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38 die in two crashes

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Accident

Eighteen passengers travelling in a Toyota Hiace bus died on the Abuja-Lokoja highway on Saturday night while another 20 persons also died the same day on the Nsukka-Enugu highway in Enugu State when two buses in which they were travelling had a head-on collision. The combined death toll of 38 from the two accidents alone made it one of the bloodiest weekends in the history of Nigerian road carnage.

The accident on the Abuja-Lokoja highway occurred Anini village near Kwaita. Sector Commandant of the Federal Road Safety Commission in the

Federal Capital Territory [FCT] Nseobong Akpabio said it occurred at about 10:40pm and involved a white 18 seater Toyota Hiace mini bus with Registration Number Edo XP 269 BEN and a 60 seater Luxury bus with Registration Number Lagos XV 952 APP belonging to Best Way Transport Company Ltd. He said dangerous driving was the cause of the accident.

"The mini bus carrying 19 passengers and the driver was on its way to Kano from Benin City, Edo State while the Luxury bus was conveying 50 passengers to Lagos from Kaduna," he said. The Luxury bus veered into the lane of the on-coming Mini bus at high speed to overtake slower vehicles and collided with the mini bus head on.

Akpabio said 17 passengers in the Toyota bus died on the spot while another passenger from same bus died at the General Hospital, Kwali where the FRSC rescue team took the injured persons. Two people in the Luxury bus including the driver and his assistant were severely injured and are currently at the Kwali Hospital. He said the FRSC Rescue officials led by the Unit Commander, Yangoji Unit Command Cdr Abdullahi Umar in conjunction with policemen from the Kwali Divisional Police Station conducted the rescue operation.

He said another driver who arrived at the scene from Benin on his way to Kano shortly after the crash, identified the 19 male passengers in the Mini bus as Hausa speaking Muslim traders who departed Benin just before he did. "He identified the dead victims as Alhaji Idris (the bus driver), Alhaji Yaron Mota, Malam Dan Birni, Wamzam Kabiru and Usman Yahya, all from Kano State. He also identified Alhaji Mamman, Hassan, Abdullahi Umar, Umar Hussaini, Rabi'u Umaru, Musa Idris, Nasiru Mohammed, Alaramah Mohammed, Abdullahi Alhaji Garba and Magawata Saidu, all from Kebbi State. Accident victim Musa Sanni was identified to be from Zamfara State while Bala Mai'adua was from Katsina State," Akpabio said.

The Sector Commander said there was no Passenger Manifest in the Mini bus to identify the addresses of the passengers. "There was no Passenger Manifest, being the condition spelt out by the National Road Traffic Regulations 2004 and the Federal Road Safety Commission (Establishment) Act 2007, to confirm the true identities of the dead accident victims. The only survivor now is still in the Kwali General Hospital and could not give us any information yet," he said.

A witness at the accident scene said the dead men were buried at Yangoji. "The 17 dead victims were given mass burial after much consultation among the Hausa community leaders at Yangoji as well as with the police," he said.

Police Public Relations Officer in Abuja DSP Moshood Jimoh said the corpses were released for the burial after some of the victims were identified by family members. He said 17 corpses were buried there while one was released to the victim's family.

The FRSC Commandant said the two buses left their destinations late in the day, thereby embarking on a night journey which contributed to the fatal accident. He said people must avoid travelling at night because drivers usually have poor visibility and often fall asleep due to fatigue. The twenty casualties in Enugu State were recorded when two commercial buses had a head-on collision at Umuna on the Enugu-Nsukka express road.

Mr Ikechukwu Okwor, Head, FRSC Nsukka Operation unit, said in Nsukka that the remaining 21 of the 41 passengers in the two vehicles were seriously injured. "Seven women, five children and eight men died on the spot, while those injured are receiving treatment at the Bishop Shanahan Hospital," he said. Okwor blamed the accident on over speeding, "which made one of the buses belonging to the Enugu State Transport Company (ENTRACO) to catch fire". He said the other bus belonged to Peace Mass Transit.

Mr Paul Ezeugwu, branch Manager of ENTRACO, said the bus involved was travelling from Kaduna to

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Enugu when the incident occurred. "All the 18 adult passengers in the bus died, but a child survived," he said.

Meanwhile, 18 NYSC members were also involved in an accident on Saturday on their way to Uzo-Uwani to attend the burial of a colleague, Miss Scholastica Enechi, who was serving in Abuja.

Mr Charles Ugwuoti, Nsukka NYSC Liaison officer, said the accident occurred when the bus conveying the corps members somersaulted.

He said nobody died and those who sustained injuries were receiving treatment at the Shanahan Hospital.

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