

## MARITIME WATCH

## NPA intensifies efforts to recover pilot's body from Lagos waters

WHEN he left home for work that fateful Monday morning, he did not know he would never return to his house. The only thing that bordered him as he left the house that morning was the possibilities of his daughter securing admission, this year, into an institution of higher learning.

Omoshekeji Abiola was a pilot with the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA). He was in his early 30s and he has spent close to 30 years in the service of the Nigerian Ports Authority.

As usual, he had successfully piloted a vessel, *BBC Germany* to the far away buoy, a point where he ought to bade the ship good bye

from Nigeria.

Late Abiola at this point wanted to disembark from the ship into an NPA pilotage vessel that would have brought him back into the port when he slipped and plunged into the Atlantic Ocean.

That was how Biola as he was fondly called by colleagues and friends ended his life and career as an NPA pilot.

His work schedule was to pilot vessels coming to Nigeria from the high sea to Nigerian shore and same for vessels leaving the Nigerian Port to their next destination outside the country.

Over one week after the accident, the remains of Biola who has been presumed dead by the

authorities is yet to be recovered fuelling fears that he may have fallen into the propeller side of the ship which may have torn the body to shreds.

A visit to the control towers of the Lagos Port complex over the weekend showed that colleagues of the pilot still wore mournful looks as some of the colleagues were still discussing the sad event while management of the NPA and that of a private shipping company were said to be working out compensation to be paid to the family of the deceased.

To Tunde Omosokin, a family member of the deceased pilot, it is a sad way to end a career and a big blow to the family.

He was particularly



• Sarumi, MD, NPA

By Ozioruva Aliu

concerned about the welfare of the six children Abiola left behind. He appealed for speedy action by his employers so that the children and the wife could be

Port shortly after meeting with the harbour master.

"They have not promised anything yet, they said they are still searching for his body. The children must go to school, we must train them, I am appealing to the management of NPA to help, to bail us out of this problem to be able to train the children.

"Now the head of the family is not around again, he is no more, I myself I have my own problem and the children must go to school."

*The Guardian*, however, gathered that NPA and the shipping company may soon pay the family compensation as contained in the NPA's condition of service. The NPA has also promised

to improve on the welfare of the pilots.

The Managing Director of the NPA, Chief Adebayo Sarumi was said to have personally led a delegation that met with the pilots at the control towers of the Lagos Port complex over the weekend.

The NPA boss was said to have immediately appointed the president of the Nigeria Maritime Pilots Association, Pilot Etime Emeyin into the pilotage board of the Lagos Pilotage District so that they can make inputs on matters relating to the welfare of the pilots.

Besides, the management of the NPA said it would soon acquire new pilot cutters for smooth pilotage operations.