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38 die in Rivers after consuming local gin

Posted by: Rosemary NWISI | In Featured, News | 2 days ago

No fewer than 38 persons have died in Rivers State after consuming locally made gin.

The tragic incident occurred barely two months after a similar one in Ode-Irele, Ondo State, where 18 people died in April after consuming locally made gin.

The Permanent Secretary of Rivers State Ministry of Health, Dr. Somieari Isaac-Harry, confirmed the incident in a chat with newsmen in Port Harcourt, the state capital, yesterday.

Isaac-Harry said 42 cases had so far been recorded. Of the number, he said, 29 are males and nine females while four others survived.

He said the victims died as a result of the presence of methanol in their drink. (The Permanent Secretary urged members of the public to remain calm and desist from further consumption of the substance, pending the tracing and removal of the contaminated products from circulation.) He said the ministry's surveillance team is already in communities and villages across the state to educate and sensitize dwellers on the need to stop further intake of alcohol until the bad batch was stopped from circulation. (He said the state governor, Nyeso Wike, was deeply pained by the tragic development, and appealed for the cooperation of members of the public to rid the state of the product.) Isaac-Harry said: "We had a call on June 3 from Woji town in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of the state on the sudden death of some people who ate dog meat and drank local gin.

"However, what really caused the death of those who consumed the illicit gin was methanol alcohol and not the dog meat. ("The victims presented symptoms like abdominal pain, vomiting, sudden blindness, speechlessness, fast breathing and confusion.) "Despite rushing many of them to hospitals, we still recorded a lot of mortalities.

"Eleven cases were recorded in Woji, 10 died, including a woman, while one survived.

"In Bonny LGA, 18 cases were recorded, 17 died, including 11 males and six females, while one survived.

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M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					
« May						

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Archive 1 (2006-2008)

Archive 2 (articles before June 22nd 2010)

Archive 3 (articles before April 16 2011)

Archive 4 (articles between April 2011 and September 20, 2012)

"In Gokana LGA in Ogoniland, 13 persons were affected, 11, including two women, died, while two survived." ("The mortality rate is very high and we wish that we tell our people to stop taking this illicit alcohol. It is not the right type we were taking before. This is an industrial alcohol that is highly poisonous to the body.") "The governor is very angry that this level of mortality could be recorded in the first week of his administration

"Meanwhile, our surveillance teams are in the 23 LGAs educating and sensitising people to stop intake of alcohol, at least for now." (The news had broken on Sunday evening of some residents of Woji in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of the state, who died after feasting on dog meat delicacy at their usual joint in the area.) It was later said that those who died of the dog meat also drank Kaikai. It is difficult to ascertain the actual cause of the deaths, following the Ondo State saga. (The mysterious death later spread to Bonny Island. In Bonny and Gokana LGAs, all the deaths were linked to kaikai consumption while the victims reportedly presented the same symptoms of abdominal pain, vomiting, sudden blindness, speechlessness, among others.) He called on traditional rulers, youths and women leaders in communities to talk to their members to stop taking the chemical substance until the bad/contaminated ones were traced and removed from circulation.

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