

SOUTHSOUTH

Bayelsa ex-PDP chairman dies, Alaibe denies link to incident

From Willie Etim (Yenagoa) and Ann Godwin (Port Harcourt)

FORMER Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Bayelsa State, Col. Sam Inokoba (rtd) has passed on.

According to his first son, Waripamowei Inokoba, the retired army officer slumped and died in the wee hours of yesterday in Lagos during a family visit.

"My father slumped at about 2am in the early hours of Wednesday and was confirmed dead before taken to the hospital. Some of our people are on their way to Lagos to bring back his corpse," he disclosed.

The late politician, who defected to the All Progressive Congress (APC) some 19 days ago, is believed in some quarters to have died of food poisoning while

others argued that his frail condition suggested stress.

Inokoba had reportedly procured his Expression of Intent and Nomination Forms at the APC secretariat in Abuja to contest the party's primaries ahead of the December 5 governorship election in the state.

The family, in a statement jointly signed by the deceased's elder brother, Clee Inokoba and son, Wari-

pamowei also confirmed the incident.

When our reporter visited the residence of the departed, it was a scene of mournful faces of political associates, family members and sympathisers.

The Bayelsa State government, has however, expressed shock over Inokoba's demise.

A statement issued by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor Seriake Dickson, Daniel Markson-Iworiso, said: "The death of Retired Colonel Inokoba is sad and a painful loss to the state. He will be greatly missed by his family and close associates, especially the political class. We pray God to grant the family the fortitude to bear the irreparable loss as well as grant his soul eternal rest. We as-

sure the family of government's preparedness to support and participate in the rites of passage for the late Col. Inokoba," the statement read.

The late politician had also slumped during the last PDP presidential rally held in Yenagoa.

Meanwhile, a governorship hopeful and former Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Timi Alaibe has dismissed any connection with the incident.

An online medium had reportedly insinuated that Inokoba died in the Lagos home of the former presidential adviser on Niger Delta.

In a statement signed by his aide, Nwokoma Ndu, Alaibe said the rumour was baseless,

malicious and wicked. He said the same portal had also alleged heated arguments between the duo, where the deceased had allegedly turned down a N200 million offer to forfeit his gubernatorial ambition. Ndu maintained that Alaibe had been in Abuja all the week, querying: "How can somebody who has been in Abuja all week suddenly appear in Lagos for a ghost meeting?"

He added: It is evident from the hate stories emanating from the pro-PDP media in the state that it was targeted to look for every opportunity to nail Alaibe due to their fear that he may emerge winner of the December elections if he gets the APC nomination," Ndu stated.