

# Valentine Day Tragedies: Policeman's head shattered on Ikeja bridge

CHINYERE AMAECHI, *Lagos*,  
AHMED MAZI, *Maiduguri*,  
JUSTIN OZUZU, *Nnewi*, with  
*agency report*

## • Fire guts Maiduguri hospital

It was a tragic Valentine Day for a policeman attached to the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) centre police station, Ikeja, Lagos, Thursday, when he burst his head on an iron barricade along the Ikeja overhead bridge Oba Akran Avenue road.

This is as suspected armed robbers shot dead a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), a police sergeant and four vigilante members in Ozubulu, Anambra State same day dedicated for lovers across the globe.

Also, in Maiduguri, Borno State, a mysterious early morning fire gutted part of the multimillion naira ultra modern Bulunkutu General Hospital.

The policeman, simply identified as Okoro met his tragic end when he, probably unaware of the iron barricade, hit his head on it as the *Rapid Response Squad* (RRS) vehicle he was travelling with, along side his colleagues was descending the bridge.

According to his colleagues, Okoro was standing in the vehicle immediately he collided with the iron barricade, and died on the spot.

The policemen *Saturday Champion* learnt had gone to the Area F police station, Ikeja and were

returning to their base when the unfortunate accident happened.

One of the deceased's colleagues, who spoke under strict condition of anonymity told *Saturday Champion* that it seemed that Okoro had premonition of his death as he was reluctant to embark on the journey to the Area F police station, which is a few minutes drive from their Wemabod Estate, Adeniyi Jones Avenue, Ikeja office.

According to him, it took a shouting order from a superior officer of their station before Okoro was compelled to join the team.

He further said that the shouting order might have forced Okoro to choose to stand at the back of the vehicle instead of sitting with his colleagues.

"I personally invited him to come and sit with me but he refused, saying he was comfortable standing behind", the policeman said.

When Okoro's lifeless body was brought to the MAN Centre police station 20 minutes after he had left the place alive, his colleagues and neighbours wailed uncontrollably.

The Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in-charge of the station, who later arrived held a brief meeting with some of his officers and later drove away with the corpse accompanied by some top officers of the station.

When contacted to confirm the accident, Deputy Police Public Relations Officer, Lagos State Police Command, Jimoh Oluamide, said he was yet to be informed of the tragedy.

The Ozubulu incident which took place at about noon along Owerri-Onitsha road by Ozubulu junction affected victims on transit who were said to have been dispossessed of their cash and valuables.

*Saturday Champion* gathered that the robbers who were heavily armed took over the road for hours and were challenged by a team of police men on a tip-off who immediately swung into action to rescue commuters and other road users. This resulted in exchange of fire between the police and men of the under world thereby leaving two police men dead.

According to sources, the robbers were said to have engaged the men of the vigilante service in a gun duel on their way to escape after their encounter with the police which also led to the death of four vigilante members.

People also scammed for safety during the incident which left the road deserted for hours as expended bullet shells were seen littered all over the scene.

At the end of the incident which caused traffic-jam, curious crowd gathered at the scene of the incident to catch a glimpse of what actually transpired.

When the Police Public Relation Officer of Anambra police command, Mr Felix Agbo was contacted, he confirmed the robbery incident.

The Bulunkutu General Hospital, Maiduguri, which was

consumed by the early morning inferno, unfortunately is one of the projects slated for commissioning by President Umaru Yar'Adua, Thursday next week during a presidential visit to Borno State.

The *News Agency of Nigeria* (NAN) learnt that the inferno was first noticed around the theatre complex at about 8 a.m. by labourers tidying up the site preparatory to the president's visit. NAN also gathered that the worst hit areas were the state-of-the-art theatre complex, the consulting blocks, the x-ray department, labour rooms and the administrative block, among others.

NAN noticed that the affected blocks housed the hospital's most expensive equipment, mostly imported from Germany and, therefore, the heart of the 300-bed capacity, hospital.

Speaking to journalists at the scene of the incident, Gov. Ali Modu Sheriff who was visibly angry over the incident, alleged sabotage by enemies of his administration.

The governor said he could not understand why the facility which will benefit the people could be a target by arsonists.

He said that people who did not mean well for the indigenes of the state had in the past fought to disrupt the visit of former President Olusegun Obasanjo to the state.

Sheriff alleged that at that time, members of the opposition set ablaze the house of a prominent politician in Bama area of the state to create impression of insecurity in the state.

The governor said that the loss to the state in the fire incident is colossal.

## warehouses in Lagos

arrived the scene about 30 minutes after the fire started.

The fire service tanker with registration number, LA 106 A40 arrived at the scene where the nylon producing

completely. Sympathizers and eye witnesses condemned the late arrival of men of the fire service.

The fire was raging as at 11.00 pm