 1 and 2 polling units which is the ward of Mohammed were destroyed as a result of the violence. Voting was said to have however resumed in other polling units in the town after the little setback. Police Area Commander, Assistant Commissioner Gabriel Ikpen, who confirmed the development, said some arrests had been made and assured that peace would be maintained after the elections in the town. Mohammed described the development as "unbelievable".

The candidate who was at the INEC office, Minna to lodge a complaint to the commission said his photograph and other documents were submitted to INEC and demanded explanation on why the name of the party and his photograph were omitted from the ballot paper. The PDP gubernatorial candidate in the state, Dr. Muazu Babangida Aliyu, and his wife, Jummai, cast their votes at 9.50 a.m. The two former military heads of state, Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Abdulsalami Abubakar also cast their votes at the Sabongari Uphill polling unit with members of their families. Babangida who drove his wife, Maryam and eldest daughter, Aisha, to the polling center in metallic Mercedes Benz with registration No. Abuja 944 ABC cast his vote at 10.30 a.m., followed by his wife and daughter. His eldest son, Mohammed, had earlier cast his vote at the same venue.

Gen. Abdulsalami and his wife who also arrived the polling unit shortly after Babangida's arrival cast their votes at about 10.45 a.m. Answering questions from journalists, Babangida described the preparation and elections as "okay" saying people were well behaved and that it was an indication that it would be violence free.

Borno: 15000 suspected thugs 'detained'

There was a large turnout of eligible voters in most parts of Borno State, with women outnumbering men at the polling stations within Maiduguri metropolis, the state capital, just as there was late arrival election materials in most voting centres. A visit round the town and some villages showed that the conduct of the elections were generally peaceful and orderly, but there were minor skirmishes in some polling centres following disagreements between members of the ANPP and PDP.

Speaking with journalists shortly after casting his vote in his home ward, Gamboru Ngala, about 120 kilometers from the capital city, Governor Ali Modu Sheriff, who expressed satisfaction with the turn-out of voters and peaceful conduct of the elections, expressed concerns over the shortage of election materials in several polling stations which caused delay in the commencement of the exercise. The police in the state disclosed that it had impounded 3,000 vehicles that were parked in a hide-out by yet to be identified politicians who allegedly wanted to use them for electoral malpractices.

The vehicles, according to the police, were carrying about 15,000 able-bodied persons, even as it disclosed that the hide-out was discovered following a tip-off, adding that they had been put under security watch by a combined team of police and soldiers. Speaking to journalists, the state commissioner of police, Mr. Shehu Babalola, who disclosed that the suspects had ulterior motive probably to cause problems during the elections, said that he had ordered that 'the youths be detained within the premises where they were found until after the elections.'

Plateau and Bauchi: Polls generally peaceful

The elections were generally peaceful in Plateau and Bauchi states apart from cases of delay in commencement of voting, missing names on the voter register and difficulty in getting to voting centres by those who could not register near their homes. In Plateau State, there was a general problem of the late arrival of officials to many polling centres resulting in a situation where

voting had not started in some places by 1 p.m. Governor Michael Bot-Mang and the Gbong Gwom Jos, Da Victor Pam experienced the delay as they got to their different polling centres but did not find the election officials. They could not cast their votes until past midday.

There was also the problem of the missing logo of the DPP for the House of Assembly elections in some areas which was blamed on the late submission of candidates' list by the party. Many voters were angered by the delay in the arrival of voting materials and the inadequacy of the materials when they eventually arrived. In some centres, the ballot papers supplied were far less than the number of registered voters. This led to delay and hot arguments in many centres as some of the voters interpreted it as a ploy to deprive them of voting. Voting continued past the 3 p.m. deadline given in some places because of the problems. For example, at the Albakans polling unit in Tudun Wada, Jos, only a few people had cast their vote as at 3.10pm.

Bot-Mang and Deputy Senate President, Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu, in separate interviews, expressed delight at the large turnout of voters for the exercise commending INEC for a job well done. However, ANPP senatorial candidate for Plateau North, Mr. Lumumba Dah Adeb alleged that many centres were starved of materials a situation which forced many people to leave in frustration. He said materials did not get to most of the polling units he visited on time. The elections were also peaceful in Bauchi with many centres recording a large turnout of voters despite the delay in the commencement of voting in some parts. Although there was an initial low turnout probably for fear of crisis following the burning down of the INEC office in Gamawa Local Government Area on Friday, people later trooped out after seeing the level of security presence around.

Taraba: Large turnout of voters
In Taraba State, there was a large turnout of voters for the elections with women outnumbering the men. The elections were also generally peaceful as a combination of soldiers and policemen were on hand to provide security. Governor Jolly Nyame who monitored the elections in Jalingo, Yorro and Ardo-Kola local government areas later voted at his village in Zing Local Government Area at about 12 noon. He described the turnout as impressive attributing it to the high level of mobilization of the electorate and a sign of the level of political awareness of the people.

Adamawa: Atiku slams INEC; confusion over AC candidate

There was confusion over yesterday's polls in Adamawa State as the Action Congress, AC, logo appeared on the gubernatorial ballot whereas the INEC had said Friday night that the candidate, Alhaji Ibrahim Bapetel, had been disqualified by the EFCC for corruption. AC had got an injunction setting aside the EFCC report but INEC surprised everyone as it disqualified the candidate less than 12 hours to the election. But Governor Boni Haruna, who voted at his Kubu area of Michika West Development Area, asked supporters to go ahead and vote for Bapetel, his former secretary to the state government, as, according to him, the matter would be decided at the tribunal.

Vice President Atiku Abubakar was among the early voters in the state governorship and state House of Assembly elections. He arrived at the Ajiya ward 02 in Yola North Local Government at 10:25am accompanied by the Resident Electoral Commissioner, REC for Adamawa, Alhaji Suleiman Bello. The vice president told newsmen after casting his vote that he had no confidence in INEC conducting the elections. He stated that INEC's preparedness for the elections fell short of expectations and described the process of the entire elections as lacking credibility. "With what we are seeing, INEC can never conduct free and fair

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How Nigeria almost became a nation

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Nigeria should be dedicated to the promotion of research and the advancement of science and learning. Every detail about the founding of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the dramatic personae is chronicled in this chapter.

The focus of chapter eight is the crises that beset Nigeria immediately after independence in 1960. These include the Western Nigeria crisis of 1962, the census controversy, the 1964 federal election crisis and the Western Region election crisis of 1965. These crises presaged the January 1966 military coup and the civil war. Many Nigerians remember Dr. Ikejiani more in connection with his tenure as the chairman of the Nigerian Railway Corporation. This is the subject of chapter nine. Chairmanship of the Railways can easily be described as the most controversial period of the author's life. It is so central to the author's life that the cover illustration carries a loco engine 1401! And expectedly, chapter nine runs from page 261 to 338, all of 78 pages!

The interesting encounter through which Dr. Ikejiani was appointed chairman of Nigerian Railways was detailed in this chapter. Here also you read how Ikejiani advised Zik to appoint Dr. Teslim Elias who was then resident in London, as the Minister of Justice against the two Igbo contenders, Chuba Ikepeazu and Mr. Moses Balonwu, two candidates backed by powerful party leaders. Chapter nine is essentially about Ikejiani's tenure as the chairman of Nigerian Railway Corporation and the Justice Joseph Adeniji Adefarasin Tribunal of Enquiry set up on June 2, 1966 by Gen. JTU Aguiyi-Ironsi. The tribunal of enquiry was replete with accusations of ethnicity, nepotism and alleged improprieties. The author who was at the center of it all describes the inquiry as "an inquisition which was used as a cloak for political and private revenge." He believes that the inquiry was used to flush out the Igbo from the Nigerian Railway Corporation. As will be seen on page 338, Chief Awolowo, much later in years, had similar view about commissions of inquiry. Many names featured in the Adefarasin enquiry. In this chapter also, the author discusses the Nigerianization of various posts in the Railways.

In chapter ten, the military coup of January 15, 1966 and how power was handed over to the Military are the subject. Other issues discussed in this chapter are the counter coup of July 29, 1966, Gen. Gowon's infamous "basis of unity is not there" broadcast, the ad hoc constitutional conference of September 1966, the meeting of the Nigerian military governors at Aburi, Ghana and a very prophetic letter dated November 17, 1966, written by Zik to the author a day after Zik's 62nd birthday.

Like chapter nine, this chapter is replete with historical details of the national crisis that led to the civil war. The merit of this chapter lies in the new information the author supplied to an already over-flogged subject like the 1966 coup and counter coup. Events described in chapter ten led inevitably to the declaration of the Republic of Biafra and the civil war, which form the subject of chapter eleven. Details of the structures with which Biafra was administered as well as the dramatic personae are given in this chapter. This chapter, like the previous chapter, is rich with historical materials.

The author was one of those designated as Biafra's roving ambassadors, with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dr. Mbadiwe, Prof. Kenneth Dike and Chukwuma Azikiwe. In chapters twelve and thirteen, he discusses his forays into diplomacy to procure diplomatic recognition for Biafra. The relationship earlier established with Dr. Francois Duvalier in Michigan years back became a factor in Haiti's recognition of Biafra. In chapter fourteen, we read about the fall of Biafra, the escape of Ojukwu and other Biafran leaders and the issues of abandoned properties. In chapter fifteen recounts the author's return to Canada while the last chapter, sixteen, recounts the author's travel with C. C. Mojekwu to Ivory Coast, Guinea, to meet with Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who had been overthrown by the military and was in exile in Guinea.

To be concluded

Violence mars polls: 52 killed

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Kaduna: Protests as many can't vote

Voting started in Kaduna at most of the polling centres at about 9.30 am due to the late arrival of election materials and INEC officials. The election was peaceful in areas visited by *Sunday Vanguard* including Barnawa, Sabon Tasha, Tudun Wada, Ugwan Rimi and Kawo. At Narayi High Cost, some voters complained that they were not allowed to vote as they had temporary voter's cards.

A banker, Mr. Uwadiagwu Nwodo, told *Sunday Vanguard* that only a few voters were allowed to vote at his centre due to non possession of voter's card, although none was given to him after being registered. However, there were protests in Ungwan Sarki area of Kaduna metropolis as voters complained that although there were over 500 voters in each of the five centres in the area, the INEC officials brought only 100 ballot papers for each of the voting centre instead of 500 each. At Zaria, voting was yet to start at several polling centres as at 3.30 pm as most eligible voters could not find their names where their booths were located.

In Kachia and Kagarko local government areas, the House of Assembly elections did not take place due to the omission of the logo of the ANPP from the ballot paper. The governorship election in the area however went ahead peacefully without any complaint.

An INEC official was quoted as saying that they only discovered that the ANPP logo was missing in the ballot paper for the House of Assembly for the area when they opened the box containing the ballot papers for distribution. The ballot papers were however not distributed. Sources close to INEC in the area said that the commission will hold a meeting with stakeholders from the area and fix another day for the election in Kachia and Kagarko local government councils.

Bayelsa: Polls fail to hold in many areas

Confusion and anger trailed the elections in Bayelsa State as eligible voters could not cast their votes following non arrival of election materials in virtually all the polling booths in the state forcing most residents to remain indoors. The chaotic situation blamed partly on the INEC shoddy handling of the exercise and the alleged hijack of materials by agents of the ruling PDP almost caused one of the commission's personnel his life in Sagbama Local Government Area of the state, Mr. Jude Nabie, who was beaten to pulp and almost stripped naked by angry youths who besieged the commission office protesting the alleged hoarding of materials to favour candidates of the PDP in the Bayelsa West senatorial district.

The exercise billed to have commenced at 8 am did not hold in virtually all the areas visited on account of the alleged hijack of materials while security was reinforced around the INEC headquarters backed by armoured vehicle stationed in front of the Government House gate directly opposite the commission's office. This reporter who went round the local government council headquarters of Ogbia, Kolokuma-Opokuma, Sagbama and Yenagoa that could be accessed by road observed that most of the polling booths were empty as the people on ground complained about the non arrival of election materials even after 2 pm. The state governor Dr. Goodluck Jonathan who traveled to his country home at Otuoke in the Ogbia council area of the state to cast his vote had to return to Yenagoa the state capital at about 1.15 pm to ascertain the cause of late commencement of the exercise.

The governor, who eventually return to cast his vote along side his wife Patience at about 3.20 pm, blamed the delay on the late arrival of materials to some polling stations in the state as a result of logistic problems caused by the difficult terrain. According to him, materials had to be dispatched first to the hinter lands to enable them get the materials early enough for voting to take place in such places. He noted that it was a teething problem which will be sorted out before the next round of

elections pointing out that it did not mar the electoral process in the state as people turned out to vote in a peaceful and orderly manner.

On the issue of alleged political killings in the state, the Governor said that investigations were on and the culprits will be brought to book. The governor allayed fears of political violence in the state and called on Bayelsans to go about their lawful duties pointing out that the state is calm and peaceful. Although the hiccup in the take off of the exercise was blamed on the riverine nature of the state by officials of INEC but the story was is not different in the state capital where the commission headquarters is located as nobody could be sighted casting his or her vote in any of the designated polling booths. When contacted the state Resident Electoral Commissioner, Mr. Humphrey Nwanegeneh blamed the hiccup on the riverine nature of the state saying the coastal areas had to be taken care of first because it would take time to get to the hinterland. He however noted that the delay notwithstanding the exercise was successful in the state.

Kano: Polls in shaky start

In Kano State, there was large turn out of voters, despite the late arrival of election materials in most of the local government areas. The polls were conducted under tight security in identified trouble zones in the state, as military personnel mounted road block, checking the few vehicles on the streets. Voting which was supposed to commence at about 8.00-8.30 am in most of the polling stations started between 10.30 am to 12 pm.

INEC thumps up election — Commission meets today

INEC yesterday expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the gubernatorial and state assemblies' elections waving away reports of malpractices in some states as inconsequential to the overall success of the election. He, however, admitted that voting was suspended in one local government area in Delta State as a result of violence while he accused some unnamed politicians in Enugu State of attempting to stop voting in the State. The commission, Prof. Iwu said is to meet later this evening to review situations. His observation of a free poll nonetheless, the elections were marred in neighbouring Nasarawa State where the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) candidate in the State assembly election was omitted in the ballot paper. Iwu who was flanked by the INEC Commissioner in charge of Publicity, Barrister Philip Umeadi (Jnr) and Commissioner for Operations, Mohammed Jumare at the briefing pledged that the commission would review the situation of voting on a case by case basis.

Responding to reports that the picture of Mr. Charles Ugwu was displayed on some ballot papers in Imo State, the INEC chairman said that whatever votes were cast for him would be tabulated in favour of Senator Ifeanyi Ararume who he said was the recognised PDP candidate for the gubernatorial election in the state. Besides, he affirmed that Alhaji Ibrahim Bapetel and Alhaji Audu Abubakar presented as gubernatorial candidates by the AC and the ANPP in Adamawa and Kogi States respectively were not recognised by the commission. He said that votes cast in their favour would be invalidated.

"As at 5 o'clock this evening the situation of the 2007 general elections remains as I described earlier, namely successful and turnout of voters throughout the country peaceful in nearly all the parts of Nigeria," Iwu said at the second press briefing of the day.

Buhari protests

Yesterday, the presidential candidate of the All Nigeria Peoples Party, ANPP, retired General Muhammadu Buhari, rose in protest against what he called irregularities in the governorship and state house of assembly elections. He told journalists who visited him in his Daura country home that his party was already compiling the irregularities with the intention of confronting government with them for rectification before next Saturday's presidential poll. Buhari disclosed that he received reports that Governor Modu Sheriff, the ANPP guber candidate for Borno State, had to seek refuge in a military



•Election officials in Oyo yesterday

barrack after the commissioner of police in the state, failed to protect him from those he described as "rampaging PDP thugs". He expressed dismay that even in Katsina State, reports had it that a police divisional officer was caught in Zango with a ballot box, while in places like Mashi and Balagawara, electoral misconducts led to violence and destruction of property.

Referring to the statement by his PDP rival, Governor Umar Yar'Adua that telling voters to police their votes amounted to a fouling of the Electoral Act, Buhari countered that the same law permits the presence of party agents and the announcement of election results at the polling stations, adding that he was a law abiding citizen. He lamented that a fellow third world country like India with over a billion people and 600 million registered voters still manages to stage free and fair elections despite their more complex socio political set up compared with that of Nigeria.

AC: Elections marred by irregularities across the country

The Action Congress (AC) has said that Saturday's state legislative and gubernatorial elections were marred by irregularities perpetrated by PDP officials in collusion with the police and soldiers in many states in the federation. In a statement issued from its elections monitoring centre in Abuja by the National Publicity Secretary, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, the party said hijacking and stuffing of ballot boxes, illegal voting and collation of fake results, delay of voting in areas where the opposition is strong and the harassment of the opposition were recorded in Bayelsa, Enugu, Kano, Rivers, Ondo, Oyo, Osun and Kwara, among others.

In Bayelsa State, AC gathered that concocted results were being written at the state house in Yenagoa from as early as 5.30 a.m. when elections had not even started. In Kano, where AC is considered very strong, voting was delayed by non-arrival of voting materials. As at 1 pm, voters who had turned out very early at polling centres could not vote because there were no electoral officials or materials.

In Rivers State, the bombing of two police stations and the death of eight persons, including seven policemen, scared many voters who stayed indoors during the elections. In Ondo State, the chairman of the Ese-Odo local government area cornered all ballot boxes at Kiribo town and made them available only to PDP supporters. At the Irele local government area, armed soldiers forced everyone to raise the PDP victory sign before they could vote. And at the Oluwatuyi quarters in Akure, the deputy governor tried to hijack ballot boxes.

In Oyo State, the names of AC candidates were not included in the ballot in the South West Local government area of Ibadan, but INEC has promised to conduct a bye election in the area at a later date. Voting materials did not arrive for voting at the Oluyole area. In Osun State, Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola personally led those who hijacked ballot boxes. Police vans were used in the hijacking of the boxes, which were then taken to palaces at Osogbo, Okuku and Inisa for illegal voting by PDP supporters.

And in Kwara, the state Commissioner of Education, Raheem Adedoyin, led a team of PDP thugs to try to stuff ballot boxes in Ward 2 at Oro. Police, backed by soldiers, fired teargas and gunshots to scare the people away so they could stuff the boxes with previously thumb-printed ballot papers. However, angry youths resisted the move, forcing them to burn down three polling booths in the

town. The same attempt to stuff ballot papers was reported in Ward 1. At the Offa local government, voters were deliberately starved of voting materials, with only 50 per cent of the materials made available. The remaining materials were taken to Mr. Adesoye's house for illegal voting by PDP supporters. Military men also hijacked ballot boxes at the Kiama local government area.

"We are monitoring the situation nationwide and will make our overall view known when all the reports have been received," the party said.

Commonwealth Observer Group promises to be non partisan

The Commonwealth Observer Group to the Nigerian elections has pledged to be non partisan in its observation of the ongoing Nigerian elections. The observer group led by former Tanzanian Prime Minister, Justice Joseph Warioba in a statement issued in Abuja said the report of its findings would be made available to all commonwealth countries and major stakeholders in the ongoing elections. The group in the statement promised that its findings would be a true reflection of the situation on ground saying:

The statement issued by Mr. Warioba read in part: "These elections are also an opportunity to build on the experiences of the 1999 and 2003 elections — both of which were observed by the Commonwealth — and to take another step in strengthening the country's democracy. It is vital that the elections are peaceful and credible. The task of the Commonwealth Observer Group is to observe and report on relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the elections. The group will consider all the factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole, and determine whether or not the conditions exist for the free of expression of the will of the people, and in general terms to what extent the results reflect the will of the Nigerian people."

"In conducting our duties and undertaking our assessment we will be neutral, impartial, objective and independent. If we offer any criticisms they will be constructive, with the intent to help strengthen the democratic process in the country for the future. Commonwealth Observers are invited in their individual capacities as eminent Commonwealth citizens. The assessment by the Group will be its own and not that of respective member governments or of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Before we deploy, we will meet with INEC, representatives of political parties, civil society, Commonwealth diplomats and media, as well as representatives of other international observer groups in order to listen to the broadest possible range of perspectives and concerns."

"A smaller Advance Group has been present in Nigeria for a few days and will be deployed for the state level elections on 14 April, but the main Group will deploy on 18 April, for the Presidential and National Assembly elections scheduled for 21 April. We will observe the climax of the campaign and thereafter the voting, counting and results processes. Following this, the group will reconvene in Abuja to compile our final and comprehensive report prior to departure."

"This Final Report will contain our main findings and conclusions as well as our recommendations for strengthening of the process. It will be submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who in turn will forward it to the Government of Nigeria, INEC, political parties and then to all Commonwealth Governments. The report will thereafter be made available more widely as well as being placed on the website of the Commonwealth Secretariat."