

Dupe Gbadebo-Ajayi, and Mr Lanre Idowu, at the inauguration of the commission in Lagos...

# One killed, scores injured as Rivers APC, PDP supporters clash

Dennis Naku, Port Harcourt

**VIOLENCE** rocked Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, on Monday as supporters of the All Progressives Congress and the Peoples Democratic Party clashed along Aba Road in the city over the outcome of the March 18 governorship election.

PDP supporters, in their hundreds, as early as 8am, stormed the office of the Independent National Electoral Commission along Aba Road, asking the commission to allow a joint inspection of election materials by political parties ahead of the election petition tribunal sitting.

The placard-carrying protesters took off from GRA, while the demonstration paralysed vehicular activities from the Waterlines axis.

The incident resulted in a clash between the PDP supporters and APC supporters in the state. Scores were injured while one person was hit by a stray bullet.

In the melee, the APC governorship candidate, Tonye Cole, reportedly escaped a mob attack as he was whisked away from the scene slightly injured.

Our correspondent, who visited the scene, reports that while the PDP protest was ongoing, Cole, in company with

the state APC Chairman, Emeka Beke, and other party leaders, showed up at the GRA axis of Aba Road, heading for INEC office.

On hearing that Cole was at the GRA Junction, the protesting youths raced in his direction and pelted stones and water sachets at him.

Security operatives attached to Cole immediately shielded him and whisked him into the vehicle, but the protesters continued pelting stones and sachet water at him and his group.

Our correspondent further reports that within a few minutes, soldiers of the 6 Division, Nigeria Army, Port Harcourt, and operatives of the Nigeria Police and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence

Corps arrived and shot into the air to disperse the protesters.

The security forces stationed patrol vehicles in front of INEC office to prevent any damage to the facility.

Speaking to newsmen at a different location shortly afterwards, Cole said, "There was an assault on myself, my party chairman, and the woman leader, who were going peacefully to go and collect documents from INEC."

"We were not allowed to get anywhere near the INEC office. This was a deliberate act to prevent us from going to get fundamental materials critical to our petition. And they have told us that they are going to be there Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, by which time we will

have no documents from INEC to present to the tribunal.

"All we are interested in is going to the tribunal. You say you have won; allow us to go to the tribunal to prove that you did not win."

When contacted, the state Publicity Secretary of the PDP, Sydney Gbara, described the claims by Cole as false.

Gbara said, "The truth of the matter is that Pastor Tonye Cole is being economical with the truth and is trying to deceive the gullible members of the public."

"What happened was that the PDP was at INEC to register their protest and make demands that they also want to be included in inspecting the result sheets used for the election."

"And we all know that since the election, several political

parties have done the same. No other party has gone there to frustrate or stop them."

"But what we saw today was that Tonye Cole came there with thugs dressed in police uniforms and tried to disrupt what the PDP was doing, and we said no."

"In the process, the thugs tried to disperse the PDP supporters and started shooting into the crowd. And one of our supporters was shot and rushed to the hospital. The information we are getting now is that he has been confirmed dead as I speak to you."

"Therefore, the PDP is calling on the Inspector-General of Police and the state Commissioner of Police to go after Tonye Cole and arrest him immediately for the death of that young man."

## Kaduna declares curfew as two killed in communal clash

Godwin Isenyo, Kaduna

**THE** Kaduna State Government has explained that it imposed a 24-hour curfew following a clash between local hunters and some gangsters in the Sabon Garin-Tirkaniya area of Chikun Local Government Area.

It was learnt that the violence led to the death of two people on Sunday night.

The Kaduna State Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan, said properties were also destroyed.

The development, according to him, forced the state government to impose the curfew to forestall escalation to other parts of the state.

The government, he said, also banned social activities linked with the violence of Sunday

night and Monday which left two citizens dead and six others injured in the Sabon Garin-Tirkaniya area of Chikun LGA.

He said, "The Kaduna State Government has banned social activities linked with the violence of Sunday night and Monday which left two citizens dead and six others injured in the Sabon Garin-Tirkaniya area of Chikun LGA."

"The decision was taken after

a thorough appraisal of the security situation by the military, police and the Department of State Services, as well as an emergency meeting with traditional and religious leaders of the area at the 312 Artillery Regiment Kaduna.

"The social activities observed in the community, which are now prohibited with immediate effect are listed as follows: Kidan Bishi, Kidan Gala (drama house), hunting expeditions."

"The government has also directed the arrest of anyone linked with the peddling of hard drugs in Nasarawa and Sabon Garin Nasarawa."

"Furthermore, three suspects have been arrested in connection with the violence. In addition to the killing of two citizens, six persons were injured and are presently receiving medical attention. Several vehicles and properties were also destroyed."

The Commissioner quoted Governor Nasir El-Rufai to have hailed the prompt action of the military and police in preventing the violence from escalating beyond the area.

"The Governor also allayed the fears of the families that lost their loved ones, affirming that the matter would be investigated conclusively," he added.

## NPO inaugurates media complaints commission, promises professionalism

Tunde Ajaja

**THE** Nigeria Press Organisation on Monday inaugurated its newly-constituted National Media Complaints Commission.

The President of NPO, Kabiru Yusuf, who is also the President of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria, said at the event held in Lagos that the initiative was "to watch the watchdog, serve as a co-regulator, be an independent forum for prompt resolution of complaints about the press, maintain journalism standards and defend the freedom of the press and people's right to know."

Yusuf noted that the initiative,

driven by members of NPO, including NPAN, Nigerian Guild of Editors, Nigeria Union of Journalists, Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria, Guild of Corporate Online Publishers, the civil society and MacArthur Foundation, was for the media to regulate their work and conduct of their members.

He said the nine-member commission would be chaired by a former Editor and Managing Director of The Guardian newspapers, Mr Emeka Izeze.

He named other members to include a former President of the Nigerian Bar Association, Abubakar Mahmoud (SAN); the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Paul University,

Awka, Anambra State, Prof Chinyere Okunna; Country Director, Care International, Dr Hussaini Abdu; Editor-in-Chief, Diamond Publications, Mr Lanre Idowu; veteran broadcaster, Mrs Eugenia Abu; Executive Director, Media Rights Agenda, Mr Edetaen Ojo; and a former Editor, Mrs Dupe Ajayi-Gbadebo.

While calling on stakeholders to support the initiative, Yusuf stated, "The media is wary of government regulations, because politicians tend to have short-term goals. We are happy to submit to peer regulation by collaborating with the civil society and other professionals. We gave it two names, for emphasis, the National Media

Complaints Commission and The Ombudsman."

The Publisher of Vanguard Newspaper, Sam Amuka-Pemu, who inaugurated the commission, said the media and the country would benefit from the initiative.

Izeze said, "Unlike the government, the intention is not to control the press. The commission will not seek to hinder the freedom of the press; rather it will enhance it and seek to boost the confidence of the public in the media. The media is to help the government do a better job and if we can get the press to function more professionally and adhere to professional ethics, the country will be better for it."