

Gunmen abduct 10, kill 3 cops at Eleme

CHINEDU WOSU,
Port Harcourt

THE uncertain security situation in the Niger Delta region of the country yesterday played out with the abduction of 10 workers at the Eleme Petrochemical Company Limited (EPCL), Eleme in Rivers State by unidentified gunmen numbering over 40 and suspected to be militants.

The incident which took place in the early hours of Friday (about 2.30 am) also led to the killing of three mobile policemen on duty at the residential quarters of the staff of the company when the gunmen struck.

Among the abducted workers are Indian nationals and Nigerian staff of Indorama, the new core-investors in the Eleme Petrochemical Company Limited (EPCL).

The gunmen also abducted the company's managing director and chief executive officer, Mr Arun Tanejaon as well as three other management staff of the company. They are the deputy managing director, Mr Bang, Head of commercials, Mr Fotedar and the Head of Marketing, Mr Vinjay.

Although the identities of the deceased mobile policemen were yet to be made public at the

time of filing this report, our correspondent in Port Harcourt, Rivers State capital reports that the heavily-armed gunmen engaged the policemen on duty at the company's residential quarters at Agbaju in a shootout for several hours with sophisticated weapons.

Our correspondent reports that no reasons has so far been given by the gunmen for abducting the workers of the petrochemical company, just as no group has claimed responsibility for the abduction and killing.-

Also, no arrest has been made as at press time by the state police command as the gunmen escaped with abducted workers through the creeks.

Reacting angrily to the incessant cases of kidnap of the staff of the Eleme Petrochemical Company Limited, hundreds of youths from the company's host community, Friday barricaded the Eleme-Onne port road to protest the abduction.

The youths' spokesman, preferring anonymity told our correspondent that "the kidnap cases are obviously distracting the company from continuing with its revival efforts of the hitherto dying Eleme Petrochemical Company Limited, which has offered jobs to many of us, (Eleme indigenes)".