

# Tragedy: 28 women perish in auto crash

EMMA OGU, Owerri

**A**BOUT 28 women attending a funeral ceremony perished, yesterday, at Okohia, in Isiala Mbano local government area of Imo state in a ghastly motor accident involving their 508 model Mercedes bus and a tipper.

Only one, among the occupants reportedly survived, though, badly injured. But the driver of the

bus died on the spot, while the tipper driver escaped into the bush.

*Saturday Champion* recalls that just three days back, 20 people were crushed beyond recognition in a fatal accident involving two L300 model buses at Avu junction along Owerri-Port Harcourt.

The Okohia accident occurred at about 10.30 am around a dangerous sloppy spot known as "Ugwu Omere lawyer," (the hill that dealt

with a lawyer on the newly constructed Okohia road that bursts at Anara in Isiala Mbano.

The women, who were said to be heading to Nkwere in the chartered vehicle for a burial ceremony, were believed to be members of an association or of same community. The aged overloaded coaster bus with Cross River State registration number, AG 615 CAL, reportedly took off from Aba

in Abia state and collided, head-on, with the tipper, which has the registration number XA 666 AFR.

The tipper blew off entirely the body of the bus up to the roof top, leaving the tires and engine area, which ran into the bush. The entire wreckage of the rickety bus was soaked with tick blood, including the tires and the iron seats.

The victims' bodies were dismembered. Some had their heads, limbs and legs completely chopped off. The scene was littered with human brain, flesh and blood alongside personal effects of the victims like shoes, wrappers and shirts etc.

In fact, sympathizers and passersby had to cover their nostrils with hands to stave off the pungent smell of fresh blood that filled the air at the scene. Tears flowed as the dismembered bodies of the women were packed like sardine in three ambulances that headed towards Aba.

As at press time, the cause of the accident was yet to be established. Sector commander of the Federal Road Safety Commission, Angus Ibezim, told our correspondent when contacted on phone, that he had contacted his men on duty in Mbano to move to the scene of the fatal accident.

When contacted, Police Public Relations Officer, Linus Nwaiwu, said he was not yet aware of the accident but described it as unfortunate.

## Count us out of N/Delta summit—Reps

ADELANI ASHAMU, Abuja

**H**OUSE of Representatives, yesterday, dissociated itself from the controversial Niger Delta Summit saying the initiative was solely that of the Presidency.

Answering questions from House correspondents in Abuja yesterday, House Committee Chairman on Public Affairs, Eziuche Ubani, said those who are seeking the view of the House regarding the subject should realise that the planned summit was not a business for the House but that of the federal government who mooted the idea and is working out its execution.

He said what is in the business of the House and for which the members are conscientiously looking at is how to increase

budgetary allocation to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), to accelerate the development of the region indeed the people.

The planned Niger Delta Summit in the past one month, has elicited so much uproar, particularly as it affects the choice of those to serve on the steering committee. Professor Ibrahim Gambari, was recently dropped as a result of the controversies surrounding the idea of the summit.

Hon. Ubani, who also used the forum to correct certain perceptions about the various probes in the House, said there was no truth in the information being peddled on the forthcoming NNPC probe, adding that the various figures being reported as received by the leadership of the House are mere speculations.

According to him, "the leadership of the House has not received any money with respect to executing the probe."

The Public Affairs Committee chairman also said it was misinformation that the final report on the power probe will be submitted to the Speaker in his office.

Contrary to this speculation, he said "the report will be presented to the Speaker on the floor of the House after work is concluded on it."

On the removal and replacement of Festus Adegoke as House committee chairman on appropriation by Hon. Ayo Adesun. Ubani said the change was without any grudge but to provide more efficiency, adding that the House found out that the last budget was not properly tied up.

Revels to organise education