

•L-R: Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babatunde Fashola (SAN); Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Mr. Tokunbo Afikuyomi; and Benue State Governor, Mr. Gabriel Suswan, during a courtesy call on Fashola at Alausa...on Monday.

Mother, three children, among latest victims of kerosene explosions

Sola Adebayo, Warri

•DPR orders probe of incident

A 44-year-old woman, Mrs. Beauty Israel, and her three male children were among the latest victims of the serial kerosene explosions in Delta State.

Beauty and her children, Ochuko-12years, Oghenegha-10years and Oghewegba-seven years, died at Warri Central Hospital on Monday morning as death toll resulting from the 'killer' kerosene in Warri, Effurum, Ughelli and other parts of the state rose to 21.

Beauty and her children were rushed to the hospital on Saturday from their Okwuokoko residence in Ughelli North Local Government Area of the state.

Family sources informed our correspondent at the hospital on Monday that a devastating explosion heralded Beauty's attempt to lit the stove after she refilled her stove with kerosene.

Medical officers battled to save their lives until they passed on in quick succession on Monday morning.

Their remains have been deposited with those of other victims in the morgue of the hospital.

Grief enveloped the hospital on Monday as more victims on admission were reported dead.

A 41-year old woman, Mrs. Stella Maweremi, who was admitted in company with her three children on Friday, also died on Monday morning.

Her children, who were in critical conditions were quickly withdrawn for better medical attention elsewhere by her bereaved brother, Mr. Chris Ekpekurede.

A devastated Ekpekurede said the death of his sister was traumatising, adding that he

was desperate to seek help elsewhere to save the lives of the children.

Meanwhile, the Director of the Department of Petroleum Resources, Mr. Tony Chukwueke, has ordered a probe into the sources of the adulterated kerosene.

Similarly, the management of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, on Monday, vowed to uncover the source of the 'killer' petroleum product.

Chukwueke also directed that the cause of the explosions be ascertained to forestall any future occurrence of the tragic incident.

Specifically, he directed the Operations Comptroller in charge of Warri Zone, Dr. Henry Oke, to handle the assignment.

Consequently, a team from the DPR visited the Warri Central Hospital on Monday and obtained statements from the victims.

The team, led by the Principal Technical Inspection Officer, DPR, Mr. Simeon Abbey, was accompanied to the various wards by the hospital's Medical Director, Dr. Francis Omatsola, and the Chief Consultant Surgeon, Dr. Christopher Oside.

It was learnt that the team also visited some retail outlets and Otujeremi, headquarters of Ughelli South Local Government Area, to obtain samples for analysis.

Oke, in a telephone interview with our correspondent, said Chukwueke ordered a total investigation into the incident.

He, however, said the preliminary investigation by the DPR revealed that the victims purchased the kerosene from unauthorised sources, particularly from hawkers.

To this end, Oke advised members of the public to henceforth stop the purchase of pe-

troleum products from illegal sources.

He also advised that a stove should not be refilled with kerosene when the light is on.

The NNPC has also described the incident as a sad development.

The corporation's Group General Manager, Public Affairs Division, Mr. Levi Ajuonuma, in a telephone interview with our correspondent, said it was unfortunate that many lives were lost in the incident.

It will be recalled that a serial kerosene explosions started in Delta State on Thursday with 10 deaths recorded at various hospitals, especially at Warri Central Hospital and Ughelli General Hospital as at Sunday night.

A total of 29 victims were on admission at Warri Central Hospital as at press time on Monday evening as more persons were being rushed to the hospital.

Olubadan bars Adedibu, 12 others from

Akin Oyedele, Ibadan

THE Olubadan of Ibadanland, Oba Samuel Odulana, has barred Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu, Senator Lekan Balogun and Chief Adisa Akinloye from partisan politics.

They are among the 13 traditional high chiefs constituting the Olubadan in-council who are affected by the new directive of the monarch.

A statement by the Chief Press Secretary to the new monarch, Prince Oyedotun Oloyede, has conveyed the decision of the monarch to

the affected high chiefs.

Olubadan said the step was in line with the traditional ordinance and conventional regulation of Ibadanland which forbade members of the Olubadan in-council from partisan politics.

He threatened to sanction any errant chief who might flout the directive.

Adedibu currently holds the title of Ekerin Olubadan, while the former national chairman of the defunct National Party of Nigeria, Akinloye, is the Seriki.

The monarch had earlier frowned on the July 6 promotion of chiefs a few hours

before the death of the late Olubadan, Oba Yunusa Ogundipe, which catapulted Adedibu to his new position.

Odulana had told journalists that certain ordinances guiding such promotion were breached, thereby making a review inevitable.

As the former Otun Olubadan, who was next to the late monarch from the civil chieftaincy line, he said he was sidelined when the promotion was held.

The titles that would come under review are those of the Balogun, Otun-Balogun, Osi-Balogun, Ekerin, Ashipa Balogun, Ekarun-Balogun