

# Riots break out in Lagos

Riots broke out yesterday in Lagos when commercial vehicle operatives took to the streets protesting at the alleged shooting of one of their members by policemen and

Traffic management officials. Members of the National Union of Roads Transport Workers [NURTW] and the Road Transport Employers Association on Nigeria [RTEAN], clashed with the Police and the state Traffic Maintenance Authority, [LASTMA] officials at the Ojota-Maryland axis of Lagos state.

Police responded with teargas. The riots also paralysed activities at Anthony area and Oshodi for hours, forcing workers to trek long distances to their office yesterday morning.

Our correspondent gathered that the fracas which started as early as 7 am, spread from Ojota bus stop to Maryland, was a planned confrontation by the commercial drivers to put a stop to the alleged constant extortion of their members by the two law enforcement agencies.

Meanwhile, the Lagos police Public Relations Officer, Olubode Ojajuni said he was not aware of any driver shot by any policeman.

Confirming the crisis that brought the area to standstill, the Chief Executive Officer of LASTMA, Mr. Young Arebamen said no matter what the commercial bus drivers do, "LASTMA will come to stay, if the people don't like its activities, there should be a procedure of getting it out of existence, not by a mere demonstration.

"I am telling you that if I withdraw the LASTMA from the Lagos roads just for 20

## From Olumide Bajulaiye & Bola Ojuola, Lagos

minutes you be my witness that Lagosians would regret the traffic situation in the state," he however queried "but who are these miscreants anyway, who are they to say they don't want LASTMA?"

Arebamen denied his men of any corrupt practices that allegedly led to the crises, he the commercial bus-drivers thus "the problem is that they always avoid to pick passengers on the service lane for the fear of settling their members, and our men will not condone them picking same on the express."

"Certainly LASTMA will not prosecute any driver that pack on the service lane to pick

passengers, as far as I am concerned, law and order have broken down," Arebamen who was also the former commissioner of Police in the state stressed.

Witnesses told our correspondent that trouble started when a commercial bus driver vehemently refused give a LASTMA official N100 to leave the bus stop.

The argument between the two however made the passengers on board to disembark. The development, another source Mr. Michael Kokumo, a trader in the area added made the driver pull the LASTMA official by his collar.

He said "All we saw a bus driver holding one LASTMA staff, saying that he had inflicted

ill luck on him," adding that the hot argument later attracted the participation and involvement of their loyalists in the fracas that subsequently led to the breakdown of law and order in the area.

While all these were going on at Ojota, similar incidence was said to be going on at Maryland where the Police were allegedly enforcing their "right" to collect N20 dues from motorists.

It was reliably gathered that while the commercial drivers had the opportunity to fight the LASTMA officials at Ojota, those at the Maryland never had such opportunity because they were consistently tear gassed by the Police.

# Nyako blames states for poor agricultural scheme

Some state governments have failed to implement agricultural loan schemes worth billions of naira, the chairman, disbursement committee, said yesterday.

Retired Vice Admiral Murtala Nyako accused state governments of not putting forward their share of the money required to fund N50 billion loans to farmers.

He confirmed that farmers in Adamawa, his home state, have been seriously affected by the failure, but declined to name other states responsible.

The scheme is a joint arrangement between the federal and state governments with the 25 commercial banks in the country to offer soft loans to various categories of farmers throughout the country.

While farmers in some states have started benefiting from the

From Abdullahi Tasiu Abubakar, Yola scheme; in some others, the scheme has not yet taken off, he said.

Speaking in Yola, Adamawa state capital while receiving an award from "Zone E" of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Admiral Nyako blamed the affected state governments for the poor implementation of the scheme in their states.

The arrangement, he said, specified that the federal government should contribute N20 billion, the commercial banks N30 billion while each state is to give a counterpart funding of N200 million, bringing the overall total to over N57 billion.

He said that while some state governments have paid their counterpart contribution to the scheme with one of them

even exceeding the target by contributing N1 billion, other states have failed to even set up the implementation committee.

He declined to name the states, although he confirmed that his own state, Adamawa, is among the affected ones.

Admiral Nyako who is also the national president of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), said where the scheme is being implemented well, small scale farmers are getting as much as N5 million each, medium scale N20 million and large scale farmers above N20 million.

He said that his committee can intervene in the states where poor implementation is becoming detrimental to the interest of the farmers, adding that the scheme can help to boost agriculture in the country since the loan attracts only eight per cent interest compared to the