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AFTER a brief lull, robbers returned to Benin City yesterday, with an early morning raid on two new generation banks on Akpakpava Street. One Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) and another policeman were killed in the Edo State capital where two houses were razed. For about five hours, the robbers held the neighbourhood hostage, moving from one bank to the other and shooting sporadically at the bank buildings and their fences, leaving hundreds of bullet holes on the walls.

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• The burnt building

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It was learnt that the robbers entered the city

through Ikpoba Hill, killing on their way to the scene the Assistant Superintendent of Police who headed a police checkpoint. They also injured some other policemen at the check point. Besides, 10 vehicles were destroyed.

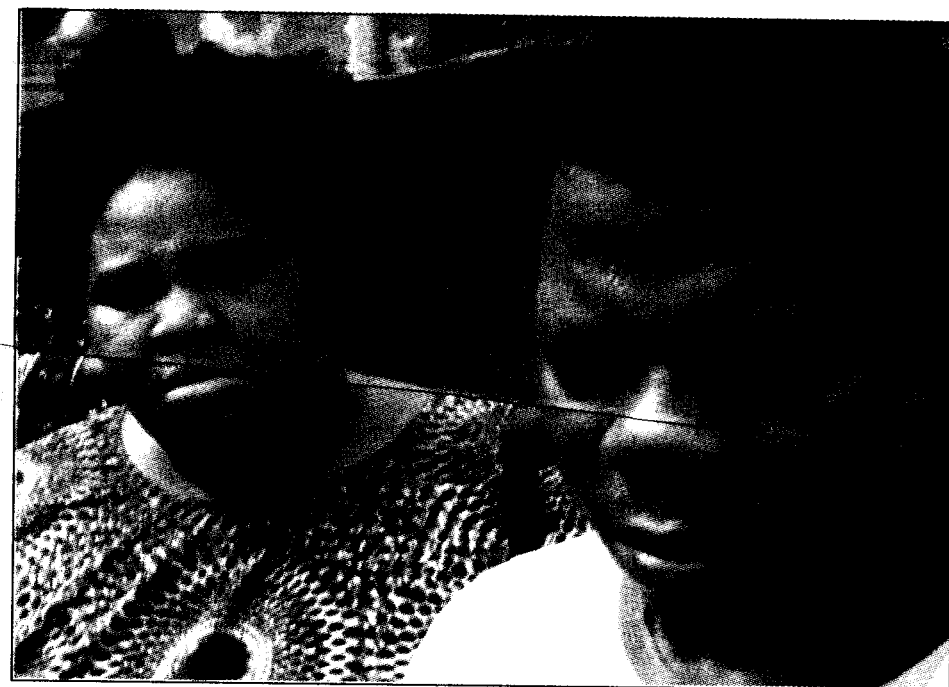
The Edo State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Bala Hassan, confirmed the killing of the ASP. Though, he said none of the robbers was arrested, some of them may have been fatally wounded, carried away by their colleagues.

He added that the robbers entered one of the banks but that he could not say whether they stole any money.

On Akpakpava Street, the robbers who were said to have continued their operation until a police team confronted them, also punctured the tyres of the armoured personnel carrier that brought them. It was the third reinforcement by the police that finally dislodged the robbers.

During the shoot-out between the police and the robbers, two houses situated between two of the banks caught fire. They were razed down. In one of the buildings were corporate offices, including a law firm. The other had a printing press and shops for electronics and electrical parts.

Mr Edmund Akaka, who



• Some of the victims of the robbery, Mrs. Alabi Ubueku and her son Uche... yesterday
PHOTO: JOHN MAYAKI

works in the law firm, said: "I was able to show my friends this morning, the materials that were shot from the armoured tank which fell into this building. And, it is reasonably inferred that that was what put this place on fire.

"These people do not sell ammunition. Why we are telling you is to help appeal to the good conscience of the police and well-meaning Nigerians to come to the rescue of these people. Look at my office, the other side is affected. This is January and many people don't have money. For somebody to come here this morning to see this type

of disaster, you will reasonably know that this is shootout from the armoured tank."

While arguing that the fire was ignited during the crossfire between the police and the robbers, Akaka said some expended bullets were picked from the burning buildings after the clash of the police and the robbers.

The bank robbery came two months after a similar attack on one of the new generation banks at Ikpoba Slope. One of the banks in yesterday's robbery had been attacked six times in a similar manner.

Obasanjo presents Census report to Senate

TO put to rest the differences between the Presidency and the Senate on the procedure for conveying census report to the Senate, President Olusegun Obasanjo will today physically lay the report on the table of the Upper Legislative Chamber.

The Senate last week returned the President's letter on the provisional result on the report, asking him to come forward and personally lay the report on the table in line with Section 213(3) of the 1999 Constitution.

Court rejects Favose's prayer to

Oyo AC aspirant to