

Fire guts hostel, kills two

AN inferno that broke out in the dormitory of Mercy High School, Eleme, Rivers State in the early hours of Sunday has killed two female students of the school and left 25 others critically injured 25 with various degrees of burns.

The fire was said to have started from a lantern filled with adulterated kerosine belonging to one of the dead students who was attempting to turn on the lamp for morning devotion. She and her mate were to become the first casualty, when the lantern exploded.

The fire also gutted down one of the 12-bed double bunk hostels and destroyed property worth millions of naira, including text books, money, boxes, shoes, mattresses and other items.

Eyewitnesses said that in the ensuing stampede, the fire spread rapidly through the dormitory unchecked, burning the bedding and clothes of the students, who ran in various directions.

Rivers

From Clarice Azuatalam, Port harcourt

The Divisional Police Officer at Eleme, Aliyu Garuba (CSP), confirmed that the quick response of his men to a distress call from members of the public saved what would have been a major human disaster even as many students were severely burnt.

The state's emergency health services were on hand to assist in putting out the fire as well as conveying both the dead and the critically injured out of the community, to both University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital and Teme Clinic, all in Port Harcourt.

Commenting on the incident, the Paramount Ruler of Alet Community, Eleme, HRH Philip Osaro Obel, said it was "rather unfortunate and painful considering that it happened to young people who were in search of education to better their lots and contribute their quota to nation building."