

16 die in Okene-Benin road crash

From Usman A. Bello, Lokoja & Vincent Egunyanga, Benin

SIXTEEN persons lost their lives yesterday in an accident involving two passenger buses on the Benin to Okene expressway, Daily Trust learnt in both Lokoja and Benin.

Our reporter in Lokoja was told by the authorities that 16 persons died while 10 were injured in the accident.

Kogi State Sector Commander of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) Sunday Maku said the accident involved a Toyota Hiace bus with registration number XT 911 FKJ and another Toyota Hiace bus with registration number XJ 700 USL.

He said the accident happened about 13 kilometres away from Okene town along the Auchi -Okene road when one of the vehicles coming from

Benin dangerously overtook another vehicle and in the process collided with an on-coming vehicle from Abuja, killing 16 people on the spot.

The Sector Commander said 30 people were involved in the accident, adding that out of the number, 16 people died, 10 were injured while four others escaped unhurt.

"Among the 16 corpses were nine
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30 die in Okene-Benin road crash

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male adults, six female adults and one child, while the injured ones include eight male adults and two female adults," the sector commander said.

He said the injured ones were taken to the Okene General Hospital for treatment while the corpses were deposited at the hospital's morgue.

Maku attributed the accident to dangerous overtaking and warned motorists to desist from reckless driving and over speeding, saying that it account for most of the accidents that occur along the Auchi - Lokoja - Abuja

highway.

He appealed to motorists to desist from reckless driving as Christmas is approaching, saying that the volume of vehicles plying the road has increased.

There were however conflicting accounts provided by different people. Witnesses in Benin told our reporter that one of the passenger buses belonging to Big Joe Ventures was going to Kano when it had a head-on collision with another yet to be identified bus which was heading towards Edo State from the North.

A man who said he witnessed the accident told newsmen that all the passengers in both vehi-

cles lost their lives. The magnitude of the accident was such that both vehicles were squeezed almost beyond recognition, trapping all passengers on board. The express road became chocked up as many travellers on the route disembarked from their vehicles and went to inspect the accident scene.

The accident was attributed by many witnesses to over speeding by the drivers. Attempts to reach the sector commander of the Federal Road Safety Corps in Edo for comments proved abortive as the command was said to have mobilized its men and material to join its Kogi state counter-

part to restore order on the busy expressway.

When news of the accident filtered into town, several families were seen making quick checks on the passenger manifest at the corporate headquarters of the company at Aduwawa, Benin City.

Edo State commissioner of Police David Omojola told Daily Trust on phone that he could not comment on the incident, since it did not occur within Edo State command. It will be recalled that over 20 people were reportedly killed in a similar road accident along the Benin - Ore road last week.