

voy crushes man to death, injures journalists

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Delta State Governor Ifeanyi Okowa

Ovie Okpare, Warri

AN elderly farmer has been reported to have been crushed to death during an accident involving one of the vehicles in the convoy of the Delta State Governor, Senator Ifeanyi Okowa, around Umutu, in Ukwuani Council Area of the state.

Our correspondent gathered on Wednesday that the accident happened on Friday when one of the buses in the governor's convoy was returning from the Niger Delta Stakeholders' Meeting, held at the Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun. It was hosted by Chief Edwin Clark.

A source within the convoy told our correspondent that the bus carrying the pressmen ran into the man, who was said to be returning from his farm. He was said to have tried to dodge a pothole along the Agbor/Abraka expressway.

Some of the pressmen in the vehicle also sustained varying degrees of injuries, prompting them to almost lynch the driver, until Okowa personally intervened.

The governor later ordered that the victim, whose name could not be immediately obtained, be rushed to a hospital.

The journalists involved included some correspondents of the state-owned newspaper, *The Pointer*, DBS and other national print and electronic media. However, they were barred by the state government from divulging the details of the accident to newsmen.

It was gathered that the victim had earlier been rushed to an undisclosed hospital in Abraka, the home community of the Delta State University. Later, he was said to have been referred to Asaba for medical treatment, where he died.

Another source, who confirmed the development to our correspondent, refused to disclose the hospital where the victim died. He, however, said that the corpse had been deposited at a morgue in the state capital.

The driver of the 18-seater bus conveying the journalists was, as at Wednesday afternoon, still being detained at the police headquarters in Asaba, awaiting investigation on the incident.

A senior police officer at the Delta State Command confirmed the development to our correspondent but warned not to be quoted, based on the sensitivity of the report.

But when contacted, the spokesman for the Command, SP Celestina Kalu, could not immediately confirm the development. She promised to investigate and call back. However, she had yet to call back as of the time of filing this report.

However, our correspondent gathered that there was grumbling among those said to be part of the trip, as a result of Okowa's failure to ask after the state of health of some of the injured journalists.

One of the journalists involved complained bitterly to our correspondent. He said they were not catered for by the state government.

Efforts to speak with the state Commissioner for Information, Mr. Patrick Ukah, or have the governor's spokesman, Mr. Charles Ehiedu Aniagwu, to speak on the incident, proved abortive.