

4 feared dead, over N30bn lost as fire razes Balogun, Okobaba markets, Igando hospital

CHUKWUMA OKPARAOCHA AND
OLUMUYIWA OLABULO-LAGOS

THE fire incident that occurred in Okobaba in Ebute-Meta area of Lagos, on Sunday night, was said to have claimed the lives of three young children and an old man.

The cause of the fire was as a result of a candle light which one of the residents forgot to put out in her room before she headed for the bathroom.

Residents of the plank market, on Monday, therefore, sent a save our soul message to the Lagos State government to come to their aid.

In a related development, traders at the ever busy Balogun Market on Lagos Island have been counting their losses, as scores of shops were razed in the early hours of Monday after fire gut six buildings in the market.

The cause of the inferno, which was said to have started at about 4:00 a.m., remained unknown as at the time of filing this report.

Some of the traders who spoke with newsmen claimed that goods lost to the inferno was over N30 billion, explaining that containers containing the goods had just arrived while they have barely completed offloading when the fire started.

"This is not a good way to start the New Year," many of them remarked.

The affected buildings comprised three three-storey buildings; two five-storey buildings and a four-storey building, which had shops where various items, such as assorted clothing materials, shoes, electronics and other things were sold.

Mr Rasaq Ekunsumi, the secretary of the Balogun Community in Central Lagos, said the fire started from one of the containers attached to a five-storey building.

Officials of the federal and state fire services, Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA); National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA); Civil Defence Corps, police; Lagos State Building Control Agency, (LASBCA), and Julius Berger officials could be seen in desperate attempts to put out the fire.

Speaking to the media, the director, Lagos State Fire Service, Rasak Fadipe, confirmed that the fire started around 4.00 p.m. and that six buildings were involved.

He added that about six

fire tankers were promptly deployed to fight the fire.

He said he could not ascertain what led to the inferno, but complained that the presence of large crowd was affecting the fire fighters operation, noting that the fire had affected several shops in the buildings.

Fadipe said fire trucks from Sari Iganmu, Isolo, Ilupeju and Alausa were among those that helped to put out the fire.

In his remarks, the General Manager, LASEMA, Dr

Femi Oke-Osanyintolu, who corroborated Fadipe's report, claimed that the damage caused by the fire was "unquantifiable and serious."

Officials of the police and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) were observed to be having a hectic time cordoning off the area, to prevent the crowd from obstructing fire fighting exercise.

In a similar development, patients at the Igando General Hospital scammed

to safety between Sunday night and Monday mid-day, as fire ravaged the government hospital in Alimosho Local Government Area of the state, destroying many buildings and equipment at the hospital.

Nigerian Tribune gathered that the general hospital fire started from a compound from an adjoining street and spread to the back of the hospital and other parts of the buildings.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian Council of Registered

Insurance Brokers (NCRIB) has commiserated with victims of recent fire disasters in Iron Rod Market, Agodi in Ibadan and Balogun market in Lagos.

President of the council, Mr Ayodapo Shoderu, lamented the continuous losses of merchandise and properties in many commodity markets in the country to fire disasters, noting that such losses could be better prevented and mitigated if the victims had embraced insurance.



Scene of a fire incident at Balogun Market, Lagos Island, on Monday. PHOTO: SYLVESTER OKORUWA

Police avert explosion at APC/INEC secretariat As PDP condemns bombing of APC office

DAPOFALADE-PORTHARCOURT

THE Ebonyi State police command, on Monday, foiled an attempt to bomb the secretariat of All Progressives Congress (APC) in Abakaliki, and the office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), as the suspected explosive device failed to explode.

A source, who doubles as

an aide to the APC governorship candidate in the state, Mr John Ekeh, confided in Nigerian Tribune, on condition of anonymity, alleging that the plot was masterminded by some suspected agents of some political parties in the state.

According to Eke, "we heard a loud sound inside the premises when the suspected terrorists threw in the (IED) through the

fence, with the intention to bomb the office, but unfortunately, the explosive could not catch up with the petrol that accompanied it."

Reacting to the incident, the All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship candidate, Senator Julius Ucha expressed concern over increasing plots by some political parties in the state to cause violence and loss of lives and prop-

erty and described the failed attempt to bomb his campaign office as one of the negative signs of what some political parties are planning to do in the state during and after the election.

Confirming the failed attack, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Chris Anyanwu, said some mischief makers, at the weekend, prepared an incendiary device in form of Improvised Explosive Device, IED and hauled it into some targeted premises, adding that such device was hauled into the premises of the APC/INEC.

Meanwhile, Rivers State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has condemned the bombing, on Sunday, of the secretariat of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Okrika Local Government Area.

The state PDP chairman, Mr Felix Obuah, said he received the news of the destruction of the three-storey building with sadness and called on the security agencies to ensure perpetrators of the act were brought to book.

Ogun govt promises to take over abandoned FG housing project

OLAYINKA OLUKOYA-ABEOKUTA

THE governor of Ogun state, Senator Ibikunle Amosun, has promised his administration's determination to address the issue of housing deficit in the state.

He intends doing this by completing the abandoned housing project of the Federal Government at Obada-Oko in Ewekoro Local Government Area of the state.

The project, which was constructed under the administration of former president Shehu Shagari in 1979, had long since been aban-

doned without any move by successive governments to continue it.

Amosun said the project would be completed through a mortgage scheme that will address the issue of security threat, which the abandoned project had continued to pose to the immediate community, following alleged occupancy of the houses by illegal occupants.

He said this during the continuation of his campaign for second term in office at Owowo on Monday, adding that the possible take-over of the FG housing project

would further afford the people the opportunity to own houses in the state and to shore up the state economic base.

He said, "We must find a way of developing the FG abandoned housing project here at Obada Oko; we know that it was initiated by the FG then after the state government had allocated it, but the state of the housing estate today is an eye-sore. We are now negotiating with the Federal Government for a possible take-over of the abandoned housing project."

Delta PDP kicks off campaign

ALPHONSUS AGBORH-ASABA

THE Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), in Delta State, will kick off campaigns for the 2015 general election, today, with the presentation of flags to its standard-bearers in gubernatorial, House of Representatives and House of Assembly elections.

The ceremony will hold at Oghara Township Stadium in Ethiope West Local Government Area of the state. Senator Ifeanyi Arthur Okowa, the party's gubernatorial candidate, will lead the cast during which three senatorial candidates, 10 House of Representatives aspirants and 29 state House of Assembly standard-bearers will be presented with flags.

Today's rally marks the beginning of a state-wide campaign programme that will take the train to all the 25 local government headquarters in the state.

According to the campaign rally itinerary, issued by the media and publicity committee of the PDP Campaign Organisation in Delta State, the rally will be rounded off on February 4 with a grand finale and national rally in Asaba, the state capital.

Ekiti PDP chief mobilises support for Jonathan/Sambo

SAM NWAOKO-ADO EKITI

A Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chieftain and community leader in Ekiti State, Chief Dele Okeya, has hosted leaders and members of the party in the state and particularly, in his Emure Local Government Area, to an annual get-together.

He used the occasion to canvass for further support for the candidature of President Goodluck Jonathan in next month's election.

Chief Okeya said the president deserved a second term in office "so that he will be able to see to the conclusion of the numerous transformation programmes he had embarked upon in the various sectors of the Nigerian economy."

According to the former Ekiti state Commissioner for Works, President Jonathan had laid the foundation for a better Nigeria, saying "Nigerians must support him to accelerate and concretise in the coming years by giving him another four-year mandate."