

Fire guts Ogbogonogo market, 2 bodies recovered

By Austin Ogwuda

A SABA —PROPERTY worth thousands of naira were gutted by fire on Monday night at Ogbogonogo market, while two dead bodies were recovered near the scene.

The same Ogbogonogo market was gutted by fire a couple of years ago and was presently being reconstructed at a cost of nearly N500 million.

When our reporter visited the scene yesterday morning, the fire was yet to be completely put out but the only luck was that the main building currently under construction was not touched.

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Boro.

While x-raying the performance of the institution in the last five years he said the number of academic staff have increased from 356 in 2004 to 527 in 2006.

He added that as against the only eight professors and one reader then the number has increased to 14 professors and 43 readers some of whom though were visitors.

According to him, apart from the high caliber academics that have been attracted to the university, all but four of the thirty eight programmes assessed by the National Universities Commission during the 2005 accreditation exercise were accredited.

Commending the state government for the success so far achieved as well as the governing council, he said no fewer than one thousand students who have successfully completed their studies in the 2004/2005 (the foundation students) and 2005/2006 academic years would be awarded degrees.

Eyewitness said that the fire might have started from a heap of gabbage near some of the shanties erected as shops at the back of the new building and spread with the aid of the harmattan breeze and affected the textile, meat and provision sections of the market.

Two dead bodies were also found beside the debris but the State Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Miss Olabisi Okuwobi said "the two dead bodies are not connected with the fire. The bodies were recovered from the River Niger where they probably got drowned. Infact, it was we (police) that noticed the fire and contacted the Fire Service", she stated.

The same market was gutted by fire sometime in 2002.

The foundation of the new Asaba Modern Market nearly completion was laid on 17th June 2005 by the state Deputy Governor, Chief Benjamin Elue at a contract sum of N487.6 million awarded to Ar-bico Plc.

Speaking on the occasion, Elue said "the market is expected to have a total of one thousand shops and ancillary facilities, which include offices, banking hall, police post, telephone exchange, fire station, a crèche for infants, cold room, warehouses, pharmacy and restrooms for males and females".

He added that "the importance of the Asaba modern market to this community cannot be over-emphasized in view of the growing political, social and commercial importance of Asaba, as one of the main hubs of government activities in the state. Lack of good physical space for business transaction has compelled many entrepreneurs and traders to convert every available space into shops and warehouses. And this has led to the unhygienic practice of executing unplanned temporary structures which deface the environment."