

...three feared killed at PDP rally in Akure

FEMI MAKINDE

ABOUT three persons were feared killed on Saturday in a fierce gun duel between the supporters of the Oyo State Governor, Senator Rashidi Ladoja and his deputy, Chief Bayo Alao-Akala at the Peoples Democratic Party's zonal rally for the South-West, held in Akure, the Ondo State capital.

Also many sustained gunshot injuries. Two of the victims were laid very close to the entrance of the Akure Township Stadium the venue of the rally.

There were blood stains for about 200 meters from

the stadium to the other adjoining streets.

The violence came despite the heavy presence of security operatives there were both inside and outside the venue. The Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, was also present at the rally.

Our correspondent learnt that the fight broke out immediately the National Chairman of the PDP, Senator Ahmadu Ali, handed over the party's flag to Alao-Akala as the governorship candidate in Oyo State.

Ali also gave the party's flags to Otunba Gbenga Daniel of Ogun State; Segun

Oni of Ekiti State; Musiliu Obanikoro to represent Lagos State; Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola of Osun State and Dr. Olusegun Agagu of Ondo State.

An eyewitness told our correspondent that one of the dead, a female supporter of Obanikoro was hit by a stray bullet. The second victim, was in Alao-Akala's vest.

A 15-year-old boy who was hit by a stray bullet was lucky as the bullet peeled off the skin of his stomach. Another eyewitness who identified himself as Segun said the boy was asked to run to a hospital for medical attention as everybody was busy running helter skelter.

There was pandemonium in the stadium as one person was hit by a stray bullet. The victims were quickly rushed out of the venue and nurses were seen rushing to towards the dressing room apparently to give him medical attention.

Ladoja himself was said to have been smuggled out of the stadium after the rally. His official car was attacked with cutlass but it was not sure if he was inside.

About 10 vehicles were vandalised in the fracas. Three of the buses were marked with the registration number of Ogbomoso, Oyo State, the home town of Akala.

There were conflicting reports on whose supporters started the fight.

The Ondo State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Adeniran Aremu, could not be reached to confirm the incident. Several calls put across to his mobile phone were not answered.

The rally was brought to an abrupt end as the vote of thanks, closing prayer were omitted.

Earlier, Agagu who started his campaign promised to turn the state around if elected as the governor in the poll.

Obasanjo, who arrived the venue at about 4.40 pm, thanked the people of the South-West for voting for the PDP in 2003, he urged them to ignore the promises of other parties and stick to the PDP.

He said that the gubernatorial candidate of the Labour Party in Ondo State, Dr. Olusegun Mimiko, would soon be visited by the EFCC. According to him, Mimiko messed up while he served as the Minister for Housing and Urban Development.

The President said that Mimiko ignored his plea not to run for the governorship seat in the April election.

Obasanjo who spoke in Yoruba language urged the South-West to support Alhaji Umar Yar'Adua and Dr Goodluck Jonathan who he said were competent to take the nation to the next level of glory.

Also, Yar'Adua described Obasanjo as the mother of democratic Nigeria.

He said that no president had done what Obasanjo had done for the nation and no one could ever equal his record.

Atiku in Kano, blasts PDP, promises positive change

SOLA IMORU and JOHN ALECHENU

THE presidential candidate of the Action Congress, Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, has accused the Peoples Democratic Party of impoverishing Nigerians.

He dissuaded Nigerians from voting for the PDP in April, saying that a vote for the party would worsen the situation.

Abubakar, who spoke in Hausa and English, said this while launching his presidential campaign in Kano on Saturday.

The event was witnessed by a mammoth crowd. Delegates from the 36 states of the federation including Abuja attended the ceremony, carrying placards of their candidates seeking elective positions both at the state and federal levels.

The event was generally peaceful in spite of the fact that the police were overwhelmed at some points. Atiku, who was dressed in a blue agbada

with a cap to match, came into the venue in a black jeep and was received by a crowd of jubilant supporters. The events of the day were rendered in the three Nigerian languages — Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

The principal officers and supporters of the party carried brooms, the symbol of the party, "to sweep away the 'eight years of misrule' of the PDP."

Abubakar was introduced to the crowd by the National Chairman of the AC, Chief Bisi Akande. He mounted the rostrum at 2:30pm to the tumultuous applause of his teeing supporters.

Those who attended include Akande, Chief J.K.N. Waku, Chief Solomon Lar, Chief Yomi Edu, Chief Audu Ogbe, Chief Tom Ikimi, Chief Bode Olowoporoku, Chief Funke Adedoyin, Alhaji Abubakar Rimi, Ms. Layi Mohammed, Mrs. Kemi Nelson, Alhaji Salihu Koko, Alex Ede, Alhaji Musa Gwadabe, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, Chief Niyi

Adebayo, Alhaji Umar Pategi, Chief Titi Ajanaku, Alhaja Laila Dogonyaro, Alhaji Lawal Kaita and Mr. Yahaya Kwande.

Abubakar said an AC-controlled Federal Government would reverse the trend and restore public confidence in government.

He also said if voted into power, his administration would assist factory owners to reopen the over 320 factories already closed down largely due to inadequate power supply.

He promised to establish an Independent Power Plant in Kano that would ensure regular power supply. This, he said, would ensure that youths were gainfully employed.

He said his administration would subsidise fertiliser by up to 50 per cent to assist farmers produce more.

He also promised to strengthen law and order to improve on the hopeless security situation across the country.

Abubakar blamed the fuel scarcity on the PDP. He said, "There is fuel scarcity because they want to do *mago-mago*; it's all the fault of the PDP government."

Turning to the Kano State AC governorship candidate, Alhaji Usman Riruwai, Atiku made him pledge to provide water just like the late Audu Bako, a former military governor of the state, did by constructing dams.

Abubakar described the PDP as 'an empty shell, saying that those who formed and nurtured it to maturity had all been forced out. He said the founding fathers that made the PDP tick have now joined the AC.

Commenting on the choice of Kano for the take off of his campaign, Atiku said, Kano, in the history of Nigeria and democracy, is number one. The late Aminu Kano - may God bless his soul — was produced here; the late Sabo Bakin Zuwo — may God forgive him, bless

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