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Tragedy At PDP Presidential Rally

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The PDP Presidential Campaign Rally in the Southsouth zone in Port Harcourt yesterday, ended in tragedy, with four persons (three security personnel and a civilian) losing their lives in an accident involving a presidential convoy.

Twenty persons also died, while no fewer than 25 persons were seriously injured, with some of them on danger list in hospitals across Port Harcourt, as a result of the stampede after the rally at the Liberation Stadium in the state capital.



Giving details of the accident, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) of the Rivers Command, Dr. Rita Inoma-Abbey recalled that: "At about 2:50 pm, at the Liberation Stadium, Elekahia, during the presidential campaign flag off for the Southsouth zone, lots of jubilant supporters were exiting the main gate that their governors have been given PDP's flags.

"Those coming in were pushing and those exiting were pushing their way out. In the ensuing stampede, so many people fell down. The police mounted troop, PMF (Police Mobile Force) and other security agents contained the push, by closing the main gate to rescue the victims.

"Some were taken to police clinic with police ambulance, some to Teme Hospital and BMH (Braithwaite Memorial Hospital) in Port Harcourt for treatment."

The accident in the presidential convoy, according to witnesses' accounts, occurred near the headquarters of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), GRA Junction and Waterlines Bus Stop, on the ever-busy Port Harcourt-Aba Expressway.

A Toyota Prado Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV), with registration number: Bayelsa: AX 176 KMK, rammed into a stationary articulated vehicle (trailer), with many other vehicles in the convoy running into it, leading to confusion.

The Commissioner of Police, Rivers Command, Mr. Suleiman Abba, who confirmed the accident, said it involved a vehicle in the rear of the convoy, with people from Bayelsa and Rivers states inside, while some vehicles ran into the jeep, because of the rain and slippery road, but could not confirm the casualty figure.

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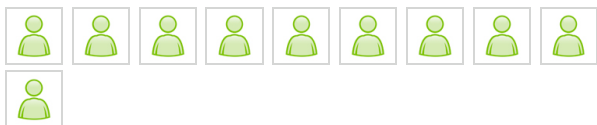
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