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National
 Metro
 Africa
 World
 Business

OPINION

Editorial
 Columnists
 Contributors
 Letters
 Cartoons
 Discussions
 Outlook

SPORTS

Home
 Abroad
 Golf Weekly
 Results

FEATURES

Focus
 Policy & Politics
 Arts
 Media
 Science
 Natural Health
 Law
 Education
 Weekend
 Friday Review
 Executive Briefs
 Fashion
 Food & Drink
 Auto Wheels
 Friday Worship
 Saturday Magazine
 Sunday Magazine
 Ibru Ecumenical
 Centre
 Agro Care

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Property
 Appointments
 Money Watch
 Market Report
 Capital Market
 Business Travels
 Maritime Watch
 Industry Watch

Nine die in Imo, Delta auto crashes

From Chido Okafor, Warri, with agency reports

LAST weekend was a sad one for the Etsu Nupe traditional council as it lost five of its members to in automobile crash which occurred on the Owerri-Onitsha road, Imo State.

The Saturday accident, according to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), involved the motorcade of the Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Yahaya Abubakar.

Four persons, including a mother and her child, were also crushed to death in another accident along the PTI expressway junction in Effurun, Delta State.

Those who passed on in the accident, according to a senior member of the Etsu's traditional council, Alhaji Abdulmalik Ndayako who confirmed the incident to NAN yesterday in Minna, Niger State, included the Wazirin Nupe, Alhaji Mohammed Kudu.

Others were the Etsu's Secretary, Alhaji Usman Mohammed, a one-time Chairman of Bida Local Council, Alhaji Abdurrahman Nma and the Etsu-Onitsha, Alhaji Halidu Ladan, and the driver of the vehicle, Malam Sani Mohammed.

Palace sources in Bida said yesterday that the accident happened at about 4p.m. on Saturday when the motorcade was travelling back to Niger State from Owerri, Imo State - and the vehicle, conveying senior members of the entourage, attempted to avoid a pothole.

In the process, it skidded off the road and somersaulted into a ditch.

The source said all the occupants of the vehicle died on the spot as attempts to rescue them failed.

The Etsu, who doubles as chairman of the Niger State Council of Traditional Rulers and the Abuja National Mosque Committee, was in Owerri for a religious function, organised by some Moslems resident in the eastern part of the country.

However, in the Delta auto crash, four persons were feared crushed to death and seven others seriously injured yesterday morning when a truck carrying a container of burnt bricks somersaulted at top speed yesterday morning.

The truck, The Guardian learnt, was being chased by a team of policemen when he failed to heed the signal to stop.

The incident, which occurred at about 7.35a.m. at the ever busy PTI expressway junction, held up traffic for almost five hours and it took the intervention of Chevron Nigeria Limited staff who brought in their heavy duty crane to clear the highway amidst tight security.

Although the identities of the deceased were not immediately known, a mother and her child were amongst the dead while the driver of the truck was among the survivors.



Witnesses said the police team was pursuing the truck driver for his failure to obey traffic rules but when he negotiated a bend, the container fell off and the trailer somersaulted and crashed unto the victims.

The Divisional Police Officer in charge of the Ekpan Police Station declined comments when told his men were chasing the truck when the accident occurred.


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