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**Thur, October
04, 2007**

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LANDSLIDE THREATENS
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IN ADDITION TO THE 2007
ELECTORAL LANDSLIDE ?

Tanker fire: My escape, a mystery —Survivor

LUKKEY ABAWURU, FLORENCE UDOH and CHIDI UGWU

SURVIVORS of Tuesday's accident in which a petrol tanker caught fire, yesterday, relieved the encounter with one of them simply called Kunle, describing his escape as a mystery.

Similarly, another survivor, Mrs Yemisi Balogun described her escape as miraculous.

A petrol-laden tanker, it would be recalled, Tuesday night caught fire while negotiating a bend near National Stadium flyover on Funsho Williams Avenue, Lagos, killing about nine persons.

Kunle who claimed he was on his way to Ketu when the incident happened, said all he heard was sudden explosion and subsequent balls of fire in the air.

"At 8.30 p.m., I was coming from Apapa to Ketu, I heard the explosion from a tanker conveying 33,000 litres of fuel to unknown destination and what I saw next was balls of fire scattering everywhere, how I escaped is still a mystery. I saw some people who attempted to jump the Teslim Balogun Stadium wall as fire caught up with them and burnt them. My brother, I could not believe what I saw. I thank God for saving me."

Kunle, a trader, added that the tanker skidded off the road and somersaulted, resulting in the incident.

According to him, "the entire Funsho Williams Avenue was blocked as people including drivers and passengers as well as car owners abandoned their vehicles and scampered for safety."

For Mrs Balogun her survival remains a miracle. "Indeed, I don't know how it happened. I really thank God for saving my life."

THAT'S SERIOUS

Balogun who said she was rushed to hospital by a Good Samaritan said "it was after several hours that I woke up to see myself at the ward of Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH). I was unconscious and didn't know what actually happened. I thank the person that brought me here."

When Daily Champion visited ward three unit of LUTH, some of victims were admitted there but the hospital management refused our correspondent access to talk to any of them.

Meanwhile, Lagos State government as promised to bankroll the medical bills of the victims.

Consequently governor Babatunde Fashola has directed his commissioner for environment, Dr Muiz Bamre to ensure free medical attention to those that sustained injury in the inferno as well as to conduct a DNA test on the mangled bodies to properly identify the deceased.

Disclosing this yesterday at a address by five commissioners and two special advisers to the governor the commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr. Opeyemi Bamidele confirmed the incident occurred about 8:pm.

According to him, nine vehicles and part of the just commissioned Teslim Balogun stadium were consumed in the inferno, even as some men of the state Traffic Management Authority [LASTMA] were beaten by sympathizers who faulted their attitude during the incident that lasted for about six hours.

The commissioner who blamed the incident on the tanker driver's recklessness of the tanker driver explained that "the driver fell off the stadium bridge on Funsho Williams avenue, and emptied the petroleum product into the drainage," adding that it was an Okada man who was desperate to vacate the area that ignorantly ignited the fuel.

Speaking also commissioner for Transportation, Prof. Dele Badejo, who conveyed the state government's renewed efforts to stop a ugly incident declared that the Vehicle Inspection arm of the ministry of Transportation has been directed to step up checks towards reducing unworthy vehicles on Lagos roads.

On the directive to conduct DNA to trace the trailer driver and those with him, Badejo said, "Attempts to use the number plates to trace the residences of the owners of the vehicles on our database were also frustrated as the intensity of the fire mangled and burnt the number plates."

He commending the efforts of the Police, the state Accident and Emergency Services LASTMA and the fire service for their boldness and selflessness at combating the fire and rescuing those trapped in the incident.

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