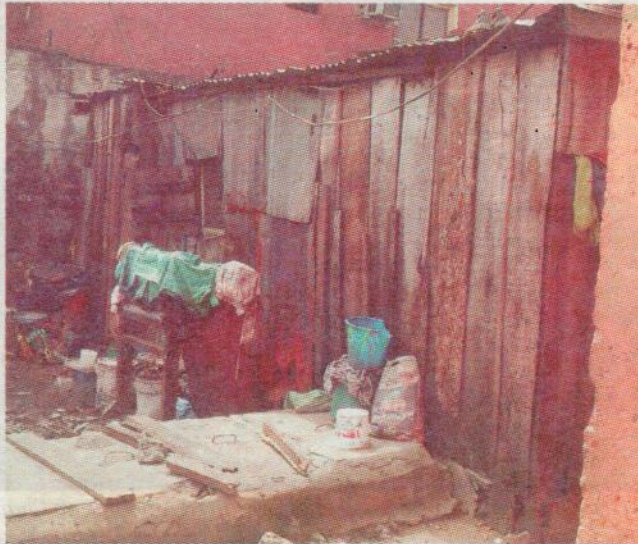


Fire fumes choke Lagos trader to death



• The deceased's apartment

Photo: Olaleye Aluko

Olaleye Aluko

TRAGEDY struck on Tapa Street in the Ebute-Meta area of Lagos State on Saturday after a trader was found dead in his apartment from what residents said were fumes from a fire incident that happened in the area.

PUNCH Metro learnt that the 35-year-old trader, identified only as Timothy, who sold men and women's belts, was discovered dead at about 4pm when a customer came to his apartment and met it locked.

Our correspondent gathered that on Wednesday at about 12am, neighbours had raised the alarm of a fire in the adjoining apartment, and they had quickly mobilised to put it out, while all of them rushed out to take fresh air to allow the smoke to subside.

It was learnt that Timothy, who hailed from Benue State, however, was nowhere to be found as his room was locked and residents felt he had also gone out.

However, Timothy was said to have been discovered dead in his room on Saturday, four days after the fire.

Our correspondent gathered that the matter was thereafter reported at the Denton Police Division.

When PUNCH Metro visited the house, a neighbour, who identified himself as Akeem Mustapha, said the fire started from a candle lit in an adjacent room, adding that the deceased's room was stocked with belts and the smoke might have choked Timothy to death.

He said, "We do not know any of Timothy's relatives. That is the challenge. Also, his phone cannot be found. About five years ago, his elder brother fell ill and died. As it is, the police have arrested his neighbour, identified as mama boys, for arson.

"What we heard on that night was the alarm that fire had started. So, everyone mobilised and came out to put out the fire. We did not know Timothy was inside the room. It was on the fourth day when a customer came that he was found dead."

Another neighbour, who declined to mention her name, said they scolded Mama Boye for not reporting the incident to the police promptly, which was why the police were suspecting her of complicity in the trader's death.

"The woman did not know that the trader was inside his room. Ordinarily, Timothy was supposed to run out too when the alarm was raised. But nobody saw him. When the woman did not see him the next day, she was supposed to have called the police's attention, but it was a customer on Saturday who discovered the man was dead in his room."

Our correspondent gathered that the case was being prepared to be transferred to the State Department of Criminal Investigation, Yaba, for further investigation.

The Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Joe Offor, could not be reached for comment.