

# 40 PDP Delegates Crushed To Death

- Party Orders Outstanding Primaries For Today
- Nnamani Flays Teatment Of Senators

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About 40 persons died and 50 others were injured in Kaduna on Tuesday when a trailer rammed into humans, vehicles, and motor cycles at the venue of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governorship run-off

election.

Supporters and delegates had trooped to the International Trade Fair Complex for the ballot between Senator Isaiah Balat and Namadi Sambo.

Kaduna Deputy Governor, Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa, described the incident as "a national tragedy."

Eyewitnesses recounted

that a Kano-bound trailer, marked YOBE, XB 487 PKM, lost control as a result of traffic jam at the junction leading to the complex.

A Kano-bound 14-seater bus carrying passengers from Kaduna ran into the trailer and burst into flame, killing some of the occupants instantly, and

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leading to multiple accidents.

Some of the victims were burnt beyond recognition; the injured screamed and groaned for help as the police, Federal Road Safety Corps and the National Civil Defence Corps battled to evacuate the dead and the injured.

The corpses were deposited at the Barau Dikko Hospital and the 44 Armed Forces Reference Hospital.

Yakowa promised that the government will foot the medical bills and prayed that such disaster should never happen again.

He added: "Myself and the Assembly speaker have visited all the hospitals where the victims have been taken to. We have given instructions that the hospitals should take full care of them, and that the state government will settle the bills."

The victims admitted at St. Gerald Catholic Hospital included a mobile police Sergeant, Saleh Ahmadu, Abubakar Abdulmumini, and a 15-year old boy, Ibrahim Sule.

Meanwhile, the national leadership of the PDP has decided that a run-off election in the Lagos governorship pri-

maries be held today between Hilda, the widow of Funsho Williams, and Musiliu Obanikoro.

The National Working Committee (NWC) also ratified run-offs in seven other states, owing to inability to conclude voting in the December 9, 2006 governorship primaries.

They are: Akwa Ibom, Niger, Imo, Plateau, Adamawa, Benue and Nassarawa States. The PDP headquarters awaits result for that of Abia State.

Intrigues, for the fourth day running, stalled the exercise in Akwa Ibom State, fueling strong feelings that the flag bearer may eventually be decided by the national headquarters.

Speculations were rife that the leadership of the party in the state was bent on foisting a particular aspirant on the party, a development opposed by the other aspirants.

The desire to go ahead with the imposition is said to be the main reason why the exercise has been stalled in the state. An attempt to hoodwink delegates on Tuesday led to a distress call

to Abuja which ordered that the exercise be halted until otherwise directed.

Senate President, Ken Nnamani, assessing the exercise so far, accused the party of rewarding senators' loyalty with betrayal at the primaries, although he urged senators who lost to forget the past and consolidate democratic representation.

Echoes of the senatorial primaries reverberated at the plenary session when five senators, three from the PDP and two from the ANPP, changed parties on Tuesday.

"It is very painful that some of our colleagues were betrayed by the very persons and institutions they supported as legislators. It is even more disheartening that some primaries were said to be unfairly conducted or manipulated against them," Nnamani lamented.

"The reports about violence, manipulation, and outright imposition in some of the primaries raise cause for concern about the sustainability of democracy post 2007. From the experiences of our recent past, we should be instructed that primaries to elect candidates for elections are not mere formalities. They are definitive of the character and direction of democratisation in Ni-

geria."

"Some of our colleagues participated in the primaries. A few senators, for personal reasons, did not participate, electing to continue to offer their services to the nation outside the corridors of official power. Still, some senators participated in primaries for governorship positions in their states.

"We are proud that each of our colleagues who vied to return as senator or to transfer his or her service to the nation in the gubernatorial position fought gallantly. But, unfortunately, some of our colleagues failed to clinch their party's tickets. Because the Senate is one family and we share deep conviviality and commitment, we empathise with our colleagues who lost the primaries.

"If the primaries are grossly manipulated, then the signs are not good enough for the main elections. Primaries are shadows of things to come. And if we judge by media reports, already our democracy post 2007 does not stand. We cannot afford to brood over party primaries. We cannot allow bitterness to block the initiative and commitment

that mark this Senate.

"This is time to buckle up and finish strong. We must consolidate and preserve the legacy of democratic representation, which this Senate is bequeathing to the nation. We must remain focused, strong and dedicated so that we will achieve our mission. Neither grief nor sorrow should deter us from discharging our responsibilities as Senators. Let's move on," he said.

Nnamani read out letters from Senators Saleh Danboyi, (PDP, Taraba); Kanti Bello, (ANPP, Katsina); Rufai Hanga, (ANPP, Kano); Ibikunle Amosun (PDP, Ogun), and Iyabo Anisulowo (PDP, Ogun), announcing their decision to quit their parties for new ones.

Danboyi crossed over to the Action Congress (AC), Amosun (ANPP), Anisulowo (ANPP), and Hanga (AC).

Regardless, the PDP National Working Committee (NWC) announced that over 5,000 delegates are expected at the national convention on Saturday to choose the party's Presidential candidate.

PDP National Publicity Secretary, John Odey, said the fate of the aspirants rest on the delegates and the party is committed to holding free, fair and an all-inclusive convention.