

Government reportedly disbursed about N7.9bn to 25 companies from the National Automotive Fund. The money was for the production of vehicles, motorcycles and bicycle tyres and accessories. An additional N3bn was earmarked for disbursement

political zones, while N83bn out of the N300bn for the power and aviation sectors had also been disbursed to companies in these sectors.

As part of Federal Government's intervention in education in 2012, it approved N95.653bn for

implementation of NIRSAL, CBN, Mr. Jude Uzonwanne, reportedly said N45bn from the N75bn had been set aside as loans to the farmers, while the balance would be used to train and insure them.

Irked by the situation in which government's interventions have had

above 50 per cent capacity utilisation.

Apart from inability of stakeholders to access the government's intervention funds, there have been discrepancies in the administration of the funds.

While some of the funds have been diverted to other uses, parts of the funds can no longer be accounted for.

The Senate Committee on Public Accounts, last year, raised the alarm over a missing N44bn from the Federal Government's Special Intervention Fund on Solid Minerals.

The committee discovered the missing funds during an interactive session it had with officials of the Federal Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation.

The committee said despite the fact that the fund was created by the Federal Government as a special intervention fund to develop the non-oil sector of the nation's economy, no project had been accomplished in the sector.

According to the Senator Ahmad Lawan-led committee, the records of the Federal Ministry of Finance and that of the Central Bank of Nigeria could not properly account for about N44bn, out of the total

sure jobs are generated and infrastructure is developed to encourage small and medium-scale industries. There should be micro-credit facilities for entrepreneurs to increase local content. Most intervention funds are a wrong step in the right direction. The government is just chasing shadows. The funds will not make people face the reality to be creative and productive."

Another group, Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project, said it was improper for the government to approve intervention funds for private enterprises, citing the example of the aviation sector.

The Executive Director, SERAP, Mr. Adetokunbo Mumuni, said, "If the government allocates funds for public institutions, provided it is properly accounted for, it is acceptable; when such funds are for private businesses, it is not acceptable. Why use the public funds to intervene in private enterprises? It is unreasonable and unjustifiable.

"Spending on private businesses sounds fraudulent. Monies have been spent without proper account for them. The government can only give financial intervention, provided funds would be spent transparently and accountably."

He vowed to relocate his office to Onitsha to ensure that his orders for the closure of the markets were implemented to the letter.

An angry Obi lamented that he had for many years used persuasion and appeal to reason to get those trading along that road to leave, but that they refused.

Virtually shouting at the traders, the governor said those insisting on trading along the road were mostly not from Anambra.

"I decided from the beginning to treat you as human beings that you are, but you have refused to cooperate. I knew what it took me to persuade contractors working in Anambra to cut their holidays short and resume work at their various sites.

"It is annoying that having resumed work, they are prevented on many sites from working because some people are trading on the sites, parking vehicles and even defecating.

"We shall no longer tolerate that. I hereby order the immediate shutting down of illegal markets along the road. Before the end of the month, we shall relocate to Onitsha to monitor things ourselves until the town and all our other towns return to its old glory. We must forcefully demonstrate that Onitsha and any part of Anambra State is not meant for pigs, but for humans," Obi said.

SEGUN OLATUNJI and
ENIOLA AKINKUOTU

30 die in Ogun pipeline explosion

DISASTER

A pipeline explosion in the Arepo area of Ogun State killed about 30 people who went to siphon petroleum products from a ruptured Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation pipeline on Saturday.

It was learnt that the fire broke out after vandals started fighting over the oil. One of them was said to have fired a shot that led to the explosion.

Operatives of the Inspector General of Police Special Task Force on Anti-Pipeline Vandalism Unit, Force Headquarters Annex, Lagos, who were on patrol were said to have gone to the scene to avert further disaster.

It was in the process that they arrested a medical doctor, Dr. Odusina Adegboyega, and one of the survivors, Sunday Reuben, on their way to the hospital.

Confirming the arrest,

Assistant Commissioner of Police, Friday Ibadin, who is in charge of the task force, said the explosion started at about 2am on Saturday.

"Shortly after the explosion, policemen led by Sector Commander, Lagos, DSP Onaghise Osayande, cordoned off the area to reduce casualties while they awaited the arrival of fire fighters to quench the fire.

"It was in the process that they stumbled into a jeep carrying one of the survivors and a medical doctor who was on his way to the hospital. In the course of interrogation, we discovered that the survivor was one of those who participated in the killing of NNPC officials last year.

"The task force arrested six suspected vandals who were alleged to have participated in the incident that led to the killing of three NNPC officials at Arepo Village, Owode,

Ogun State.

"Sometime in August, 2012, there was a fire outbreak which was caused by suspected vandals who burst the pipeline to siphon petroleum products at Arepo."

The spokesperson, National Emergency Management Agency, South-West zone, Ibrahim Farinloye, confirmed the incident to our correspondent on the telephone.

Farinloye said the casualty figure could not be ascertained.

"The explosion has made the area inaccessible but we will continue rescue efforts on Sunday (today)," he said.

Also, the NSCDC Public Relations Officer of the Ogun Command, Mr. Kareem Olanrewaju, who confirmed the fire said, "No arrest was made as the vandals escaped through Majidun."

Residents however told our correspondent that over 30 people were killed in the fire.