

2011: N/West PDP shops for Yar'Adua's replacement

• *Violence rocks meeting, 2 feared dead*

By EMEKA MAMAH

A meeting of the North West Zone of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Kaduna yesterday ended in violence with no fewer than two persons feared dead while scores of others were seriously injured.

The meeting held behind closed door at the Hassan Katsina House, Kaduna lasted over three hours. The focus was on how the zone would complete its second term of eight years in the Presidency.

Sources at the meeting, who spoke anonymously, said the zone was keen on replacing President Umaru Yar'Adua with a view to completing eight-years of two terms in power.

It was learnt that two governors, Alhaji Sule Lamido of Jigawa State and Ibrahim Shema of Katsina State, were being considered for the vacant position of vice president to Jonathan should Yar'Adua be impeached.

Secretary of the North West Zone of the PDP, Baba Lawal Aliyu, who spoke with newsmen at the end of the meeting, said that since the national leadership of the party had zoned the presidency to the North West, the zone has the right to take steps to secure its second term of office in 2011.

Aliyu said that since Yar'Adua has not exhausted his tenure due to his ill health, it was the responsibility of the party to ensure that the North West would present the president of the country in 2011.

He said however that the issue of whether there would be a replacement for the president in 2011 or not would be

determined after Yar'Adua's return to the country from Saudi Arabia.

"The party has zoned the presidency to our zone, the North West and so it's still our tenure and we hope to continue to occupy it till the end of the next term beginning from 2011. It's our tenure and we have to present the next president from the zone since the North West has eight-year tenure at the presidency," Aliyu said.

The PDP chieftain added that the meeting also resolved to unanimously give total and unflinching support to Yar'Adua based on the premise that he was holding the slot of the North West zone at the presidency.

Other party chieftains from the zone at the meeting were Governor Namadi Sambo (Kaduna), Governor Shehu Shema (Katsina), Governor Magatakarda Wammako (Sokoto), Governor Aliyu Shinkafi (Zamfara) and Governor Saidu Dakingari (Kebbi). Others included members of the party from the zone in the National Assembly and state houses of assembly.

However, while the meeting was going on, violence broke out among the supporters of the Katsina governor who had besieged the venue of the meeting in large numbers.

The youths, who were dressed in white T-Shirts carrying the pictures of Shema and Yar'Adua, came to the venue in hundreds of commercial buses from Katsina.

The violence was sparked off when they were sharing largesse given to them by an unidentified chieftain of the party. Two unidentified persons were feared dead and scores of others seriously injured.

Two of the youths who were stabbed severally by colleagues fell into a coma after losing a lot of blood and they were rushed to an undisclosed hospital.

While the violence lasted, the rampaging youths fought themselves with various dangerous weapons including knives, cudgels and machetes.

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