

No major Guyana election hiccups

Apart from some incidents of malfunctioning ballot paper stamps, an underage girl voting, and reports of a man attempting to "steal" a ballot box today, Guyana's national elections seemed to have gone smoothly.

Guyana Elections Commission (GEOCOM) chairman Dr Steve Surujbally told the media earlier today that the voting process was going well, despite minor issues, but he expressed annoyance with the supplier of the stamps that malfunctioned at three polling stations.

"... I feel we were cheated when we paid out good money," Surujbally said, indicating the stamps had been bought from a company overseas.

The Electoral Observer Mission of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) also said up to late this afternoon that it was satisfied with the elections process but expressed disappointment at the lack of provisions for the elderly and disabled to cast their ballots.

That mission was pleased too with the large voter turnout.

There were eight political parties registered for today's vote, but it is seen as a straight contest between the incumbent People's Progressive Party/ Civic (PPP/C), led by Donald Ramotar, and the coalition A Partnership For National Unity-Alliance For Change (APNU-AFC), headed by Opposition Leader David Granger.

The AFNU-AFC also told the media in its own briefing that it too was satisfied with voting procedures.

Co-chairman of the APNU+AFC coalition, Raphael Trotman, said the coalition had received a

report of an underage young woman casting a ballot in Guyana's western region of Essequibo, and the matter was under investigation.

In its media briefing the coalition give the name of the young girl, and Trotman expressed surprise that this was allowed to happen.

"The child is known by the entire village to be underage, but she was allowed to cast a ballot . . . As a lawyer, I tell you if there is one incident of such case, you will find others," Trotman said.

There have been reports of three instances where unauthorized persons attempted to remove ballot boxes from polling stations in Georgetown. Both GEOCOM and APNU-AFC confirmed receiving reports of such improbable attempts in the middle of the voting process.

The alleged thieves are said to be in police custody, and smartphone videos are making the rounds on social media showing crowds swarming the men at two polling stations and apparently assaulting them.

Reports are they had to be rescued by police. PPP/C leader Donald Ramotar said after casting his ballot: "Once the elections are free and fair, and pronounced free and fair, I think the loser should accept defeat, whoever the loser will be, and which I am sure wouldn't be me".

This statement reflected a concern by observer missions that neither of the leading parties contesting the elections was prepared to accept defeat.

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The elderly too came out to vote.



Home affairs minister in the last government, Clement Rohee, showing his voting finger. Reports are that his index finger is injured and he was advised to stain his middle finger to register that he voted.



Guyana Elections Commission chairman Dr Steve Surujbally (centre) briefing the media today.



PPP/C leader Donald Ramotar and wife displaying their voting fingers after casting their ballots this morning.