

# 6 killed, scores injured as train crushes BRT in Lagos

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**T**here was a tragedy in Lagos yesterday when a passenger bus was crushed by a moving train trying to pass the level crossing at PWD-Oshodi, leaving six people dead and dozens severely injured.

Over 80 injured persons were admitted at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), Ikeja whose management set up an outdoor triage centre to treat the injured as the facility was overwhelmed.

Witnesses said the bus driver was trying to pass the level crossing after it had been flagged down and alerted of an oncoming train.

The train involved was the Lagos-Ogun Mass Transit Train (MTT) coming from Ijoko, Ogun State, to Iddo in Lagos.

Sarah Godwin, a witness, said some officials of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) had flagged down vehicles to wait for the train, but the bus driver refused to wait and wanted to quickly pass the level cross.

She said, "I saw some officials asking the driver to stop. They were waving flags for him to stop but he didn't stop. There was a small shuttle bus which passed before him and the BRT bus driver too was trying to maneuver, but unfortunately it was already late."

The bus driver, who survived, was said to have reported himself to the police railway command where he was being held.

The Lagos Territorial Coordinator of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Ibrahim Farinloye, had earlier confirmed three persons dead on the spot and 84 others injured.

Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu, said: "The immediate cause of the incident was due to reckless driving from part of the BRT bus driver while trying to beat the train road signal before the moving train rammed into the BRT bus."

But Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu later confirmed three more people dead at the hospital, taking the death toll to six.

Farinloye the ill-fated bus was trying to cross the PWD/Shogunle rail crossing while the train was coming into Lagos from Ijoko.

Sanwo-Olu, while giving an update on the incident, said he had suspended his campaign activities for the March 18 governorship election.

The governor, who visited LASUTH, said flags would fly at half-mast to mourn the



■ Scene of the accident

deceased.

He said: "I was at LASUTH to understand the condition of the victims of the bus/train accident."

"The team at LASUTH expertly set up an outdoor triage centre which has contributed in saving lives, speeding up injury level profiling and supporting immediate critical action."

"This was a totally avoidable incident that simply required patience and the need to follow proper transportation protocol."

"There were 85 pax on board the bus with 6 deaths, 42 moderate injuries, 29 serious and 8 mild injuries according to the LASUTH classification scale."

"Lagos is in a state of mourning and for the next 3 days, I am suspending all campaign activities. All flags will be flown at half-mast and tomorrow all civil servants will work till 12 noon before returning home to be with their loved ones during this trying time."

**FG begins probe**

Meanwhile, the Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) has commenced investigation into the accident.

The accident investigation marked the first train accident investigation embarked upon by the Bureau since its establishment under the NSIB Act 2022.

The NSIB, which is a multimodal accident investigation body, replaced the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB) which was solely in charge of aviation accidents and incidents.

General Manager, Public Affairs, NSIB, Tunji Oketunbi, in a statement, said: "The NSIB, hereby, solicits information from the general public in form of pictures, video or recording evidence to help assist in conducting a comprehensive

investigation."

**Concerns over rising train accidents**

Nigerians have, however, expressed worry over the spate of train accidents across the train corridors in the country.

The accidents have raised questions about the safety architecture of Nigerian train operations.

In the past three months, at least four serious incidents had been recorded on the Nigerian train corridors, including the Abuja-Kaduna, the Itakpe-Warri and the Lagos train corridors.

Some train users in Abuja expressed worry over the frequency of accidents and called for overhaul of the train safety protocols.

Mr Audu Mohammed, a train user, said: "It is a cause for concern for the frequency of train accidents in Nigeria. It shows the safety protocols are poor."

He also queried the Minister of Transportation's claim that surveillance equipment had been installed on the train to detect danger well ahead.

"I recall during the resumption you the Abuja-Kaduna train operations, during the test ride, the Minister of Transportation, Muazu Sambo Jaji has claimed that surveillance cameras were installed in the locomotives for the driver and the control room to see kilometers ahead so the train can be stopped in the event of danger or encroachment on the train tracks."

"But what has been happening shows that there is no such surveillance happening. This is sad," he said.

Another train user, Abdullahi Sambo, also expressed similar worry over the situation, urging the government to launch

special investigations into the matter as it was causing panic among passengers.

The Minister of Transportation, Muazu Jaji Sambo, in his reaction through a statement by the ministry's Director (Press and Public Relations, Mr Henshaw Ogubike, said: "We are saddened by the news of the accident which occurred this morning involving a train operated by the Nigerian Railway Corporation and a Lagos State staff bus, conveying workers to their offices in the early hours of today in Shogunle, Lagos."

**We have mechanisms in place to avoid accidents - NRC**

On its part, the NRC, while sympathizing with the victims' families, said it had put in place level crossing control and management procedures necessary for preventing accidents by deploying mechanisms and level crossing staff that work at the level crossing across the country to prevent accidents.

In a statement, the corporation appealed to all and sundry to please "ensure restrain and strictly observe caution signs and instruction from officials when approaching railway level crossing and completely stop their vehicles when directed to do so by the Level Crossing Keeper and officials to ensure seamless movement of trains and safe crossing of motorists as well as pedestrians."

The statement added: "We must also be aware that railway has the Right of Way in any city that has the benefits of train services, hence, railway track must be kept free from walking and trading at all times."

"All level crossings are manned 24 hours and the

management of the NRC will not relent in its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of advising drivers and pedestrians to always comply strictly to instructions given by the railway staff at level crossing.

"Meanwhile, we will continue to collaborate with the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), State Traffic Management Agencies such as Lagos State Traffic Management Agency (LASMA), etc, to ensure the prevention of incidents of vehicles colliding with moving trains."

President Muhammadu Buhari, in a statement by his spokesman, Garba Shehu, expressed sympathy over the incident which he described as horrific.

He said the accident at the level crossing involving the train and the BRT staff bus was "distressing and extremely sad."

He prayed for the souls of the deceased and quick recovery of the many who were injured.

Buhari commended the Lagos State authorities and Federal Government agencies for promptly getting involved in relief work.

Similarly, the speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamila, in a statement by his spokesman, Lanre Lasisi, described the accident as regrettable and avoidable.

The speaker expressed grief that innocent lives of people going about their legitimate business were lost during the incident.

He sent his condolences to the families of the victims, the people and the government of Lagos State over the incident.

He prayed for the repose of the souls of those that lost their lives and quick recovery for the injured.