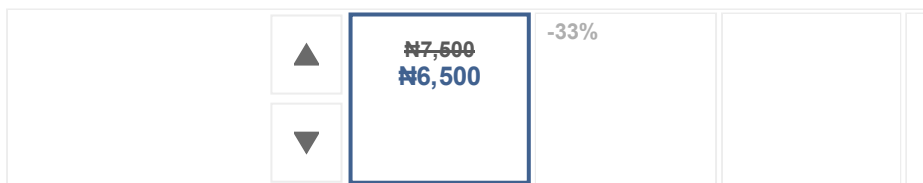


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Driver, conductor die in inferno as fuel tanker explodes

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By Evelyn Usman & Angela Okpe

LAGOS—A tanker driver and his conductor were, yesterday evening, roasted to death as their 33,000-litre capacity diesel laden truck went up in flames at Cele Bus Stop, inward Oshodi, on Apapa-Oshodi Expressway, Lagos.



There were different accounts as to how the inferno started. A version had it that the truck went up in flames when it had a burst tyre.

It was gathered that in the driver's bid to control his truck, another truck rammed into it from behind, causing it truck to somersault.

Another version said the truck was trying to avoid another vehicle that overtook it, when the truck from behind hit it. The impact caused an explosion, which resulted in a fire with the combustive content spilling into drainage around the scene.

Pandemonium

Meanwhile, as motorists plying the expressway applied brakes suddenly to avoid the raging fire, multiple accidents occurred. There was commotion. Commercial buses stopped for passengers to disembark, while others made U-turns.

Passengers and traders at both sides of the expressway scampered in different directions for safety, with the latter abandoning their wares. In the process, some of them sustained varying degrees of injuries.

The raging fire, spread to the entire expressway, preventing even vehicles moving

inward Apapa from moving, thereby hampering the free flow of traffic on both sides.

One of *Vanguard's* reporters had to trek from Coker Bus Stop, about five bus stops away, before getting to the scene.

Eyewitnesses' accounts

A trader, who claimed to have witnessed it all, said: "The tanker in front, which had three passengers, had a flat tyre, while the one that hit it from behind had two passengers. But one of the passengers in the first truck was roasted beyond recognition, while the third one managed to escape.

"Those in the second truck also escaped unhurt, with the truck".

Another trader, who spoke with *Vanguard*, lamented that the incident had spoiled the day for traders, who usually brought their wares for sales at the bus stop in the evening.

She said: "I was just bringing my tomatoes to display when I saw people running. I immediately joined in the race for life without knowing what the problem was. It was later I heard that a tanker was on fire and that the whole of Cele had been engulfed.

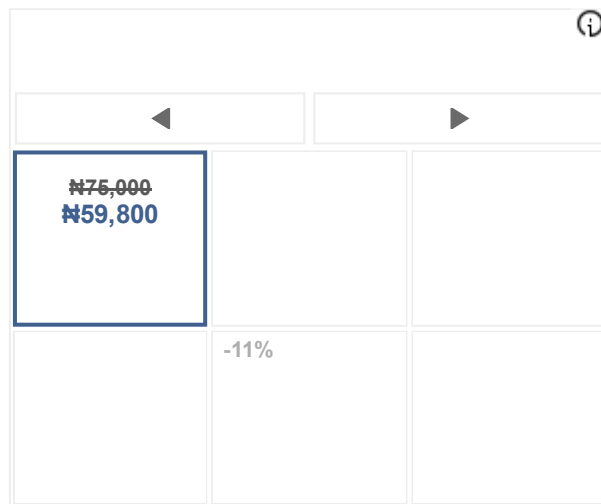
"It is an unfortunate incident because it has spoiled business for those of us who usually sell in the evening."

Lagos State Fire Service Director, Rasaq Fadipe, disclosed that six fire trucks were drafted to the scene.

He said two bodies were found roasted in the truck after fire fighting operations, adding that "the two trucks that caused the fire and another car also got burnt."

“The fire is effectively contained now. Hoping that motorists will adhere to safety rules to avoid re-ignition.”

The South-West spokesperson for the National Emergency Management Agency, NEMA, stated that the incident occurred at about 5pm, describing the fire as a massive one.



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