Beat: News

At least 43 die in China highway explosion

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USPA News - At least 43 people were killed Saturday when a van carrying a flammable liquid collided with a passenger bus on a highway in central China, setting off a huge explosion that engulfed a number of vehicles, state-run media reported, adding that several others were injured. The accident occurred at around 3 a.m. local time in Hunan province on a section of the Hukun Expressway, which connects Shanghai to Kunming.

It happened when a freight van carrying alcohol rear-ended a passenger bus that was carrying around 50 people, causing an explosion that engulfed both vehicles and three others. "It was like the explosion of an atomic bomb," local resident Shi Shiping told the state-run Xinhua news agency. "[Those who escaped from the blaze] could barely talk and were just moaning. As we did not have medicine or any medical equipment, we just comforted them by saying everything will be OK." Photos from the scene showed the bus and other vehicles were completely burnt out. Local authorities initially put the death toll at 26 but raised it to at least 43 by Sunday morning, making it one of the country`s worst road accidents in recent years. Six other people remained in an area hospital with serious injuries. It was not immediately known if any people were still unaccounted-for. Xinhua said investigators from the national government had arrived at the scene, but noted that preliminary findings showed that the van had been remodeled, which may have played a role in the accident. The also found the bus driver had failed to follow mandated stop-over policy that requires drivers to rest after midnight. Roads in China are known to be among the most dangerous in the world with more than 70,000 fatalities and 300,000 injuries a year, according to the country`s Public Security Ministry. Many accidents are the result of drivers violating traffic laws, fatigue, poor road conditions and overloaded vehicles. Earlier this year, on March 1, at least 40 people were killed when two tankers loaded with methanol rear-ended inside Yanhou Tunnel in the northern province of Shanxi, causing a spill before a fire ignited the flammable liquid, engulfing 42 cars and trucks. And in June 2013, a bus in the eastern city Xiamen burst into flames, killing 47 people and injuring 34 others.

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