

LAGOS PIPELINE FIRE

OLUSEGUN ABISOYE;
MAURICE IHE
LAGOS

Two Dead, 12 Injured, 31 Vehicles Razed

Two men, 31 vehicles, houses and property worth millions of naira were on Thursday burnt at Ijegun, in the Igan-do/Ikofun Local Council Development Area of Lagos State following an early morning pipeline explosion in the Lagos suburb allegedly caused by vandals. Over 12 persons sustained injuries.

Despite the efforts of fire fight-

CONTINUES ON P10

- Baru Blames It On Vandals, Orders Immediate Repairs
- One Dead, Another Injured As Tanker Explodes In Kano

Minority

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CONTINUED FROM P1

ers who responded promptly, the fire, which started about 1:20a.m. raged for about 17 hours.

It would be recalled that a similar inferno happened in April 2008 where several school children, men, women, houses and property worth millions of naira were lost.

According to dependable sources close to the area, the pipeline exploded as soon as some vandals tried to escape with a tanker which they used for the theft of petroleum products from the petroleum products pipeline.

Residents living several kilometres away from the fire point at the Isheri community and Kudeyibu Estate scampered from their homes in panic as the flames escalated and spread close to a gas station in the area.

Security personnel from various agencies collaborated to control the large crowd that fled from their homes to escape from the unfortunate incident.

The fire affected parts of Ijegan Community Primary and High Schools, the Catholic Church fence, and several other buildings.

Witnesses said that firemen from the Lagos State Fire Service arrived early about 4:00a.m and had reinforcements from other stations in the metropolis, as well as emergency personnel from the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation.

According to Shola, a commercial bus driver, who parked his vehicle adjacent the scene of the fire, he does not know what next to do.

Lamenting his loss, he said about 4:30a.m this morning, a neighbour had knocked on

his door and informed him that there was fire incident at the Fire Junction. When he got to the scene, he found his 14-seater bus had been burnt beyond recognition.

"I bought this bus from a friend who is based in Europe on hire purchase and I have just paid him N800,000 of the N3.5 million we agreed.

"I don't even know what next to do as this is my only means of livelihood for me, my wife and five children," he said shaking his head.

While opening the charred remains of the boot, he said he had just bought a new engine but thanked God it was not yet fixed when the fire began.

According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the pipeline incident was caused by vandals.

Ibrahim Farinloye, South-West Coordinator of NEMA, said on telephone that NEMA alerted the management of the NNPC on the early morning incident and fire outbreak.

Farinloye said that NEMA also called on the Safety Unit of the NNPC to immediately shut down further supplies through the pipeline in order to suffocate the fire.

According to NEMA, the fire was successfully quenched with the assistance of specially-trained safety firemen after 17 hours of tedious services.

According to Farinloye, he had sent the details that two died and taken to the mortuary, 12 injured, four were rescued and taken to Lagos State University Teaching Hospital.

He noted that eight persons with minor burns were taken to Gbagada Hospital.

He, however, mentioned that 31 vehicles were burnt



Emeka Ihedioha, Governor, Imo State (left), receiving a letter of congratulation from Bashir Idris Shehu, Emir of Zauzau (middle), while a guest looks on during the Emir's visit to the governor in Owerri, Imo State on Thursday.

by the fire.

The traditional ruler of Ijegan, Oba Nureni Akinremi, told newsmen that despite several efforts to orientate some miscreants in the community against pipeline vandalism, some have failed to become law abiding.

"I have made several efforts to speak with my people through my chiefs and community leaders, yet, some people have remained adamant.

"We really need to keep the security agents on regular surveillance in this area because it was the same area that was affected in a similar incident some 11 years ago," he said.

Baru Blames It On Vandals, Orders Immediate Repairs

Meanwhile, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corpora-

tion (NNPC) has directed its team of engineers to immediately investigate and commence repairs of the burnt pipeline allegedly caused by vandals.

Ndu Ughamadu, Group General Manager, Public Affairs of NNPC, said on telephone in Abuja that the explosion was caused by vandals and the Group Managing Director, Dr. Maikanti Baru, has directed the corporation's team of engineers to resume at the fire scene and redress the situation.

According to Ughamadu, "The fire was ignited when some vandals were scooping fuel from the pipeline.

"We urge everybody within the community to remain calm as the situation is under control. Our team of engineers has resumed at the site to bring the situation under

control."

One Dead, Another Injured As Tanker Explodes In Kano

In a similar development, one person has been confirmed dead while another sustained injury when a tanker filled with gasoline (diesel) exploded at Rano road in Bunkure, Bunkure Local Government Area of Kano State.

The spokesman for Kano State Fire Service, Alhaji Saidu Mohammed, told newsmen in Kano that the accident occurred about 8:52a.m on Thursday.

"We received a distress call from one Malam Mohammed at about 08:52a.m that there was a tanker that was gutted by fire on Rano road.

"On receiving the information, we quickly dispatched our personnel and vehicle

to the scene of the incident about 09:10a.m to rescue the victims," Mohammed said.

He said that the tanker's number plate could not be completely identified due to the fire.

Mohammed attributed the accident to speed limit violation which, he said, resulted in loss of control by the driver.

He said two people were involved out of whom one had died while the other sustained injury adding that the victims had been handed over to officials of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC).

Mohammed gave the names of the victims as Malam Danladi, 45, and Abubakar Ya'u, 35.

He appealed to motorists to always obey traffic regulations so as to stay alive and minimise accidents on the road.