

# Relations wail as gas explosion kills five, injures 13, destroys 25 cars in Lagos

•Victim's sister: 'God, why? My brother had 4 kids, small small boys; God, why?'

Dayo Ayeyemi | Lagos

**F**RESH findings on Friday showed how five persons were burnt to death in a gas tanker explosion that rocked the Ogun State Property Investment Corporation (OPIC) Plaza on Mobolaji Bank Anthony Way, Lagos.

Prominent among the dead reportedly was a top official of the Association of Town Planning Consultants of Nigeria (ATOPCON).

The gas tanker explosion, which occurred late Thursday, also damaged the ground floor of OPIC Plaza that houses a Chinese restaurant and left 13 persons with varying degrees of burns.

Video of a sister of one of the victims went viral with her, amid tears, saying: "Why? Why? Help me to wake my brother up o. Help me to wake him up. The boy had four children — small, small boys. We don't have parents; we are orphans. Oh God! Why?"

One of the dead is also said to be an indigene of Ife North Local Government Area of Osun State who was unfortunate to be driving along that area when the tragedy struck.

A relative of the deceased told *Saturday Tribune* that "he struggled to get out of the vehicle but was badly

burnt." He reportedly died in the hospital.

A source at the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) told *Saturday Tribune* that the ATOPCON top official had his office in the plaza but had gone to eat at the Chinese restaurant when the explosion occurred.

Another source confirmed that the official died in the explosion.

Twenty-five vehicles parked on the premises were also burnt.

The injured persons were taken to the nearest hospitals for treatment.

Explaining how the tragedy happened, the Director General of the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Dr Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu, said that pressurized gas that escaped from the fully loaded gas tanker discharged into the atmosphere and spread in all directions, especially to that of OPIC, where it ignited and devastated an eatery housed in the building's ground floor.

The resultant fire, according to him, led to the blowback that razed 22 of the vehicles parked within the OPIC premises, beside Opebi Sheraton Hotels and Towers, trapping its occupants and leaving the OPIC plaza extensively

damaged.

He said LASEMA, in an overnight operation, concluded a recovery operation that commenced when the gas tanker exploded on Thursday night.

"LASEMA and its collaborators successfully extinguished the resultant fire from the gas tanker which broke out at Maryland at the front of Sheraton Hotels and Towers when a loaded gas tanker with unknown registration exploded on motion while traveling inwards Ikeja," he said.

However, Oke-Osanyintolu said the agency's paramedics administered pre-hospital treatment to numerous victims that sustained varying degrees of burns before they were taken to the Gbagada Burns Unit, LASUTH and General Hospitals nearest to the scene for further treatment.

"The agency's heavy-duty equipment, Goliath-the-giant forklift and a flat-body truck were deployed to recover carcass of the burnt gas tanker, while dampening down operation continued for hours after," the LASEMA boss added.

LASEMA's spokesman, Nosa Okunbor, said the extinguishment of the fire, through the collaboration of the agency's response

teams, fire unit, the Lagos State Fire and Safety Service and the Nigeria Police, was coordinated by the LASEMA boss.

The affected OPIC Plaza building has been cordoned off.

Lagos State's Commissioner for Special Duties, Mr Martins Bamigboye, who led other state officials to the scene, explained that the incident occurred as a result of the truck's breakdown with leaking cylinder whose gas spread to the generator house and gas cylinder of the Chinese restaurant, resulting in a spark.

## 2 One abducted freed,

SOLDIERS operating under the auspices of Operation Hadarin Daji have rescued some of the students and teachers of the Federal Government College, Birnin Yawuri in Kebbi State who were abducted on Thursday.

The state governor, Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, disclosed this on Friday night, according to a breaking news aired by Channels TV.

He praised security agents for their efforts which led to the rescue.

Earlier, a statement by the