

# 3 feared dead as PDP, AC supporters clash

● *PDP defies court orders, holds congresses*

By Ola Ajayi, Vincent Ujumadu, Enyim Enyim, Tony Edike, Simon Ebegbulem, Gabriel Engholase, Samuel Oyadongha, Dapo Akinrefon, Olaolu Oladipo, Austin Ogwuda & Kolade Larewaju

**YOLA** — SUPPORTERS of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and those of the Action Congress (AC) yesterday clashed in Yola with about three persons feared dead. Five other supporters of the AC were reported dead in a road crash while travelling from Madasali to Yola to solidarise with the party's governorship candi-

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**MR & MRS**



The tribunal had also said the oral and written testimonies presented by the first respondent, Chief Clarence Olafemi, were laden with contradictions and could therefore not be relied upon by the tribunal.

The tribunal consequently nullified the election and ordered for a fresh poll within 90 days after the ruling.

The Action Congress (AC) candidate, who was the petitioner, Chief Ben Abereoran, had, through his counsel, Mr. Job Ohieku, challenged the election of the PDP candidate at the election tribunal, arguing that the election was marred by widespread irregularities and prayed the tribunal to declare him winner.

### Crisis: I-G summons Audu, Idris

Meanwhile, Inspector-General of Police, Mike Okiro, yesterday summoned those he called the 'political gladiators' in Kogi State to the force headquarters 'to discuss a way of achieving permanent peace in the run-up to the March 29, gubernatorial election re-run in the state.

He made the remarks even as former Governor of the state, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris stunned everyone at the IGP's Conference Room with the disclosure that the arms and ammunition bought by politicians for thugs, especially in Kogi Central Senatorial District, were enough to arm a battalion in the Nigerian Army.

On his part, former Governor

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date, Alhaji Ibrahim Bapatel. However, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) yesterday defied separate court orders restraining it from conducting the state congresses in Oyo and Anambra.

The Yola clash came hours after the Court of Appeal, Jos upheld the nullification, by the Adamawa State Election Petition Tribunal, of the election of Admiral Murtala Nyako as governor.

It also came on a day the main actors in the April 12 governorship battle in the state — Admiral Nyako (PDP) and Alhaji Ibrahim Bapatel (AC) arrived the state capital, Yola to launch their campaigns for the election.

Supporters of the PDP allegedly laid ambush for those of AC close to Chonchi Bridge. The AC supporters were said to be on their way to a rally. Dangerous weapons were freely used in the ensuing confrontation.

Admiral Nyako, whose election as governor was upturned by the appeal Court on Tuesday also addressed a ral-

ly in the state capital, vowing to return as governor. The rally was attended by Chief Bode George, Senator Jubril Aminu and other other party bigwigs.

Parallel congresses of the party were also held in Edo and Enugu while a faction elected a new executive in defiance of an order of the party caucus in Bayelsa.

However, former Deputy Senate President, Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu, who presided over the Ogun PDP congress lamented that the nullification of the victorious of the party by the courts in some states was a serious indictment on the party.

The Oyo PDP, led by Ibadan veteran politician defied a court order obtained by Saka Rashidi, Ajao Jide and Adeosun Adebisi restraining the party and its chairmen in the state, Chief Dejo Afolabi, their agents, officers or any other person "howsoever described from conducting and participating in the forthcoming ward, local government and state congresses of the Oyo

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aged the politicians to be more daring with the rigging of the 2007 election.

Comrade Omar said, "what has been demonstrated is that the nation's electoral jurisprudence needs to be improved to ease the process of proving electoral malpractices and non-compliance with electoral regulations."

Making a direct reference to the judgement of the Presidential Election Tribunal, the NLC President said "the judiciary is not a substitute for evolving an electoral system with sufficient credibility and integrity."

He therefore called on the Electoral Reform Committee set up by President Umaru Yar'Adua to take its job seriously and help "generate measures that can end the vicious cycle of electoral rigging."

Comrade Omar maintained that the "NLC remains committed to the struggle for electoral reforms because we appreciate that election rigging is an impediment to progress and development."

The guest speaker, Prof. Iyayi commended the NLC for its achievements which include its struggles against economic policies by various governments which have impoverished the generality of the people such as the Structural Adjustment Programme, its struggles against increases in the prices of petroleum products, the national minimum wage and others.

Prof. Iyayi urged the NLC leadership to be more involved in the Labour Party and create a platform for credible candidates to emerge.

Former NLC President, Com-

military engaged in such a needless adventure as this.

"Even during the tension that gripped the land after the 1979 elections, when the 12-2/3 issue came up, the military did not threaten anyone. Also, when Gen. Buhari challenged Obasanjo's election in 2003, there was no threat from the military.

"We are at a loss as to why the military will suddenly jump into the fray and usurp the role of the police. In any case, protests — as long as they are non-violent — are part of democracy. If people feel a need to protest, they will protest, within the ambit of the law, and nothing will happen, whether or not Gen. Owoye Azazi likes it.

"We are constrained to say the pledge of support for the President is a mere smokescreen, a disguised support for the PDP. This is clearly unprofessional of any military. The military leadership should take care of the rot within its own system and stop dragging the institution into the quicksand arena of politics, with its ever-shifting loyalty," AC said, and challenged the military to name the faceless trouble makers instead of painting everyone, who disagrees with the Court of Appeal ruling with the same brush of inciting violence.

It also reminded those behind the threat that the AC, without prompting, had chosen the non-violent path by taking its case against last year's elections to the courts, adding: "If we had wanted violence, we would not have taken the legal recourse, while consistently appealing to our supporters

for warnings against any attempt to protest the verdict, saying that the warnings were an indication that the majority of Nigerians were unhappy with the verdict which the CNPP noted, was the real threat to the nation's democracy.

Its National Director of Publicity, Mr. Osita Okechukwu in a statement in Abuja alleged that the tribunal judges deliberately ignored weighty evidences and chose to rule otherwise, saying that it was a green-light for prospective election riggers to go ahead and do so in future elections.

"What happened to the two final result sheets signed by Prof. Maurice Iwu and certified by INEC? Where in one President Umaru Yar'Adua was allocated arbitrarily 25.3 million and in the other 24.6 million?

"What is the position of the law when there is inconsistency?" the group queried.

It added that the "CNPP wishes to alert the military and the police that the greatest threat to democracy and indeed national security are those who have incurable phobia of free, fair and transparent elections. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has unfortunately demonstrated time and again their hatred for democracy, even in intra-elections of officers of the party."

CNPP further asked "if the judgement had served the interest of justice and the core values of democracy, why is the obnoxious judgement engendering national insecurity that the military and the police are making reference to?"

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State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party slated for 21, 25 and 28 of February, 2008 pending the determination of the motion on notice."

## PDP defies court order, holds congress in Oyo

The party and some of its chieftains assembled yesterday at the Lekan Salami Sports Complex. Adamasingba and elected officers ahead of the forthcoming national convention.

Among those at the venue of the congress were Chief Adedibu, Governor Adebayo-Alao Akala, his deputy, Alhaji Taofeek Arapaja, former military Governor of Lagos State, Brig.-Gen. Raji Rasaki (rtd), Mr. Femi Lanlehin, and Mr. Hazeem Gbolarmi.

The leader of a five-member National Convention/Congress Monitoring team, Alhaji Salihu Zubair, denied knowledge of any court injunction restraining the party, saying "there were rumours that some people went to court to stop this congress. This committee is not aware of such court order as we were not served. The congress is legal and the outcome will be valid."

At the end of the programme, all the former executives of the party were returned.

They are the State Chairman, Chief Dejo Afolabi, Vice-Chairman, Alhaji Kunmi Mustafa, Publicity Secretary, Mr. Yahaya Adetunji and the Legal Officer, Mr. Adeolu Adebayo.

Akala, described the aggrieved members who went to court as perpetual agitators and expired politicians who are bereft of ideas.

Adedibu described the congress as satisfactory, adding that due consultations were made before the party executives emerged.

## ...also in Anambra

The story was not different in Anambra, where a faction of the party loyal to Mr. Andy Uba conducted the state congress in spite of a state High Court order restraining the two factions in the party from holding the congress.

The interim order of injunction was granted one of the aspirants to the post of State Chairman of the party, Chief Ken Emeakayi, who alleged that the party was not following the guidelines of the PDP in the conduct of the ward, local and state congresses.

Part of the court order granted by Justice B. A. Nwankwo and endorsed by a Senior Registrar I, L. C. Uyanwa reads: "That an interim order of injunction shall be and is hereby granted restraining the 1st to 9th defendants/respondents from organising and conducting state congress for purposes of electing state officers of PDP in Anambra State pending the hearing and determination of the motion on notice filed in this suit by the plaintiff/applicant."

Joined in the suit are the National Chairman of PDP, Dr. Ahmadu Ali, National Secretary, Dr. Benard Eze, Chairman of the National Convention Committee, Chief Bode George, Anambra State Chairman of PDP, Chief Tony Nwoye, the State Congress Committee Chairman, Chief Frank Oramulu, PDP State Secretary, Dr. Tony Akachukwu, state chairmanship aspirant, Mr. Bright Nebedum and Chief Anayo Nebe, the Speaker of the House of Assembly, who heads a faction of the State Congress Committee

The two factions of the party, one led by the State Chairman, Comrade Tony Nwoye and the other led by the Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Chief Anayo Nebe, who was appointed Chairman, State Congress Committee by Dr. Andy Uba, fixed parallel state congresses at Women Development Centre and White View Hotel, Awka, respectively.

However, the Tony Nwoye/Frank Oramulu group did not hold the congress in compliance with the court order of the Ihiaba High Court.

At the White View Hotel, the Nebe faction adopted a consensus list of state executive officers with Mr. Bright Nebedum as Chairman.

Nebe said the consensus list was resolved at following the withdrawal of some contestants to the various positions in the state exco.

Those elected by consensus were Bright Nebedum (Chairman), Wilson Anekwe (Deputy Chairman), Innocent Anumba (Vice-Chairman, South), Uche Ezeliora (Vice-Chairman, Central), Ike Enwezor (Vice-Chairman, North), Edwin Okwuosa (State Secretary), Jude Akunna (Asst. Secretary, South), Joe Ezeatu (Asst. Sec, Central), Kennedy Moyah (Asst. Sec, North), and Sabastine Uzowulu (Treasurer), among others.

The motion for the adoption of the consensus list was moved by Chiedu Enemu and was adopted by voice vote.

Dr. Andy Uba who was accompanied to the venue by Senators Ikechukwu Obiora and Joy Emordi, Minister for Transport (Water), Chief John Emeka and members of the House of Representatives, in his speech said the party was not quarrelling with anybody and called on PDP members, who are aggrieved to come back to the fold.

"We are not quarrelling with anybody. Our house is open. We are not driving anybody away. This is one family. All those who are aggrieved should come back to their house where they rightly belong."

The congress was monitored by a national officer of the party, Otunba Adewale Idowu from Ogun State and INEC officials led by Mr. Mike Nwuneli.

## Parallel congresses in Enugu

The two factions of the party in Enugu State conducted parallel congress. One faction is led by Governor Sullivan Chime while the other is loyal to former Governor Chimaroke Nnamani.

At the party congress held by the faction loyal to former Gov. Nnamani, Mr. Ray Nnaji emerged chairman while Mr. Augustine Ike Eneh was elected as State Secretary, among other members elected into the State Executive Committee of the party.

Senator Nnamani and a member of the Federal House of Representatives from the state, who doubled as a Returning Officer for the State Congress, K. G. B. Oguakwa were among chieftains of the party at the congress.

The congress was supervised by four members of the State Congress Monitoring Committee, led by Mohammed Yunusa as Chairman. Three members of the committee, Johnson Akinsehinwa, Kayode Bankole, and Mrs. Basheba Riki, as well as some officials of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from the state were present.

The other congress held at the Hotel Presidential, Enugu by the

Chime faction had in attendance the Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu and Gov. Chime. It was monitored by only one member of the congress committee, Alhaji Aminu Mohammed Gumel, Engr. Vita Abba emerged State Chairman.

A total 6,600 delegates participated in the congress which was generally as peaceful. The proceedings were watched by the State INEC Commissioner, Alhaji Abdul Bulama and other top officials of the commission. Majority of the National Assembly members from the state also participated.

A circular by the National Secretary of the party, Chief Benard Eze had approved Mac-Davos Hotels, venue of the congress held by Nnamani's faction as the official venue of the congress and the party officials were charged with the responsibility of conducting the congress there but one of them declined.

The official, Gumel from Jigawa State told reporters at the congress that he could not understand why four of his colleagues decided to attend the congress held by the Ebeano group, insisting that the congress by the Chime group was the authentic one and would be recognised by the national leadership of the party.

Speaking at the event, Deputy Senate President, Ekweremadu described the Ebeano group as spoilers, adding that members of the faction were infected with "malaria of politics." He said that he has the mandate to initiate the removal of the National Secretary, Chief Benard Eze, whom he accused of causing confusion in the state chapter of the party.

## ....also in Edo

Chief Dan Orbih and Mr. Edward Sado, emerged factional chairmen in the parallel congresses in Edo State. The duo are from the Edo North Senatorial District of the state.

Chief Orbih was declared winner in the congress held by the Anenih faction while Mr. Sado emerged at the congress held by Governor Oserhiemen Osunbor's faction.

The congress held by the governor's faction was supervised by a team led by Alhaji Kura Mohammed from Abuja. The parallel congresses further highlighted the lingering crisis between Chief Anenih and Gov. Osunbor.

Meanwhile, members of the state House of Assembly, led by the Speaker, Zakawanu Garuba boycotted the two congresses, citing the need for the members to remain neutral in the crisis so that they would not lose focus in their resolve to give good representation to the electorate.

Senators Yisa Braimoh and Odion Ugbesia described the Anenih faction of the party as the "authentic" PDP in the state, declaring that "those in the other side of the divide are not in the mainstream of Edo State politics."

According to Braimoh, who moved the motion for the nomination of Chief Orbih, "this is the only one Dan Orbih and the only PDP Chairman in Edo State. He has all it takes to move the state party forward and that is why we are supporting him today as chairman. His records in politics cannot be compared to what they are doing on the other side. We have all it takes to move this state forward and that is why we are voting the best candidate for the job."

While seconding the motion, Ugbesia thundered "this is the

original PDP. Any body that is looking for a carpenter to come and build a structure for him is making a big mistakes. Only a bricklayer can build a structure for a building and we are the bricklayers of Edo State politics. The authentic and legitimate PDP in Edo State is here."

Other others who attended the Anenih congress were members of the Federal House of Representatives, Samson Osagie and Abass Braimah. Others included the state Commissioner in the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Mr. Mathew Iduoriyekemwen, among others.

## Fresh crisis brews in Bayelsa

Fresh crisis seemed to be brewing in the Bayelsa State Chapter of the PDP after the emergence of a new state executive in defiance of a caucus meeting where it was resolved that the present crop of executives from ward to state level be retained.

The state executive of the party dismissed yesterday's congress as illegal.

The caucus meeting attended by Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan, Governor Timipre Sylva, his deputy, Mr. Pere-mobowei Ebebi and members of the Board of Trustees had resolved that the status quo be maintained in the state in the wake of the crisis rocking the party. This led to the suspension and counter-suspension of members of the State House of Assembly and the alleged impeachment of the Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Mr. Werinpre Seibarugu by a faction of the House.

The party caucus apart from resolving that the status quo be maintained also instituted a four-man peace committee made up of Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan, Gov. Timipre Sylva, the Niger Delta Development Commission Managing Director, Mr. Timi Alaibe, as well as the former Chairman of the Directorate of Food, Roads Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Air Vice-Marshal Larry Koinya (rtd) to look into the crisis with a view to finding a lasting solution to the problem threatening the cohesion.

However, the state congress which took place yesterday at the auditorium of the State Women Affairs came as a surprise to many party faithful given the position of the party caucus that the incumbent executives from the ward to state level be retained.

Besides the Deputy Chairman, Chief Darius Obiene, who attended the congress, the state party chairman, Fred Agbedi and others were conspicuously absent which is believed to have the backing of Gov. Timipre Sylva, owing to the large presence of his aides including his Special Adviser on Youth and Mobilisation, Mr. Waripamowei Dudafa.

The state deputy chairman of the party, Chief Darius Obiene was the only one of the 30-member state executive retained who his position.

Chief Rufus Abadi from Southern Ijaw Local Government Area in the Bayelsa Central Senatorial District emerged as the new state chairman of the party. Mr. James Akari was elected as the state secretary of the party.

## Koshoedo emerges in Lagos but...

Newly-elected Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP in Lagos State, Mr. Seton

jo Koshoedo promised to reconcile aggrieved members of the party even as he vowed to provide purposeful leadership during his tenure.

Mr. Koshoedo, who was returned unopposed as new party boss during the state congress of the PDP, yesterday identified leadership problems as the bane of the party but promised to provide a pro-active leadership.

The former member of the House of Representatives said "we are resolved more than ever before, to bring our political experience to bear positively on our party's aspirations in the state. Today (yesterday), we embark on a journey to a political destination envisioned by the founding fathers of our great party."

In addition, he said "in the past few years, our party has been faced with leadership challenges in the state. It is therefore our first priority to evolve a new culture of focused, purposeful and proactive leadership for our teeming supporters."

It will be recalled that a faction of the party had dragged the leadership of the party to court last November when the initial set of congresses were to take place, alleging that its (factional) membership had been shut out of the process of electing leaders for the party.

However, reacting to the development, Publicity Secretary of the Olorunjoje-led faction, Mr. Femi Carrena said as far as their faction is concerned, there was no election.

According to him, "as far as I am concerned there was no election because there wasn't need for it. But if there was any, it is a nullity. I still don't believe any body was elected. Like I rightly told you, we do not recognise anything from what they had today."

The faction's pointsman said: "As far as we are concerned, it is a contempt of court. There is a court order preventing the congress. The situation in Lagos is similar to Oyo State. We are still waiting for what the national body will do about it."

National secretariat of the PDP sent a team led by Dr. Shafi Abdulalami to monitor the election, while INEC officials were also on ground to witness the congress.

Those present at the congress include former Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Femi Pedro, Dr. Abayomi Finnih, former Commissioner for Establishment in Lagos State, Mr. Ebenezer Olubolade, former member of the House of Representatives, Mr. Tunde Salau and Chief Lanre Razak, among others.

## Nwaoboshi emerges in Delta

A foundation member of the party, Chief Peter Nwaoboshi emerged as consensus Chairman of the party in Delta State.

Others elected to serve in the 29-man exco are Chief Ighoyota Amori as deputy chairman and Chief Solomon Ogba as Secretary. The Chairman of the Electoral Committee, Dr. Martin Oke who came to supervise the exercise, reeled the names out.

However, one of the chairmanship aspirants, Ogbueshi Ndozi Onyia told reporters that although he was not opposed to the consensus arrangement "but I was excluded in the whole arrangement. I was not consulted. I am not opposed to the emergence of Nwaoboshi and the exco but due process should have been followed. As a contestant, I should have been consulted so

I am going to the Appeal Panel. My complaint is not addressed," he stated.

In his remark, Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan expressed that the party was able to organise the exercise without rancour.

According to him, "Delta PDP must not continue to be divided. We have spent the last few days talking. Why should we continue to fight ourselves. PDP will never again be divided in Delta State," he said.

Nwaoboshi on his part promised that his emergence would usher in a new dawn in the state.

## Tribunals' verdicts indict PDP — Mantu

Meanwhile, former Deputy Senate President, Ibrahim Mantu yesterday lamented that the voiding of the victories of the PDP candidates at the last general elections by the courts was a serious indictment on the party.

Senator Mantu who was Abeokuta to conduct the State Congress of the party said that the voiding of the elections was an indication that the selection process for the candidates was faulty.

He said, "It remains a serious indictment on our party that today the courts are voiding the victories of our party members at the last general elections, not necessarily because of election rigging but because the internal processes that threw up such persons for election were flawed as such processes have been seen by the courts as inconsistent with the party's own constitution in the cases involved."

"This development, even if it is a single case, should be enough to make us have a rethink on the way we did things in the past, especially our pugnacious approach to selecting candidates to represent our party at the election."

"Thus, much as recent court decisions remain a victory for our evolving democracy, they nonetheless amplify what some have chosen to label our party's terribly depreciating image locally and internationally."

Obviously indicting former President Olusegun Obasanjo's leadership of the party, the former Deputy Senate President said that the present leader of the party, President Umaru Yar'Adua has already spoken against imposition of candidates and would not allow it to happen again.

"He wants PDP under his leadership to bid goodbye to the imposition of candidates by anybody, no matter how powerful, no matter how influential and no matter the position such a person occupies either in the party or in government."

"Democracy is about the majority having its way in a free and fair contest. Therefore, in true democracy, there is no substitute for the will of the people. Invitation to anarchy becomes the clear consequence of a manipulated process where the will and wishes of the people are not respected and allowed to stand."

## Fadairo emerges in Ogun

Chief Joju Fadairo retained his seat as chairman.

But Governor Olugbenga Daniel was conspicuously absent. He was said to have been away to China with President Umaru Yar'Adua.

A new Deputy Chairman, Chief MA Bankole was elected while a new Secretary Chief Pegba Otemolu was also elected to replace Elder Yemi Akinwonmi.