

Abuja-Kaduna travellers suffer 14-hour gridlock

● Cop who killed driver to be tried - CP

Maryam Ahmadu-Suka, Kaduna

People travelling from Abuja to Kaduna, and vice versa, were yesterday stuck in a gridlock that was described by many as a "nightmare". Lasting over 14 hours, motorists who left Abuja as early as 8am were stuck on the highway until well after 10pm, before cars began to crawl away.

The gridlock is said to have begun when in the early hours of Friday, a policeman shot a I-5 driver dead on the highway, prompting other drivers to block the road in anger, and to protest the killing.

Social media was awash with personal accounts by travellers stuck in traffic, unable to get food or water. One of them who spoke to *Daily Trust Saturday* on phone, said they heard that two kids slumped and died, most likely from dehydration. "It was terrible, people were crying," he said. Also, there

were fears that kidnappers could cash in on the situation and swoop in, so many people were visibly distraught.

Haruna Ibrahim, a traveller, said he observed some motorists sharing their food and water with others who were not so fortunate. "I saw a woman and her husband opening the booth of their car, and brought out some chin-chin which they shared to people, until some impatient and ill-mannered ones rushed it, spilling most of it on the ground," he said. "It was total chaos," he said.

Ibrahim also shared the story of a 3-year-old who went to a man unknown to her parents and asked for a plate of spaghetti he was eating. "He graciously surrendered it to her. Hunger was evident, and children were crying," Ibrahim narrated.

The high volume of traffic is due to the large number of travellers, on their way to various destinations for the Sallah celebrations slated for

tomorrow, Sunday.

In the evening, Kaduna State governor, Malam Nasir el-Rufai, visited parts of the highway affected by the gridlock, and inspected how bad the situation was.

Kaduna State Commissioner of Police, Ali Janga, ordered an immediate investigation into the killing of the driver, allegedly shot dead by a police Inspector around Olam while on his way to Kaduna around 7:30 am yesterday, sparked the protest which paralyzed the highway for the whole day.

"It was about 11pm, before some of us began to move on towards Kaduna," one motorist told *Daily Trust Saturday*.

The police commissioner expressed sadness over the incident, noting that the inspector involved in the incident would be tried accordingly. He assured that he had directed full investigation into the killing and commiserated with the family

of the deceased, assuring them and members of public that the command would ensure that justice is done on the matter.

Commissioner, Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan, on behalf of the state government yesterday apologised to road users who were subjected to hours of traffic gridlock over the killing. "The loss of life is deeply regretted and the state government commiserates with the family of the driver and has directed that the police will thoroughly investigate the incident. However, grief and a sense of loss does not justify imposing such pains on other citizens as the protesting drivers have done by blocking a very busy public highway. They have left many people stranded for several hours and caused considerable distress. The Kaduna State government apologises to road users for the inconveniences caused by the hours-long blockade," he said.