

Six killed in Delta cult/youths clash

NO fewer than six persons are feared killed, several others critically injured and properties worth a fortune destroyed Sunday night in a clash between a suspected cult group and youths in Emede, Isoko South Local Government area of Delta State.

Panic-stricken residents of the town are said to have fled the tense community in large numbers.

The suspected cultists are known as the Lion Zone Boys.

From Dominic Adewole, Asaba

The Nation gathered that the crisis broke out following the hijacking by the cultists of a sand excavating job given to a unidentified contractor.

The job, perceived as lucrative, had been the exclusive preserve of the youths in the poor community who used its proceeds to keep body and soul together.

There has been a crisis of confidence between the youths and the suspected

cutlits for about four years over the alleged acts of terrorism inflicted by the latter who were also accused of seizing all viable communal activities for their selfish profit.

The Nation learnt that yesterday's incident came following the leaking of a secret plan to rein in the *Lion Zone Boys* by arresting them.

Collaborating in the plan were police who had been finding it difficult to arrest the Boys.

It was revealed that when the *Lion Boys* got wind of the plan to arrest them, they armed themselves to the teeth with lethal weapons and charms a.

The community's youths in collaboration as policemen from the Oleh police station, in mufti, were said to have entered the *Lion Zone* in a bid to arrest them but met with strong resistance from the boys who opened fire on them.

The youths and the police, who were not properly

armed, beat a retreat, reinforced and returned. Thereafter, spontaneous gunfire rocked the community.

Household properties, including one vehicle and three motorcycles of some perceived sponsors and supporters of the alleged terror group, were later burnt down by the youths.

The presence of the police was said not to help matters as the angry youths brandished dangerous weapons and were alleged to have shot dead six of the boys, including their leader, Gabon.

Two persons, including the presumed arrow-head aiding the *Lion Zone Boys* and a primary school teacher, Mr. Andrew Iborogu have been arrested by the police in connection with the crisis.

When contacted, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in charge of Oleh police station, Mr. Shodipo Razak denied any collaboration between his men and the community youths.

warns perpetrators of political violence

demned the recent pattern of violent disruption of rallies by "criminal elements."

The statement reads: "It is becoming obvious that these acts of violence are deliberately being instigated by anti-democratic forces determined to undermine the success of the forthcoming elections by creating an atmosphere of insecurity and chaos as part of their ploy to

thwart the free expression of the people's will.

"For the avoidance of doubt, the Lagos State government will spare no effort to maintain the well known tradition of peaceful rallies and campaigns in the state. We will recall that in 1999 and 2003, we had keenly contested elections in Lagos State during which the colorful and exciting campaigns

were hardly ever marred by the kind of violence being unleashed on innocent citizens today.

"The competition between political parties and candidates was always at the level of ideas and the intellect, never violence and bloodshed. We cannot afford to tarnish the well-earned image of Lagos as a land of liberty, peace and freedom

where a million contending ideas are allowed to bloom in an atmosphere of tolerance that is second to none in the country.

"Asiwaju Tinubu calls on all residents of Lagos State not to be intimidated by those who want to scare the majority of the people from participating in the political process through violence."