

NAFDAC: Methanol Responsible for 'Ogogoro' Deaths in Rivers

Ernest Chinwo in Port Harcourt

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has stated that methanol, and not ethanol, was responsible for the death of more than 70 people from the consumption of local gin, also known as ogogoro or kai-kai in Rivers State.

Chairman on the ad hoc committee of the Rivers State House of Assembly, on the cause of deaths arising from intake of local gin, Hon Okechukwu Chinda, made this known while presenting the committee report on the floor of the assembly yesterday.

Chinda said his committee's investigations revealed that some greedy dealers decided to use methanol to produce the local gin due to shortage in supply of ethanol.

According to him, the state has 80 reported cases, with 70 deaths in five government areas, including, Ahoada West, Obio/Akpor, Port Harcourt, Gokana and Bonny.

He also said: "The actors of the state Ministry of Health acted promptly by taking those affected to Bori General Hospital, Woji Health Centre

and Bonny General Hospital and a private hospital in Abuloma. Unfortunately, all the victims in Ahoada West died before they could get help.

"Officers of the Ministry of Health took samples of the killer gin from the affected locations and sent to NAFDAC. The laboratory result of the investigation revealed excess presence of methanol in varying quantities.

"Due to shortage of supply of ethanol used for the production of local gins, unscrupulous elements resorted to the use of methanol to bridge the supply gap."

Meanwhile, sources at the ministry of health have said the increase in the number of casualties from 66 to 71 was from new deaths in Gokana and Ahoada West local government areas of the state.

The Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Dr. Somiari Harry, said in one particular case in Ahoada west, a young man had boasted that the killer gin would have no effect on him.

Harry said the young man took the drink after his boasts and retired to his home, only to be found dead the following morning.

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