



•The herb shops gutted by fire in Osun.

4 feared dead, scores injured as explosion rocks Onitsha drug market

•As fire guts nine herbs shops in Osun

By Nwabueze Okonkwo & Shina Abubakar

ONITSHA—AN explosion at the chemical section of the Onitsha drug market, yesterday, claimed four lives, with many sustaining various degrees of injuries.

Sources said that the chemical explosion emanated from one of the shops along the Progressive Science Union line, Bridgehead drug market, Onitsha, popularly known as Ogbogwu market.

The unexpected explosion, it was gathered, resulted in a stampede, which added to the increase in the number of casualties.

"It took some frantic efforts by men of the state fire service, who arrived on the scene with two trucks of fire fighting equipment, to put out the fire and stop it from spreading to other sections of the market.

Reacting to the incident, Chairman of Bridgehead

Markets Amalgamated Traders Association, Chinedu Ezekwike, said: "The chemical explosion that started from one of the shops collapsed the building and in the process sent four to their untimely death. We still want the fire to cool so that we find out from the debris if there are more deaths, but scores were injured...about 20.

"The explosion caused thick smoke and iron and stones from the shop, where it exploded, hit some people also. We fear the casualty figure may increase," said Ezekwike.

Also, a member of the Caretaker Committee of the market, Peter Okala, while lamenting the untimely death of the four victims, stressed the need for those who know chemical substances to be dealers of such, stating that most traders who deal in chemical

products in the market do not know how to handle them.

He also accused the past regimes of the market of not procuring firefighting trucks for the market despite the huge amount of money they generated in the market.

"If the past leaderships of the market had procured fire fighting trucks, it would have helped in a situation like this. Unfortunately, the huge sum they generated went into their private pockets," Okala stated.

Also, yesterday, nine herbs shops, located at Ibokun road, Oja-Oba, in Osogbo, Osun State capital, were reportedly razed by an early morning fire incident.

Shop owners, while lamenting their loss, disclosed that they lost goods worth millions of naira.

One Isola Olalekan, who sells traditional ornament, said most of the items destroyed in the fire incidents are meant for exportation to Brazil and USA.

According to him, he cannot ascertain when the fire started or the source, but night guards that passed through the shop alerted residents who in turn informed the fire department.

Confirming the incident, Osun Fire Service Public Relations Officer, Adekunle Ibrahim, said the incident started around 2 am on Tuesday while the department was informed around 3 am.

He added that nine shops were destroyed

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while the timely intervention of firefighters prevented the fire from spreading to other buildings in the area.

The fire had already destroyed properties worth millions of naira and buildings damaged before the Fire Service department was informed.

CAVEAT EMPTOR

This is to notify the general public that the property situated at No 24 Obafemi Awolowo way (Along New Ikirun Road), Ayetoro, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria belonging to Late Engr. Michael Araoye Akinola is not for sale. Intending or potential buyers are hereby warned.

Signed:

The Family of Late Engr. M. A. Akinola