

# Accidents Claim 28 in Sokoto, Kano

No fewer than 16 people have been confirmed dead following a motor accident that occurred along Sokoto-Gusau road.

The incident occurred around 8pm yesterday at Lamban Tureta, 60 km away from Sokoto.

As soon as residents of the area noticed the incident, they swiftly intervened and succeeded in rescuing three out of the 19 passengers.

The Sokoto accident came

*From Mohammed Aminu in Sokoto and Ibrahim Shuaibu in Kano*

just as a 16-seater Toyota bus with registration number XD 550 GUS plunged into the into Fada dam in Gwarzo local government area of Kano state, killing twelve people.

Police spokesman in Kano, SP. Baba Mohammad confirmed the incident, saying "six corpses have been brought out

of the dam; two were alive and had been taken to hospital for treatment."

The police spokesman added that a combined team of police and fire service members were already at the dam trying to rescue the remaining passengers.

According to an eyewitness, the Sokoto accident was caused by a burst tyre which made the bus that was coming from Funtua, Katsina state and conveying 19 passengers to plunge into a pond by the road side.

The Sokoto State Commissioner of Police, Alhaji Mamman Tsafe, who confirmed the incident said the occupants of the vehicles were predominantly women.

THISDAY checks revealed that all the passengers on board were from the extended family of the Chief Imam of Funtua, Shekh Sa'idu Altı.

THISDAY learnt that the passengers were going for a wedding ceremony of the Sheikh's step son in Sokoto.

It was also gathered that only three of the occupants survived the accident and are currently receiving treatment at Usman Danfodio Teaching Hospital, Sokoto.

As at the time of filling this report more rescuers were deployed at the site of the accident and were busy searching for more bodies in the pond while the remains of those that were brought out had been deposited at the mortuary of Usman Danfodio Teaching Hospital.

Meanwhile, a family source of the deceased told THISDAY that their remains would be conveyed to Funtua for final burial.

## Mark: Benue Tribunal Did Hatchet Job

Emboldened by his victory at the Court of Appeal, Senate President, Senator David Mark, yesterday said Justice C.I. Uriri-led Lower Benue Election Petition Tribunal succeeded in doing the hatchet man's job.

The lower tribunal nullified Mark's election.

Mark, who spoke when he received traditional rulers and members of Benue State House of Assembly in his office in Abuja, insisted that he won the April 21, 2007 election to the Benue South Senatorial seat freely and fairly.

He said, "I want to thank Almighty God that He touched the hearts of the Justices who delivered that judgment. I won the election, there was no doubt about it; it was a free and fair election and I won."

"It is a pity that the lower tribunal did the hatchet job, but thank God that the appellate court was very, very objective in its analysis. For me, the judgment has made me more

*From Sufuyan Ojeifo in Abuja*

focused, made me more committed; it has encouraged me to be more determined to continue to do those things I think will be more beneficial to the ordinary man on the streets," he said.

While receiving the team, led by the Deputy Speaker, Honourable William Ogbole, Mark said the visit was indicative of the fact that he had home support.

According to him, it is good to

also show that you have home base or support from your base. You are the first State House of Assembly to congratulate me, and rightly so because I believe that the judgment given on July 15, was in the best interest of democracy in this country. It was based on the truth and the facts available to the appellate court.

He said he had forgiven all those who took him to the tribunal, saying that it was necessary for them to join him in working for the interest of the nation.

## FG to Privatisise 7 Strategic Minerals

The Federal Government is to privatise the seven strategic minerals identified as viable resources for economic development.

The minerals are Barite, Bitumen, Coal, Iron-ore, Gold, Limestone and Lead/Zinc. Mines and Steel Development Minister, Chief Sarafa Isola,

announced this yesterday in Abuja, while inaugurating the seven-man Ministerial Committee on Bitumen Bloc Bidding.

Isola said the seven minerals had the potential of contributing 80 percent of the sector's revenue to the nation's Gross Domestic Products.

He said bitumen, being the first to be privatised, had been divided into three blocs namely A, B and C. Isola, who said that all the minerals would go through the same bidding process, explained that Bitumen was listed first because it had been cleared of all existing encumbrances.

According to him, Bitumen which has a proven reserve of one billion barrels equivalent to oil, is deposited in the western belt of the country, around Lagos and Edo states.

He said the criteria for the bidding included technical capacity of the bidders, proven financial ability to develop the mineral and minimum work programme. "Out of all the minerals, Bitumen development is the most capital intensive, so bidders must meet these criteria," he said.

## Uwais, Akpabio Seek Comprehensive Review of Constitution

Former Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Mohammed Uwais, and Akwa-Ibom State Governor, Godswill Akpabio, have called for a thorough review of the 1999 Constitution to address its numerous deficiencies.

Uwais, who chaired this month's edition of the Initiatives Roundtable, also described the 1999 Constitution as not being a product of the Nigerian people.

He said, "although it largely borrows or follows the 1979 Constitution, it also contains provisions that constitute complete departure from the Constitution. In its preamble, the 1999 Constitution states in part that it is the people of Nigeria that have firmly and solemnly resolved to make, enact and give to ourselves the Constitution."

"This has evolved a great deal of criticisms by legal practition-

*From Stanley Nkwazema in Abuja*

ers, university dons, politicians in particular and the public in general. It is argued that the Constitution tells lies about itself, because it was not made by the people of Nigeria, but a cabal of the military in power during General AbdulSalami Abubakar's regime, and so by no

stretch of imagination, could it be said it was by representatives of the people of Nigeria."

Also at the event, Speaker, of the House of Representatives, Honourable Dimeji Bankole on his part, criticised Niger Delta governors for failing to meet the needs of their people, despite huge yearly allocations to the region from the Federation Account.

## Senate C'ttee Moves to Avert RATTAWU Strike

*From Sufuyan Ojeifo in Abuja*

Senate Committee on Media and Information has appealed to Radio Television and Theatre Workers Union (RATTAWU) to back down on its planned nationwide strike, assuring that the arrears would be captured in the 2009 budget.

The Committee, headed by Senator Ayogu Eze, also gave the Federal Government a month ultimatum, to round off verification of all monetisation arrears owed the Union and the amalgamated union. The initial estimates put the arrears at about N53 billion.

This was the outcome of a three-hour meeting, which had in

attendance, representative of Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe, who is a Permanent Secretary in charge of Special Duties, Dr Hakeem Baba Ahmed, the Accountant General of the Federation, Alhaji Ibrahim Dankwambo, Auditor General of the Federation, Robert Ejenavi and officials of RATTAWU.