

Vanguard

Bayelsa poll: Four feared dead, scores injured

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THE Bayelsa governorship election was, yesterday, marred by violence, inducement of voters and apathy in parts of the state, particularly in the riverine and coastal areas. Malfunctioning of card reader machines was also rampant.

Southern Ijaw, Ekeremor, Brass and Nembe local councils were worst hit as thugs unleashed mayhem on rival supporters.



(<http://www.vanguardngr.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Bayelsa-state-Gov-Election-5-e1449315450379.jpg>)

A Voter being Accredited by an INEC Official at unit 18 Ward 6 Amarata, Yenegoa during the Bayelsa State Governorship Election. Photo: Nwankpa Chijioke

In Southern Ijaw, although four persons were reportedly killed, an indigene of the area told *Sunday Vanguard* that those confirmed dead were more.

Gunmen were said to have invaded the riverside community in the early hours of the day ostensibly to hijack election materials. Three of the invaders were reportedly killed as security forces battled to restore normalcy while the fourth victim was said to have been felled by stray bullets.

Elsewhere in the riverine Nembe and Brass local councils, the election day eve witnessed shootings and disruption of the peace, which prompted reinforcement of security personnel in the area.

Although normalcy returned to Nembe on election day, the tension and security uncertainty caused voters to remain indoors, resulting in voter apathy.

It was gathered that the spate of shootings forced many of the residents indoor for fear of being caught in the cross fire just as election materials, according to a source, could not leave the highly tensed area.

“Several shots were fired to scare the people and this paved the way for the carting away of election materials but security operatives attached to the area were up to the task,” said an eye witness.



(<http://www.vanguardngr.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Bayelsa-state-Gov-Election-4-e1449315513997.jpg>)

Voters Queue Up at Unit 18 Ward 6 Amarata area of Yenegoa for Accreditation during the Bayelsa State Governorship Election in Bayelsa yesterday. Photo: Nwankpa Chijioke

card readers in Kolokuma/Opokuma Units 6 and 7 of Ward 10.

In Otuan community in Southern Ijaw, the locals were yet to sight INEC officials and materials at press time. Unconfirmed reports said INEC had cancelled the exercise in Southern Ijaw.

Dickson decries faulty card readers, violence against supporters

The Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, candidate, Governor Seriake Dickson, who led his wife, Rachael, and mother, Goldcoast, to do accreditation at about 10.38am at Oruere-Ware Unit 5 of Sagbama Ward 2, lamented that the card reader failed to capture their finger prints .

Dickson, after accreditation, expressed worry over the alleged spate of failure of the card readers and violent attacks on his supporters in Oporoma, Brass, Ekeremor and other parts of the state.

The governor noted that the report of violence was disturbing and described them as pre-meditated in spite of the presence of heavy security agents.

“We are taking note of the violence against our people. Everyone knows who they are and security agents are watching while they carry out the mayhem,” he said.

According to the eye witness, no fewer than 45 suspects were arrested by security operatives.

At the time of filing this report, a source in the community told *Sunday Vanguard* that the exercise might be suspended due to the mayhem and escalating tension in the area.

However, the election was generally peaceful in Yenagoa, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Ogbia, and parts of Sagbama local government areas.

A community leader in Sagbegeria in Kolokuma/Opokuma, Ongore Joshua, who decried the low turnout of voters, described the situation as unfortunate.

In parts of Yenagoa, Ogbia and Kolokuma/Opokuma local councils, accreditation started around 8:30am, although there were complaints of failure of

Sylva optimistic

Chief Timipre Sylva, the All Progressives Congress, APC, candidate, was accredited at 11.41am alongside his wife, Alayingi, at Eseni Square, Unit 4, Ward 4, Okpoama-Brass.

Sylva condemned the attack on the house of the Minister of State for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Chief Heineken Lokpobiri, at Oporoma by suspected thugs.

He also picked holes in the many incidents of failed card reader but expressed optimism that, having had a successful campaign, he was certain of victory .

The APC candidate, disclosed that several thugs were apprehended by the Joint Task Force (JTF) at Odioma while floating in the river waiting for him.

He said that intelligence led to the arrests.

“We got security reports of infiltration by PDP thugs but it seemed to be ignored by security agencies owing to conflicting reports. Here, there is peace, everyone is allowed to exercise his franchise. You can see that there is peace here.

“My card was read well but, while on the line, I noticed that many people were failed by the card reader. I want INEC to up this technology, it gives me some worry, but, overall, everything is going well.

“The other party didn’t want election from what we can see with the deployment of thugs and violence. A minister was attacked. He called me to say his house had been attacked. We called for security reinforcement and he is safe now.”

Sunday Vanguard gathered that the houses of the Acting State Chairman of the PDP, HRH Serena Dokubo, and another party stalwart were attacked by opposition supporters at Brass in the morning but Dokubo could not be reached for comments at press time.

I’m quite worried about card reader issue – Jonathan

Immediate past president, Dr Goodluck Jonathan, after suffering card reading hitches as he and his wife, Patience, faced during the last general elections, called for the review of the concept of the card reader before the 2019 elections.

Jonathan made the call after his accreditation at Otazi Playground Polling Unit 039, Ward 13, Otuke, in Ogbia local council.

The former President and his wife’s first attempt at accreditation, at about 8:45a.m, was unsuccessful on account of the malfunctioning of a card reader They were later accredited when a back-up machine was brought at 10 am. However, the card reader failed to capture Jonathan’s mother and two other associates.

Answering a question on his impression of the situation, the former President said: “I advise that before the 2019 elections, the whole concept of card reader and the technology must be reviewed. I’m quite worried about the card reader issue this morning. Luckily, this is an isolated, one-state election. But from my experience today, INEC must review this

issue of PVC and card reader very well before we go into the next elections.

“In the last presidential election, myself and my wife’s PVCs were rejected by the card reader. Today, because they changed mine and that of my wife, it was successful. Five people came with me including a former commissioner known to me in the state. The card reader rejected three others. They could not have been carrying clone cards.”

Jonathan, who looked calm, admonished Bayelsans to be calm and see politics as a duty to bring about change in the society.

He averred that transparent and credible elections are hallmarks of democracy, adding that when elections are not peaceful, they cannot be said to be credible.

Urging Bayelsans to go about yesterday’s poll peacefully, he said whoever emerged governor after the voting exercise should govern the state well.

How thugs attacked Lokpobiri’s home

Few hours before the commencement of accreditation of voters, the country home of the Minister of State for Agriculture and Director-General of the Sylva/Igiri Campaign Organization, Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, was attacked by gunmen.

The gunmen were said to have stormed the house in the early hours of the day but were repelled by security operatives.

The attackers, according to sources, overpowered security men deployed to Ekeremor and made their way into the minister’s compound, causing mayhem, with Lokpobiri and others trapped inside the house.

While the security personnel attached to the minister were making attempts to restore normalcy, the the invaders intensified the attacks and reportedly took over the entire community.

It was however gathered that the military had restored normalcy in the community at the time of filing this report.

Bayelsa APC chieftain loses polling unit, hijacks election box

In the meantime, a chieftain of the APC and a former governorship aspirant from Kpansia in Yenagoa local council allegedly hijacked election materials including results sheets after losing his polling unit at the poll.

According to eye witnesses, confusion started when the result was in favour of the PDP in Ward 9, Unit 7 in Yenagoa. Suddenly, the APC chieftain, a former government official, alighted from a vehicle, with suspected thugs, in a commando style, hijacked the election materials and forced the INEC officials to go with him.

Voters, who gave the vehicle a hot chase in vain, lamented the absence of security personnel at the polling unit.

In the meantime, INEC has declared, last night, that election will continue in parts of Bayelsa where the poll was marred by violence or late arrival of materials, today.

INEC National Commissioner representing South-South, Mr Mustapha Leckey, who disclosed this in Yenagoa during a press briefing, said the election in Southern Ijaw local council ran into hitches due to clashes between rival parties.

Lecky, who was flanked by the Resident Electoral Commissioner, REC in Bayelsa State, Baritor Kpagih, commended the election process in part of the state. He said that the election in Southern Ijaw had not been cancelled but will continue today.

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