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26 pupils, six others die in road accidents

By Sunday Aborisade, Akure and Francis Falola, Minna, Published: Saturday, 20 Mar 2010

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Twenty-six pupils of the Aricent Nursery and Primary School in the Olupitan area of Ore, Ondo State, their proprietor, popularly known as Alfa, and two National Youth Service Corps members, are said to have died in an auto crash on the Ondo-Ore Road while returning from an excursion on Wednesday evening.

Also, on Thursday, three persons lost their lives in another auto crash that occurred along the Mokwa-Jebba Road in Niger State, with the sum of N1.5m found on one of the deceased.

In Akure, the Public Relations Officer of the State Police Command, however, Mr. Aremu Adeniran, only confirmed that 28 people including the proprietor and the youth corps members died in the accident involving pupils of the school.

It was gathered the Mokwa accident happened around 6.10a.m on Thursday, with 15 other passengers injured. The victims travelled to Lagos from Sokoto with a trailer-load of pepper for sale and were returning back to Sokoto in a Toyota bus with registration number AG 156 JEG when the accident occurred.

Federal Road Safety Commission, Mr. Emmanuel Abe, in Minna confirmed the number of the dead and the amount recovered from one of the victims on Friday to our correspondent. Abe disclosed that the accident occurred as a result of over speeding and loss of control.

He said the accident occurred while the party was returning from an excursion to Idanre hills.

He said the Coaster bus which conveyed the children to the excursion had collided with a fully loaded heavy-duty truck while negotiating a sharp bend.

Adeniran said the truck was on its lane while the driver of the 40-seater bus overtook other vehicles in front of him before colliding with the truck. He added that the driver, whose name was not given, the deceased and others who sustained injuries had been taken to the Ore General Hospital.

The police spokesman said a combined team of the police, and the FRSC officers were deployed immediately to the accident scene to render rescue operations.

However, eyewitnesses, who spoke to our correspondent in Akure, claimed that 42 pupils died. They said 38 of the pupils died immediately while the remaining four died later at the hospital.

It was further gathered that a woman who lost three children and another who lost her only child, created a scene there as they insisted on physically taking their dead children home in a basket. But our correspondent could not confirm this claim because the story broke late and he couldn't embark on the trip to Ore.

The Ondo State Government through the Commissioner for Information, Mr. Ranti Akerele, on Friday, sympathised with the relations of the deceased, but said only 15 people including the proprietor of the school, died.

However, Akerele said the Commissioner for Adult and Vocational Literacy

Education, Mrs. Kehinde Momoh; and her counterpart in the education ministry, Mrs. Nike Fatogun; who visited the school, confirmed that it was not registered with state government and that its management "did not seek permission to go on excursion."

The state Director of the NYSC, Mrs. Foluso Kolajo, denied that any youth corps member died with the school pupils. She told our correspondent that it was not the practice of the NYSC to post youth corps members to nursery schools.

Our correspondent learnt that the school was established by a Muslim missionary about six years ago.

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