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THREE persons were on Wednesday killed following an explosion that occurred after a tanker fully loaded with petrol exploded close to Eburutu Barracks axis of the Murtala Muhammed Highway in Calabar.

The incident which occurred at about 1:00p.m., caused serious traffic gridlock as commuters, pedestrians and

transporters were stuck for several hours. The inferno also destroyed residential buildings, parked vehicles and properties worth millions of Naira.

The victims, the tanker driver and his conductor including a boy who was excavating sand by the road side, were burnt beyond recognition.

The raging inferno which lasted for over three hours took the combined effort of firefighters from the Cross River State Government, Calabar free trade zone and Nigerian Ports Authority to salvage the situation.

An eye witness, Ima Tessy, said two trucks, laden with petrol and moving on the same lane was trying to overtake each other and collided in the process.

She said: "the two tankers were struggling to overtake each other on the same lane as another empty tanker was packed in front on the right hand side of the road. While the petrol loaded tanker was trying to give way for the one coming behind, the driver lost control."

Another eyewitness, Effiong Akpan, a motorist, said the accident occurred when the two trunks were trying to avoid parked trucks owned by a transport company.

A fire fighter from the State fire service, Edem Edet, said they arrived the scene of the incident few minutes after they got the signal.

Meanwhile, some parts of Abuja metropolis, including Garki, Asokoro, Lugbe, Karu, Keffi and environs are experiencing power rationing, following the loss of a 60MVA, 132/33kv power transformer and the associated 33kv switchgears at the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) substation, Apo, as a result of a fire incident, caused by direct lightening strike, on Tuesday.

In a statement by TCN management, signed by the company's Assistant General Manager (Public Affairs), Mr Dave Ifabiyi, the fire started after an explosive sound from the 132/33kv switchyard at about 2.40pm. It was then noticed that the relay room and cable trenches within the control room were engulfed in smoke.

According to the statement, "TCN's quick response engineering team has since been working assiduously to isolate the affected 60MVA, 330/123kv power transformer and replace cables of the 2x45MVA power transformers in the substation, so that service can be restored through the 2x45MVA and 1x100MVA power transformers not affected by the fire."

TCN further noted that as soon as isolation work is completed and the cables replaced, normal transmission of electricity to distribution load centers in Garki, Asokoro, Lugbe, International airport as well as Karu business units would commence.

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