

Kiambu >

Voting begins on time and runs smoothly in region

BY MARY WAMBUI

Voting started on time in many parts of Kiambu County, with the turnout being higher than during party primaries earlier this year.

Queues started forming outside many polling stations in the region as early as 4 am, with voters ready for the official start of casting ballots at 6 am.

Apart from an isolated incident where two women and a man were arrested for allegedly soliciting for

votes at Heshima Primary School in Thika Constituency, voting went on well in the county.

The three were later released without being charged after the police established that they had not committed an electoral offence.

"Three agents were found outside the gate of the polling station, tallying those who had voted so that they could mobilise more to vote. Our officers arrested them on suspicion that they were committing an electoral offence. They brought them in and verified that

they were real agents. It was not a big deal as they wanted to know how many people had voted," said Thika Deputy Police Commander Bernard Ayoo.

Independent candidate for the Thika Town seat Patrick Wainaina said he was confident of ousting incumbent MP Alice Ng'ang'a, who is seeking reelection on a Jubilee Party ticket.

Residents who spoke to the *Nation* said they were happy with the planning and preparations by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) officers.

"I came at 8.30 am and before lunch hour, I had voted. This is an improvement from what we experienced in previous elections," said Ms Esther Wambui, a voter at Thika Stadium.

Some people were, however, caught trying to vote before those who had joined queues earlier by taking turns to carry the same babies in a bid to be given preference.

At the St George's polling station in Ruiru Constituency, IEBC officials had to mark the fingers of the babies in a bid to stop the practice.

Kwale > Exercise took off on time in most polling centres, amid tight security

Many voters 'sought help to cast ballot'

Poll officials lament that large number of voters, even young ones, required help

BY DANIEL NYASSY

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Voting in Matuga Constituency in Kwale County was hampered by the large number of voters who needed assistance to cast the ballot.

Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) officers complained that many of the voters, even young ones, sought help as they could not read or write.

"The biggest challenge we are facing here is the huge number of voters who need assistance. Apart from having many aged voters, we also have young people who are illiterate. They too have to be assisted," said Mr Mazera Mwatumbi, the presiding officer (PO) at Matuga Primary School voting centre.

Despite opening the polling station early at 6.02am, only 108 residents had cast their votes by 11am in Stream 1. The station has two streams.

His sentiments were echoed by the deputy presiding officer in

Reaction

WHAT ELECTION OFFICIALS SAID

"Apart from having many aged voters, we also have young people who are illiterate. They too have to be assisted"

Mr Mazera Mwatumbi, PO Matuga primary school

"The problem is that many of the voters who need assistance did not come with helpers. We therefore have to assist them"

Ms Susan Mzughha, deputy PO

stream 2, Ms Susan Mzughha.

"The problem is that many of the voters who need assistance did not come with helpers. We therefore have to assist them," she said.

At Yeje Primary School polling station, the presiding officer, Mr Mwazimo Athman, said a second challenge they faced was the initial failure by the electronic gadgets to verify some voters' fingerprints, especially the elderly.

"We had problems with some six elderly men whose fingerprints could not be identified on



the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) kit," he said.

His officers had to check the names under the Alfa Numerical system to identify the voters' names and photographs. "Although they delayed, they finally managed to vote after the systems identified them," he said.

Another PO at Yeje Primary School polling station, Mr Elvas Shungu, blamed the large number of assisted voters on illiteracy.

Deputy PO at Yeje Primary School, Ms Caroline Nimaneno Mwenda, expressed surprise at this turn of events.

"I am surprised that young men and women claim to be

completely illiterate," she said.

On delay in the start of voting, she said the IEBC team could not initially locate the voters register and had to call to the IEBC headquarters to make enquiries.

"We were told that it was wrapped among other documents which we had not noticed. After a long search, we finally found it but we had already wasted time," she said.

At Voroni Primary School, IEBC officials grappled with the challenge of elderly and illiterate voters turning up at the station unaccompanied.

Nonetheless, voting kicked off on time in most of the polling stations. There was adequate security in the centres.

IEBC clerk Shidii Churchill assists Mama Mwajuma Mpanga, 97, get her biometric fingerprints at the Pumwani Social Hall in Kamukunji, Nairobi yesterday. In Kwale, many elderly and youth had to be assisted to vote due to illiteracy,

KANYIRI WAHITO/
NATION

Bomet >

Officer arrested for 'campaigning' on eve of polls

BY GEOFFREY RONO

Bomet Lands Executive Alex Kirui was arrested on Monday night after police said they had found him holding a meeting to woo voters in favour of the incumbent Governor Isaac Ruto. Campaigns ended on Saturday countrywide. Mr Kirui was arrested at Chepalungu Boys' Secondary School for what police claimed was bribing voters.

Bomet OCPD Samson Rukungu said police are

holding the suspect in custody and that investigations are ongoing before he is arraigned in court.

Reached for comment, Governor Ruto said the arrest was an orchestrated move by the Jubilee government to intimidate his supporters.

Nasa's victory

Mr Ruto defended the executive, saying the arrest was orchestrated by the Jubilee administration. He said the Independent Electoral and Boundaries

Commission had no hand in arresting his officer.

"This is not true; if the officer was distributing money to the voters for that purpose, he would not have done it before the general public," he said.

Mr Ruto said the Jubilee government was worried about the people's verdict in this General Election, adding that Nasa presidential candidate Raila Odinga will win.

However, the OCPD termed the governor's allegations baseless.

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