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# 14 die, 25 injured in Christmas Day auto crashes

•Nigerians in subdued festivities

A total of 14 people were yesterday confirmed dead in three motor accidents in parts of the country as the Christendom celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ.

Twenty five others, including four children, were injured in the mishaps.

Reports from different parts of the country said the festival was generally subdued largely because of the economic and security challenges in the country and the COVID-19 pandemic which is into its second year.

The first of the accidents on Ososa Bridge on the Sagamu-Benin Expressway involved a Mercedes Benz luxury bus and claimed the lives of seven passengers.

Seven others were injured, according to the Sector Commander of the FRSC in Ogun State, Ahmed Umar.

Umar said the accident occurred at 12:20 a.m. and was caused by excessive speeding, wrongful overtaking and loss of control by the driver.

He said the unregistered vehicle took off from Ojuelegba, Lagos and was heading to the eastern part of the country when the accident occurred.

On board were 63 persons - 40 male adults, 15 female adults and eight children. Forty-nine of the passengers, including all the children, escaped unhurt.

He added that the injured victims were rendered first aid treatment while the deceased were deposited at State Hospital Mortuary, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.

The sector commander cautioned motorists about dangerous driving, especially during this period of high vehicular movement and night travels when visibility is poor.

He advised motorists to drive defensively, maintain safe speed, avoid night travels and obey traffic rules and regulations.

Umar commiserated with the families of the crash victims and enjoined them to contact FRSC Ijebu-Ode unit for more information about it.

Six persons died in the sec-

ond accident which occurred on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway at about 3:20 am yesterday.

It involved two vehicles - a Toyota Hiace bus with registration number MKA 567 XZ and an Iveco articulated vehicle marked XF 854 KTN. Umar said.

He said that 12 other persons sustained various degrees of injuries in the accident.

He said the corpses of the victims were deposited at Idera Hospital, Sagamu, while the survivors were taken to different hospitals for treatment.

He attributed the crash to excessive speeding and loss of control and urged motorists to desist from over speeding to avoid unnecessary loss of lives and property.

Umar said a total N127,900 was recovered from the acci-

dent scene.

He advised families of those who might have travelled in the Toyota bus to contact FRSC Ibafo outpost for more information.

**Tired driver dies in Christmas Day crash, injures children in Anambra**

In a separate confirmation, the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) in Anambra State confirmed the death of a middle-aged man in an accident at Umuokpu on the Awka-Enugu Expressway.

The crash, which occurred at about 4 am on Christmas Day, involved a blue Passat Volkswagen wagon with 12 passengers.

The driver of the vehicle was said to have dozed off on the steering and consequently veered off the road.

An eyewitness said: "The driver slept off and crashed."

"He died instantly while many occupants of the car were

injured."

Sector Commander of the FRSC Adeoye Irelewuyi said six persons comprising a female adult, four male children and one female child were injured.

He attributed the crash to fatigue and sympathised with the deceased's families, wishing the injured quick recovery.

He said: "A fatal road traffic crash occurred at Umuokpu inward Enugu Section of the Expressway by Awka-Enugu Expressway 25th December 2021 at about 04:00hrs."

"The lone crash involved an unidentified driver of a blue Passat Volkswagen Wagon with registration number BEN658TP."

"Twelve people comprising two male adults, one female adult, four male children, five female children were involved in the crash."

"Six persons comprising one female adult, four male children and a female child were injured."

"The injured victims were

rushed to Princeton Hospital, Awka by FRSC rescue team where one male adult was confirmed dead by the doctor on duty and his corpse deposited at the morgue.

"However, the FRSC rescue team on the ground managed traffic and ensured obstruction caused by the crash was cleared."

"Motorists should always observe the regulatory rest periods when travelling in order to avoid fatigue."

"Traffic rules and regulations must be obeyed always."

**Nigerians in subdued celebration of Christmas**

Reports from different parts of the country said that the celebration of this year's Christmas lacked the elaborate preparations and fun that usually accompany the festival.

Most Nigerians were mindful of the current spate of kidnapping across the country and tried to avoid unnecessary spending that might attract kidnappers.

Some others cancelled travelling to their hometowns or villages all together to avoid falling into the trap of kidnappers.

Yet some others tried to avoid large gatherings for fear of contracting COVID-19 although some people seemed not to be bothered by warnings to take precautionary measures over the infection.

A worshipper at a church in the Durumi area of Abuja, Mr Tony Ejike, said the fear factor was lost.

"Many Nigerians think that COVID-19 is just a fever and it has become difficult to convince them about the harm that the virus can cause and with the new variant in place," the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) quoted him as saying.

He urged government to ensure strict enforcement of the COVID-19 protocols by deploying officers to public places.

Some worshippers in the Utako area of Abuja were also seen wearing mask on their chin or clutching it in their hands even as the worship centres were crowded.

Madam Jakiri John, who was seen in Utako said: "We have all been vaccinated, and there's no big deal because we are in the presence of God."

Dr. Peter Gambo, a public health expert, said that the biggest challenge for the PSC this time was to ensure adherence to the safety norms.

Gambo said: "A fine should be charged for non-adherence; let the fear of paying a fine make people to wear a mask and observe other protocols."

Meanwhile, following the decline in compliance with the safety measures against the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has called on security agencies to work alongside religious bodies to enforce the protocols during the festive season.

This was as the centre disclosed that 45 cases of the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus had so far been detected in the country.

It added that the first Omicron case was detected in a sample on Nov. 9, 2021.



•Scene of the accident at Kara bridge of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, opposite Elanlan Construction zone yesterday.

North now fully in the grip of evil says Kukah