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Also speaking at the scene, Chief Kennedy Njoku, representing Osisio-ma Constituency in the Abia State House of Assembly, said that he was saddened by the unfortunate incident.

Njoku, who said that he came to the scene to see things for himself.

"It is a black Friday," he said, adding that it was unimaginable that people could take such a big risk to make economic gain.

He said that the incident could have been averted if the security operatives deployed for surveillance along the pipelines "were alive to their duty."

Meanwhile, 18 persons died while two others sustained injuries in a lone accident involving a Hilux Pickup vehicle in Yautare village of Darazo Local Government area of Bauchi State on Friday.

Mr Paul Gua, the Bauchi State Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Sector Head of Operation, confirmed the incident to Daily Independent at his office in Bauchi.

Mr Gua said that the Hilux Pickup with registration number DRZ 716 XA had a tyre-burst while on top speed which resulted in the accident.

He stated that 20 adult males were in the vehicle when the accident happened at about 12.30 pm, saying that 16 persons died on the spot while two other persons later died at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) in Azare town while receiving treatment.

"The commercial vehicle which was conveying 20 passengers skipped off the road and lost control as a result of the tyre that burst. The vehicle ran into the bush as it hit several trees and rock formations and in the process, many of the victims lost their lives and sustained fatal injuries"

"The other two persons are at a very critical condition. They were transferred from the Federal Medical Centre, Azare to the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Teaching Hospital Bauchi, where they are currently receiving treatment," he said.

The FRSC Head of Operation said that the corpse of the deceased persons had been deposited at the Federal Medical Centre, Azare mortuary, while the vehicle had been evacuated by the officers of the command.

In Ibadan, Oyo State capital, on Friday, a petrol tanker crushed an infant, her mother, and a commercial tricycle operator.

The accident occurred at Ring Road area of Ibadan.

The fuel laden tanker reportedly lost control and rammed into the people.

The nursing mother and her baby were reportedly going to Apata area of the city when they met their untimely death.

Daily INDEPENDENT gathered that the accident was as a result of brake failure.

Eyewitness accounts had it that the driver in order to avoid running into other vehicles, decided to make a detour into a lay-by where it hit the victims who died immediately.

The crowd of sympathisers, who immediately after the accident besieged the scene attempted to seize the driver and burn the vehicle.

It took the timely intervention of policemen before the irate crowd was prevented from setting both the truck and its driver ablaze.

Adekunle Ajisebutu, the Police Public Relations Officer, Oyo State Command, confirmed the accident.

Ajisebutu, however, maintained that the actual number of victims of the accident was yet to be ascertained.