

## NEWS

**A** SPECIAL committee to investigate all cases of armed attacks on oil facilities in the Niger Delta region is to be set up by the Federal Government.

On its part, the Nigerian Navy has denied a report that five of its officers were killed in a recent confrontation with robbers in Port Harcourt, Rivers State capital.

When inaugurated, the committee would work with the host communities in the oil-rich region to identify spots where militants regroup and the reasons for their attacks on oil outfits.

The government's resolve to focus on mili-

# Panel to probe Niger Delta violence under way

*By Alex Olise*

tant attacks is reportedly prompted by huge losses incurred in the past year, especially the reduction in oil production revenue earnings, which have adversely affected the economy.

Defence sources told *The Guardian* that the government is no longer comfortable with violence in the region, hence the need to find lasting solutions to the age-long problem.

Denying report of the

death of five naval officers, the Director, Naval Information, Captain Obiora Medani, said: "The Nigerian Navy will wish to refute a story in a national newspaper not (*The Guardian*) issue of Wednesday, June 28, in which the paper claimed that robbers sank three naval boats and killed five personnel during a robbery operation at the Naval Base in Port Harcourt".

Medani said that no naval boat was sunk by any robber in Port Har-

court.

"It is true that there was a shoot-out between naval personnel and some armed groups who attacked an oil facility within the periphery of the Naval Base on Thursday, June 22, 2006, at about 3.45 a.m.

"The attackers were beaten with heavy losses but two naval personnel were unfortunately killed during the shoot-out. An official inquiry is presently going on to ascertain fully the details of what really happened", he said.