

Clement James  
CALABAR

# Over fifty roasted as tanker explodes in C'River

● State govt. donates to victims

No fewer than 50 persons were burnt to death in Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River State on Friday as a petrol tanker exploded after skidding of the road and landing into a ditch.

The incident, which happened near the Federal Housing Authority Estate at New Netim in Odukpani, created pandemonium as people watched helplessly as the fire burnt their loved ones.

It was learnt that the incident happened at about 3.00pm, when the driver was trying to maneuver his way round a bad portion on the road when the tanker detached from the truck head and fell into the ditch.

As soon as the tanker tipped over, residents of the area rushed to the scene to siphon the highly inflammable product and it was while this was going on that the tanker exploded, burning over 50 of them.

One Richard Odu, who

claimed to have witnessed the gory incident, said: "Initially, people within the axis gathered and were siphoning the fuel. They later brought a liquid pumping generator to pump the fuel into another tanker, in that process, it backfired igniting the highly inflammable liquid inside the tanker."

"The people that were there, over 50 started shouting as they were trapped in the flames. We were there, but the flames were so intense that no body was able to go near and the ones inside couldn't run out either."

He added: "The people standing outside started shouting and crying. One of the victims who tried to come out was later aided and dragged outside as the

fire had engulfed his whole skin.

"The Fire Service later came, but they couldn't stop the fire because the fire was too much. About 7-8.00PM, the fire was still burning."

*Sunday Telegraph* also learnt that the tanker, which took off from the Calabar depot, was heading to the northern part of the state when the accident happened.

The Public Relations Officer of the state's Police Command, Ms Irene Ugbo, who confirmed the incident, said she could not put figure on the victims, adding, however, that "the Police had asked them to leave the place but they refused to heed instruction."

Meanwhile, the Cross

River Government has donated medical equipment to the emergency ward of the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital (UCTH) to aid the victims of the fuel tanker explosion.

The equipment included cartons of intravenous fluids, hand sanitizers, wound dressing equipment among others.

The state's Commissioner for Health, Dr Inyang Asibong, who donated the equipment to the hospital on Saturday, described the incident as "tragic and sudden".

Asibong said that the visit to the hospital was to access the situation and donate the equipment for the treatment of the survivors.

She explained that as soon as the victims were brought

into the hospital, the ministry had to mobilise its personnel to join their colleagues in the UCTH to respond timely to the victims.

"We don't have the exact number of casualties at the moment, but I know that we have lost a dozen of them due to the explosion."

"People must stop the act of scooping fuel whenever a tanker falls in their area. Many persons have died in the past through this."

"We will do everything possible as a state to make sure that we don't lose these ones," she said.

Prof. Thomas Agan, the Chief Medical Director of UCTH, told NAN in an

interview that 18 persons were brought into the hospital on Friday night.

Agan explained that of the 18 victims, 15 were adults while three were children, adding that one victim died on arrival while another one died later at night.

"As we speak, we have 16 victims in our facility. 18 victims were brought for treatment and two of them have died."

"The 16 victims are fair game. We need support from corporate bodies, individuals and groups because we have exhausted our internal consumables," he said.

## 2019: Pwajok dumps APC to PDP

Musa Pam,  
JOS

Chairman House Committee on Rules and Business and member

tatives. It is clear that the leadership of APC lacks focus and does not have regards for its members.

"Since I lost the Senator Primary in the party which