

Gunmen kill policemen, driver, abduct headmistress

From **Hendrix Ollomogbo** (Asaba) and **Inem Akpan-Nsoh**, Uyo

GUNMEN suspected to be kidnappers yesterday struck again in Eket, Akwa Ibom State, taking away the Headmistress of Mobil Pegasus Nursery/Primary School, Mrs. **Lakshmi Itauma**.

The incident, which occurred while Itauma was going to work, claimed the lives of the driver to the vehicle and two policemen attached to her.

Itauma was reportedly on her way to QIT, the operational base of Mobil at Ibeno when the gunmen intercepted her car.

Eyewitnesses said the gunmen, numbering about 15, waylaid the headmistress' car along Grace Bill Road in Eket, shot her official driver and a police escort killing both of them instantly. Another policeman who attempted to confront the hoodlums was also killed before they escaped through Onna-Ikot Abasi Highway.

The bullet-ridden car of the Mobil staff school head

teacher and the remains of her driver as well as the police escort were later found lying on the road.

The eyewitnesses added that the hoodlum struck at about 7 a.m. while workers and school children were going to their workplaces and schools.

They told *The Guardian* that passersby and residents of the area, on hearing the sporadic gunshots along Grace Bill Road, ran for their dear lives.

In the last one week, more than four people have been kidnapped, including the wife of a former military governor, Group Captain Sam Enwang.

None of the victims has been released till date, as sources close to their families said the kidnappers' ransom demands were "on the high side."

Confirming yesterday's incident, Akwa Ibom State Commissioner of Police, Walter Rugbere, said efforts were being made to track down the hoodlums behind it.

He called on residents of the state not to panic, assuring that the police were handling the situation very well. However, Rugbere charged the state's residents to report any suspected criminal to the police for appropriate investigation.

Meanwhile, a whopping ransom of N70 million has been demanded by the kidnappers of one Dim Maxwell Obiajulua, Managing Director of Obi-Links Petrol Station for him to be set free, Delta State Police Public Relations Officer, Charles Muka, has disclosed.

Obiajulua was abducted from his home last week in

Asaba by a gang of kidnappers.

Muka said the kidnappers, who had been in contact with the victim's wife, had suddenly gone incommunicado because of fear that the police were closing in on them.

He also disclosed that in a renewed bid to rid the state of criminal elements, the Delta Police Command has arrested 74 suspected cultists in various part of the state.

Muka, who spoke in Asaba on Tuesday, added that some of the suspects were arrested at Issele-Mkpitime, Aniocha-North Local Council, with 42

nabbed in the home of one Ofili Nkemwa, a businessman, in the course of trying to initiate them into a cult. Another 32 suspected cultists were picked up at Delta State University (DELSU), Abiraka.

He said Nkemwa was still at large while the matter had been transferred to the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for further investigations.

The police spokesman assured that the suspects would soon appear in court, adding that their arrest was made possible through a tip-off from the affected communities.

Rivers court voids Eso panel report

From **Kelvin Ebiri**, Port Harcourt

APORT Harcourt High Court has perpetually restrained the Rivers State government from implementing, acting or giving effect to the report of the Justice Kayode Eso-led Truth and Reconciliation Commission for indicting former Governor Peter Odili.

However, the court declined to set aside the state government's White Paper on the Eso report recommending that a judicial commission of inquiry be set up to prove the destruction of Okuru-Ama and the murder of an Okrika chief.

But in a reaction, Commissioner of Information,

Mrs. Ibim Semenitari, said the state government would appeal the judgment, which was delivered in favour of Odili.

Irked by portions of the report and the procedure that gave birth to it, Odili had through his counsel, Wale Olanipekun (SAN), initiated the suit in which he complained that his fundamental rights to person-