

# Kaduna fuel explosion claims 70 lives

**T**HE Police Command in Kaduna yesterday confirmed that 70 persons, mostly youths, were burnt to death while siphoning fuel from a fallen petrol tanker at Katugal, a suburb of Kaduna. Several other victims are said to be in critical condition in various hospitals.

The incident occurred when a 33,000-litre tanker, which was conveying Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), or petrol, from Suleja, Niger State to southern Kaduna on Monday night overturned as the driver lost control at a bend by the community, 45 kilometres from Jere.

The driver, an eyewitness said, warned the youths who swooped on the fuel to steer clear of the danger but they failed to heed his advice until one of the buckets they were using allegedly caused a spark, which resulted in an explosion.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Yahaya Sa'ad, also said that the sight of the gushing fuel from the

tanker caused several villagers to rush to the scene with containers and buckets.

Said he: "We visited the scene as usual and from our records, 70 people died. We know of only one survivor at the Kargarko General hospital. Some have been taken to Kafanchan for further treatment. We are still investigating the matter."

"A tanker fell on the road side, the people went scooping for fuel from it and fire was ignited. We believe the tanker was from the Suleja Depot. It had fuel and the nearest depot was Suleja. Some of the villagers came and have identified the victims. A mass burial was given to the victims."

Executive Secretary of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Aliyu Saleh Ramonkura, who claimed to have visited the scene, also explained: "When we came, we discovered that 69 people were killed instantly by the fire. Nine other victims who suffered various degrees of burns were

*From Saxone Akhaine,  
Kaduna*

taken to Kagarko General Hospital where four died."

The remaining five, he said, have been transferred to Barau Dikko Specialist Hospital in Kaduna while 16 other victims were taken to Kafanchan where 10 later died. The other six have been transferred to Uni-

versity of Jos Teaching Hospital for better treatment."

District Head of Katugal, Mr. Ishaku Gado, said he was at home when he heard about the accident. He lamented that a generation of the youth in the community had been lost to the inferno.

His words: "When I came out, I saw a thick black smoke that had erupted from the direction of the

accident. I moved towards it but met some people who were rescuing the victims. We quickly took those rescued to hospitals at Kwoi and Kafanchan."

Meanwhile, Secretary to Kaduna State Government (SSG) Mr. Felix Hassan Hyet, who also visited the scene of the accident said the state government had taken up responsibility of treating the victims and carrying

out the burial of the

"It is unfortunate. accident could have prevented if our people would not fish in troubled waters. The state government has taken responsibility for treatment of the victims and the burial of the dead. We are transferring those that survived to Kaduna and Jos for more efficient medical services," noted.



Men arrested in