

Communal clash claims five lives in Akwa Ibom

Chukwudi Akasike, Uyo

ABOUT five persons lost their lives while 10 houses were torched in a communal clash between Esit Urua in Eket and Ukpenekeng in Ibeno Local Government area of Akwa Ibom State.

Trouble started when a group from Esit Urua in Eket Local Government area took their masquerades to Ukpenekeng, a neighbouring community.

Our correspondent gathered that youths from Ukpenekeng numbering up to 15 suddenly pounced on the visitors who came to showcase their culture in the spirit of the Yuletide.

Scared by the sudden attack on them, the masquerades and youths from Esit Urua took to their heels.

They were, however, accosted on the way by some other youths from Ukpenekeng, who had laid an ambush at the border between the two local government areas.

It was gathered that the fleeing visitors were inflicted with cutlass injuries.

An indigene of Eket, who was at the scene of the incident, told our correspondent that about five persons were killed at the scene of the incident.

The eyewitness, who preferred anonymity, said those injured were rushed to a nearby hospital for immediate treatment.

He said, "The houses destroyed are all in Eket vicinity.

Those killed were all from Eket. The most surprising thing is that the senseless attack on us was unprovoked."

"It becomes more pathetic when you begin to think that these two local government areas were together before. Ibeno was carved out from Eket."

Reacting to the incident, the Chairman of Eket Local Government Council, Chief Samuel Edohoeket, expressed shock at the development.

Edohoeket said Christmas was a period when love is expected to reign in every

community nationwide.

According to him, it was wrong for the youths from Ibeno to engage in violence at a period they were supposed to be together like one family.

He pleaded with the youths from the warring communities to lay down their weapons and embrace peace.

When contacted, the Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of Operations in the state command, Mr. Elias Wayemero said the matter was yet to be reported to the police.

Seven killed in Port Harcourt

**Soni Daniel,
Port Harcourt**

NO fewer than seven persons were feared killed in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital on Tuesday as two rival cult groups clashed after the Christmas celebrations.

Eyewitnesses told our correspondent that trouble started following a disagreement between members of the two groups over the sharing of proceeds of a display they embarked on to entertain residents of the Elelenwo area of the state.

The disagreement was said to have triggered a fight which involved the use of dangerous weapons, leading to the death of two persons on Monday night.

Irrked by the development, the aggrieved party reportedly mobilised and attacked the other faction

and killed three members of the group.

The bodies of the three were still lying on the roadside as at Tuesday evening while the police moved into the area to stop further fighting and prevent looting.

Rivers State Acting Police Commissioner, Mr. Bassey Inyang, confirmed the clash and said that his men had deployed in the area to restore law and order.

In a related development, two policemen were said to have been shot dead in an encounter with armed militants who invaded the residence of a businessman, simply identified as Georgewell and abducted him on Monday night.

The gunmen reportedly killed the police who attempted to stop them from taking away the businessman.

Fuel scarcity: Driver stabbed to death at filling-station

Kunle Adeyemi

MEN of the Lagos State Police Command have launched a man-hunt for a man who allegedly killed a driver at Abule-Egba area of the state on Saturday.

The incident happened while hundreds of drivers and other fuel users struggled to buy fuel at a filling-station (name withheld) in the area.

Our correspondent learnt that the incident, which happened at about midnight, sent all prospective fuel buyers away as the filling-station closed shop immediately.

The victim, identified as Nureni Lateef, drove his commercial Volkswagen mini bus with registration number XA 222 AKD, to the filling-station to get some fuel.

It was learnt that due to the current fuel scarcity experienced in most parts of the country, the driver joined other motorists on the queue when he got to the filling station.

Soon afterwards, Lateef was said to have moved out his vehicle out of the queue in a bid to by-pass other motorists and buy fuel before them.

Other persons queuing for fuel at the filling-station, it was gathered, did not take his action, with kid gloves. One of such persons was a man identified as Friday.

Friday was said to have challenged Lateef and insisted that he (Lateef) would not buy fuel before anybody he met on queue.

A disagreement which later turned to a physical bout ensued between the two men.

During the fight, Friday reportedly used a broken bottle to stab Lateef in the neck.

The victim eventually collapsed after he had lost some blood. He was, however, rushed to a nearby hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Our correspondent gathered that immediately Friday stabbed his rival and noticed that he had collapsed, he fled from the scene.

The incident, which was first reported at a police station in the area, was later transferred to the state Criminal Investigation Department, Panti, Yaba.

Spokesman for the command, Mr. Olubode Ojajuni, a superintendent of police, who confirmed the incident to our correspondent on Tuesday, said the police were still investigating the case.