

10 killed in Bayelsa over oil well

DENNIS NAKU, Yenagoa

WITH 10 people already dead, a combined team of military personnel has moved into Brass local government area of Bayelsa State to quell a lingering communal strife.

Egweama and Liama communities erupted in violence over land disputes last Saturday in an oil-well farm settlement recently discovered by Emerald Energy Resources.

The killings have created tension in the two communities forcing the people to relocate to nearby Brass Island, and Yenagoa, the state capital.

Heavily armed youths were spotted brandishing sophisticated weapons, despite the heavy presence of military personnel and the police, but state deputy governor, Peremobowei Ebebi said the government had no option than

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to deploy troops to the trouble spot so as to forestall reprisal attacks, even as he said the development was unfortunate.

"We are not sleeping; we are not happy with the situation on the ground. Why would two brothers be fighting over an oil well they don't even know much about? The crude will finish one day, not even too long. What we are particular about is peace and people should endeavour to live together in peace," Ebebi said in Yenagoa yesterday.

Bayelsa

Ebebi, who visited the area also reacted to allegation of the chairman of Egweama council of chiefs over the "insensitivity" of the government to the plight of the people in the area, especially the strained relationship between the two communities. explained that governance was a serious business involving everybody, including traditional rulers; adding that royal fathers are invaluable in resolving such

crises.

Troops comprising regular police, MOPOL and naval officers were deployed and would remain there to ensure safety of lives and property, just as he urged the people to guard against a repeat of military incidents at Odi, Obioku and Odioma which he described as disasters.

Earlier, Egweama council of Chiefs chairman O.A Basuten had blamed people of Liama for the crisis, accusing them of aggression, even as he said the land in question belonged

to Egweama not Liama as being claimed and therefore called on the government to wade into the matter decisively.

For his part, Liama council of chiefs, chairman Chief Loveday attributed the crisis to the discovery of crude oil on a farm settlement in the area, adding that three of their youths (from Lima community) were kidnapped and beaten up by suspected youths from Egweama while accompanying a tug boat to the rig, and as result youths from the latter area went for reprisal attacks.