

Niger Delta govs blew N7.3tr in 13 years — Clark



■ Edwin Clark

From Vincent Egunyanga, Benin

Governors of the oil producing states in the South-South wasted a total of N7.282 trillion in the past 13 years, being petroleum derivation revenues received from the Federation Account, elder statesman Edwin Clark has said.

Clark, a one-time information minister in the 1970s, said it was regretful that even though these funds were meant for the development of oil producing areas, those communities have little to show for it.

Speaking yesterday in Warri when he received a delegation of oil and gas producing communities of the Niger

Delta, Clark said it was sheer greed on the part of governors to appropriate the derivation funds meant for the oil and gas producing communities.

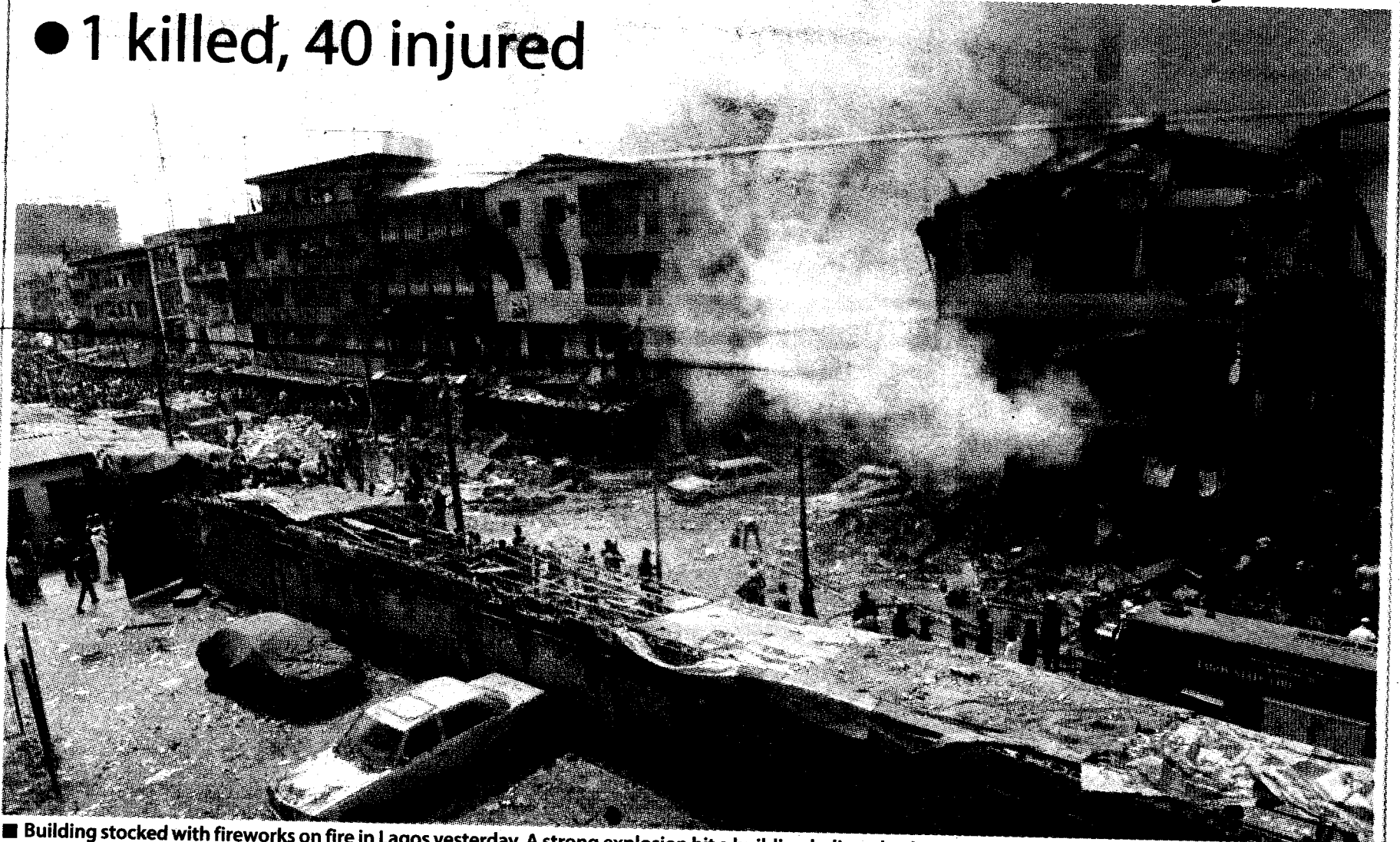
He said since the funds were meant to develop those areas, governors have no business spending the monies the way they do now.

Continued on Page 5

“ Clark said the oil producing areas have little to show for the trillions received in their name

Lagos fireworks turn deadly

● 1 killed, 40 injured



■ Building stocked with fireworks on fire in Lagos yesterday. A strong explosion hit a building believed to be storing fireworks for the Christmas and New Year festivals in the sprawling Lagos Island, the oldest and most densely packed neighborhoods in the Nigerian economic capital Lagos.

PHOTO AFP

From Kayode Ekundayo, Femi Akinola, Lagos & Abdulkadir Badsha Mukhtar

At least one person was killed while 40 others were injured

when an explosion in a warehouse storing fireworks sparked a major fire in Lagos yesterday.

Ten buildings and ten vehicles were also gutted in the blaze at

the Jankara Market, Idumota, which started at about 9am.

Officials said the explosion was caused by firecrackers which were packed in a shop in Folawiyo House, located at No.

45 Ojogiwa Street, which is one of the mostly densely populated streets on the Lagos Island.

Leader of the community, Alhaji Olumegbon Isiaka, told the *News Agency of Nigeria* that

one of the sellers lit a firecracker, which accidentally flew into a shop and detonated the packs inside, leading to numerous explosions and the blaze which

Continued on Page 5

Gov Yero needs older person as deputy - Fearon Pg. 7

Lagos fireworks turn deadly

Cont'd. from page 1

quickly spread to other buildings in the area.

Isiaka confirmed the death of a 15-year-old boy in the fire, adding that as many as 40 people, who were injured, had been taken to the hospital.

But a trader, Silas, said he feared that more people might have died in the fire.

"We have only seen one dead body brought out so far. We know lots of people are living inside shops here on Lagos Island. Nobody knows how many of them have travelled home for Christmas and how many did not travel," he said.

"We are afraid that those who slept in the shops might have perished in the explosion. We saw some of them making merriment as at yesterday evening but we have not seen any one among them by now."

When *Daily Trust* visited the scene at 10 am yesterday, at least five nearby four-storey buildings were seen destroyed.

Among the buildings affected by the blaze were Martins House, Folawiyo House, Akib House, Gunsema Plaza, Fashola House, Modupe House and Okoya House, NAN reported.

Some of the buildings most affected by the fire had to be demolished in order to stop the fire from further spreading.

Folawiyo and Modupe houses had been demolished as at 4pm, while some others were in the process of being pulled down as the agencies continued to try to bring the inferno under control.

Most of the shops in the area were securely locked, while some shop owners who came round, were seen trying to evacuate their wares, in spite of the restriction of movement placed on the zone by security officials.

Mr Sadiq Isa, who described himself as a coordinator at Governor Babatunde Fashola's office, said that the explosion, which started the fire, was "like thunder".

"We have not seen these kind of firecrackers before. They are more of explosives and the government should embark on a mission to rid the society of such," he said.

"Any building found containing these fire crackers will be sealed immediately and anyone found with them will be prosecuted," he added.

The police bomb squad also took samples of the explosives and left for further examination, NAN reported.

The fire attracted a huge crowd, which made it difficult for firefighters to reach the scene fast enough.

Residents grabbed fire hoses to try help put out the flames, but witnesses said the water ran out quickly.

Femi Osanyintolu, General Manager, Lagos State Emergency Management Authority (LASEMA), attributed the blaze to firecrackers stored in one of the shops.

He also said property worth billions of naira was destroyed.

Spokesman for the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Yushau Shuaib said in a statement that at least one person was killed in the fire.

"So far one human-body that was burnt beyond recognition had been recovered from the rubble of exploded area in Lagos as reported earlier. The recovery was made when search and rescue officers were working at the scene," he said.

"The fire incident was triggered by suspected fireworks stored in presumed warehouse in Lagos Island. At least fifteen people were treated for injuries sustained mostly from stampede during the explosion."

Earlier in a separate statement, Shuaib said the "powerful explosion" was caused by 'knockouts' brands of fireworks that are usually used during festive periods.

He added: "Although the Search and Rescue Officers had hectic time to reach the densely populated area due to heavy traffic and crowds, other response agencies and volunteers mobilized were able to control the fire incidents in area with supports from residents."

Later yesterday, the Lagos State Government assured residents of their safety, restating that the explosion was not caused by a bomb as speculated earlier.

Spokesman for Governor Babatunde Fashola, Mr. Hakeem Bello, said, "There was a need to correct the impression created this morning by speculations that an explosion heard was as a result of a bomb planted in the Lagos Island neighbourhood."

Lagos state commissioner of information and strategy, Lateef Aderemi Ibirogb, also urged people to go about their lawful activities.