

4 days to fresh polls -

PDP chieftain killed in Kogi

Five days to the repeat of Kogi State gubernatorial election on Saturday March 29, the Peoples Democratic Party [PDP] chairman in Ankpa Local Government Area of the state has been killed.

The politician, who was identified as Mallam Alih Ayegba, was killed by unknown assailants in his compound at about 7.30pm on Sunday.

From Ahmed Tahir and Sam Egwu, Lokoja

According to a witness, the assassins, thought to be four in number, drove in a Peugeot 505 and trailed the deceased from a mosque in Ankpa and opened fire on him a few metres to his residence.

Daily Trust gathered from other residents in the area in Ankpa that they had seen the

Peugeot 505, painted in red, patrolling around the late PDP chairman's residence earlier on Sunday and were shocked to later learn that it was the same car that the assassins used when they launched the attack on Alhaji Ayegba.

Another eye-witness, who claimed that the assassins killed the PDP chieftain in his compound, quoted the man's pregnant wife, Hajara

as having asked the killers of their names and pleading with them to spare her husband's life, but to no avail.

The Ogaji Road New Layout, where the deceased's house is located, was full of sympathisers when *Daily Trust* visited Ankpa yesterday.

This murder is coming at a time when various groups are calling on President

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Yar'Adua to ensure security in Kogi State towards the forthcoming repeat gubernatorial polls. In the last few days, there have been reports to killings in Okene, Anyigba, Dekina, and now Ankpa local governments.

Last week, the Acting Governor, Clarence Olufemi escaped a gun attack at Ejule in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, while returning from the PDP campaign rally in Idah, the ancestral home of the Igala-speaking people of Kogi State. The assassins escaped unhurt.

Kogi State, previously unassuming, has since 2003 be-

come a hotbed for political assassinations; none of which has been resolved. Some of those killed included Chief Steven Olorinikpa, the late Chairman of Kogi State Independent Electoral Commission, and Chief Bako Shigaba, PDP chairmanship aspirant for Bassa Local Government Area.

Ahead of Saturday's contest, which is between former governors Prince Abubakar Audu and Alhaji Ibrahim Idris, there have been calls for the redeployment of top police chiefs, and the deployment of soldiers into the state to maintain peace and security.

The two contenders for the governorship position have been accusing each other of sponsoring thugs and militants, in spite of the fact that they had signed an undertaking with the Inspector-General of Police Mike Okiro to be of good conduct during the elections.

When contacted, the Kogi State police public relations officer, PPRO, Kogi state, Mr Innocent Inalegwu, said the police authorities were leaving no stone unturned to ensure the culprits were brought to book. However, as at last night, *Daily Trust* gathered no arrests had been.