

2 die, 20 injured, 2 secondary schools gutted in Ijegan pipeline explosion

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LAGOS—A commercial driver and a night security guard were, yesterday, burnt to death, as no fewer than 20 persons sustained different degrees of burns after a Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC, pipeline exploded in Ijegan, Alimosho Local Government of Lagos State.



Cross section sympathizers at the scene of fire explosion from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC pipeline at Ijegan, under Igando-Ikotun Local Council Development Area [LCDA], Alimosho Local Government in Lagos state, . Photo: Bunmi Azeez

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The driver was identified as Austine, a.k.a. *Japan*, while the night security guard, a citizen of Niger Republic, Bashir, reportedly met his death while tracing the source of the spillage.

The explosion, as gathered, was due to activities of pipeline vandals in the area.

Aside the victims, 30 vehicles, Ijegun Junior and Senior High schools, and 20 other structures as well as goods worth millions of Naira were razed after the pipeline exploded around 4:59a.m.

Firefighters

After about 12 hours of intense fire fighting by men of Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, LASEMA, the state fire service and other emergency agencies, the inferno was finally put out at 4:40p.m.

Confirming that the fire has been put out, Acting Director of the state fire service, Margaret Adeseye, told *Vanguard* that after putting out the fire, a three nozzle tap was discovered at the scene, and is the source of the content that resulted into the inferno.

According to her, “after putting out the fire, we discovered the source to be a three-way nozzle outlet from where the vandals siphoned products from Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC, Pipeline.”

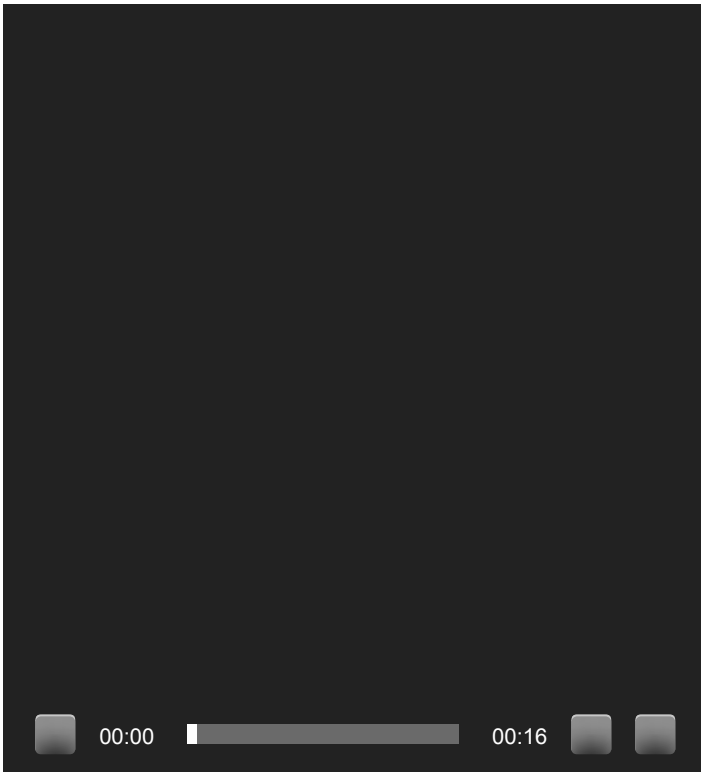


Scene of the fire explosion from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC pipeline at Ijegun, under Igando-Ikotun Local Council Development Area[LCDA], Alimosho Local Government in Lagos state, Photo: Bunmi Azeez

Speaking on the explosion, General Manager of LASEMA, Dr. Femi Oke-Osanyintolu, who confirmed the number of casualties, said the charred bodies have been removed and taken to General Hospital.

Oke-Osanyintolu, said: “On arrival of Lagos Rescue Team at the scene of the incident, it was gathered that some vandals were engaged in bunkering activities at Fire Junction, Ijegun, where an NNPC pipeline was buried.





“The vandals had already siphoned petrol into a 33,000-litre tanker, while a second tanker of the same capacity was being loaded when security agencies suddenly intercepted the vandals.

“While trying to escape, some of the siphoned fuel spilled into the drainage and the vandals were alleged to have set the spilled fuel on fire in a bid to deter the security agencies from apprehending them.

“The fire eventually returned to the pipeline point, where the vandals siphoned the fuel, and over 30 vehicles burnt, eight persons were also injured.

“The actual loss will be determined upon conducting post-disaster enumeration after the fire has been put out.”

Meanwhile, residents told *Vanguard* that the vandals arrived at about 1:30a.m., putting on uniforms similar to that of the law enforcement agencies, which gave residents the impression they were preventing vandals from operating.

Ijegan pipeline explosion: Situation under control – NNPC(Opens in a new browser tab)

How we tried to avert disaster—*Guard*

A security guard, Mr. Umaru Muhammed, who said he escaped by the whiskers, told *Vanguard* that five of them, including the deceased Bashir, discovered that petroleum fumes had enveloped the community, which made them to bang on doors, telling residents not to switch on their generator or ignite gas cookers.

To ascertain the source, he and late Bashir began to trace the source from Tijani Awolumate Street, where they were employed as security guards.

He noted that Bashir and he took different routes to hasten the search, saying “few minutes after, I heard a loud bang from where Bashir was and another from my end. I ran for safety and I hoped my friend had done same. But I came here to meet his lifeless body already consumed by the inferno.”

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Another person, Afeez Adewale, who participated in alerting the residents, narrated that “at the time we discovered the community had been enveloped with the smell of petroleum that was already flowing in the drainage, we alerted the residents including the owner of the Volvo saloon car and the deceased commercial bus driver not to turn on the ignition of their vehicles.



Scene of the fire explosion from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC pipeline at Ijegan, under Igando-Ikotun Local Council Development Area[LCDA], Alimosho Local Government in Lagos state, Photo: Bunmi Azeez

“But they refused. While the commercial driver claimed he had passengers waiting for him, the other argued that he had an appointment to keep.

“Instead of the commercial vehicle driver to leave the scene, he begged us to push his vehicle for him, which we did. And few minutes after we cautioned them, they switched on the ignition. What we heard after that was a loud bang from the vehicles and explosions from other locations followed.”

He narrated that after being caught by fire, the commercial driver and the security guard ran into the canal with the intention to get water “but the canal was already filled with the content and fire erupted again from there.”

Photos : Ijegan pipeline fire

I’m ruined—Car owner

One of the owners of the vehicles razed by the explosion, Mr. Chukwudi Anaelechi, lamented that the inferno has left him with huge debt, saying “I am ruined.”

Anaelechi said: “I bought the vehicle for N2.5 million. But I have paid N800,000 to the owner, with a promise that before the end of the year, at least 70 percent would have been paid.

“But now, the vehicle is burnt. How do I raise the money to pay the debt? I have five children to cater for. Where do I start now?”

4 months ago...

A resident, Mrs. Ebere Okeke, told *Vanguard* that for over four months, they had been suspecting the activities of pipeline vandals within the community.

Okeke noted that she had been afraid and had continuously warned friends and relatives to exercise safety, telling them “I have that belief that something is about to happen within this community and it will be severe.”

According to her, “we have been noticing some tankers within the community lately and the worrisome aspect was that they do not have number plates. After some minutes within the community, they will leave.”

‘No explosions in Satellite Town’

The Ijegun-Egba Tankfarm Owners and Operators Association, has dismissed news reports of pipeline explosion in Ijegun, Satellite Town areas.

A statement by the association’s Secretary, Eshiet Eshiet, insisted that no explosion took place in the area.

The statement lamented that the news report “has adversely affected our members’ businesses and operations as government at all levels, regulatory authorities, security agencies, business partners, customers among others, have inundated our members with series of enquirers regarding the said publication.

“Let us add that the publication has gone far and wide.”

Meanwhile, Commandant of Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, NSCDC, Tajudeen Balogun, has said the incident is a man-made disease.

His words: We are working to know the cause of the inferno. There was leakage, which resulted into the fire. We are yet to make any arrest, but we have started investigation.”

The Commandant urged residents to assist law enforcement agencies with information on vandals.

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