

Eight die, 19 injured in Borno inferno

MYSTERY fire in Sagir, a border community in Borno State, has claimed the lives of eight residents as 19 others sustained various degrees of burns when they attempted to put off the inferno.

Also, five persons were yesterday burnt to death in a motor accident involving two tankers, a Toyota Hilux pick-up van, a Sport Utility Vehicle and a motorcycle along the Benin-Auchi road in Edo State.

The Borno Fire Service and the police command are yet to ascertain the cause of the fire but the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) yesterday in Maiduguri, linked the incident to indiscriminate use of fire during the harmattan season.

To check such incidents, the state fire service has

• Six killed in Edo road accidents

From Njadvava Musa (Maiduguri) and Alemma-Ozioruva Aliu (Benin)

warned residents and petrol hawkers to desist from indiscriminate use of fire and storage of petroleum products in dangerous areas.

Chairman of Ngala Local Council, Alhaji Goni Sheriff, who confirmed the fire outbreak in the state capital yesterday, said he was away from the council headquarters last Tuesday when he received the report that Sagir had been razed by fire. He said eight people died from the fire outbreak while 19 others

sustained various degrees of burns.

Sheriff said 40 houses and livestock were also destroyed when the residents could not bring the fire under control. According to him, "the residents were left at the mercies of God, as they could not do anything to check the fire because the council has no fire-fighting vehicles." He added that the border community with Chad has no access roads.

Sheriff, who sympathised with the families of the victims, said five of the injured victims including three women, had been taken to the Umaru Shehu Hospital in Bulunkutu, Maiduguri, for treatment.

The remaining 14 victims, he added, were admitted at the Ngala General Hospital for treatment for burns.

The Sagir community leader, Mallam Isa Mai Modu, however, lamented the poor response of the Borno State Emergency Relief Agency (BSERA) to the fire disaster. He said it was five days after the incident that the agency brought little reprieve to the people.

Responding to Modu's allegation, the Director of Press Affairs of Government House,

Usman Chiroma, said: "It is very unfortunate and we sympathise with the people of Sagir. Yes, government could not intervene, because of logistical problems and inaccessibility of the area."

He, however, told *The Guardian* that from yesterday, the state government would begin the delivery of relief materials to the people.

On the Benin-Auchi road multiple accident, the Zonal Commander of the Federal Roads Safety Commission (FRSC), Zakari Nda, said the fatal crash occurred near the Monastery gate, Ewu in Edo Central.

He said three survivors sustained various degrees of injuries in the accident.

In another development, one life was lost on Sunday in an accident in Umunede, near Agbor along the Benin-Asaba Highway in Delta State.

The accident involved a Nissan Bus with registration number IM 139 A28 and a Peugeot 505 Station Wagon car marked GQ 552 KJA.

Of the 16 persons involved in the accident, Nda said nine of them were males while the remaining seven were females. He attributed the accident to tyre burst.

He said both the dead and the injured were taken to Kife Clinic and Maternity in Umunede.

NMEC chief, Olagunju, reports at EFCC

EXECUTIVE Secretary, National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non Formal Education (NMEC), Dr. Dayo Olagunju, yesterday reported at the Abuja office of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to make enquiries over the arrest at the weekend of 18 directors of the commission by operatives of

Commonwealth Education Ministers' Conference, aborted the trip when reports got to him that the EFCC had arrested the NMEC directors and carted away some office equipment, including computers, over allegation of contract award fraud in December 2008.

Olagunju, who was alleged to be on the run, had told *The Guardian* at the weekend that he did not receive