

Fuel tankers, bad roads and accidents in Nigeria

On Thursday December 2, 2010, about 21 people, including a pregnant woman, her two year old kid and husband were killed in an explosive fire that gutted a fuel tanker around Alakija on Mile 2-Badagry express way in Lagos.

The man that drove the car in which the pregnant woman was killed had earlier escaped but went back into the car when he heard his two year old son saying "Daddy please come and take me."

An eye witness said that the pregnant wife was also shouting "honey please assist. Don't let us die inside this fire." The man, according to an eye witness, Aaron Ukodie, went back but he was engulfed by the raging inferno which also burnt his pregnant wife and the kid to death.

About 10 cars, two Peugeot buses and other properties worth millions of naira were also raised in the accident, which occurred about two days after the Petroleum Tanker Drivers (PTD) branch of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) suspended its seven-day warning strike.

The tanker drivers have, for the umpteenth time, went in and out of strike to protest the horrible state of federal roads based on the statistics that many lives were lost in the course of their daily activities.

The statistics released by the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) showed that over 32,000 people die in Nigeria due to road accidents every year.

Executive Director, Accident Prevention and Rescue Initiative (APRI), Abuja Nigeria, Fidelis Nnadi, corroborated the statement when he said Nigeria loses an estimated 35,000 of its citizens to road accidents annually.

But the government has yet to do anything tangible to address the problem.

Lagos zonal Chairman of NUPENG, Tokunbo Korodo told *Daily Independent* that the government has particularly been unserious about the need to put the roads in proper shape.

It would be recalled that many accidents involving fuel tankers have claimed lives of many innocent Nigerians.

No fewer than 16 fuel trucks were burnt two months ago in a fire incident that occurred at the truck park along Orile-Ijora Road, Lagos.

It was a case of multiple and fatal accidents when a fuel tanker crushed 16 other vehicles in Asokoro District of Abuja. Investigations reveal that the trailer driver failed to stop at the Water Board Junction where the traffic warden had stopped all vehicles from Nyanya through the AYA Bridge.

The news that drew tears from many people on Tuesday, November 31, 2010 was that of a tanker which rammed into another truck at Adodo. Mowo Bus stop in Badagry area of Lagos killing no fewer than 10. About 22 vehicles were said to have been set ablaze in the incidence.

The rate at which fuel tanker accidents claim lives of motorists on Nigerian roads has reached a disturbing level in recent times.

Another of such mind boggling major accidents caused by fuel laden tankers that recently claimed scores of lives occurred separately in Abuja and Lagos.

Recently 14 passengers lost their lives, while two others sustained serious injuries in a fatal motor accident that occurred at Kuru village, near Abaji recently.

A witness, Yakubu Ismaila, said the accident happened when an 18-seat Toyota commercial bus with registration number XH 250 JJN overtook another vehicle at a sharp bend and collided with a petrol tanker, killing 14 passengers in the bus instantly.

The bus driver and 13 of his passengers died on the spot and officials of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) evacuated the corpses to the mortuary, the witness said.

On Tuesday, November 14, 2010 a major accident occurred along Lagos-Ibadan Expressway when a trailer loaded with PMS

Over 32,000 people die in Nigeria due to road accidents every year out of which fuel tanker accidents amount for over 69 per cent. CORRESPONDENT, Adeola Yusuf writes that the lip service, which the federal government is paying to rehabilitation of roads shows that more Nigerian may die of fuel tanker accidents in 2011.



• Jonathan



• Alison-Madueke

from Lagos lost control at Kara Ibafo and caught fire. Another multiple accident recently along Otedola Estate, Berger Bus Stop, on the same Expressway, left more than 20 people dead and several others injured.

As if there is "intimacy" between Tuesday and fuel tankers accidents, on another Tuesday June 10 2008, a Conoil tanker carrying 33,000 litres of motor fuel had collided with a taxi at the Oworonsoki end of the Third Mainland Bridge, Lagos. The taxi driver ignorantly tried to kick-start his car to escape from the fuel dripping from the tanker. Unfortunately, it exploded. Six cars were burnt in the inferno. There was no human casualty.

About one month earlier in the early hours of May 7, a truck driver had lost control of his vehicle and rammed into a building in the neighbourhood at Ojelade Street, off Ikorodu Road Fadeyi, Lagos. Several drums of

Ethanol he was carrying spilled into the street and caught fire. The inferno which woke the residents from their sleep razed buildings, vehicles and other valuables within a space of an hour. No life was lost.

The Ibadan tanker truck explosion was one of the worst ever multi-vehicle accidents, killing about 200 people near Ibadan on November 5, 2000. The accident occurred outside Ibadan, on a stretch of motorway connecting Ibadan and Ife to the eastern Nigeria.

It is noteworthy that Nigeria suffers heavy traffic circulation problem, and this day was no exception, with a large traffic jam covering all lanes of the road and numerous pedestrians weaving in between them. A large petrol tanker, bringing fuel to Ife, was travelling on the same road at high speed, when it suddenly encountered the traffic jam and attempted to come to a halt. At this point, the poorly maintained vehicle suffered a to-

tal brake failure, and ploughed straight into the queue of cars ahead. The number killed in the initial collision was probably high, but they will never be known, because the tanker which had finally come to rest on its side had begun to leak its highly flammable load onto the roadway. Within seconds, this trail was alight, and the tanker disappeared in an enormous fireball, which rose above the city and devastated a wide area around the accident scene. Those still in their cars trapped in the crash wreckage, or standing too close were immolated instantly, while those further away were burnt to death or hit by flying shrapnel from the blast. Burning wreckage caused several small fires in the nearby suburbs.

Transportation Risk Analysts have blamed this scourge on the over-reliance of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and Pipeline and Products Marketing Company (PPMC) on the road mode for distribution of petroleum products without giving due consideration to the environmental consequences.

Last Line

The states of federal roads in Nigeria deserves that pages of manifestos of presidential aspirants for various political parties in the 2011 elections should be adorned with possible ways of fixing them. The tankers drivers, in the same vein, should pursue their agitations for motorable roads with more commitments.

All Nigerians are not left out of the need to join the drivers to demand that the road be fixed. All hands must be on deck to save Nigerians from meeting untimely death from fuel tankers accidents.

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