

Two feared dead as police clash with commercial motorcyclists in C-River

By John Ighodaro

CALABAR—TWO persons were feared dead yesterday as the clash between the police and commercial motorcyclists continued in Calabar, Cross River State.

In the early hours of yesterday, the area around the Atakpa police station which was set ablaze by hoodlums the previous day was almost deserted despite the bustling Wyatt Market close by. At the outskirts of the town however popularly known as Eight Miles commercial motorcyclists mounted illegal roadblocks on federal highways and adjoining streets still in protest of the N14,000 imposed on them by government to register their business before operations.

Vanguard gathered that it was an attempt by the police to stop the protesters from mounting those illegal roadblocks that led to the clash. According to an eyewitness "the motorcyclists would mount roadblocks on the road by piling up disused tyres and setting them on fire, the police would come and disperse them only for them to gather at another location and mount another roadblock."

Speaking to *Vanguard* on the incident a man who identified himself as a police officer but who was however on mufti said, "I understand two people have died in the clash. I didn't see the dead with my eyes but a colleague of mine who was at the scene said two people have died. I think there was a shoot out."

When contacted however, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr. Thomas Ekpeme said, "I am just coming from a briefing on the clash. We were not told that anyone died. No one died, except per-

haps that happened after the briefing, but I am not aware that anyone died. No one died," he added. Meanwhile the chief press secretary to the governor, Mr. Joseph Ushigiale has said that the

state government is setting up modalities to check unbridled payment of levies and taxes imposed on business operators by local government council revenue agents across the state.

ICPC drags Etsako LG boss to court

By Gabriel Enoghola

BENIN—THE Chairman of Etsako East Local Government Council of Edo State, Mr. Stanley Odidi has been arraigned before a Benin High Court by the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) over an alleged misappropriation of the council fund amounting to over N100 million.

Vanguard gathered that the chairman's problem was sequel to petitions allegedly written to ICPC by some concerned citizens of the local government who called upon the commission and the EFCC to look into gross embezzlement and looting of the council's fund by the chairman.

The petitioners further alleged that since Mr. Odidi assumed office by April 2004, the council has received over N1 billion from the federation account excluding internally generated revenue, but has nothing to show for it in terms of development. They also claimed that the chairman has created several avenues through which the council's fund is being siphoned.

They named the avenue to include the Health Department, bogus claims, grading of roads, the chairman's guest house and the purchase of motorcycles and cars to selected people, etc.

When the case came up of hearing recently in Benin, it was adjourned to January 24th 2007.

Seimbiri ward 7 calls for equal representation

By Emma Arubi

BURUTU—THE Ijaw of Seimbiri kingdom ward 7 have called on the leadership of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, in Burutu local government council to intervene in the alleged political imbalance endemic in the area, saying that in the spirit of the clamour for power shift by the South South region they are also calling for equal representation for all the villages in the ward.

The Seimbiri Minority Forum (SMF) in a paper entitled; "Enough of political slavery in Seimbiri kingdom" delivered on behalf of the group by Mr. Perekeme Amakada, stated that since the creation of Burutu local council in 1976 in the defunct Bendel State, only Okpokunor community has been producing the councillor representing ward 7, adding that the rest communities are left politically impotent and out of the scheme of things.