

Burnt to ashes, crushed to death



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The gas plant axis of Abakaliki/ Enugu expressway, has become a place motorists and passers-by see as a danger zone, owing to some vehicle explosions that have occurred on the road with lives lost, including the burning to ashes of a driver last Wednesday. UCHENNA INYA reports from Abakaliki

It was on January this year that a tanker exploded on the plant axis of the Abakaliki/ Enugu Expressway and destroyed lots of public properties. Many motorists and passers-by including a pregnant woman were seriously injured.

One of them, Mrs. Maria Owai, a pregnant woman who broke her legs and head while running for her dear life when the incident occurred, is still nursing her injuries at the Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki (FETHA) when another explosion occurred last week, leading to the death of two drivers.

One of the victims was driving a Honda vehicle with registration number APP -607AR when it ran into a tanker with registration number ENU 908 X which was undergoing repairs by the roadside and cut fire. The driver was burnt to ashes as only some of his bones were seen inside his small car which was burnt beyond repairs.

The second driver(tanker driver) sustained serious burns and was rushed to FETHA where he died a day later. His body was peeling off when it was being removed from the vehicle for movement to the hospital for urgent medical attention.

The tanker driver whose identity could not be immediately ascertained, was rushed to hospital but gave up the ghost on Thursday morning. The driver of the Honda car simply known as Chimaco and brainwork was a welder opposite Crunches at Afikpo road in Abakaliki metropolis. The incident threw many people, including his immediate members into mourning.

Brainwork had left his shop and his workers on that fateful day to attend to an important appointment but he could not get to his house while returning home in the night as he was involved in the accident that snatched his life and threw his family members, friends and well wishers in mourning. He ran into the tanker with his car which cut fire and he was burnt to ashes, leaving only few particles of his bones inside the car.

The tanker it was gathered offloaded oil in Calabar, Cross River State and was on the way to Enugu State when it developed a fault along the ever busy Spera-in- Deo junction in Abakaliki town .

The driver however looked for a safe place to park and work on the vehicle. He drove a few steps off the gate of a Gas plant on the

Abakaliki/Enugu Expressway and parked for the repairs .

When the driver of the tanker alighted from the tanker to look at the vehicle, the vehicle of Chimaco ran into the tanker and cutfire. An eyewitness, Obinna Anene Henry, said “the tanker driver parked to check the fault in his vehicle. He came down to place vehicle caution sign on the road. In the process, the small car knocked him down and ran into the tanker and cut fire. The conductor of the tanker had the fire burning on his leg and he ran with it but somebody answered a call and said the conductor died this morning.”

Another one said: “When I was going for school runs this morning, I saw the accident. I stopped and called somebody I suspected that may be involved in the accident but he picked and said that was not his vehicle but while coming back, I stopped because I couldn’t go.

When I saw these people crying, I recognized them to be working for a welder at Afikpo road. An elderly man simply known as OJ, said: “We saw the articulated vehicle. It lost the tire and the driver was looking for a comfortable place to park. When it parked, as soon as the driver came out and bent down to check the tire, within 3 seconds, this small vehicle came and knocked him down.

Before we could come out, the vehicle cut fire. It was some keke (tricycle) riders and Okada riders around that helped in rescuing others from the articulated vehicle who were also affected before they were taken to the hospital but the police and fire service arrived and put off the fire.

“What was brought out of the small vehicle was a very small particle which they said was the remains of the driver of the small car. We equally learnt that the driver of the tanker died this morning.

” Some men who rushed to the scene of the accident on Thursday morning broke into tears as they recognized the Honda car to be that of their master. One of them spoke to New Telegraph thus: “I know his vehicle very well. The plate number belongs to our oga. This car is his car.

“We were all together till 6 O’clock yesterday. We normally close work by 6:20pm. He gave us our feeding money and said he was rushing to somewhere. He didn’t stay for roll call, only for us to come out this morning without seeing him. We went to his house and found out that he did not come back home last night. The wife has been calling his number and the line is not going and we have tried the number too it’s saying not reachable.

“So when we got the news of a burnt car along the expressway, we decided to come and check. Lo and behold, it is our oga’s vehicle. Our master car was the one that got burnt and we believe he is the one that burnt to ashes.”

Confirming the incident, the Head of Operations, Ebonyi State Command of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Charlie Eden, said that they redeployed officers to cordon off the place.

He said: “We are making arrangements to take off the vehicles out of the road in order not to cause more accident on the road. “Only the driver of the Honda motor was burnt beyond recognition but the driver of the articulated vehicle who was under the tanker working on his vehicle was saved but was in critical condition. Information reaching us from the hospital where the tanker driver was taken for treatment said he died on Thursday morning.”

Meanwhile, a vehicle belonging to the Chairman of the state Universal Basic Education Board(UBEB), Chief Hycinth Ikpor also hit and killed a man and his wife riding a motorcycle as the police was investigating the matter. The state Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Loveth Odah, who confirmed the incident, said the tragedy occurred at Amudo, Ezza South Local Government Area of the state.

Odah said that the UBEB Chairman's vehicle hit and killed the man and his wife on a motorcycle as the police was investigating the matter. "The UBEB Chairman's driver is still in custody while the affected vehicle has been impounded.

"The matter has however been taken to court and came for mention on Wednesday because the incident claimed human lives." Ikpor, the UBEB Chairman said that the accident occurred while he was on inspection tour of some schools in the state.

"My driver unfortunately hit and killed the man who was riding a motorcycle with one of his wives. "I have been dialoguing with the deceased's family since then but the problem is that they are demanding for an outrageous sum of money for the burial. Ikpor noted that the family was demanding N3.2million for the burial of the deceased persons while he agreed to pay N2million and contribute in the education of their children.

"The Divisional Police Officer (DPO) Onueke police division where the matter is being handled told me the matter was taken to court because negotiations between I and the deceased family was being prolonged. "He said that the police could not wait for the negotiations to be concluded and I more pained because the deceased is a member of my party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)."

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