

3 Gunmen allegedly kill Okomu oil palm worker, set equipment, farm ablaze

From **Michael Egbejule**, Benin City

GUNMEN yesterday, allegedly killed worker in Okomu Oil Palm Company Plc, set ablaze three of its equipment and 20 hectares of rubber plantation in Ovia South West local council of Edo State.

Speaking to journalists at the company's office, the Public Relations Officer, Fidelis Oliseh said the gunmen numbering six, stormed the plantation with AK-47 rifles and shot at one of their workers at close range and he died on the spot.

He said: "A group of individuals came into our plantation to attack our workers and our equipment. The security rushed to the scene. They shot at our security personnel and they were driven back by the furious resistance put up by the security forces. In the meantime, they were trying to protect four excavators working on our plantation and they managed to rescue one excavator.

He said: "Unfortunately in the scuffle, the gunmen shot dead one of the operators. It was a close range, he tried

to jump down from the excavator to get away, but they caught him, put the gun to his head and assassinated him and threw his body into a trench. They then proceeded to set other excavators that were within alight. They set the three excavators alight and later proceeded to the rubber plantation which was close by to set it alight as well. The company lost 20 hectares of rubber due to the fire that they started."

Oliseh said the company at the moment, is trying to work with the security agency to see how it can carry

on, stressing that the army are in control of the whole area.

He maintained that they have also closed the company because of the insecurity and the gunmen attack.

He said the recent attack on the company's personnel and its facilities could be linked to the determination of the state government to put an end to illegal logging in the state.

The Edo State Police Command image-maker, Bello Kontongs when contacted, said the command has not been briefed about it.