

Suspected toxic waste kills two in Warri

TRAGEDY struck at Sedeco area of Warri, Delta State shortly after the Christmas celebration when two men suddenly died while cleaning up an oil barge.

They were alleged to have died after inhaling a substance suspected to be toxic in the oil barge they were hired to clean up.

The two young men, *The Guardian* learnt, had together with some others been hired by a firm, Jowason Enterprises, to clean up the oil barge.

Apparently as believers in dignity of labour, the young men had attacked their task with vigour. They started removing some black substance from the barge and dumping them into a jetty allegedly owned by another firm, Two Brothers Company. It is, how-

From Chido Okafor, Warri

ever, on lease to Jowason Enterprises and Ocan Marine Services.

But at 12.05 a.m. on Thursday December 28, 2006, one of the workers was said to have noticed that two of his colleagues inside the barge were not forthcoming with the substance they were hired to remove. He raised an alarm. Concerned persons and some security agents rushed to the scene.

A quick search let out a rather disturbing information. The two young men were no longer alive. They were alleged to have died after inhaling the substance in the barge. It was suspected to be toxic.

Hell was let loose. The police were invited and

the operator of the barge, Mr. T.E. Jowason and his manager, Mr. Bethel Otuemo, were arrested.

Already, *The Guardian* learnt that some forensic samples were collected from the barge at the weekend.

The samples, it was further learnt, were collected by a team of police detectives from Asaba assisted by some laboratory technicians made available by an oil firm.

This followed protests by the families of the deceased who insisted that the content be analysed to ascertain whether it was toxic or not.

It was, however, a pitiable sight when the bodies of the two young men were being removed from the belly of the barge.

Abuja cabs leasing firm to increase fleet

TO boast its service delivery in the new year, the Abuja Leasing Company (ALC), operators of the Abuja Green Cabs, is poised to increase its fleet with about 1,200 new cabs, the Managing Director/CEO of the company, Tunji Tolani, has disclosed.

In a statement made available to *The Guardian* in Abuja, at the weekend, Tolani said that the first batch of 200 cabs would be provided for the Abuja City in the first quarter of 2007, while the remaining is expected to be delivered before June, this year.

He said that the need to increase the number of vehicles operating in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) had been necessitated by the huge demand from the public.

He added that the Global Positioning

From Chria Garba, Abuja

Tracking System (GPTS) device being used by the ALC had proved very effective against the theft of the cabs.

He said the GPTS had assisted in tracking down cabs snatched at gunpoint, which when the incident took place, the cars were immediately demobilised from the operational headquarters in Abuja, which forced the robbers to abandon them.

Giving one example of the effectiveness of the GPTS device, Tolani revealed that on Saturday, December 23, 2006, at 10.00 p.m., one of the cabs was snatched at gunpoint at Maraba, a satellite town in Nasarawa State along the Abuja-Keffi highway. He said that as

soon as the driver of the cab reported the incident to the ALC Head in Abuja, the vehicle was tracked down to Karu, another satellite town in the FCT and dismobilised on the spot.

"The vehicle was subsequently switched off from our office premises at Tofa House, which forced the robbers to abandon the car. This system has proved very effective. Since the inception of the scheme about 18 months ago, none of its over 600 brand new vehicles has been stolen by men of the underworld," he said.

Tolani disclosed that the ALC had invested over N200 million in the tracking facility and enjoined Nigerians to take advantage of this opportunity being offered by ALC to secure the safety of their vehicles.

Seven die in Kaduna fire outbreak

ASOUR note was added to the *Eid-el-Kabir* festival in Kaduna State at the weekend as a family of seven perished in a fire outbreak at Tukur-Tukur, Zaria, Kaduna State.

The immediate cause of the inferno, which started around 2 a.m. on Saturday, is yet to be ascertained.

Witnesses told *The Guardian* that the family was trapped in the house when the fire broke out. It was not possible for anybody to rescue them from the building as the fire was accompanied by a heavy smoke.

The unfortunate incident happened while the head of the family, Alhaji Umar Ibrahim, a politician, was said to have travelled to Abuja with the hope of returning the following day.

A witness and a neighbour to the victims further narrated: "At the time the incident occurred, there were

From Saxone Akhaine, Kaduna

confusion in the area and we could not determine if the family head had returned from Abuja or not. But a lot of people were on the premises of the unfortunate incident. There was a thick smoke within the building and nobody could know where the entrance to the place was on time."

However, sympathisers were said to have alerted the branch office of the State Emergency Management Agency

(SEMA), which came to put out the fire.

The SEMA men came late as the victims who were trapped in the building were said to have been burnt beyond recognition by the time the fire was eventually put out.

The victims' names were given as Hajiya Dan Asabe (housewife), Naja'atu, Suleiman, Nusaiba, Umar, AbulAzeez and another unidentified person. All the victims were said to be the wife and children of Ibrahim.

APGA's factional

DISPLEASED with the lingering crisis between President Olusegun Obasanjo and his deputy, Atiku Abubakar, the factional secretary of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) Dr. Sani Shinkafi, said yesterday that the feud

portends grave danger to democracy.

Obasanjo and Atiku have been engrossed in altercations over alleged gross abuse of their offices and corruption.

Speaking on the row, Shinkafi described it as "a big threat to our