

Police arrest 24 cult members in Edo

VINCENT ADEKOYE, *Benin*

Edo State Police Command has recorded a major breakthrough in its determination to reduce the activities of cultists in the state as the command weekend arrested 24 youths suspected to be members of various cult groups believed to have been terrorizing the state.

The suspects identified as students of two major Universities in the state were rounded up by combined Mobile and undercover policemen at a popular club House located along Wire road with arms, near the state office of the *Champion Newspapers*, Benin last Saturday evening as they were said to have been preparing to wage cult war on another Institution in the state.

Four of the suspected cultists who police said were part of the cult members that participated in the bloody cult war at Ekpoma two weeks ago, were yesterday arraigned before an Ekpoma Magistrate Court on charge of murder while the remaining 20 were arraigned before a Magistrate Court in Benin.

It would be recalled that Edo state had been under the firm grip of blood thirsty cult groups who unleash terror on residents without any mercy.

Two weeks ago, Seven students of the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, were killed by suspected cultists in a bloody war at the university town of Ekpoma. The sad incident came exactly one year after eight anti-cultism members of the same university were shot dead one night by masked cultists and their residential apartment located within the university burnt.

In the same vein, a final year student of the College of Education,

Ekiadolor, near Benin was killed and his head severed and roasted by heartless cultist after which it was neatly delivered at the main entrance of the institution.

Speaking on the new catch, the elated Edo State Police Commissioner, Mr. Bala Hassan, told *Daily Champion* that it was the best moment for the Command.

"I want to say that this is a major breakthrough in our bid to curtail the dreaded activities of cults in the state. I said on assumption of duty that I shall not allow them to take over the state and in line with that determination, I set machinery in motion and the result is what you have seen now. Because there were evidence and the need to let justice prevail, we did not waste time in

bringing them to court and those suspected to have participated in the Ekpoma mayhem have been taken to Ekpoma for trial also.

"There must be peace in Edo and we shall continue to ensure that there is peace. Once we have the information, we shall act promptly this is because we believe that the activities of cultists in the state might not be unconnected with the high crime rate in the state" Edo commissioner of police stated.

At the Magistrate Court in Benin, the suspected cultists were slammed with three counts charges of Conspired to commit felony, belonging to a prohibited cult and illegal possession of arms which is contrary to the relevant sections of the Nigerian Constitution.

SS3 student nominated for space flight

AKOR SYLVESTER, *Abuja*

A Nigerian student, Miss Stella Felix has been nominated to participate in a scientific weightlessness flight taking off from Kennedy Space Centre (KSC) in Florida USA next week.

The SS3 student of Moremi High School, Ile-Ife, Osun State was being sponsored by the National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA).

The weightlessness flight initiative was put together by Space Week International Association (SIA), a non-profit organisation based in Houston, Texas in partnership with the Zoro-G Corporation of Florida, USA, owners of a specially modified Boeing 727-200 cargo aircraft, "G-Force One," for an "out-of-this world" experience.

The Centre for Space Science and Technology Education (CSSTE) at Obafemi Awolowo University campus, Ile-Ife had nominated Miss Felix to participate in the programme.

Nigeria recently launched a 25-year road map for the acquisition of the know-how in space science and technology (SST). The target was to have a Nigerian astronaut in space by the year 2015. In support of this goal, the centre for space Science and Technology Education (CSSTE), a developmental centre under NASRDA, has been mandated to promote education through formal and non-formal teaching methods as an outreach programme. Particularly targeted were the school-age children as part of a "catch-them-young" initiative.