

did was the normal thing. I

when they could not find him.

founded.

Our correspondents learnt

phone was switched off as at 7.30pm on Friday.

## Seven die in fresh police/MASSOB clash

**A**t least seven persons were feared killed in a renewed clash between suspected members of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra and the police in Onitsha, Anambra State on Friday.

Our correspondent also gathered that more than 18 persons were arrested in Onitsha as the clash, which started late on Thursday, escalated.

The atmosphere around Upper Iweka, a strategic part of the city, was tense on Friday as people ran for safety amid the crossfire between MASSOB loyalists and riot policemen.

The Onitsha-Owerri Expressway was also blocked by MASSOB members, who were reportedly protesting recent police raids on the hideouts of the group in various parts of Anambra State.

Saturday Punch gathered that a N70 million Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC), deployed in Anambra State from the Edo State Police Command, was allegedly seized and burnt by MASSOB members.

They also allegedly seized and burnt one Tata truck and vandalised about four Mitshubishi L-300 buses which the Anambra State Governor, Mr. Peter Obi, donated to the police a fortnight ago.

Police sources confirmed on Friday that the team, which engaged the

**John Ameh, Onitsha**  
MASSOB members in the clash, was led by the Area Commanders of Onitsha and Awka, Mr Matthew Uyana and Mallam Umar Gwadabe, respectively.

About nine policemen, who received gunshot wounds, were also reportedly admitted at an hospital in Onitsha.

The Anambra State police spokesman, Mr. Fidelis Agbo, a deputy superintendent of police, confirmed the clash to Saturday Punch and admitted that

## FG undaunted by security problems in Niger Delta -Obasanjo

**P**resident Olusegun Obasanjo has assured oil multinationals in Nigeria that his administration was "undaunted" by recent security problems in the Niger Delta.

He also said his administration was taking appropriate action to deal with the situation.

Speaking at separate meetings with executive directors of Shell International and Total Worldwide in London late Thursday, President Obasanjo declared that his administration was prepared to do whatever it needed to do to guarantee the safety of Nigeria's oil resources and facilities in the region.

The President stressed, however, that solving the problems of the Niger Delta should not be considered the responsibility of the Federal Government alone, adding that the oil companies,

"some arrests were made."

He, however, denied that anyone was killed.

"I have not received a report that anybody was killed; no policeman was killed too but some arrests have been made", Agbo added.

MASSOB's Onitsha Area II Administrator, Mr. Samuel Edison, told newsmen on Friday that some of those arrested were "just people passing by and they also shot seven persons, including our members."

He said, "It is not true that MASSOB members

states and local governments also had a role to play.

"We want to deal with the security issue from the roots. Let us all work together on this," he told Mr. Malcolm Brinded, executive director in charge of Exploration and Production at Shell International and Mr Christophe De Margerie of Total Worldwide.

President Obasanjo also reiterated that the recent crises in the Niger Delta were a culmination of years of neglect and under-development which his administration had been taking concerted action to redress.

He told the oil executives that his government was beginning to gain the confidence of militants in the region through dialogue and persuasion.

The President reminded the oil executives that the incidence of illegal bunkering and stealing of Nigeria's

blocked the Onitsha-Owerri Road. What happened was that youths in the area were protesting the deployment of policemen from Abuja in the state to wipe out Igbo youths.

"This type of thing does not happen in the North; it does not happen in the South; it happens only in the South-East."

Edison claimed that the police started the latest clash when they invaded the venue of "our peaceful meeting" and dispersed the group.

crude oil had been reduced by about 50 per cent through measures that were put in place by the Federal Government.

## Lagos Speaker honoured

**Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, Ikuforiji Adeyemi, on Thursday got the Best Speaker Award from the Leadership Development Centre, Abuja. The award ceremony took place at the prestigious Transcorp Hotel, Abuja.**

In a chat with Saturday Punch earlier in the week, Ikuforiji said he got a letter of his nomination from the organisation asking him to send his acceptance and his resume. He stated that he sent his acceptance after his findings about the organisation revealed that the company, which only last year gave a similar award to the Lagos State Commissioner for Education, Dr Leke Pitan, was credible.