

Protest on Lekki-Epe Expressway as reckless driver kills pupils

• Lagos Assembly calls for overhead bridge in Ikota village

By Sunday Odita, Wole Oyeade and Cleopatra Eki

THERE was chaos on Lekki-Epe Expressway, Lagos in the early hours of yesterday as five school pupils of Ikota Primary School were feared killed in a car crash. The accident created an unprecedented traffic gridlock on the usually busy highway.

The truck, according to eyewitness, lost control on the expressway and ran into the school children waiting to cross the road. An eyewitness alleged that the protest brought to a halt commercial and vehicular activities in the area for hours.

He said the accident involved a blue-coloured Mercedes Benz water tanker (truck) with registration No. XZ87JJJ and a black Toyota Prado SUV with registration No. CB690AKD.

"The SUV gave way to allow the school children cross the expressway while the driver of the truck tried to overtake the car, thereby running over the kids. The driver of the truck and his conductor bolted away but were arrested by the mob," he added.

For fear of being caught up in the crossfire, proprietors of schools in the area sent messages to parents that the drivers of their school buses would not be allowed to drop off the children and advised those who can to come for their children.

The tragedy led to a spontaneous protest by residents and social miscreants popularly called *area boys*, who blocked the entire express-

way, making the highway impassable in both directions for several hours. A traffic gridlock stretching over 10 kilometres built up on the road and it trapped thousands of motorists reporting to work.

Efforts by security agents to clear the road were resisted by the protesters, which caused the Police to fire gunshots into the air, to scare them away. This led to a gun duel between the hoodlums and the police.

The protesters' anger was not unconnected with the "refusal" of the Lagos State government to construct an over-head bridge around the accident scene, despite years of pleas.

They cited that accidents along that corridor had become one too many, and pedestrians, especially resident in the village, were often the victim of fatal road accidents.

But for later intervention of men of the Nigerian Police Force, the corridor was a no-go area yesterday morning. Several gunshots were also heard in the area, as police had a hectic time dislodging angry protesters from the highway.

Though normalcy has returned to the area following the prompt arrival of the police from Ajah Division. The witness added that street urchins and some commercial bus drivers in the area later hijacked the protest. The angry mob blocked the major roads into the area by setting ablaze used fires.

Meanwhile, the Lagos State

House of Assembly has mandated the state government and ministry of works and infrastructure to ensure provision of an over-head bridge around Ikota Village, to prevent incessant killing of pedestrians in the area.

Lawmaker representing the constituency, Hakeem Alimi, brought the matter to the floor of the Lagos Assembly yesterday, as he urged the House to mandate the Executive arm of government to see to the construction of an over-head bridge at Ikota Village without delay.

Alimi, with an emotion-laden voice, narrated the early morning incident to the

lawmakers, adding that the three injured school pupils are now receiving treatment in the hospital.

He said: "I have, therefore, decided to bring the matter to the House, to use its' legislative might, in ensuring that the most needful infrastructure in that area is quickly built," Alimi said.

Quite sympathetic to the plight of the school pupils and residents at large, Chief Whip of the House, Dr Rasak Balogun observed that the over-head bridge was one of the six, the state government had proposed in the 2014 budget, currently before the House.

Speaker of the House, Adeyemi Ikuforiji, commiserated with family of the pupil

that was killed in the accident, as he called on the state government to speed up processes, towards the construction of an over-head bridge in the area.

When contacted, the Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Ngozi Braide, stated that the unfortunate incident occurred at about 8am. She said the Police Division received a distress call that there was a fatal motor accident at Ajah.

"The situation was later brought under control as the Area Commander intervened and appealed to them not to take laws into their hands, which they obliged and left the road at about 1.30pm. Meanwhile the area is calm and quiet now," Braide said.

Another service holds at home on Saturday, November 23, to be followed by interment in Ikot Ntuen Nsit Village, Nsit Ibom Local Council, opposite Teaching Hospital, Abak Road, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State at 11.00a.m



Udoh

Varsity to honour Okonjo-Iweala, Sanusi, Patience Jonathan, others

FOUR eminent Nigerians, including Dame Patience Jonathan, will be honoured on Thursday during the Fourth Founder's Day and first convocation ceremony of Oduduwa University (OUI), Ipetumodu, Osun State.

Jonathan will be honoured with a doctoral Degree in Public Administration, Coordinating Minister for the Economy and Minister of Finance, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala will be awarded Doctor of Finance while the Governor of Central Bank, Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi would bag Doctor of Economics and Professor G.A. Olawoyin (SAN) awarded a Doctor of Law.

The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Adeleke Ogunwale, disclosed that the ceremony would be kicked off with the installation of Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade as the Chancellor.



The protesting youths...yesterday