

One shot dead as fire guts Oyo market

January 6, 2020 Correspondents

Sola Adeyemo

Ibadan

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roperty and goods believed to worth billions of Naira were burnt yesterday when fire gutted the popular Akesan Market, Oyo town, in Oyo State.

The fire broke out about 2a.m, but due to inability of the only vehicle available at the Fire Station, about 20 metres from the market, to move, the fire raged on till dawn.

It was in the morning when fire fighting vehicle from Ogbomoso town arrived to combat the inferno.

Before its arrival, many of the shops in the multiple lanes in the massive market had been burnt without much of the goods salvaged.

It was wailing and sobbing galore yesterday afternoon as victims and sympathisers gathered in clusters.

It was learnt that the fire erupted from a shop when power supply was restored.

Some protesters besieged the Fire Station and vandalised the two vehicles in the compound and the offices. In the melee, men of the 'Operation Burst' reportedly opened fire on the protesters. One person was killed. Two others were said to have received gunshot injuries and taken away for medical attention.

When our correspondent visited the market about 11.30a.m, the whole road leading to the Alaafin's palace, about 30 metres from the Fire Station, was crowded with protesters. They blamed the loss on the ineffectiveness of the Oyo State Fire Service.

Also, smoke still rose from some of the shops.

Responding to the incident, the Deputy Director, Fire Service, Mr. Moshood Adewuyi, who was on ground controlling the situation, described the incident as unfortunate.

He said: "The reason why it is unfortunate is that the vehicle attached to Oyo is perfectly working well. People confirmed, and even His Imperial Majesty, the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi, confirmed that the vehicle is in good condition and that the firefighters went to Akunlemu area in Oyo here yesterday (Saturday) where millions of naira goods were saved from being lost to fire.

"But immediately they resolved that fire incident, that vehicle developed gear problem. And we tried as much as possible to re-fix it that yesterday, but there is one important aspect of it that got damaged and needs to be replaced.

"I struggled yesterday, along with the mechanic, to get the part at Ibadan, but the mechanic was unable to complete it until 6p.m. yesterday (Saturday). We then agreed that as soon as possible this morning (yesterday), he will come and re-fix it, but unfortunately, the fire occurred about 2a.m."

Adewuyi also spoke on the rumour that men of the Operation Burst (a combined state security outfit) manning the Fire Station opened fire on the protesters.

He said: “The protesters were stoning the Operation Burst men. Actually, about three persons were involved. One person died and two others were injured. They were taken to a hospital. Even, the Commissioner for Environment, Hon. Kehinde Ayoola, has taken it upon himself by referring the injured to another hospital in Ibadan.”

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