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Christmas tragedies in Lagos, Bayelsa, Edo

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•2 killed in police barracks collapsed building, as fire guts Nigerian breweries in Lagos

•4 children of same parents burnt to death in Yenagoa

By Emma Njoku

This year's Christmas celebration was blighted by tragedies of different proportions in Lagos, Bayelsa and Edo states.

In Lagos, yesterday, two people died after a staircase in a two-storey building collapsed at the Highway headquarters of the Lagos Police barracks on the same day fire gutted a part of the corporate headquarters of the Nigerian Breweries in Iganmu, Lagos.

The Lagos Police Command spokesperson, Dolapo Badmus confirmed the death of two persons in the building collapse which occurred in the early hours of yesterday .

South-West spokesperson of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Ibrahim Farinloye also confirmed the fire incident but assured it was under control by the fire fighters.

Farinloye said the "partial building collapse affected the bathroom of the building. Efforts are on to bring down the remaining part of the structure," he said in a text message.

Meanwhile, a release signed by the Corporate Affairs Adviser of the Nigerian Breweries Plc, Kufre Ekanem said no casualties were recorded in the fire outbreak at the headquarters of the company in Iganmu, Lagos, yesterday morning, after.

"Only empty bottles, plastic crates and some sections of the bottle holdings bay were impacted by the fire. Breweries operations were not disrupted by the incident," he said.

Director of the Lagos State Fire Services, Rasak Fadipe said his agency discovered the fire around 5:25 a.m.

"We discovered it on our own, it was not as if they placed a call to us, we saw the thing billowing in the sky and that was how we responded," Fadipe told PREMIUM TIMES over the phone.

"On arrival, we discovered the fire had covered about three acres of open land, where finished products and empty cartons were stacked.

"It was very massive, the bottles and the crates were dissolving as we were attacking the fire. There were some sporadic explosions as well, that gave us another problem, but we quickly got it under control.

"But as at now we are on top of it; we had to break the back of the breweries' building and fight from there because the fire was initially spreading to the railway line."

Daily Sun gathered that seven fire trucks from the Lagos State Fire and Safety Services, three fire trucks from Julius Berger and officials of both the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency and the National Emergency Management Agency were on ground to tackle the inferno.

In Bayelsa, a Christmas Eve tragedy claimed the lives of four children of same parents in a fire incident in Okutukutu, Yenagoa, Bayelsa state.

Eyewitnesses said the children, identified as Princess, Godstime, PraiseGod and Richman, aged 10, eight, six and four years, respectively, were burnt beyond recognition when the building was engulfed in an inferno.

The father of the children, Captain Bartholomew was said to be away while their mother was on her way back from Aba for Christmas shopping when the incident occurred.

It was suspected that a candle light caused the fire at the makeshift house where the children were sleeping.

"Their parents were away when the incident occurred. We are suspecting that the candle light which probably was not positioned well caused the fire. Unfortunately, the children were deep in sleep and they were all burnt beyond recognition in the fire incident," an eyewitness said.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr. Asinin Butwats, who confirmed the incident, said the Police are investigating the incident. He disclosed that the bodies of the four children have been deposited at the morgue of the Federal Medical Centre.

"Yes, a fire incident claimed the lives of four children. The Police are investigating the incident."

Also in Benin, three persons reportedly lost their lives between Saturday and yesterday morning.

Two of the deaths were said to have occurred at Ugbowo community on Saturday morning when a truck rammed into an Audi car from the rear.

The victims reportedly parked beside the Ugbowo-Lagos Road when the truck lost control and hit the car, killing its two occupants.

Meanwhile, the third victim said to be a young man, was said to have met his untimely death in the hands of suspected secret cult members yesterday morning at the popular New Benin Market in the state capital.

Residents of First and Second Aburime streets and adjoining roads leading to New Benin Market were said to have discovered the lifeless body of the unidentified victim in a pool of blood.

The discovery reportedly attracted passersby, most of who were returning from Saturday night church service held by Catholic faithful at a nearby Blessed Tansi Parish to usher in the Christmas day festivity.

It was learnt that the market environ had been listed as flashpoint for violent cult activities in recent times.

When contacted, the spokesman for Edo State Police Command, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Moses Nkombe said he was yet to be briefed of the incidents.