

One feared dead, 30 cars burnt as fire razes mechanic workshop

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One person was feared dead and about 30 vehicles were destroyed yesterday, when fire swept through below Apapa Bridge close to Snake Island.

The fire was caused by a fallen fuel tanker. The NNPC tanker, which spilled its content was speeding through the curvy road when its driver lost control.

Some hoodlums descended on the scene and began to scoop fuel.

A mechanic workshop under the bridge was razed. Many customers were shocked on their return to see their vehicles burnt.

The bridge's pillars were cracked and marred with smoke.

A worker who simply gave his name as Owolabi who lost two vehicles, said: "What we saw was that the trailer sped into the curvy road, trying to navigate the main express way. In that process, the tanker's head detached from the fuel container. For more than 45 minutes, there was no fire outbreak. But some area boys started scooping the fuel to hoard at a nearby garage. Fire broke out there and burnt some of them. They tried to contain the fire but it spread to the main spot where the tanker fell. The driver drove away the detached part and left the tanker behind.

Most of the cars here are owned by customers who brought them for repair, Tokunbo vehicle sellers and villagers from Snake Island, Igbologun across the water. They don't have road access there; so when they return from work, they would usually park here and come for their vehicles the following day. Two of my vehicles were destroyed. The government should please save us from these tankers. If it happened in a congested residential area, many lives would have been lost. The vehicles lost here is worth about N50million."

A man who simply identified himself as Ayo condemned the way tanker drivers operate in the area, asking the government to intervene.

According to him, the tankers are fond of selling to black marketers after loading from their depots.

He said: "I want to beg the government to help us deal with those who sell fuel on the road, especially those who sell on their way from the depots. If they load from the depot, on their way out, they sell per drum, per litre, per keg, to black marketers. It has happened before when fire broke out when they were selling. This fire could have spread to my father's house because it's close to the bridge. One of my friend's Toyota Camry, he just bought last month got burnt. He lives on the Snake Island and only parked it here. There is even a Chief who has about three cars here. One of my relations too also has a peacock jeep too he wanted to sell."

A mechanic, Adebayo said his customers were still in shock, adding: "I was at home when my friend called that fire had razed our workshop. All our customers' vehicles were totally burnt. They only pardoned us because it was obvious it wasn't our fault. I cannot express the kind of sadness displayed on their faces. When my customer came, it was as if his source of livelihood had been cut off. The owner of one Camry car almost ran mad."

A member of the Tipper union, Suleiman Olanrewaju said: "Some people were chasing those hoodlums away and asking them to stop fetching the fuel but they refused. One of them fell and caused the fire to spread. This people must stop this kind of thing because they eventually harmed those who didn't even have anything to do with the fuel. We all feed our families from here. If the government asks us to leave now, where do we go? We know they are trying their best to develop the state."