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The remains of the houses ...at the weekend

IT was all tears last Sunday in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital when an expectant mother, her child and another baby died in a fire, reports ISAAC OMBE in Yenogoa

THREE persons including an expectant mother, her four- year old child and another little baby died last Sunday night in a fire that gutted houses and stores in Onopa, Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital.

The late expectant mother, Mrs Benita Olotu, and her son Paul, sources said had just returned from a funeral when the incident occurred. Mrs Olotu was tired and immediately retired to her room on arrival.

The fire engulfed her home when she was asleep.

The fire, which started about 6pm, lasted for over five hours.

Eye witnesses said it occurred when a dealer in adulterated fuel was re- fuelling a generator that was still running.

There was a spark which resulted in a fire.

As the fire engulfed the apartment of the dealer it spread to other houses.

No fewer than 50 thatched houses and stores were affected.

Store owners had a hectic time as they battled to rescue their wares. Though some were able to salvage few items, others were unlucky.

The Police, members of the Joint Military Task Force (JTF) tried to put out the fire, but to no avail.

The fire fighters , who arrived at the scene while the fire was raging were helpless. There was no water to fight the fire. However, the fire fighters disappeared only to return without much water.

When the little water was exhausted, they watched helplessly as the fire spread.

Eye witnesses, who were angered by their actions almost pounced on them but for the soldiers. The policemen also encouraged the victims to go to the station to register their losses

Governor Timipre Sylva, who expressed shock promised to compensate the families.

Sylva, who ordered that the list of those affected should be compiled and sent to him warned against including fake members.

He also attributed the cause of the inferno on non-adherence to planning regulations.

“If we adhere to planning regulations, these things could be avoided,” noted Sylva, adding: “as a government, we will give some assistance in more sustainable ways.”He said government would acquire this place (the land).

Earlier, one of the landlords told Sylva that over 50 families had lived on the land and they were mostly policemen.

A woman who had reportedly kept over N200, 000 at home wailed uncontrollably. The money was burnt to ashes.

“If I had known I would have kept the money in the bank”, she said.



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