

# Pregnant woman, 2 others die in auto crash



LUCKKEY ABAWURU and  
MANSUR OLADUNJOYE

**T**RAGEDY struck on the notorious Third Mainland Bridge in Lagos, yesterday, leaving a pregnant woman and

to others dead.

Death came the way of the commuters when a Mercedes Benz truck-bruck popularly known as *Molue* in Lagos, in which they were travelling out of Lagos Island, crashed into a

luxury car on losing control.

As at press time last night, Lagos police spokesman, Olubode Ojajuni, told *Daily Champion* that he could not confirm a casualty figure.

The accident, which happened

on a stretch of the four-lane bridge just behind the University of Lagos (UNILAG), inward journey to Iyana-Oworo and outward journey from Lagos, according to an witness, had

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# Auto crash

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most of the casualties coming from the *molue*.

The witness informed our reporter that the *molue* had registration number OGUN XB 333 AAB, while the saloon car was marked LAGOS XM 457 JJJ.

Another witness told our reporter that most of the passengers were flung into the lagoon when the commercial bus overran the rails on the side of the bridge after careening into the car.

Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) public relations officer, Adeyinka Gbemibade said four people had so far been rescued by fishermen.

She added that the owner of

the Honda saloon car sustained a serious injury and is now at the mercy of the state ambulance services (LASAMBUS), assuring all that, "Our officers are on ground to ensure free flow of traffic," adding that the LASTMA has immediately instituted a search party in the waters under the bridge.

Lagos State fire service senior superintendent Salau Musbaudeen who led a five-man rescue team to the accident scene, said "six people have been rescued: four survived and taken to the hospital while two were dead before they could be fetched from the lagoon".

LASTMA zonal head Oreagba Bolaji who recounted how it all happened said: "When we got here, we found the *molue* on the railings, with the saloon

car behind it; we guessed it must have ran into it from behind, probably for lack of space to swerve."

He informed our correspondent that local divers succeeded in rescuing four people, while the search team that rescued them also rescued additional two.

When the *Daily Champion* visited the government hospital at Gbagada, one of the nurses told our correspondent that a victim, Bolarinwa Adebawale had been discharged by his family members and taken to the military hospital for better medical treatment.

At press time, a combination of Nigerian Navy, the police, fire service personnel and the fishermen rescue team were seen combing the lagoon with the hope of uncovering more drowned victims.

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Bola Tinubu of Lagos State, Governor Ali Modu Sheriff of Borno, his counterpart in Kano, Alhaji Ibrahim Shekarau, Rabiu Kwankwaso, Rotimi Amaechi and Humphrey Azubuike.

They are to report to the panel's secretariat at the conference room of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation on the 11th floor of the Federal Secretariat, Shehu Shagari Way, Abuja.

Meanwhile, Vice President Atiku Abubakar yesterday briefed his counsel over his inclusion by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in the list of indicted candidates sent to political parties.

This is coming as the leadership of All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) yesterday in Abuja defended 35 of its candidates whose names were in the list, arguing that EFCC was on a witch-hunt mission.

Speaking with *Daily Champion*, media consultant to the Vice President, Mallam Garba Shehu, confirmed that Atiku held a long session with his lawyers in his office.

"Yes, His Excellency briefed his counsels," Shehu said. Although he did not disclose the identity of the lawyers who met with his boss, it was gathered that Chief Wole Olanipekun (SAN) may lead the team.

The legal team is expected to file the case either today or Monday.

On whether Atiku will appear before the Administrative Panel set up by the Presidency to look into the EFCC list, Shehu said, "Haba, how can anybody attend something that he has not been invited? The VP has not been invited."

Marshalling out reasons why it is not bothered by the EFCC report, National Chairman of ANPP, Chief Edwin Ume-Ezeoke, at a world press conference, accused the commission of engaging in functions which it has no constitutional power to do.

Apart from that, Ume-Ezeoke who was flanked by officials of the party also accused the commission of being used by the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to destabilise other parties. He ruled out replacing the alleged corrupt candidates as advised by EFCC.

The text of the press conference reads in part: "The action of the commission was the climax of various attempts by the ruling PDP to destabilize the other political parties particularly the ANPP through subterfuge and other means. By the recent action of the EFCC, these nefarious attempts have assumed an unbearable dimension."

"We hold the considered view that the EFCC has no constitutional power to bar any candidate from contesting elections. And we challenge the EFCC and those using it as a tool for witch-hunting, arm-twisting, slander and the terrorizing of

# Graft

political opponents to show us what section of the Electoral Act gives the commission the awesome power.

"For the avoidance of doubt, we wish to state categorically that our candidates particularly the serving governors of Kano, Zamfara and Borno are simply victims of a calculated slur campaign using the EFCC as the weapon of their repression and humiliation."

The ANPP boss queried "when the other 29 governors were cleared, by what mechanism were they cleared and who cleared them?"

The text further read: "In view of this unsettling development, we in the ANPP must condemn, in its totality, the trumped up and, certainly, kangaroo panel that has been set up to, apparently, rubber stamp the obvious illegality that was announced by the EFCC."

"We totally discountenance the unacceptable so-called administrative panel by

whatsoever name called and do hereby strongly call upon the Federal Government to immediately, disband the panel forthwith because it would serve no useful purpose whatsoever.

Ume-Ezeoke accused the Federal Government of using the EFCC to heat up the political and precipitate national crisis that would be used to extend the tenure of President Olusegun Obasanjo beyond May 29, 2007.

It accordingly called on "patriotic Nigerians, civil society organizations, non-governmental organisations as well as the United Nations, the African Union, the ECOWAS and other well-meaning countries to intervene and save our young democracy from the jaws of civil dictatorship."

It would be recalled that the EFCC Monday published the names of 135 public-office seekers it barred from contesting the April 2007 elections. Among these were three serving ANPP governors: Alhaji Ibrahim Shekarau (Kano), Alhaji Sani Yerima (Zamfara) and Alhaji Modu Sheriff (Borno State).

# Information Minister commends Odili over road project

TONY ITA ETIM, Port Harcourt

MINISTER of Information and Communications, Mr. Frank Nweke Jr. has commended the Rivers State governor, Dr Peter Odili on the Ogoni-Andoni Opobo Road.

Nweke made the commendation when he inspected the 40 kilometers road popularly known as Unity Road as part of his two-day "Legacy Tour" of federal and state government projects in Rivers State executed since 1999.

The Minister declared that the project is strategic and commendable as it would not only open up the rural areas, but would also link up the riverine parts of the state with the mainland, adding that it would also enhance both vehicular and human traffic as well as give the people a sense of belonging.

The approach of the Rivers State government, Nweke pointed out, is "a key to unlock the issue of development that exist in the Niger Delta as well as the environmental challenges facing the region."

According to Nweke, when people talked about development in Nigeria; development in other parts of the country is different from the Niger Delta because the region is distinct with peculiar features, characteristics and challenges.

He charged the media to highlight the challenges that face the states in the region that attempt to bring development to their people and appealed to other

Nigerians to show understanding to the plight of the people.

Nweke stated that President Olusegun Obasanjo has fulfilled his promises to the Niger Delta Region through the setting up of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the payment of 13 per cent derivation revenue to the oil producing states disclosing that it is the increase in funding that has enabled Rivers State to conceptualize a project of that magnitude.

He appealed to successive administrations at all levels of government to build on these projects and ensure their completion.

He called on other tiers of government to assist the federal government in the provision of facilities and infrastructure to the people.

Conducting the Minister around the road project, the state commissioner for works, Architect Julius Urombo disclosed that the project would not be completed in the lifespan of Odili administration because of technical reason.

Urombo said though the initial cost of the project was N11.8 billion, there are some changes along the Opobo axis which has increased the number of bridges from five to eight.

He announced that the first Andoni community has been linked up with the Ogoni mainland while the first six kilometers of the road which is at stone level would be asphalted soon.

# Fuel crisis

persist till March, 2007.

But, in a swift reaction, Ajuonuma said that there will not be any price increases and that the prime minister was quoted out of context in the various reports.

He said the minister at no point during his interaction with State House correspondents mentioned anything relating to price increase.

"The minister did not at any point mention anything relating to a price increase. The mere fact that he was sharing some technical information was not an imminent price increase."

"That it would take two months to repair the damaged Chanomi Creek crude pipelines as the minister revealed, should

not be misconstrued to mean that the current scarcity would last for that length of time.

"Rather the minister was pointing out the need for everyone involved in products bridging to steer clear of sharp practices," the statement said.

Noting that there was currently equilibrium between what the NNPC charged and the landing cost of premium motor spirit the corporation said that such did not give room for any price increase.

The NNPC also said that the Petroleum Products Regulation Agency (PPPRA) had not given any indication of price increase, warning that any marketer who hoards products will be sanctioned.

# Etiaba

Anambrarians during her short stay.

On the purchase of bullet proof cars, Governor Etiaba denied it saying that, "a governor must be secured. I have only one jeep that has bullet proof."

Meanwhile, Governor Etiaba yesterday effected a minor cabinet reshuffle with Commissioner for Economic Planning and Development, Dr Nkem Okeke taking charge of ministry of works addition to his existing portfolio while Special Adviser on Works Chief Nick Obi now moves to Utilities under the Bureau of Basic Infrastructure.

Also, Mr Dubem Obaze former Special Adviser Special Duties was appointed political Adviser to the Governor and a new appointee Mr Sylva Nwobu-Alor former campaign coordinator Peter Obi Campaign Organization takes over Senior Special Assistant, Special Duties.

constitutional legislation against one appointing his or her ward that knows the job saying, "yes let him be the defacto governor, no problem."

On the dualization of the Arthur -Eze road Awka, Governor Etiaba said government had recalled RCC to continue work on the road pointing out that in her 100 days in office she commissioned about 500 kilometers of roads including on going ones and those already undergoing construction.

She said that she has signed more than 650 Certificates of Occupancy (C of O's) and mortgages because her government reduced tariff while the perennial problem of education in the riverine areas of the state had been ameliorated. She further said that she has empowered most

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over governance to Mr Obi today after the Appeal court judgment.

Governor Virgy Etiaba also said that the All Progressives Grand Alliance government in Anambra State made it clear to the public that she is standing in for her boss, adding that "My relationship with my boss, Mr Obi is very cordial"

On her spending, Governor Etiaba said that money was meant to be spent judiciously but assured that she was very accountable to the people of Anambra State.

"I am very accountable to the people of Anambra State. Every kobo that is spent will be accounted for to the last kobo I am not spending money extravagantly. The records are there."

On why she appointed her son as a Senior Special Assistant, Governor Etiaba asked if there was any

# Militants take 2 hostage

## •OBJ dismisses military solution

TONY ITA ETIM, PH and DANIEL IDONOR, Abuja

HOSTAGE taking in the Niger Delta continued with the seizure of a Frenchman and Filipino oil workers in Port Harcourt, Wednesday night.

Meanwhile, President Olusegun Obasanjo says he was not in a hurry to order full-blown military operations to solve the problem over which oil workers are threatening a total pull-out from the area.

Indeed, leaders of oil sector's twin-unions Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) and National Union of Petroleum and Gas Workers of Nigeria (NUPENG) are charging that, "there can hardly be a successful (militant activities in the region) without security connivance."

Now, Presidents Obasanjo wants mothers and women generally in the Niger Delta to appeal to their children against taking up arms against government.

Unknown gunmen Wednesday night kidnapped a French national in Port Harcourt, hours after releasing a Briton abducted on January 23, 2007. The latest victim was said to be an operative of Elf Petroleum.

Company sources confided in our correspondent that the man was taken hostage near his residence by gun men. Our correspondent gathered that the expatriate, who is married to a Nigerian, has been working in the company for about 10 years.

The other case concerns a female Filipino abducted along Olu Obasanjo Road, Port Harcourt earlier on Wednesday.

*Daily Champion* learnt that the

lady was returning from one of the commercial banks where she reportedly made huge withdrawals, when she was attacked.

As of Thursday night, the lady's whereabouts and state of health were not known as no group had claimed responsibility for the abduction.

However, there are fears in Port Harcourt that her abduction might have been an armed robbery attack and not the usual kidnapping by militants.

Rivers State police command spokeswoman Baresua Ireju said she was not aware of the incidents, but President Obasanjo's senior special assistant on media Remi Oyo said the President was not opting for a military solution due to his respect for the sanctity of human life.

After presiding over a meeting with stakeholders in the oil and gas sector, Obasanjo stated that

he had not decided to take the military option to deal with the hostage taking and vandalism in the Niger Delta, for the simple reason that lives of innocent people are involved.

His audience NUPENG and PENGASSAN leaders who accused security agencies of conniving with oil pipeline vandals, and said that they would "adopt a wait and see attitude" on the outcome of their meeting with the President.

The unions, recommended that the "government and the NNPC should deploy high-tech strategies including helicopters and close-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance to monitor the entire pipelines network nationwide" while "community leaders and youth organizations engaged in pipelines surveillance should be properly paid and well equipped."

Mrs. Oyo said later that, "if the President is not rolling out all the tanks, it is because he believes in the sanctity of lives. He believes that it is possible that within the Niger Delta region, we can have people come to the table."

# Herbalist nabbed with human skulls

KOLA ADEPOJU, Abeokuta.

HELL was let loose in Abeokuta, Ogun State yesterday when an angry mob set ablaze, residence of a herbalist arrested with three human skulls.

The herbalist, Waheed Somorin, aka Egeje, who allegedly specializes in exhuming corpses from the cemetery and sales human parts to herb sellers at the popular Itoku Market escaped being lynched by the angry mob before his house was set ablaze.

The native Doctor, who was arrested alongside his accomplice, Mrs. Nafisatu Ewuoso who sells herb at Itoku Market are now in Police net at Eleweeran Command headquarter, Abeokuta.

According to our Correspondent who witnessed Somorin's arrest, nemesis caught up with him at 9.45am when a team of policemen from Ibara Police Station stormed his uncompleted Bungalow one room apartment at Itabaale area which is behind the MKO Abiola Stadium.

The policemen who were acting on a tip-off by a local

vigilante group caught Somorin red-handed with three skulls, two jaws containing tooth and a face material used to cover one of the corpses.

The shocking discovery which attracted residents of the area to the scene turned Somorin's residence to a mecca of sorts as more people kept thronging it.

Angered by the discovery, residents of the area almost lynched the herbalist but for the intervention of the policemen who whisked him away in their van to Ibara Police station and later Eleweeran Command headquarters.

Moment, thereafter, the angry residents set the uncompleted bungalow ablaze amid jubilation.

They also prevented men of the State fire service who brought their vehicle marked OG 084 A09 from putting out the fire ravaging the bungalow.

Speaking with our Correspondent, Somorin disclosed that he dug the three corpses from St. John Anglican Church Igbein Cemetery which is beside Paramount F.M. Station the previous night.