

2 killed as *Okada* riders, task force clash in Delta

By Ochuko Akuopha ●Police arrest 8, impound 53 motorcycles

ASABA — Two persons were feared dead in Asaba, Delta State, following a clash between commercial motorcyclists, commonly called *Okada* and members of task force on Commercial Motorcycle and Tricycle Operators Association, COMTOA.

The incident, which happened Sunday, heightened tension, yesterday, in Asaba, as *Okada* riders went on rampage, attacking members of the association's task force.

They also attacked and chased away ticket sellers at various locations in the state capital, and thereafter, stormed the secretariat of COMTOA, vandalizing office furniture and made away with some valuables.

An official of COMTOA said they got information last Saturday that the tricycle and *Okada* riders were trying to set up a union that is different from the one inaugurated by the Delta State Government.

He said: "About 3p.m., that day, it was discovered that they had already inaugurated their own task force and that was how it started.

"They started attacking people paying for tickets through COMTOA, chasing the task force and ticket sellers but we were not deterred because the revenue is for the government.

"On Sunday, we were around GRA with the Police to enforce the law against the movement of *Keke* riders from 10p.m., when we were attacked again and we eventually left the area.

"This morning (yesterday), no fewer than 300 tricycle riders came to our office to attack us with cutlasses, guns, and other arms. They broke doors, windows, stole laptops, generator and phones. They also ran away with bikes."

Meanwhile, the Director-General of the Delta State Capital Territory

Development Agency, Chief Patrick Ukah, has called for calm while government deals with the issues that led to the rampage.

Ukah in a statement after inspecting the scene, condemned the wanton destruction and vandalism of property at the COMTOA Secretariat by the protesters.

Ukah, who was in company of the Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Kingsley Emu and Head of Service, Mr. Reginald Bayoko during the inspection, said the Capital Territory Development Agency was in touch with the Office of the Secretary to the State Government, the leadership of COMTOA, and representatives of the Arewa

community with a view to resolving the issues.

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Police Public Relations Officer of the Command, Mr. Bright Edeke, in a statement, said 53 motorcycles had also been impounded.

He said: "Today, a group of motorcycle (*Okada*) riders embarked on a violent protest within the Asaba metropolis, over their perceived maltreatment by members of the state task force, who enforces the ban on late-hour operations of tricycles and motorcycles in Asaba, at about 0800hrs.

"The protesters stormed the task

force office along Sunmit Road, ransacked and destroyed vehicles and offices.

"Upon receipt of the information, the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Department of Operations, Efeizomor George, on the directive of the Commissioner of Police, led teams of operatives to restore peace and further put a halt to the rancorous demonstration within the metropolis.

"To that effect, the team of police officers successfully carried out a raid of recalcitrant motorcycle riders who were embarking on this violent and destructive protest in Asaba Metropolis,

"Eight male suspects were arrested and 53 motorcycles were impounded."

Convocation: Measures we implemented reduced sorting syndrome drastically

—UNICAL VC

By Ike Uchechukwu

CALABAR—Vice Chancellor of University of Calabar, UNICAL, Cross River State, Prof. Florence Obi, has disclosed that the measures put in place by the institution have drastically reduced sorting syndrome (bribing) in the school.

She made the disclosure, yesterday, in Calabar during the press briefing on the 36th convocation ceremony of the university.

According to her, "the narrative now is you study to know and no longer sorting to pass examinations.

"That era of sorting to pass is becoming a thing of the past as students have taken the bull by its horn and are living up to their

responsibilities by constantly studying."

Obi said of the 8,415 students that will be convocating in the Bachelors degree, 32 of them came out with first class.

She noted that the figure was the highest in the history of the 49 years old institution.

She said: "A significant number of our students are now living up to their responsibilities hence the increase in the number of those graduating with first class this period.

"Many know it is no longer business as usual. The measures and policies they refer to as Florence Obi policies are actually that of the University, and they are working for the good of the institution.

"We have also instituted students' scholarship scheme.

These measures among others have made many of them to sit up.

"It's a positive competition that have boosted their morale and many who are currently enjoying the scheme never want to relinquish their position."

The vice chancellor further said that no fewer than 25,000 students, who had issues with their academics were granted amnesty for them to complete their programmes.

According to her, many of the students were withdrawn without knowing some had spent quite a number of years in the institution without academically certified as graduates.

"What I did upon assumption of office was to grant these category of students amnesty to enable them complete their programmes," she said.