

Police kill 6 kidnappers in Lagos

•Rescue Lebanese victim, recover N30m ransom

THE police in Lagos on Saturday gunned down six suspected kidnappers during an operation to rescue a Lebanese seized since Monday last week.

Lagos Commissioner of police, Marvel Akpoyibo, who confirmed the incident to newsmen, said N30m ransom was also recovered

TOYOSI OGUNSEYE

from the dead hostage takers.

The Lebanese, Akpoyibo said, was kidnapped at the Ozumba Mbadiwe area of Lagos Island on Monday.

"They kept him in the creeks on the island while they demanded a ransom of N300m," the Lagos CP explained.

Curiously, while the police withheld the Lebanese names, newsmen were allowed to take his photograph.

The police told

SUNDAY PUNCH that the manager of the company where the Lebanese worked, Mr. Mohammed Sanni, who was contacted by the kidnappers agreed to pay N30m which the dead suspects insisted they wanted only in the N1000 denominations.

Unknown to the

kidnappers, however, the company had contacted the police who mounted surveillance on the waters.

"As soon Mohammed placed the ransom at the location, he turned back. Thinking that the coast was clear, the kidnappers came out of hiding in a speed boat to pick the money that was in two big sacks. The police

swooped on them", the commissioner stated.

Akpoyibo, while displaying the recovered money, said that the police would not tolerate kidnappers in the state.

He added, "The operation was tactically carried out and clinically finished. The marine and land police jointly carried out the operation. We are dedicated to ensuring safety of lives on the land and on the sea."

Oshiomhole, NLC disagree over President Yar'Adua's govt

JIDE BABALOLA

THE Governor of Edo State, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole and the leadership of the Nigerian Labour Congress temporarily parted ways on Saturday as both took opposing positions over President Umaru Yar'Adua administration's commitment to the rule of law.

While NLC's President, Comrade Abdulwaheed Omar, dismissed it as "a hollow mantra mouthed to score cheap political points," Oshiomhole who asserted that Yar'Adua is a progressive, also rejected the view, saying that the rule of law is a fundamental progressive policy of the Federal Government.

Oshiomhole, Omar, who was represented by Comrade Peter Adeyemi along with other personalities spoke at the opening of the third triennial delegates' conference of the Nigeria Union of Journalists at International Conference Centre in Abuja on Saturday.

The NLC President's perception of the Yar'Adua administration was illustrated with critical remarks about alleged mismanagement of the national economy, inadequate commitment to genuine electoral reforms and references to the rule of law as a mere political gimmick.

"Some national issues have come to reveal that sloganeering with the rule of law is made in most cases for political expediencies and not for the greater good. This is so for the case in the fight against corruption which has seen the present Attorney-General's office serially citing the rule of law essentially and unashamedly to shield and protect corrupt public officials from prosecution," Omar stated.

However, Oshiomhole, who also expressed concerns about electoral reforms and how all state governors have won all councillorship and local government chairmanship

positions for their parties, emphasized that commitment to the rule of law was one of the major reasons why all Nigerians must appreciate President Yar'Adua

He said he would not have become a governor without it.

Oshiomhole explained further, "President Yar'Adua should be appreciated; unlike Iwu who insisted that the 2007 general elections was faulty, he (Yar'Adua) courageously acknowledged that it was faulty.

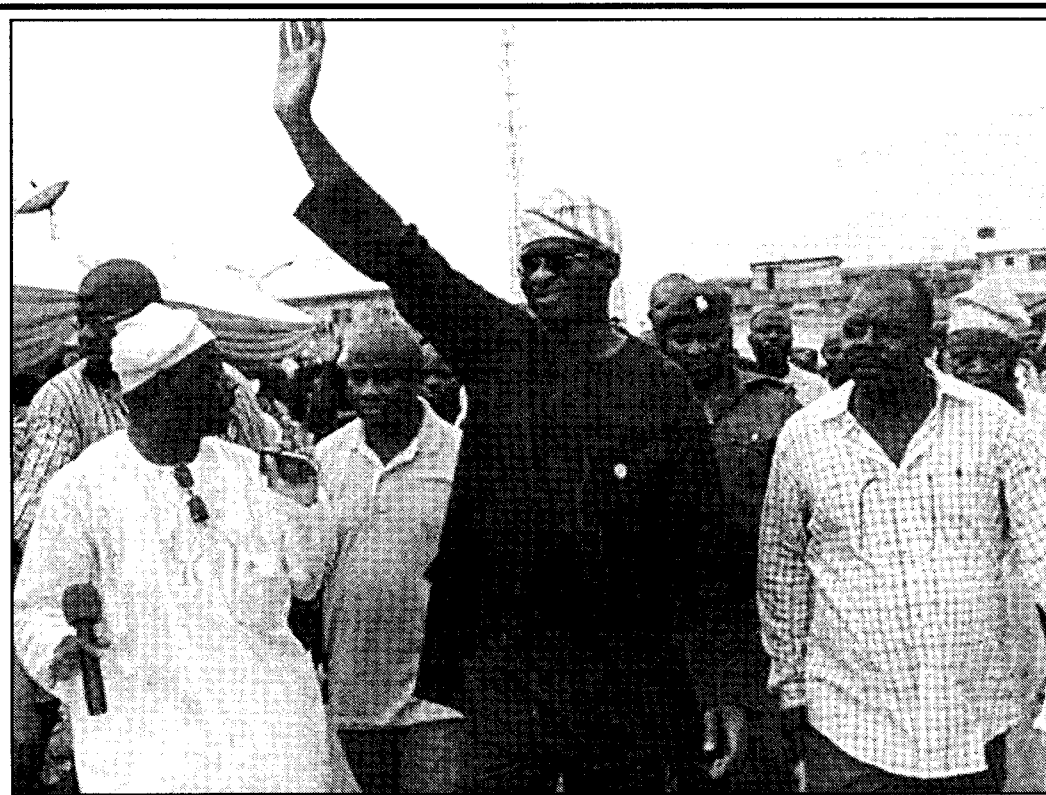
"Imagine what would have happened to people like us if the President had gone against so-called government 'enemies' the way those before him did.

"I can assure you that President Yar'Adua's voice is still a progressive force but the question is; can one man alone achieve change? His voice alone cannot override that of all of us in the Council of State but how many of us in that council genuinely won elections.

Describing the current economic meltdown as a mere expression to make it look as if nobody is responsible for the problem, Oshiomhole blamed manipulators of economic deregulation in Nigeria and other parts of the world for the problem.

Commenting on the Nigerian situation, he said that a cabal known to government has pocketed billions of Naira as petroleum products' subsidy asking that the Federal Government must disclose the cabal members' identities to Nigerians.

"The real challenge in the deregulation debate is that government has been subsidizing fraud even when the price of fuel ought to have dropped to about N50. members of the cabal include a few oil marketers, few officials of the NNPC and a few others. I believe that since the Federal Government has acknowledged that there is a cabal, it also knows identities of the real members of the cabal," the governor stated.



L-R: Chairman, Coker-Aguda Local Council Development Authority, Mr. Babatunde Kazeem; Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babatunde Fashola and Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftancy Affairs, Mr. Rotimi Agunsoye, during the inauguration of Sururlere health mission in the council in Lagos ... on Thursday

ASUU set for indefinite strike

FEMI ADETUNJI

THE Academic Staff Union of Universities, has concluded plans to embark on a nationwide indefinite strike if the Federal Government fails to sign and implement the joint agreement of December 2008 renegotiations reached by the two parties.

The ASUU Chairman, University of Calabar chapter, Dr Chike Ekeopara, said this on Saturday, while briefing journalists on the preparedness of the union.

He said one of the clause in the FG/ASUU agreement of June 30, 2001 was the renewal of the agreement after a period of three years which the Federal Government failed to oblige in July 2004.

He added that failure of the FG to renegotiate with ASUU until March 14, 2007 (three years after it was due), led to the three-month old strike action by ASUU which was called off on July 2, 2007, after pleas from well meaning Nigerians and a letter from the Federal Ministry of Education dated June 26, 2007 that urged ASUU to call off the strike.

Part of the FG/ASUU renegotiation as contained in a letter from the Federal Ministry of Education to ASUU reads, "The negotiating team shall be empowered to negotiate with ASUU within the principles of

collective bargaining with a view to addressing the problems of the rot and brain drain in the university system and to establish internationally competitive standards."

The Don said since the renegotiation ended in December 2008, the Federal Government had

demonstrated high level of insincerity through her non-challant attitude toward the union's demand, brain drain and the proper funding of the Nigerian university system.

The Chairman who accused the FG of 'footdragging' said ASUU had exhausted its patience which may likely spell

doom for the Nigerian education system.

He condemned Federal Government's gesture of increasing the wages and other welfare packages for the military personnel and other para-military agencies with no consideration for the university system.

CLO doubts INEC's preparedness for Anambra guber polls

EMMANUEL OBE

THE Civil Liberties Organisation has expressed doubts about the readiness of the Independent National Electoral Commission to conduct next year's governorship election in Anambra State.

The Chairman of the Anambra State branch of the organisation, Mr. Aloy Attah, said the commission had not done anything to show that it was preparing for a large scale election that was due in nine months.

Attah spoke to reporters in Awka on Saturday after some civil society organizations inspected roads and other projects executed by the Anambra State Government.

He said CLO and other human rights bodies would bond together to resist any attempt by INEC and other political forces to undermine the governorship election in

the state.

He said the inspection team was impressed by the high level of development that had been achieved by the government of Mr. Peter Obi, which he said vindicated the support CLO and other civil society groups gave to Obi when he was fighting to reclaim his mandate from Dr Chris Ngige.

"We are overwhelmed and happy that the struggle the organisation embarked on during the fight for the recovery of his mandate is not in vain because this is the time all sectors and all communities in the state are receiving attention at the same time without over bloated media hype," Attah said.

According to him, while his position should not be seen as an endorsement of Obi by CLO, the organisation owed it a duty to tell the people of the state the truth.

"It is not that we are endorsing him but he is someone that has not only changed the face of the state but has brought along with him a good human rights record, which the CLO stands for."

He also said the Obi administration has consigned the era of human rights abuses in the state to the dustbin of history.

"INEC should tell the state how many polling booths have been mapped out for the election, including the new polling units as disclosed recently by Iwu," Attah said.

The national CLO delegation was led by Mrs. Halima Ibrahim, who expressed satisfaction with Obi's achievements, noting that he had vindicated them. "CLO will continue to support you for as long as you do the right thing," Ibrahim assured.