

News

Gunmen assassinate perm sec in Bayelsa

By DENNIS NAKU, Yenagoa

THE entire coastal community of Okodi, in Ogbia local government area of Bayelsa state has been thrown into mourning, as unknown gunmen in the early hours of last Friday assassinated a Permanent Secretary in the State Civil Service, Dr. Ikpariiba Apiri.

Dr. Apiri, a medical doctor was gunned down while returning home after attending the wake of the late father of the former Aide Camp (ADC) to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, who also hails from Okodi, when some gunmen accosted him on the way and told him that he was under arrest.

It would be recalled that a 10 year-old boy was killed in a communal conflict between the coastal communities of Egweama and Liama in Brass Local Government, over contention of an oil well in the locality.

Brass and Ogbia Local Government areas are located in the same coastline.

But, *Sunday Champion* learnt that trouble started when the Permanent Secretary demanded explanations as to why he was under arrest, but his assailants fired direct gunshots at him, without giving any reason; leaving the physician in a pool of his own blood.

Corpses of the late medical

doctor has been deposited in an undisclosed hospital morgue in the state.

Investigation by *Sunday Champion* revealed that Apiri's death may not be unconnected with the lingering communal crisis in his community, that has factionalised the hitherto, peaceful village.

Sources said the medical doctor had travelled

home last Friday shortly after attending an official function in Yenagoa, the state capital.

Reacting to the killing, Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Media and Publicity, Preye Wariowei regretted the killing of the Permanent Secretary, describing him as a fine and hard working gentleman.

Wariowei, however ruled

out any political undertone to the assassination, but posited that it was linked to a communal problem in his community.

Contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Ibokette Iniobong, confirmed the incident, saying the Police are still investigating the matter.

Ibokette, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) was obviously unsure if the police authority has made any arrest.

Police confirm 8 casualties in Ebonyi communal clash

By KENNETH OFOMA, Abakaliki

THE Ebonyi state Police command yesterday put paid to speculations about the number of casualties in the recent communal crisis that erupted between the Ezillo and Ezza clans in Ishielu Local Government areas saying only eight persons, including three elderly women lost their lives as against the rumoured 18 persons.

Commissioner of Police, Mr. Emmanuel Onyedikachi Udeoji who disclosed this in a maiden news briefing, said the situation had been brought under control by his men.

Udeoji said that contrary to speculations that 78 A-K 47 rifles were recovered, only few locally made guns and empty shells were recovered

from the people during the crisis that erupted as a result of a supremacy battle over the ownership of a local food stuff market in the area.

The commissioner of Police who assumed office on May 12, two days after the outbreak of the crisis, stated that out of a total of 51 persons arrested in the course of the crisis, 20 have been charged to court, while 31 persons are still being investigated with a view to ascertaining their involvement or otherwise.

Udeoji noted that his major concern was to ensure that total peace returned in the embattled communities, adding that he was not ready to tolerate any act that would constitute threat to the security of lives and property in the state.

"If you take a closer look at the security situation in

the state, you would discover that for the past three to four weeks, we've not had anything that constituted threat to peace in the state and we are determined to maintain that record," he stated, while asking men of the underworld not to attempt to carry out their "businesses here because we are declaring total war against them".

While disclosing that his regime would have zero tolerance for corruption, Udeoji dismissed allegations that some of his men were still collecting bribes from motorists across the state, despite consistent warnings from the Inspector General, Mr. Mike Okoro.

"Let me state it for the umpteenth time; any police officer caught collecting bribe will be sacked. By that I mean that, the officer would be severely dealt