

# 18 die in C-River auto crash

**By George Onah**

**P**ORT HARCOURT—NO fewer than 18 people were killed and scores injured, Thursday, when a fully loaded petrol tanker crushed three vehicles at the foot of the Okpokim Bridge, along the Cross River State-end of the Calabar - Itu Highway.

Police highway patrol sources told *Vanguard* that the accident occurred when two buses, a Mercedes Benz car and tanker were trying to avoid the menacing convoy, allegedly of Akwa Ibom State governor who was racing to Calabar at about 2.30 p.m.

Another Kia Cerato car was

also mangled on top of the bridge, when a heavy duty vehicle ran into the car as it attempted a sudden veering off the path of the convoy as "the jeeps and cars of the convoy filled the bridge and chased other vehicles off their lane.

The incident at the foot of the bridge "happened when the vehicles from Calabar stopped suddenly on sighting the oncoming convoy", following which the tanker that was "descending the slope towards the bridge and behind the vehicles lost control and rammed into the buses."

One of the buses with "Petex" inscribed on it was said to be conveying 18 passengers plus its

driver and "suffered the highest casualty where over 12 people were killed instantly. Another bus "traveling from Odukpani to Itu was crushed beyond recognition."

However, the occupants of the Mercedes and Kia cars suffered injuries, while the driver of the tanker, which belongs to Conoil, equally escaped with "grievous injury on the head, face and body.

It was learnt that the corpses of the victims were conveyed in ambulances to Calabar, while the injured were rushed to Itu for "urgent medical attention". The dead included women, children and some young men, who were said to be students.