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## 15 feared dead in 3 mishaps

DENNIS NAKU, Port Harcourt, LUKKEY ABAWURU, Lagos and  
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AT least six women were among 15 people **feared dead** yesterday in **three** separate mishaps occurring in Rivers, Lagos and Anambra states.

In Onne, near Port Harcourt, Rivers State capital, a black Infinity jeep crushed nine people including six women to death. Its driver was said to have escaped jungle justice.

Elsewhere in Ihiala, headquarters of Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State, a gang of 12 armed robbers stormed three new generation banks, carting away millions of naira before they were intercepted by security agents.

Four people were reportedly felled during a shoot-out between the fleeing robbers and a combined team of soldiers, policemen and vigilante groups.

However, in Lagos two people were roasted to death when 16 petrol tankers caught fire at Bola Ahmed Tinubu Park at the Doyin area of Orile, Iganmu, Lagos.

An eyewitness said the jeep was coming from Onne on Tuesday about 8.10 a.m when its driver lost control and crushed the victims, six women and **three** men who were sitting in a makeshift restaurant at Eleme **Road**, Onne.

Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) for Rivers State Command, Dr. Rita Inoma-Abbey confirmed the incident to *Daily Champion*.

She said: "The driver escaped while patrol is on trail for him and investigation too in progress.

Similarly, over four people including two security agents were yesterday **feared dead** following a robbery operations that lasted over **three** hours in which **three** banks in Ihiala were robbed.

*Daily Champion learnt the daredevil robbers carted away an undisclosed huge sum of money before they were ambushed by security agents including soldiers.*

According to our source, it was further gathered that in an effort to apprehend the fleeing robbers local vigilante members and villagers mobilized and went in search of the armed robbers who were said to have run into the bush although five of them were said to have been arrested by a combined team of security agents.

However, the incident which lasted for over **three** hours paralysed human and vehicular movement on the ever busy Owerri/Onitsha **Road**, as well as the Orlu axis.

Sources said many civilians were injured in the course of the tragic incident as police were said to have scampered for safety.

At the time of filing this report a combined team of the police, army, vigilantes and villagers were still ransacking the vicinity in search of the fleeing armed robbers.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr. Emeka Chukwuemeka (ASP), confirmed the incident and said five members of the armed robbery gang were arrested by a combined team of the army, police and the local vigilante operatives as arms and ammunition were equally recovered from them. He further said that there was no casualty on the side of the police.

Meanwhile, two persons were **feared dead** and 16 tankers burnt when fire gutted Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu Park at Doyin, Orile-Iganmu, Lagos. *Daily Champion* gathered that the fire started at about 12 noon and was raging till about 6pm when our reporter visited the scene.

The identity of the deceased could not be ascertained as at press time but a source said the casualties were *Area boys* who were siphoning oil from the tanker before it exploded .

Our reporter observed that social and economic activities in the area were brought to a halt as people scampered for safety.

Although there were various accounts of the cause of the fire, *Daily Champion* learnt that the fire was caused by Area Boys who were mixing oil and kerosene inside the park. We learnt the *Area Boys* were siphoning oil from a tanker with registration number XL 822 KTU and at the same time smoking Indian hemp which caught fire and exploded..

Our source who pleaded for anonymity said the hoodlums were among those that died in the inferno. He explained that the miscreants, also known as *Rice and Beans* are people who wait for the return of trucks after discharging their contents for the last drops of oil which they siphon from almost all the trucks and later mix with kerosene to increase the quantity before selling them to **road** side oil sellers.

He said the Area Boys were scooping the oil before the fire.

However another source said that a tanker was trans-loading diesel before it caught fire from the smoke of one of the Indian hemp smokers.

Speaking with *Daily Champion*, Director of Lagos State Fire and Safety Services, Mr. Adedoyin Ajose confirmed that 16 trucks were burnt. He declined comment on the casualty figure. Ajose, said the men of the Fire Services promptly arrived at the scene and assisted in putting the fire off.” Sixteen trucks were affected. You can see them yourselves. Our men arrived on time and as at 4p.m we have successfully achieved over 90 percent in quelling the fire.”

Also, the Sarkin Hausa, Alhaji Mustapha Mohammed told our correspondent that the fire would have been avoided if the government, especially local government, has representatives to monitor activities of people in the park. He said majority of the tankers came from Maiduguri. “The trucks are from Maiduguri and half of them are owned by one person .The cost of each truck is about N4million and the *Area Boys* have caused havoc to him because of little oil.”

Mohammed further urged Oba of Ijora and Divisional Police Officer of Orile to deploy vigilante people in the area.

Confirming the incident, the Lagos State Police spokesman Mr. Frank Mba, said 16 trucks were burnt.