

Militants get Presidential amnesty * Cultists shoot 7-month-old baby to death

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ABUJA — FOLLOWING a series of high level negotiations, the Federal Government has granted Presidential amnesty to Niger Delta militants. Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Alhaji Babagana Kingibe, announced yesterday, in Abuja, that the decision to grant militants amnesty was part of President Umaru Yar'Adua's promise to solve the Niger Delta crisis once and for all.

He broke the news at a workshop on the implementation of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in

Nigeria, on a day suspected cultists in Rivers State shot dead a seven-month-old baby and wounded his parents.

Ambassador Kingibe at the Abuja workshop said the Yar'Adua administration's reform would be people-centred and provide an environment for all Nigerians to prosper.

"We have initiated the process of a comprehensive electoral reform by empanelling an Electoral Reform Committee under the Chairmanship of the former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Mohammed Uwais, and have granted Presidential amnesty to the Niger Delta militants," the SGF said in the address read on his behalf by a Permanent Secretary in the Presidency, Mr. Fidelis Kaigama.

The SGF said President Yar'Adua's campaign promises would be met through a socio-economic reform that would improve the quality of the living standard of Nigerians. "The strategy for actualising the vision is the seven-point agenda, also known as the Nigeria Project Agenda, which has well-articulated time-bound activities.

"The agenda is directed at consolidating and sustaining the on-going reform processes, whilst seeking to create prosperity that leads to higher standard of living and better quality of life for all Nigerians.

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“In other words, it provides unambiguous answer to how the Yar’Adua campaign promises can be translated into widespread economic gains and democratic dividends for the benefit of all Nigerians.

“Furthermore, we have not relented in demonstrating our commitment to the restoration of our time-honoured values of honesty, decency, generosity, modesty, selflessness, transparency and accountability, humility, courage and forthrightness. These fundamental values usually determine societies that succeed or fail. We have chosen to succeed,” he said.

In his remarks, Presidential Adviser on NEPAD, Ambassador Tunji Olagunju, said the initiative would engage Nigerians in rebuilding the economy as envisaged by the administration.

He said the workshop was specifically put together to define the strategic role of NEPAD/APRM in the implementation of the seven-point agenda, particularly with regard to domesticating NEPAD principles and values in the National Agenda.

Cultists kill 7-month-old baby

Meanwhile, suspected cultists in the early hours of yesterday shot dead a seven-month-old baby and wounded the parents at Ogoloma village in Okrika.

The father of the baby said the cultists numbering about four stormed his residence at about 3 a.m. on four motorbikes.

And after forcibly entering his apartment, they started shooting. In the process, stray bullets hit the head of the baby. The father who simply gave his name as Dima said he was hit on the back while his wife sustained bullet wounds on the forehead.

The mother was said to be breast-feeding the baby when the gunmen forced their way into the house. The parents said the hoodlums demanded money but were told there was no money in the house.