

60 Illegal Bunkers Roasted Alive In PH

• 20 Die In Osun Auto Crash

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No fewer than 60 persons engaged in illegal bunkering of petroleum products reportedly lost their lives in the Soku area of Rivers State on Wednesday in a fire incident.

Saturday Independent gathered that the inferno was ignited by sparks from two iron heads used as anchor of the boats used for the bunkering.

The fire was said to have spread to other boats that were also loading fuel illegally.

Eyewitnesses said scores of others narrowly escaped unscathed just as an unspecified number of persons sustained various degrees of injuries. Those who escaped were said to have jumped into the river and swum to safety.

Sources said out of the 60 suspected to have died in the incident, six were from Andoni, while others were from riverine communities in Rivers, Bayelsa and neighbouring states in the Niger Delta.

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Soku is notorious for illegal oil bunkering business. Vandals are always on the prowl in the area, wrecking oil pipelines to siphon refined petroleum products.

While majority of the illegal dealers use locally made wooden boats to convey the products from their loading points to the various sale outlets in the hinterlands, others use barges powered by heavy duty tugs.

Navy Public Relations Officer, Way Obasi, could, however, not confirm the story as he said he had not been informed of the incident from his men in the rivers and creeks.

Tragedy also struck in the South West on Friday, as 20 persons were roasted to death while 10 others sustained injuries in a multiple auto crash along the Ife-Ibadan expressway in Osun State.

Eyewitnesses said 17 of the victims died on the spot in the accident

that involved four vehicles - a trailer loaded with several crates of beer, a commercial Peugeot 504 station wagon car, a Mitsubishi bus and a BMW car.

Some sympathisers at the scene of the accident, however, said that it occurred at about 8pm on Thursday night while some others said it happened very early on Friday morning.

When our correspondent got to the scene around 8am on Friday,

the fire was still raging with some of the victims trapped in the inferno.

A police officer, identified as ASP Aiyegbeiniu, who led the police rescue team to the scene, confirmed that about 17 dead bodies had been taken from the scene.

He said those rescued had been taken to the emergency ward of the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital, Ile-Ife, for treatment.