

# 50 killed as PDP, ANPP clash

•Police confirm 23  
•NBA warns INEC



**COMMISSIONING...** President Olusegun Obasanjo flanked by Cross River State Governor, Donald Duke and his wife Onari, during the commissioning of Tinapa Business Resort in Calabar, yesterday.

Photo: Kingston Daniel

## Ekwueme seeks shift in

JEANACHO NWOSU

PATRICK ODEY, Lafia and OLATUNBOSUN SOWEMIMO

**N**O fewer than 50 persons were feared dead and several others injured at Assakio, the headquarters of Lafia East Development Area of Nasarawa State, when supporters of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) clashed last weekend.

However, out of this number, 23 bodies have been recovered by the police at the time of filing this report last night.

This development which followed a similar incident a fortnight ago in the same area left several houses and vehicles destroyed.

The Director-General of the ANPP campaign organization, Alhaji Tanko Baba who briefed newsmen yesterday at the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Secretariat on Makurdi road Lafia decried the situation where political campaigns have turned into theatres of war.

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While appealing to the people of state to fish out all bad elements, the DG said the party will henceforth not allow miscreant to cause confusion in the state.

In a swift reaction the director general of the PDP campaign organisation Ambassador Polycarp Azige described the attack as mere figment of imagination, and a calculated attempt by the ANPP to smear the PDP.

He said the PDP candidate is a peace loving, hard working and dedicated person who is coming to consolidate the achievements already made by the current government and work on areas which need improvement.

"An Aliyu Akwe Doma administration in Nasarawa State will promote constructive dialogue and move the state forward, respecting the sensibilities and sensitivities of the diverse people of the state," he said.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) has disagreed with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) over a possible postponement of the forthcoming general elections, following series of court orders and injunctions

being obtained by candidates against the commission.

NBA, in a statement by its National President, Mr. Olisa Agbakoba (SAN), issued in Lagos yesterday said it does not accept explanation by INEC's spokesman, Philip Umeadi suggesting of shifting the polls on grounds that it (INEC) was swamped by litigations.

Maintaining that it was the electoral body's duty to appeal court orders, the NBA called on the commission to, in its best interest withdraw all the appeals it had earlier filed against the various court orders, at appellate courts, so that the elections will hold as scheduled.

Agbakoba recalled that many courts, in particular the Court of Appeal had decided that INEC had failed to understand, that as a statutory umpire, charged with the responsibility to conduct and deliver credible free and fair elections, it has no right of appeal at all in respect of cases pending at the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal.

Agbakoba added that the notion that the constitution provides a right of appeal generally does not extend to the absurd situation of conferring a right of appeal to a party, saying that "in this case INEC is not directly interested in the result of an appeal.

"For example, how does a battle between two candidates for a seat at the Senate directly affect INEC or disqualification of a candidate reserved by court to bother INEC, that it enters an appeal? The NBA called on INEC to fully comply with the decision of Justice Galadima (Jesse Balonwu Vs INEC) in respect of INEC's right of appeal. The Justice stated that INEC has no right of appeal in those classes of cases and must not descend into the arena of conflict by taking sides with any of the real contestants.

"The Court of Appeal also revalidated INEC's neutral and independent status in Haruna vs Moddibo, that INEC must never place itself where imputation may be made about its role as an unbiased umpire. The Court of Appeal admonished INEC to allow candidates to fight their own battle," the statement stated.

"The NBA advises INEC, with respect, to withdraw all appeals and leave the relevant parties to approach the courts. The NBA is of the view that the constitution and statutory nature of INEC, as neutral and unbiased umpire, deprives it of a right of appeal. This done, the electoral timetable will be achieved," it added.