

IN-DEPTH

Tanker explosion kills 13, injured many in Jos

From Ado Abubakar Musa,
Jos

It was a sad moment for the residents of Bauchi Junction and its environs in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, when a petrol tanker exploded in the area. It was a scene of agony which could be seen in the faces of not only the passers-by and motorists, but housewives and children living close to the area where the incident happened.

Eyewitnesses told *Daily Trust* that no fewer than 13 people were killed in the explosion with more than 20 sustaining various degrees of injury.

The incident, according to eyewitnesses, occurred around 2pm when the tanker driver who was heading to Bauchi lost control and eventually the vehicle tumbled, leading to an explosion.

The eyewitnesses said the tanker had also run into several vehicles before it tumbled, adding that a good number of vehicles and tricycles were destroyed by the fire.

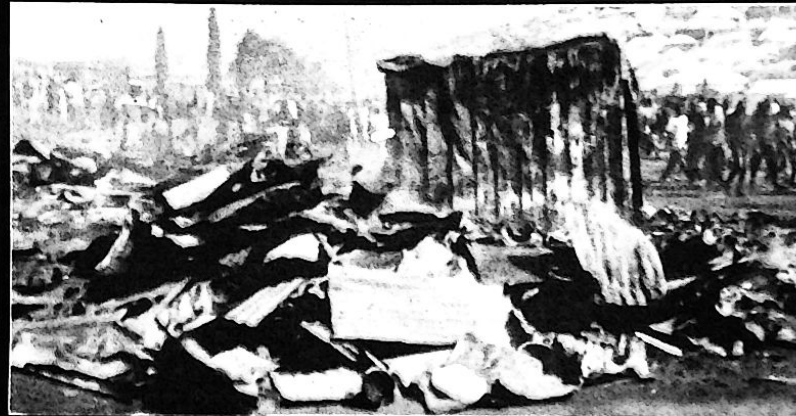
Aminu Bala Yusuf, a taxi driver, said the accident occurred around 2: pm when everyone was going about their normal activities.

"I am a taxi driver. I was there when the incident occurred. What happened was a tanker had parked around a filling station close to this junction and all of a sudden, the tanker started moving. The driver managed to enter the vehicle but couldn't control it. Eventually, the tanker fell down," he said.

Jibril Abubakar, another taxi driver, said: "It was a sad moment. We were just sitting down when suddenly we heard that a tanker had exploded. I counted more than ten bodies; many people have died. Vehicles were lost. Shop owners lost their



■ The tanker



■ Shops



■ FRSC burnt car

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Mustafa Adam lost his tricycle to the incident. He said, "I was coming from Naraguta with four passengers when I saw the tanker coming towards us. When I realised this, I quickly asked the passengers to get out.

"Within a short time, we were already trapped. We were lucky that four of us escaped and one other sustained a serious injury. He had been taken to the hospital for treatment. It was a terrible experience."

Our correspondent, at the scene of the incident, counted 11 dead bodies that were later evacuated to Plateau Specialist Hospital by FRSC officials and Nigeria aid group, Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI). Other

victims who sustained injuries were evacuated to different hospitals within the state capital for treatment.

Hoodlums blocked highway, burnt FRSC vehicle

Hoodlums in their numbers blocked the popular Jos-Bauchi highway after the explosion, accusing firefighters of coming to the scene late. They also burnt down a vehicle belonging to the FRSC, which was on a rescue mission.

The blockage of the road by the hoodlums left many travellers stranded; many motorists packed their vehicles along the roadside while others made a U-turn to avoid being trapped.

The hoodlums were later

dispersed by security personnel of Operation Safe Haven (OPSH), a multi-security task force maintaining peace in the state, police and other security agencies.

FRSC commander reacts

Alphonsus Godwin, Sector Commander of Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) in the state, confirmed the incident but couldn't give the casualty figure.

He said: "The incident occurred when the tanker driver lost control and eventually ran into some vehicles. Fire gutted the tanker and other vehicles around the scene of the incident. When we heard about the incident we immediately mobilised three vehicles to the

area for rescue.

"In the course of the rescue, one of our vehicles was burnt by hoodlums and the other one was destroyed. Even our ambulance was destroyed. I don't know the number of those who lost their lives but we have rescued a number of injured people and taken them to various hospitals for treatment."

How to avoid future accidents - Residents

Many residents of the area complained that the government's refusal to dualise the road and construct a flyover had been the major cause of accidents around the area. They said hundreds of lives were lost in several accidents in the area.

Sulaiman Hassan said: "Government knows that we don't have roads around this area. We want government to dualise the road and construct

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a flyover. Government should also ask the traders displaying their wares close to the road to leave the area."

Bashir Jos, another member of the community, said: "The cause of accidents is lack of a good road around this area. Considering how busy the road is, it should have been made wider. At one point, government started the work but later stopped. We want a flyover here. If constructed, it would help to reduce accidents in the area."

Daily Trust reports that the popular Bauchi Junction has connected virtually all states of the North East to Jos and there have been several reports of accidents at the spot which had claimed hundreds of lives.