

Police experts probe MNR blast at Katiyo

HONDE VALLEY.

POLICE forensic experts and senior army officers spent yesterday afternoon at Katiyo tea estate in Manicaland's Honde Valley sifting through rubble in an effort to determine the type of explosive used by MNR bandits to blow up a tea plant at the estate on Saturday night.

The forensic experts, who arrived at the

scene at the time the Minister responsible for Defence, Cde Ernest Kadungure, was still touring the area, refused to disclose the details of their findings.

Cde Kadungure flew to the estate in an airforce helicopter for what he described as a military assessment exercise to determine "troop deployment" into the area

which borders Mozambique.

The MNR bandits who attacked workers and blasted the Katiyo tea factory also robbed a nightwatchman, burned four cars and brutally assaulted villagers in the neighbouring Mandeya communal lands before fleeing across the border.

Eyewitnesses said that the bandits, who arrived

at the tea estate at about 7 pm, blew up the factory, robbed several people of their clothing and took \$32, shoes and other personal effects of the nightwatchman who was on duty at the time.

They had rounded up several women and girls but later abandoned the move after an alarm and hooter of one of the cars were triggered by the heat. They disappeared

soon afterwards, said one of the workers.

Several villagers in Mandeya said they had been robbed of clothing and blankets by a large band of bandits. This was the first time since independence that the bandits had attacked the area.

"They took all my family clothing and blankets and threatened to

kill us if we reported the matter to the army. They were very ruthless, beating up men, women and children," said Cde Daison Ngoro, a peasant farmer near Katiyo.

Residents said army engineers and bomb disposal experts removed some of the explosives which did not detonate when the tea plant was blasted by the bandits. — Ziana.