

•L-R: Governor Godswill Akpabio of Akwa Ibom State, former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar and Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu at the PDP convention. Photo: MUDASHIRU ATANDA.

Corpse of Sapele boat operator found afloat in River Ethiope

FROM EMMANUEL
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The body of a boat operator, identified as Babatie Gbaminidop, aged 32, was seen floating in the popular River Ethiope, Sapele, in Delta State at the weekend.

This occurred three days after soldiers allegedly embarked on a raid of the Obotie waterfront in a bid to scare away illegal diesel dealers near the river.

Consequently there was pandemonium in Sapele, Sapele Local Government Area of the State as youths

numbering over 500, went on rampage around the Decima Road waterside, setting bonfire on major roads and forcing traders and residents to scamper for safety.

The family of the deceased, which had earlier declared him missing after the raid have alleged that he might have been hit by bullets from the soldiers during the raid.

The deceased was declared missing last Saturday until his body was found afloat on the river.

At the Obotie waterside in Sapele, yesterday, few

boys were noticed apparently due to the fear of the presence of soldiers in the area, while shops along Palmer and Decima roads were locked.

At the home of the deceased at Decima Road, there was palpable grief as family members and sympathizers urged that his killers should be brought to book.

Also, at the residence of the deceased's mother by Urhobo Road extension in the town, a crowd of sympathizers including elderly women gathered, condoling with her over the inci-

dent.

The Commanding Officer of the 19 Battalion, Koko Barracks, Lt Col. Frank Etim could not be reached for comments, but a top army source at the barracks, who did not want to be named, absolved the soldiers of culpability, saying that the battalion were in Sapele to maintain peace and checkmate crimes, adding that the soldiers were friends of the civilians.

He said that the soldiers did not clash with civilians during the raid, let alone killing someone, as alleged in some quarters.