

# Accidents On Lagos-Ibadan Expressway

**F**OR the umpteenth time, scores of innocent commuters perished in a tragic multiple vehicular accident on the ever-busy Lagos-

Ibadan Expressway. Day-in day-out, lives are lost in accidents on that road. The carnage is attributable to the deplorable state of the road.

On September 8, during a down-pour, a leaking petrol tanker on top speed lost control and fell, spilling its highly inflammable cargo onto the road. The impact sparked off massive fireballs that engulfed the tanker and in turn spread to other vehicles, including two fully loaded inter-state commuter buses.

Amid the confusion and commotion that ensued, the fire raged for hours. Several vehicles were burnt. Eighty people were reportedly burnt beyond recognition. The charred bodies of the victims were cleared by men of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) and deposited at the Olabisi Onabanjo University Teaching Hospital (OOUTH), Sagamu. Only five persons survived.

It is sad that the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway on which billions of naira have been spent in the name of repairs remains so dangerous. The section of the highway between Lagos and Sagamu interchange is particularly notorious. We recall that in the past two years, the Federal Ministry of Works has made attempts to refurbish the road either by patching damaged portions, expanding the median, or offering loud impressions of activity. But this has still not translated into any improvement in the condition of the road. It is pot-hole ridden, uneven, narrow and inadequate and whenever it rains, that road literally becomes a dangerous path.

The recent accident is an indication of the underdeveloped nature of our public system and our lack of capacity to respond to emergencies. We have on many occasions faced emergency situations arising from fire outbreak, building collapse, air crash and other accidents without adequate response. It was not surprising, therefore, that there was no fire service at hand to help the victims on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

Incidentally, the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway has become notorious on many grounds. Every now and then, there is either a fatal accident or a crippling traffic hold-up due to religious activities or armed robbery incidents. We have lamented in our previous editorials the regular mas-

sive disruption of traffic on this road. There is uncontrolled development on the highway. This has compounded the unpleasant situation and turned the road into a nightmare.

The question may well be asked: who manages this busy highway connecting the commercial nerve centre of Lagos with the rest of the country? Indeed, who manages the other highways across the country? Who is in-charge of the maintenance and care of these roads? Who should patrol the highways to ensure safety of lives and property?

Several sections of the road are pot-hole ridden. When it rains, drainage puddles cover the potholes, which then constitute danger points. There are no Vehicle Inspection Officers (VIOs) patrolling the road, no speed limits and no highway managers. There are no warning signs for drivers at danger points and of course no discipline on the part of the drivers. Trailers and tankers are parked indiscriminately with impunity at Ibafo and Ogere sections of the road. These heavy-duty trucks move at top speed without recourse to safety or respect for the sanctity of human life.

The FRSC is ill-equipped to handle fatal accident situations. There are no ambulance services on the road. Accident victims therefore suffer untold anguish and pain. On many occasions, members of the public attempt to rescue victims with bare hands and crude implements. Abandoned vehicles litter the highway at strategic points without any one removing them. There is no serious initiative by the authorities to combat the decay of the highway.

Undoubtedly, the Federal Government has abdicated its responsibility. Government has abandoned the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway while innocent citizens perish as a result. The Federal Ministry of Works should rise up to the challenge of refurbishing this road without further delay. Action should be expedited on the 14 interim measures recently adopted by the FRSC, the Federal Ministry of Works and the religious groups to sanitise traffic on the road. In all, it is high time that all the stakeholders including Ogun, Oyo and Lagos state governments took proactive action to halt further carnage on the Lagos-Ibadan expressway.