

Nigeria: Two Feared Dead in PH Inferno

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Port Harcourt — Merchandise and property worth billions of naira were destroyed Thursday, when an early morning fire gutted premises of 'Happy Bite' one of the biggest supermarkets in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital.

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Also, two fire fighters' who mustered courage to go into the two-storey building for a rescue mission were feared dead after being choked by the smoke from the raging fire.

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According to eye witness who gave his name as Samuel Moses told Daily Champion, the two fire fighters were choked while trying to remove some of the merchandise in the two, story edifice, managed by some Chinese Nationals; adding that access was a major problem for the fire fighters who arrived early enough.

In his account of the incident, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Total Nigeria Limited, Mr. Waziri Loveday explained that access to the building and visibility were the problem they initially encountered with, describing the incident as complex and unfortunate.

"It's a very unfortunate situation and the damage is enormous because there are a lot of things inside this building. The Air Force men here who first heard about the fire called the manager of the building who ordered that the gate should not be opened yet to us, because he was afraid of theft."

The cause of the fire which reportedly started in the wee hours of Thursday could not be ascertained, but eye witness account traced it to an electric fault. The first and second floors had been reduced to rubbles, before the arrival of fire fighters from the Rivers State Fire Service and those of various oil firms operating in the state.

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As at press time no government official had visited the scene of the incident, which left heavy traffic jam along the popular Aba road linking the Stadium road opposite Nigeria Air Force Base in Port Harcourt .

Daily Champion reports that the fire team comprising fire men from the State Fire Service, Shell, Elf, and Total Nigeria Limited, Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC) were still battling to put out the fire that lasted for over six hours.

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