

# Detained C'River speaker faces removal over communal crisis

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**B**ARRING any last minute change of mind, the Speaker of the Cross River State House of Assembly, Mr. Bassey Ewah, may be removed from office.

The police arrested him on Wednesday for his alleged role in the violent clash in his Ekorì village.

His kinsman and opponent, Chief Obeten Okom, who represents Abi/Yakurr in the House of Representatives, is also being detained with him at the State Criminal Investigations Department of the state police headquarters in connection with the clash.

Ewah and Okom were said to have been arrested after the Governor, Mr. Donald Duke, invited them for a meeting on Wednesday night where they

discussed the crisis in the speaker's village.

At the meeting, the governor was said to have told the speaker that he should prepare his mind for his removal from office and expulsion from the Peoples Democratic Party for allegedly being responsible for the hostilities that had led to the death of about two people.

He was said to have told Okom that he too could be expelled from the party. The speaker is being said to be positioning himself to take over from Okom in 2007.

By Thursday, there were expectations that the detainees would be released on bail but our correspondent learnt that the police had been ordered to take them to court.

However, as at 2.48 p.m. when our correspondent left the police headquarters, the two legislators had not been re-

leased, neither were they charged to court.

It was, however, gathered that the PDP was working towards the release of the legislators but Okom's supporters who had taken over the police station argued that the representative was insisting on being arraigned.

His counsel, Mr. Obon Obla, told our correspondent on Thursday that he was already preparing his papers to drag the police and the government to court since they had refused to arraign his client.

Members of the state House of Assembly were also said to have made efforts to meet Duke on Thursday to plead for the speaker's release. Some of them told our correspondent that the governor refused to see them after they had waited for a long time.

They later went into a brief

session in the House and resolved to invite the commissioner of police, the commissioner for justice and the governor's chief security adviser to appear before them on Friday(today) to explain the continuous detention of the speaker.

But the governor's Chief Press Secretary, Mr. Joseph Ekpang, told our correspondent that Duke had no hand in the arrest and detention of the legislators.

He also said it was only the legislators that had the powers to remove the speaker and not the governor.

Our correspondent could not also talk with the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr. Lasisi Salami, who was said to be busy when our correspondent visited.

The command's spokesman, Mr Adama Okpene, was said to have travelled to Enugu.