

## Communal clash victims for mass burial

DENNIS NAKU, Yenagoa

PEACE and Conflict Resolution Committee in Bayelsa state is to take over the burial of victims of a recent inter communal clash in Igbomoturu, in Southern Ijaw local government area.

Also the committee assured that there would be no subsequent military invasion in the state.

At least 70 persons allegedly lost their lives, while the entire community was deserted during the period.

Disclosing this to newsmen in Yenagoa at a media briefing, Monday, the state chairman of the committee, Chief James Jephtar said for normalcy to return to the warring community, the committee had to apply Alternative Distributive Resolution method, adding that the approach yielded positive results as people have started returning to the community.

He also disclosed that as part of measure to restore peace in the community, the Committee has agreed to bury the corpse of those allegedly killed during the clash.

On the purported plan of military invasion, the chairman said there was an initial plan to carry out the onslaught due to series of unchecked activities of the militant youths which made the country to loose billions of naira.

Jephtar stated that government can no longer fold its arms and allowing criminal activities to continue unabated in the Country, noting that oil companies are gradually folding up their exploration and exploitation activities in the region.

He said, "The activities of the militant youths necessitated the setting up of this committee both at the National and States levels and since inauguration we have been visiting various militant camps in the Creeks and it has been a huge success.

Before now, he said uniform men were not allowed into Southern Ijaw territory, but during our visit there uniformed men were allowed as we have as part of our team, Assistant Commissioner of Police, senior office from the State Security Service and others.

The chairman noted that

over 98 per cent of the militants operating have subscribed to the Federal government peace initiative, adding that with time such activities in the region would become a thing of the past.

On the recent military invasion of Gbarian community in Southern Ijaw local government, Jephtar said that no death was reported in some newspapers, adding that soldiers of the Joint Military Task Force were misinformed about the true situation in the riverine area.

"Yes, the JTF was given information about the purported plan of some of the youths to attack the EA field of the Shell Petroleum Development Company in the area and to prevent the attack, the JTF men attacked the shrine but nobody was killed. The place was even deserted before the soldiers got there."

Following the development, he said he had registered his displeasure and even threatened to resign his appointment, before he was assured that such incident would not reoccur.

DENNIS NAKU, Yenagoa

NIGER Delta militants operating in the creeks of Bayelsa state at the weekend in Ologbobiri, Southern Ijaw local government made a passionate appeal for general amnesty for all those who have taken up arms against the Nigerian state.

This they said became necessary in the new spirit of peace and reconciliation being demonstrated by the federal government.

Meanwhile, the Senator

## Group wants amnesty for militants

David Brigidi-led Niger Delta Peace and Conflict Resolution

Committee continued its visit to militant camps in the predominantly riverine state. Two militant kingpins, Joshua and Africa in Southern Ijaw local government are believed to be operating the camps there.

In a closed door meeting that lasted for over three hours, an Assistant Commissioner of Police, John

Amadi, representing the Nigerian Police, Duke Fubara representing the State Security Service (SSS) and other functionaries of the Peace panel arrived Southern Ijaw about 12.15pm on Saturday and headed straight for discussion with the unit commanders of the militant camps.

Joshua and Africa formally welcomed the peace and reconciliation committee, before the close door meeting between the federal government delegation and the militants.

Brigidi and his entourage were greeted with gun salutes that lasted for over 15 minutes.

Speaking at the reception, Joshua said the federal government should demonstrate its sincerity on the amnesty plea, concerning those that took up arms against the Nigerian state, but we did so because of the obvious neglect of the social amenities in our area."

He therefore appealed for educational and employment opportunities, to improve the lots of the youths and people of the oil rich area.

In his remarks, Africa renewed the militants' demand for the release of Henry Okah, popularly known as Jomo Gbomo, describing him as a committed Ijaw activist and patriot.



Here former Governor, Donald Duke of Cross River State (left) signing the visitor's note book during his courtesy visit to Government House, Benin City, while Governor Oserheimen Osunbor of Edo State watches with keen interest.

## Community wants Gas flaring ended, Jan. 1

RESIDENTS of Ibino Rin Akwa Ibom have appealed to the federal government to insist on the Jan. 1, 2008 deadline to end gas flaring in oil fields.

The News Agency of

Nigeria (NAN) reports that Ibino is the host community to Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited.

Ibino community leader and spokesman,

Chief Okon Sunday-Akpan, told NAN at Eket that the community had lived with the pains of gas flaring since 1970 when the oil company arrived there.

He called on the federal government

to implement their zero gas flare projects.

"Shifting the deadline again will give the oil companies the impression that we are not serious. We do not want an extension.

heavy fines to withdrawal of operating licences.

Sunday-Akpan commended the DPR for its commitment to enforcing the government's deadline, which stipulated that