

JTF kills 3 suspected kidnappers of Lebanese in Ekpan

By Emma Arubi

WARRI—THE Three suspected militants who kidnapped a Lebanese in Ekpan area of Effurun in Delta State in the early hours of Tuesday have been killed by security agents.

The suspects were mowed down allegedly to send a stern warning to their ilk who might want to disrupt the relative peace that pervades the oil rich state. Nemesis caught up with the suspects barely two hours after they abducted a Lebanese, Jack Farees, working with a construction firm, Niger Cat Nigeria Limited at Ekpan area of Effurun.

An AK-47 rifle, a pump action shotgun and several unspent cartridges were recovered from the suspects identified as Kingsley Obodo, 33 years; Collins Godfrey, and Yinkore Dengha aged 37 years but the fourth and sponsor of the kidnap simply identified as Labando narrowly escaped the security dragnet.

Security sources disclosed that the suspects were picked up by a combined team of troops from Joint Task Force (JTF), the police, the special security outfit of the state and some youths at nearby Okuokoko village, in Okpe local government area where they hid their victim. Mr. Farees who was working on the multi billion Naira PTI-Ekpan dualisation project at the time of his kidnap, said that four youths accosted him, covered his face and took him away to an unknown destination.

Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan described the incident as unfortunate but that all security machinery already put in place in the state were used to secure the release of the foreigner and the arrest of the suspects.

He, however, expressed regret that the sponsor of the kidnappers who arrived Warri from

Lagos on board an Aero Contractor airline narrowly escaped arrest, adding that the whole act was plotted in Lagos and “the sponsor flew into Osubi believing that his boys must have completed the assignment”.

Coordinator of the Joint Media Campaign Centre of JTF, Colonel Rabe Abubakar, confirmed the arrest of the suspects and liberation of their victim but was silent on the execution of the kidnappers.

Rivers wants RSSDA, NAPEP partnership

By Jimitota Onoyume

PORT HARCOURT—RIVERS State Government yesterday directed the State Sustainable Development Agency, (RSSDA) Ministry of Women Affairs and the State Micro Finance Agency to partner with the National Poverty Eradication Programme, (NAPEP) to enable the credit schemes introduced by the government to address challenges of poverty in the state to succeed.

Rivers State Governor, Mr Rotimi Amaechi, gave the directive during the presentation of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) Sustainable Economic Development Solutions to the State Executive Council by the National Coordinator of NAPEP, Dr. *Magnus Kpakol* at Government House, Port Harcourt.

The governor, who explained that the essence of the partnership was to achieve the desired goals of the credit schemes, wondered why the people have refused to access the N2b deposited with First City Monument Bank, FCMB, to establish small scale businesses of their own.

He noted that the Rivers State Government had expended close to N4 billion on poverty reduction programmes including the N648 million for widows' Mi-

cro Credit scheme and the N250 million poverty reduction counterpart funding deposited with Oceanic Bank by the previous administration.

Church won't pay for abducted

By George Onah

PORT HARCOURT—THREE days into the kidnap of a Catholic Priest Rev. Fr. Pius Kii, the Catholic Archbishop of Port Harcourt Diocese, Most Rev. A.O. Makozi, has said that the church would not pay the three million naira ransom demanded by the abductors of the priest.

This comes as the Niger Delta Vigilante and Niger Delta Patriotic Force warned the kidnappers to release the Catholic priest within 48 hours or they would go after their families.

Makozi said the action of the brigands was not only despicable but “sacrilegious”, appealing to the abductors to release him forthwith.

Also, the Nigeria Union of Journalists in Rivers State has condemned the abduction of the clergyman.

Chairman of the council, Mr.