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Fire: Two die, N500m lost in three incidents in 10hrs

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...Artworks worth N400m razed in Abuja
...N100m lost in Onitsha Bridge Head drug market
...Two die, vehicles burnt in Jos gas station outbreak

By Marie-Therese Nanlong, Chimaobi Nwaiwu, with agency reports

The fury of fire was felt in three cities across the country – Federal Capital Territory, FCT, Abuja, Jos, Plateau State, and Onitsha, Anambra State – in a spate of 12 years between Friday evening and the early hours of yesterday, with two people losing their lives while goods and artworks worth over N500million were lost. In Abuja, over 20 shops filled with artworks were destroyed in the fire at the Abuja Arts and Craft Village late on Friday.

Mr Kanayo Chukwumezie, president of the African Arts and Cultural Heritage Association (AACHA) told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday, in Abuja, that the disaster caused a loss of over N400 million.



In Onitsha, goods worth over N100 million were destroyed by fire outbreak at the Bridge Head medicine market, popularly known as Association of Medical and Pharmaceutical Products Dealers Onitsha, AMPPDO, market.

And in Jos, a fire incident at Echemas Fuel Station, on Friday night, burnt two people to death and destroyed three tankers loaded with fuel, as well as four vehicles parked close to the scene of the incident.

Abuja Art and Craft Village fire: Artworks worth N400m lost

According to Chukwumezie “we have not ascertained the cause of the fire. When the fire started and the first two shops were burning, our members wanted to rush in to stop the fire, but the security at the gate by National Council for Art and Culture (NCAC) prevented them.

“Before the Fire Service arrived, almost all the shops were burnt: they were only able to extinguish the smoke. Artworks and other products for Christmas sales worth over N400 million were burnt to ashes,” Chukwumezie said.

He said that the NCAC had promised to put in place a fire service unit at the village to ensure prompt response to fire outbreak “but nothing was done. We used to stay in the village over night, but when they told us to stop staying there and promised to provide security and anti-fire measures, we stopped staying overnight. If we were on ground overnight, this fire accident would have been contained by those around.

Meanwhile one the victims of the fire, Mallam Mohammed Lawal, said he left the village around 8p.m. on Friday.

“I was called later around 10p.m. that the village was on fire. Before I could come back, serious damage had already been done. I believe if we were allowed to be staying overnight, such an incident would have been controlled before it caused havoc,” Lawal said.

Another shop owner, Mr Kennedy Idowu said he lost everything to the inferno including new art works and crafts for December sales. “All, including the one I had before now were burnt to ashes. It’s so unfortunate. I am devastated now, where do I start from?”.

A security guard at the gate, who pleaded anonymity, told NAN that the fire service was contacted immediately the fire started.

“Some people attempted to come in, but we were afraid of hooligans using the situation to loot and steal items from the shops. However, some of us attempted to control the fire, but it got out of our control because the shops’ roof was made of dried grass,” he said. Efforts to get the reactions of officials of the NCAC were not successful

Onitsha Fire Incident

The Onitsha fire incident was said to have started at about 6am yesterday, at the Redemption Line area of the market and would have gutted the whole market, but for the timely intervention of the men of Fire Service from Onitsha Main market and Building Materials Market, Ogidi, both of which were invited by the leadership of the market.

When Sunday Vanguard visited the market at about 11.am, all the members of the executive of AMPPDO, were seen resolving an issue that arose as a result of the fire incident, while the shop owners were clearing their shops of the waste left by the fire incident.

No life was however lost in the incident, but goods and cash in all the affected shops perished.

One of the affected victims, Chidubem Uzochukwu, told Sunday Vanguard that he lost N700,000 cash and goods worth over N15 million, while his neighbor Ebuka Emeh, was said to have lost much more.

President of AMPPDO, Mr. Uche Eze, said he was called by market security men, at about 6.15 am yesterday morning, that there was fire outbreak at Redemption Line and he quickly called men of the Fire Service from Onitsha Main Market and Building Material Market, Ogidi, and members of his executive, who responded immediately and were able to quench the fire to avoid spreads to the entire market.

“When I arrived the market”, he said, “the fire was still raging; members of executive were also here with me, including the President General of Bridge Head Markets Association, Mr. Sunday Obinze, Chairman of the Line and his Secretary, Alvin Okpaleke; we were all here helping the Fire Service officials to quench the fire.

About six shops were affected and over N100 million both in cash and goods were lost to this fire incident; you can see for yourself the debris left in the shops, the owners equipped their shops with goods for the Christmas sales, but you can see what has happened.

“The whole market would have been engulfed by the fire if not for our prompt response in calling the fire fighting men from both markets. We are therefore appealing to Governor Willie Obiano to come to the assistance of the affected traders, they have lost all they have been working for over the years in just one incident.

“We are also appealing to the Governor to provide us with fire service equipment; it is unfortunate that the entire Bridge Head Markets Association have no fire service facility”, he concluded.

Echemas fire incident in Jos

The fire reportedly started as a result of an attempt to divert petrol from the fuel station for sale in the “black market”, a situation that has gained notoriety in the city, especially in the last one week.

The fire also affected a nearby car mart, Mohammed Inuwa, an eye witness, confirmed.

Samuel Musa, the Deputy Director, Plateau State Fire Service, told Sunday Vanguard, that “at about 10.45pm on Friday, our attention was drawn to a fire incident at Echemas Filling Station, all our three stations, the Government House, the Bukuru and Jos stations were mobilized to the site. On getting there, we discovered that some trucks loaded with fuel (three) were already on fire; our men battled and were able to save two of the trucks.

Our men battled from yesterday night to about 7.30 this morning before containing it.. “Two lives and property were lost. Our findings revealed they were transferring fuel from one truck to another. You are aware of what is going on in town, this issue of black marketing, in the night time when people are sleeping, those people hardly sleep.”

The Fireman advised other fuel stations operators to desist from such habit and urged residents to be cautious so that they do not cause any fire outbreak especially during this dry season.

Abuja switches to digital broadcasting Thursday

Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, yesterday announced that the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja would be switched over to digital
December 20, 2016



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March 23, 2017



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February 17, 2017

