

# MOST WIDELY READ NEWSPAPER AMONG THE POLITICAL AND BUSINESS ELITE

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# 100 Die In Lagos Pipeline Fire

By Adeola Yusuf  
 CORRESPONDENT, Lagos

Lagos recorded another oil pipeline fire on Thursday, which took the lives of an additional 100 people, according to Red Cross account, including 18 primary school pupils.

The explosion occurred about 10.30 a.m. in Ijegan community, where about 15 homes and several business outlets were also razed.

About 100 pupils of Ijegan Community Primary School, Baptist Model High School, and Ijegan Community Sec-

## Court Orders Okoro To Investigate Obasanjo Over Odi, Zaki Ibiam Killings - A4

ondary School have been declared missing in the haze of the confusion that trailed the incident.

A teacher in the primary school, identified simply as Grace, could not hold back tears as she lamented: "If you are a parent, you will understand how I feel."

A police officer at the scene, Mobolaji Odesanya, declined to comment on the number of casualties, but an official of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCD), Stella Oladeye, disclosed that a great "number of lives, which we cannot even ascertain, were lost."

The account of the Red Cross on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) put the number of the dead at 100.

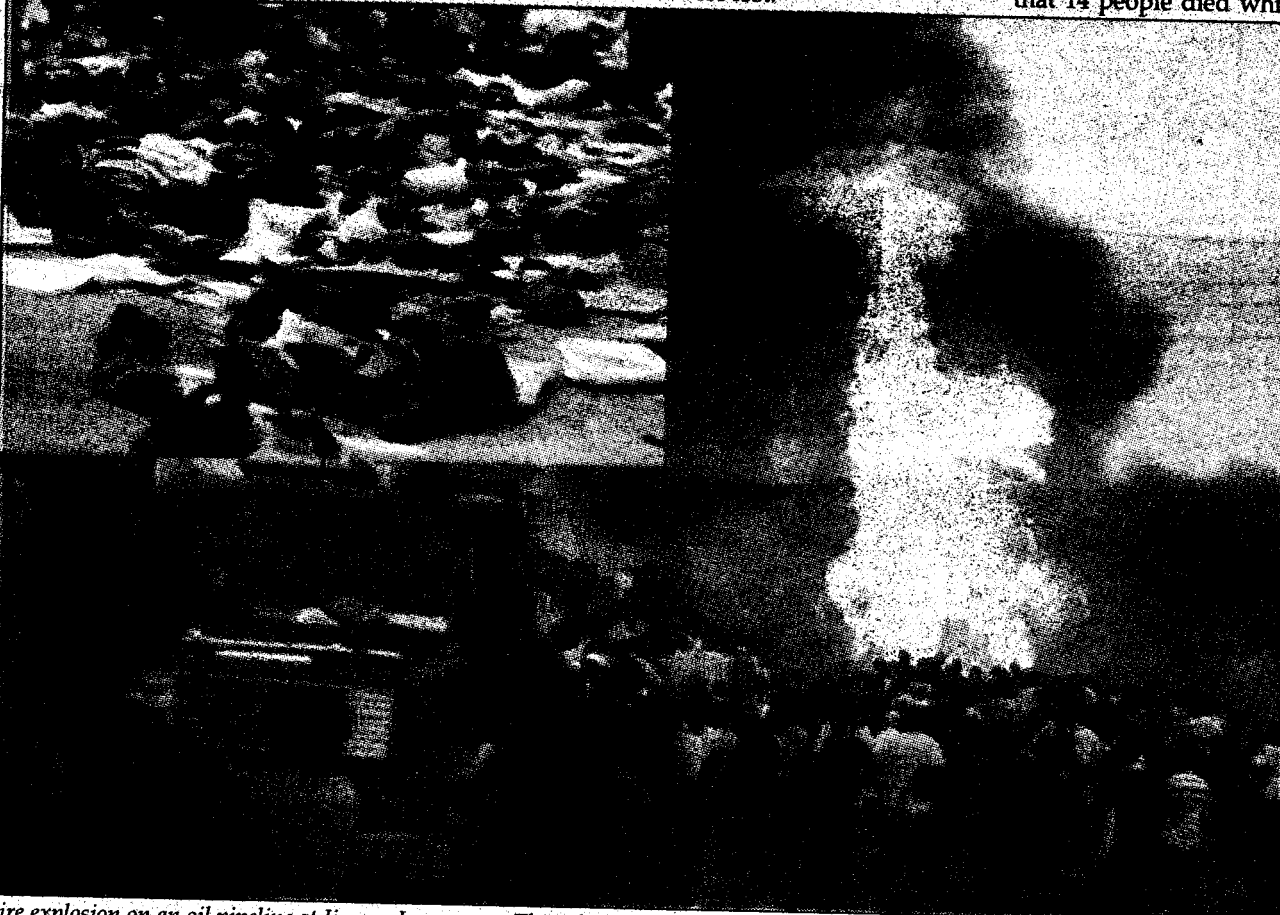
However, the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) confirmed on Thursday night that 14 people died while

six are in intensive care in hospitals.

An eyewitness recounted that the caterpillar of a construction firm working on the rehabilitation of the Ijegan-Pipeline-Isheri Road excavated the pipeline, resulting in the gushing out of fuel in the area the schools are located.

The driver of the caterpillar was himself burnt to death as the fuel caught fire. Residents and shop owners were trapped in the inferno. Some students died in the stampede that ensued.

*Continues on A2*



Fire explosion on an oil pipeline at Ijegan, Lagos ... on Thursday. Inset: Sandals of fleeing pupils of Ijegan Community Primary School  
 Photo: Kunle Ajayi

## NJI Administrator, Eight Others Sent On Compulsory Leave Over Unspent Funds

The Administrator of the National Judicial Institute (NJI), Justice Timothy Oyeyipo, and eight other management staff of the institute have been sent on compulsory leave, following the discovery of diversion of unspent funds running into millions of naira from the 2007 budget.

NEWS A9

## NNPC Probe: 'We'll Not Exempt Obasanjo From Appearing'

House of Representatives ad hoc committee investigating the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and its subsidiaries has said it will not exempt former President Olusegun Obasanjo and President Umaru Yar'Adua from appearing before it.

NEWS A4

## Channel N80b For Rice Importation To Local Production - Okonkwo

Today, a bag of rice in Cotonou is sold for N6,000. Why should it be selling for N12,000 in Nigeria? Why can't it be for the same N6,000? Why can't they even come to Nigeria to buy? It is because of certain charges that the people continue putting on Nigeria which makes the rice very expensive.

POLITICS B1

## Concerning The Ambassadors Stranded In Abuja

EDITORIAL

B2

## Transcorp Alleges Fraud At NITEL

Transcorp, 51 per cent owners of NITEL, confirmed on Thursday, that its team of accountants, which has been poring the accounts of the first national telephone network operator has discovered what it refers to as a major fraud.

BUSINESS C1

## Recalling Mikel Could Be Counterproductive - Lulu

Hope of Super Eagles and Chelsea

## N300m Graft: Yar'Adua Stops Freebies For NASS, Ministers

By Oluyinka Akintunde  
 ASST BUSINESS EDITOR, Abuja

President Umaru Yar'Adua has directed that no ministry, department and agency (MDA) should provide financial support for the National Assembly or its committees for oversight functions.

He also directed all Chief Executives of establishments to stop providing any form of financial assistance to Ministers and ministries.

The directives are contained in

*Continues on A2*

## Senate Summons Anenih, George, Yuguda, Agagu, Over N1.3tr Transport Budget

By Adetutu Folasade-Kovi

# 100 Die In Lagos Pipeline Fire

*Continued from A1*

Senior Secondary School Three (SSS III) students writing their Agricultural Science paper in the West Africa School Certificate Examination (WASCE) and their supervisors left the hall and fled for safety. Some received injuries.

By 5 p.m., 10 fire engines of the Lagos State Emergency and Fire Services had run out of water trying to put out the inferno.

Hannah Udoh, a resident of Ijegan, confirmed that many of her neighbours have fled, because "nobody wants to risk his or her life."

Oladeye said most of the students died trying to escape to safe points, while others fainted or received injuries when the fence of their school collapsed as they tried to scale it.

Some survivors were taken to the General Hospital, Isolo and Igando. Others took refuge at the palace of the Oba of Ijegan to wait for their parents.

Ijegan is notorious for such pipeline fire, which always cost lives.

A separate pipeline explosion near Victoria Island last year also resulted in the death of several people.

The Lagos State Government on Thursday expressed sympathy to the bereaved families through Home Affairs Commissioner, Tunde Balogun, who spoke alongside Governor Babatunde Fashola's Information Adviser, Segun Ayobolu.

A statement issued by Fashola's Media Assistant, Hakeem Bello, quoted

Balogun as saying that "all hands are still on deck as the fire is still raging and may take some more hours before it is finally put out considering the fact that petrochemical fire may not be easy to put out."

Speaking on telephone later, Bello said the affected families have been moved to a relief camp set up by the local government headquarters on the directive of Fashola.

Information and Strategy Adviser, Segun Ayobolu, said emergency services officials have formed a protective foam against the spread of the fire.

The LASEMA and the Lagos State Ambulance Services (LASAMBUS) are treating those with minor

injuries.

Those with major injuries have been transferred to hospitals.

Fire fighting trucks from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and Julius Berger have also joined the effort to put out the fire.

Ayobolu said the government sympathises with the victims, and would do everything to minimise the damage.

Bello appealed to the public to be calm, and to refrain from reacting to the accident in any way that could lead to an escalation of the casualty figures.

He urged residents and on-lookers not to block the road to prevent rescue agencies from reaching the victims.

## Yar'Adua Appoints Farida Waziri EFCC Chairman