

Expectant mother, four others electrocuted in Ibadan

•One-year-old baby rescued

FIVE women, including an expectant mother, were yesterday electrocuted in Agbekoja Market, Apata, Ibadan South West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

The traders were transacting businesses at the vegetable section of the farmers' market when a high-tension wire suddenly fell on them, killing the five women.

A one-year-old baby boy was, however, rescued alive from the back of his dead mother.

The Chairman of the local government, Taofeek Adeleke, has declared a three-day mourning and ordered the market shut to prevent a breakdown of law and order.

The ever busy market was empty yesterday. Members of the community and the traders were protesting the alleged insensitive attitude of Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) workers to their complaints.

At the Garden of Eden Hospital, Apata, where the victims were treated, the Chief Medical Director (CMD), Dr. David Olayiwola, confirmed the death of the five women. He said another patient was treated for minor shock and discharged.

The Divisional Police Of-

From Oseheye Okwuofu,
Ibadan

ficer (DPO) in charge of Apata Police Station, Mr Agboola Abiodun, urged protesters to avoid breaching public peace.

Alhaji Rafiu Raji, who is the Chairman of Apata Market Traders' Association, said: "I was praying in the mosque at about 5.30am when we heard an unusual noise.

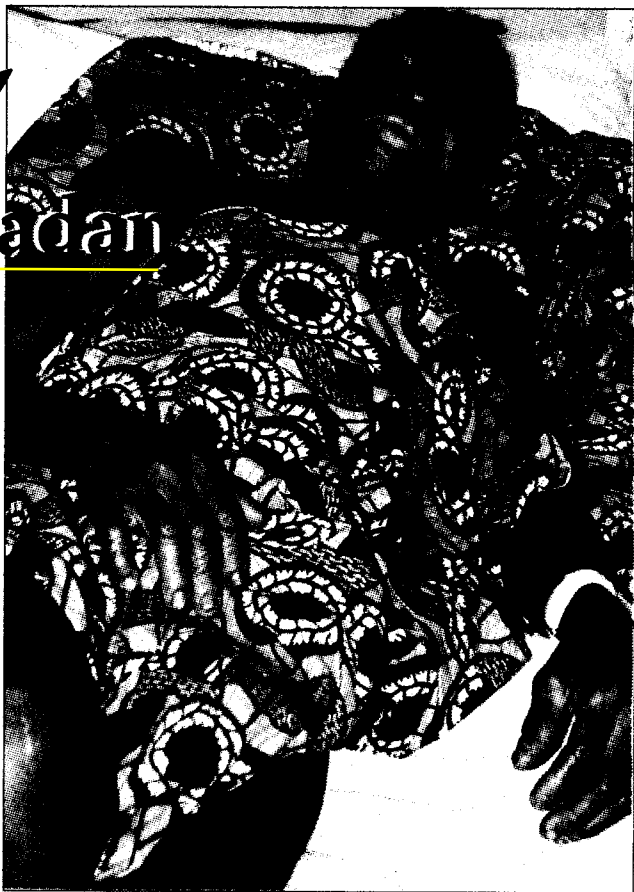
"When we rushed out to find out what was wrong, we were shocked to see five electrocuted bodies. We were informed that two others had been rushed to a nearby hospital."

He described the incident as a shock.

One of the rescuers and a commercial motorcycle rider, who gave his name as Adewale, said: "When we got here, we found the live wire on one of the women and felt the need to save her as she was struggling. We used a piece of dry wood to remove the wire and rushed her to a hospital with four others."

The traders alleged that they had lodged several complaints at the Apata Business Unit of PHCN on the weak cables in the market. They said the electricity company did not respond to their complaints.

In a statement by the Principal Manager, Public Affairs of



•Mrs Afusat Abiade on hospital bed...yesterday

PHOTO: FEMI ILESANMI

the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company of PHCN, Mr Jide Oyenuga, the company expressed regret over the incident.

The statement reads: "The accident, according to information available to us, involved loss of lives (five persons confirmed dead).

"While the company sympathises with the government and people of Oyo State on the loss of lives, we once again remind the public of the Town and Regional Planning Law, which stipulates that the mandatory distance of 5.5metres, 15.5metres, and 25metres

must be observed as setbacks in relation to low tension, 11KV and 33KVA lines, to avoid any form of accident in the event of line failures.

"The public should bear in mind that these electric materials are persistently exposed to 'mother nature' which makes them vulnerable to wear and tear. An accident can happen without notice within technical limitations."

A youth leader, Wahab Bamidele (aka Wabo), led other youths on a rescue mission.

Police spokeswoman Olabisi Ilobanafor confirmed the incident.