

• *PDP, ANPP clash claims 2 lives*

There was drama at the Bauchi Stadium, venue of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Presidential campaign rally for the North East zone yesterday, as supporters of one of the six gubernatorial flagbearers, Alhaji Danladi Baido, took to the main arena of the stadium, on a violent demonstration chanting war songs and anti-PDP slogans following the refusal of the party

*From George Oji,
Reuben Buhari in Kaduna and
Mustapha Shehu in Bauchi*

to present its flag to him (Baido).

Two people were killed, one maimed and an opponent's campaign office torched in violent clashes between PDP and ANPP thugs in Bauchi, as the former held its north east presidential rally in the city.

The protest at the stadium physically altered the course of the programme and forced the organisers of the rally to fast-forward it to save President Olusegun Obasanjo from further embarrassments from the protesters who had resorted to booing at him and throwing stones at his direction. Baido is the party's gubernatorial candidate for Taraba

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Court Halts Assembly

PDP PRESENTS FLAGS TO CANDIDATES *Cont'd from P1*

State.

Apart from Obasanjo, members of the PDP National Executive and the party's teeming supporters in the area, were also at the stadium to witness the event which was scheduled to present to the North eastern states, the PDP presidential candidate, Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'Adua and his running mate, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan.

The six north eastern states' gubernatorial candidates for the party were also scheduled to be presented by the party's National Chairman, Dr. Ahmadu Ali.

While presenting the candidates, Ali spoke glowingly of the flagbearers and urged Nigerian voters to come out enmasse on election day to vote them. Speaking on Yar'Adua and Goodluck, Ali described them as "new blood that are God-given".

He further described Yar'Adua as "a very jovial fellow and the most educated amongst all the presidential candidates".

Earlier, Ali had, while presenting the candidates, handed to them PDP flags indicating they are the flag bearers of the party in the forth-coming election.

However, the Taraba State gubernatorial candidate Mr. Danladi Baido, was not given the flag. Although before the presentation, Ali had told the gathering that those who do not get the flag would get them on Monday, youths at the venue carrying Baido's placards caused some confusion that led to the stoning and booing of Obasanjo and other PDP stalwarts on the podium.

A Baido supporter told THISDAY at the venue that the stoning episode could have been avoided had a flag been presented to Baido as indicated in the programme of events. "What is in a flag?" he queried "Even if they don't want him, giving him a flag at the rally would not stop them from doing whatever they want to do to him" he said.

Reacting to the development, Baido debunked insinuations that the party has finalised plans to substitute him.

The candidate, who spoke with newsmen after the rally at where he was the only candidate out of the six north east PDP gubernatorial candidates that was not presented the PDP flag by the party Ali, said: "You heard the party's Chairman when he said whoever did not receive any flag would do so on Monday. So you should wait until then. As far as I am concerned, I am still the PDP gubernatorial candidate for Taraba. Or have you heard of my replacement?" Baido asked.

He urged his supporters who had been chanting "No Baido, no PDP in Taraba", to calm down, as there is no cause for alarm. Baido, who received the loudest ovation at the rally, looked unruffled even as he stood on the podium along with the five other gubernatorial candidates, holding no flag.

However, his supporters did not take it kindly as they stoned and booed Obasanjo as he gave his speech. The President had to cut short his speech and left the venue unceremoniously as the frequency of the missiles thrown at him increased.

He had however outlined four areas in which the PDP administration would focus.

They include education, agriculture and electricity. On education, he promised to make basic education free and compulsory in the country.

While, his government is now negotiating with a Chinese firm to build a 2600 megawatt capacity hydroelectric power plant in Mambila, Taraba State. He also promised to intensify Fadama farming and encourage the production of an exportable crop in each of the six north eastern states.

Tension started when supporters of the ANPP woke up to see most of their party flags brought down the night preceding the PDP rally. The ANPP supporters were seen replacing the flags as PDP supporters awaited the arrival of President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday morning.

Violence erupted just before noon, when PDP supporters came to remove banners, flags

and posters of the ANPP gubernatorial candidate, Isa Yuguda, in Kobi ward adjacent to the venue of the rally. Machetes, knives and cutlasses were brandished in the clash until a person was killed, before the clash subsided.

As the rally was about rounding up, eye witness account had it that another clash ensued when another group of PDP supporters arrived in their hundreds to remove Yuguda's posters around his neighbourhood in Nassarawan Jahun ward. The clash, the eye-witness said, was as deadly as the first, but it left one dead, one maimed and the campaign office of Yuguda in Jahun ward razed down.

THISDAY visited the burnt campaign office, but could not confirm from the police whether arrests have been made.

Clashes over posters, banners and flags have become common in Bauchi, even after the ANPP recently secured a court order of interim injunction stopping the Bauchi state governor, his Attorney General, Bauchi Commissioner of Police and Bauchi Environmental Protection Agency and their servants, agents or cohorts from interfering with the billboards, posters and flags of the ANPP as a party.

In a related development, Governor Ahmed Makarfi of Kaduna State yesterday described the choice of Governor Musa Yar'Adua as the Presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as God's fulfillment of the desires of the North for power shift to the region.

Speaking at the flag off of the North West Zonal Presidential Campaign of PDP at the Ahmadu Bello Stadium, Makarfi,

remarked that, "What we wanted from Nigerians, God has given to us in Yar'Adua without any problem."

In attendance at the rally were almost all the National officers of PDP, including members of the Board of Trustees of the party.

Makarfi whose speech was delivered in Hausa appealed to the people of the North to join hands together with PDP, carry the campaign to the nooks and crannies of the region to ensure that victory comes the way of the party.

While assuring that PDP already looks good to winning the April Presidential election, Makarfi stated that "What happened in 2003 will be repeated two fold and whatever contributions anybody puts in he will reap the benefit when the party is successful."

He appealed to Nigerians to support and uphold PDP, noting that, "This time around there won't be any misplacement of priority and no rigging will take place."

National Chairman of PDP, Senator Ahmed Ali while presenting Yar'Adua and Governor Goodluck Jonathan to the people also re-echoed the sentiments expressed by Makarfi, noting that, "In this part of the country, the prayers of the people has been that the presidency should return here. God has given us what we want with these two young men."

Ali who also presented the seven PDP gubernatorial candidates for the zone to the people at the rally noted that, "The baton of leadership has been handed to a new generation, as a result, all you young men and women should rise up and give the support."

President Olusegun Obasanjo

in his speech observed that all eyes of the nation are now focused on the North West and that they would play a critical role in determining the outcome of the election because of their sheer size. According to him, North West has one unique thing, which others lack.

"You have the largest number of states, which is seven states. Use your number and vote en masse for PDP and North West will surely reap from the fortunes of April 2007 election. That is why all eyes are on North West."

Obasanjo itemised three things that distinguished PDP from other parties, saying, "At PDP we have a team of men and women of experience, track record and of promise keepers who say they will do something and do it, that is what we have in Yar'Adua."

"We as a party have now decided that we will henceforth pay more attention at the State and Local government levels and ensure that they perform the way we have performed at the National level in the area of Agriculture, National Security, Industry, etc."

"We are the only party with the international outreach, connection and the necessary wherewithal to launch Nigeria in the global arena."

We relish that and we must keep it." Obasanjo enjoined the people not to take anything for granted and work for the success of the party in the forthcoming general election. He also used the occasion to welcome Liman Jubril who earlier left PDP back into the party, noting that, "There are people like him who have gone away, they are on temporary sabbatical, as they choose to come back our hands are wide to receive them."

COURT HALTS ASSEMBLY *Cont'd from P1*

seat vacant.

In a motion seeking for an order restraining the lawmakers from removing Nri-Ezedi from office, filed by Dr Onyechi Ikpeazu (SAN) and four others, the presiding Judge, Justice M. I. Onochia ordered "That the defendant/respondent, their servants

Ezedi is 72 years at the time of his present appointment and should have been retired in 2000.

They further noted that Justice Okoli still remains the state Chief Judge, insisting that his seat is not vacant because due process has not been followed to declare his

agents and privies are hereby restrained from taking any further step to enforce the resolution passed by the Anambra state House of Assembly purporting to be an address calling on the Governor of Anambra state to remove the Acting Chief Judge of Anambra State from office pend-