

PUNCH METRO

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Six feared dead, 17 vehicles burnt in Ogun fire disaster

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NO fewer than six people were feared dead on Sunday in a fire disaster which burnt four tankers and 13 other vehicles at Ibafo end of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

The incident is coming two weeks after 40 people died and many vehicles got burnt on the same expressway at the Otedola Millennium Estate end.

But a couple, who were said to have escaped the Sunday inferno, had their happiness cut short, as their two children were feared roasted in the incident.

Another lucky occupant of one of the burnt vehicles said he was unsure of the safety of two other occupants of the car he was in. Two other bodies reportedly laid on the ground

while the fire raged.

There were different accounts of the cause of the accident. A version had it that a trailer carrying full load of motor petroleum spirit, failed brake and collided with another tanker, thereby igniting fire which engulfed other tankers that were parked on the left side of the expressway to Ibadan.

However, an eye-witness, Abubakar Adamu, said that a KIA jeep collided with another car. While sympathisers were making frantic efforts to rescue a trapped victim, a truck carrying fuel came from the back and hit one of the vehicles resulting in fire outbreak involving three other fuel tankers that were parked by the left hand side of the road. About 13 other vehicles that were coming from the Lagos end of the road were caught

up in the inferno.

"One KIA jeep had an accident with a car here. While we were trying to rescue a trapped victim, a trailer came with speed, and apparently having brake failure hit a tanker and fire exploded affecting other tankers and vehicles."

A team of fire fighters with only one vehicle with registration number OG 117-A09, from Mowe Fire Station was seen trying in vain to put out the fire. Only one policeman on uniform with a gun was seen watching helplessly while the fire raged on. Thousands of sympathisers who trooped to the scene watched helplessly while the fire consumed the vehicles. However, a cyclist and one other good Samaritan were seen conveying a victim who apparently was unconscious to

a nearby clinic for treatment.

The fire raged for over one hour.

The fire Officer in charge of the Ibafo Fire Station, Mr. Oladunjoye Ifedahunsi, told PUNCH METRO that they responded immediately they were informed of the inferno but said the one vehicle they had was inadequate to effectively contain a fire of that magnitude. He said he made frantic efforts to get assistance from other fire fighting stations but did not succeed as many of them told him that the road would have been blocked before they reached the scene.

Ifedahunsi said, "We do not know the time the fire started but as soon as we were informed, we rushed to the scene. Before we even turned from our office, we saw smoke everywhere. On getting here, we discovered that about four

petrol tankers were involved.

"We tried our best but we could not put out the fire. Only one vehicle covers this area unless we call the Lagos Fire Service. Many people have called them and they said that since there is no road, what can we do? The fire is above the capacity of the vehicle we came with. We do not know what caused the fire."

A survivor, who identified himself as Alade, said, "On our way from Lagos, we heard a noise and saw a tanker explode. I am not sure that my driver and the lady that were with me in my vehicle escaped."

Some sympathisers that spoke with our correspondent appealed to the government to stop tanker drivers from parking along the road, adding that the disaster could have been avoided if petrol tankers did not

park along the road.

Officers of the Federal Road Safety Commission, Traffic Compliance and Enforcement Corps and officers of the Lagos and Ogun State Fire Service, who spoke to our correspondent, said the inferno that later engulfed the highway, started from a minor accident.

The Acting Sector Commander, FRSC, Ogun State Sector Command, Mr. Segun Akinyemi, confirmed the accident but could not give details.

"I will get across to you with the details; we are still working and we can't give the details now," Akinyemi said.

Though officers of the Ogun State and Lagos State Fire Service had mobilised to combat the inferno, the fire was still raging at the time our correspondent filed this report at 9.00p.m.

Scenes from the fire incident. Photos: Odutayo Odusanya

