

# Militants Kill Three, Abduct Two Indians

FROM  
KELVIN EBIRI,  
PORT HARCOURT

**S**USPECTED militants yesterday killed three Nigerians and kidnapped

two Indians working at the newly privatised Eleme Petrochemical Company Limited/Indorama, in

Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State.

This is coming as the Port Harcourt branch

of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) has urged the Federal, State and Local governments to take the

security issue in the state seriously.

Rivers Commissioner of Police, Felix Ogbaudu, informed

*The Guardian* that the militants, who were armed with dynamites and other lethal weapons such as machine guns, invaded the residential quar-

**Tanker Crushes 5 To Death In Enugu**

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# Tanker Crushes Five To Death In Enugu

FROM LAWRENCE NJOKU, ENUGU

**T**EARS flowed freely yesterday afternoon when about five persons including a young girl, lost their lives and several others seriously wounded when a water tanker crashed into some lock-up shops at the busy Abakpa Market in Enugu.

The tanker registered XA 196 KPA was in Abakpa at about noon to supply water to residents, who have been hit by scarcity in the past few years.

According to eyewitness account, the tanker was descending the Abakpa-Trans-Ekulu road when the driver lost control, as a result of brake failure and crashed into the nearby market, killing five people.

Two passengers in a J5 bus and some street traders were among

those crushed to death during the incident that left several others injured.

Sympathizers, who trooped out in large numbers, wailed uncontrollably as men of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) and the Civil Defence Corps (CDC) tried to clear the crashed tanker in an effort to rescue survivors.

When *The Guardian* visited the scene in the afternoon, officials of the two agencies were still trying to control traffic, while residents took over every available space, apparently to help rescue some persons trapped in the incident.

Enugu Zonal Commander of the FRSC, Mr. S. A. Isewon told reporters that at least five bodies were retrieved from the debris of the shops bulldozed by the tanker.

Remains of those

involved in the accident had been deposited at the National Orthopaedic Hospital mortuary, Enugu, while those who sustained injuries were also rushed to the same institution.

While residents blamed the accident on the scarcity of water that has hit the area in the past few years making people to resort to commercial deliveries, an official of the Defence Corps said that casualties would have been minimal had traders heeded warnings not to do business along the road.

"There have been several warnings from relevant authorities that people should not trade along the road but such warnings are often ignored. Now, see what it has caused. The last time we came here, they (traders) even tried to attack us," he said.

The official said that the Corps would liaise with the Police in the state to find ways of checking infiltration of the traders in the market onto the road.

Relatedly, safety concerns are being expressed by the emergence of new gullies on the Abakpa Bridge on the Trans-Ekulu/Army Barracks end of Enugu-Onitsha

expressway.

This is less than two months after the Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FERMA) completed repair work on the road.

As a result of the development, motorists moving towards the Abakaliki Road end of the expressway now abandon their lane for the opposite lane, thus raising safety concerns on the road.

Contact, FERMA Chief Maintenance Engineer in Enugu, Mr. Segun Olotu said he was not competent to comment on the matter and referred newsmen to the Zonal Director in charge of Southeast zone, who could not be reached at press time.

## AD Wants Reforms Before Polls

BY KAMAL TAYO OROPO

**A**S Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) appears set to release voters' list to states for the local government elections, the Alliance for Democracy (AD) has stated that holding another poll just after the allegedly rigged general elections is unacceptable to it.

"The majority of the political parties are still licking their wounds. They have never wit-

## Workers Protest Dismissal At Mr Biggs

FROM ISA ABDULSALAMI, JOS

**T**HE staff of Mr. Biggs, Jos, yesterday staged a peaceful demonstration in front of their office to protest the termination of some of their colleagues.

Addressing journalists, the Vice Chairman of the workers union, Comrade Samuel Ishaya, said the termination of appointment was done with impunity by the management.

"Our grievances are numerous," he said. "We have had a series of dismissal and termination, but this one is coming at a time that we least expected it."

"There is no reason given so far. But we know that before an employee's appointment is terminated, he must have committed one crime."

"There was no query so far, neither was there any first or second warning. We are surprised that the termination is coming when nobody commit-

ted any offence."

When *The Guardian* sought to speak with the regional manager, Napoleon Mamman, he was said to have gone out.

Meanwhile, the Plateau State Nigerian Labour Congress has waded in, promising to hold a meeting with Mr. Biggs' management tomorrow.

## Benin Bronze Fetches \$4.2m At Sotheby's Auction

**A** 17th-century bronze head from the Kingdom of Benin was sold at the weekend at Sotheby's for \$4.74 million, against an estimate of \$1 million to \$1.5 million, the *New York Times* has reported.

The work of art had been in the collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, which is selling - over the protests of some patrons - several older works to increase its endowment for buying contemporary art.

In March, the first in the series of sales made the gallery more than \$18 million. A rare 10th-century granite statue, depicting the Hindu god Shiva as Brahma, sold to the Cleveland Museum of Art for slightly more than \$4 million, an auction record for a work of traditional Indian art.

The cast Benin head, nine inches tall, depicts a king, or Oba. The artistic mastery of sculptures, like this helped change Western views of African culture when they became known in Europe.

## Dariye Condoles With Dead Journalists' Family

FROM ISA ABDULSALAMI, JOS

**T**HE Plateau State Governor, Chief Joshua Dariye, has described last week's death of eight people, among them seven journalists, in a ghastly accident as an unfortunate and tragic incident, which no word can qualify.

He made the remark while on a condolence visit to the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Press Centre, Jos at the weekend.

The Governor, his wife, Valentina, some members of the state executive council and top government officials also paid condolence visits to the families of the affected journalists and those still

receiving treatment in the hospital.

At the NUJ Press Centre, Dariye said he was deeply pained by the great loss, adding that journalists have continued to stand for the truth and in defence of democracy. He lamented that the loss of such great and seasoned journalists has left a serious vacuum.

He recalled that journalists had stood and fought for the rule of law, urging NUJ members not to be deterred but remain steadfast and committed to the cause.

Dariye said the government would continue to associate with the union and later presented condolence letters and cheques for N750,000 to each of the bereaved families.

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ters of the expatriates, situated at Chinda Street, Elenlewo at about 4am.

The spokesperson of the Joint Task Force (JTF), Major Musa Sagir, whose men engaged the kidnappers in a fierce gun duel, also explained that shortly after the gunmen used dynamites to forcefully open the front gate of the

compound, a distress call was sent to the JTF headquarters for intervention.

However, before the arrival of the task force, comprising military and police officers, the gunmen had taken 10 expatriates hostage.

But due to the swift intervention of the security men, who engaged the gunmen in a battle that lasted several minutes, the militants managed to

escape with two Indians and some valuables of the hostages.

"There was an encounter between the troops of the Joint Task Force and some militants," said Sagir. "We are suspecting that they are members of the Ateke Tom group. They went to the residential quarters of the staff of Eleme Petrochemical and kidnapped two Indians."

He explained that

during the encounter, a Nigerian civilian was killed by stray bullet while two others sustained serious injuries. The two later died of their wounds.

He said there was no casualties among the security forces that chased the gunmen away.

Sagir also disclosed that a reconnaissance team had been dispatched to the adjoining communities and

suspected strongholds of some of the militia leaders in the state to search for the kidnapped expatriates.

"An intense rescue operation is going on to determine the very location of the Indians and to rescue them. We will do everything humanly possible to secure the safe release of the men. Our men are already striving hard to locate the men," Sagir said.

The state NBA Chairman, Emmanuel C. Aguma has appealed to those making Port Harcourt and Rivers State in general unsafe to have a rethink.

According to him, a situation whereby expatriates could not walk about freely and parents are afraid to drop off their children in school is disheartening.

"We have in recent times witnessed a series of kidnappings, which range from the absurd to the bizarre. We plead with all those engaged in these activities to please think again," he said.

The NBA noted that the strategies being adopted by the militants now show a diametrical departure from the original laudable goal of emancipating the Niger Delta people from subjugation.

## Company Denies Senate President As Owner Of Alkatex

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that the Commission had no comment "for now". He said the public should, however, note that there is a difference between those who own a company or companies and those who promote them for contracts.

Prompted further, the INEC official said: "we would rather leave the matter for now, but if it becomes necessary, the public will know the details of the transactions".

Alkatex has as its directors Chief Uche Nnaji with N40,000 share capital; Nnaji Dave (N30,000); and Obiajulu Chukwurah (N30,000).

The documents add: "By resolution, a third director was added which also changed the shareholding

of the company i.e. Nnaji N20,000."

It would be recalled that last week, a newspaper (not *The Guardian*) quoting unnamed INEC sources, said the Senate President owned Alkatex that had a contract from the Commission.

The report thus indicated that Nnamani benefited from the contracts the INEC awarded for the 2007 elections, and which the Senate has set up a 32-man Joint Committee to investigate.

Following the publication, the Senate set up a separate seven-man panel to find out if Nnamani was involved in any such contract.

A livid Nnamani denied being part of what he described as a "bazaar" that took place in INEC.

Yesterday, Alkatex, with its address on Malanje Street in Zone 4 of Wuse District in Abuja, said that Nnamani was not part of its operational setup.

It said the newspaper publication was "completely misleading and calculated to embarrass" it.

It added in the statement by one Chukwurah Obi that: "The company wished to state as follows:

"That Alkatex Nigeria Limited was registered in 1998 with RC number 334945 by the Corporate Affairs Commission. The particulars of our company are available at the Commission for any body to see."

"We bidden (bid) for, got pre-qualified, won and executed fully the contract for the supply of small part

of voting cubicles to INEC."

"Our company has track record of quality service with all our numerous customers both public and private."

"Senator Ken Nnamani is neither a director nor a shareholder in our company. Allegation that he is connected to our company is clearly false and unfounded."

"We view this misinformation in the Nigerian media as a calculated attempt to smear our good corporate image."

"We demand unreserved apology from the erring media houses failing of which we shall be compelled to seek legal redress."

"We implore all well meaning Nigerians to disregard the said publica-

tion."

In his comments on the allegation of his ownership of Alkatex last week, Nnamani said: "I have tried to avoid applying to any ministry or parastatal and I challenge any ministry or parastatal in Nigeria from 2003 to publish any transaction Ken Nnamani or his company have had with that ministry, talk less of the bazaar, the bazaar that went on at INEC."

"I did not participate in that bazaar. No company associated with Ken Nnamani participated in it. I call it a bazaar."

"So, for people to publish this, I would be speaking louder... because there are procedures and I'm assuring you people (Senators) that I would not let you down."