

Anguish as mysterious fire razes church, houses

... one feared dead, 750 people displaced

By Chinedu Ogbenna &
Austine Anozie

FATE has cast gloom and anguish on about 750 persons residing at numbers 26-40, Ladejobi Street in Ijora Badia Area of Lagos State last Monday following a strange fire that raised their houses. The incident which claimed the life of one person, consumed a church building housing members of Cherubim and Seraphim Church of Zion and L.A.H., other adjoining buildings.

Though, the real cause of the fire was yet to be known, some of the victims said they heard a loud explosion at the house of one Baba Sukura who later died in the inferno. They attributed the explosion to kerosine stove which the victim uses in preparing food.

A landlord and Pastor of the church that was completely burnt. Pastor Elisha Erukubami told *City Scope* that all he had laboured for in life went with the inferno. The Pastor who was looking disheveled at the turn of events lamented that five of his houses were completely burnt during the inferno which he said started at about

12.30pm. As sympathizers thronged to see the debris of what were once abode, to many families, the Pastor's voice was heard loudly bemoaning the fate that befell him and members of his family. "I am finished," he lamented. "What will I do with this large family. Where are we going to go from here?"

He told *City Scope*, "Five of my houses were raised to debris. What I believe is that Baba Sukura, well that's what we usually call him, his real name is Mr. Abbass. He was the one that was burnt to death. He must have been cooking inside his house and the kerosine stove may have exploded and set the house on fire. We are begging the State and Local governments to please assist us. We have gone to the Local Government to report the incident. Even when the fire started at about 12:30pm, we only heard somebody raise an alarm of fire and it was only myself, my son. The fire had gutted our own buildings. While we were trying to put out the fire in my own house, others were busy with their own but before the Nigeria Ports Authority (NPA) Terminal came to our assistance, it was

already too late."

Another victim, Mr. Azeez Suleiman, told *City Scope* that only one person lost his life contrary to earlier reports of five. He, however, said that many people sustained varying degrees of injury stating that the wife of the

Polytechnic, the young lady said she lost her NYSC certificate and other valuable documents.

Fedrick Elikiah, her brother who graduated from Owo Polytechnic, Ondo State also lost all his documents in the inferno that left most families

... Mr. Abbass was the one that was burnt to death; he must have been cooking inside his house and the kerosine stove may have exploded and set the house on fire

deceased had ran away on hearing of the death of her husband.

It was reliably gathered that the houses which were built over 20 year ago have not experienced such incident before. Other victims of the incident recounted their woes. Miss Esther Elikiah who claimed that she lost all her school certificates to the fire incident could not be restrained as she was pacing helplessly in tears. A graduate of Kwara State Federal

devastated. Mr. Tope Orija a graduate of Yaba College of Technology lost both his school certificates and share certificates. The list is endless.

The mood of sympathizers at the scene was however made a bit lively when one Mama Blessing who had earlier lost N40,000 meant for her children's school fees to the fire, succeeded in recovering sixteen barely burnt pieces of one thousand naira notes (N16,000) from the debris.