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One killed, 200 arrested in Oshodi raid

By Wole Oyeade on August 24, 2015



AT least one person was feared dead and over 200 suspected hoodlums were arrested in a cleanup operation that lasted over seven hours yesterday (Sunday) morning.

The operation, which began in the early hours of the day, was carried out by men of the Lagos State Taskforce on Environmental and Special Offences Unit.

The operation, being one in a series, was to remove illegal stalls, illegally parked vehicles on roadside and arrest hoodlums operating in the area.

But in a dramatic twist to the cleanup exercise, a phone call credited to the state governor, Akinwunmi Ambode, ordered the release of seized vehicles.

When The Guardian visited the market at about 7am, it was gathered that men of the taskforce, numbering about 50, stormed the area at 2am to begin demolition of illegal stalls, shops extensions and demarcation beyond the approved limit.

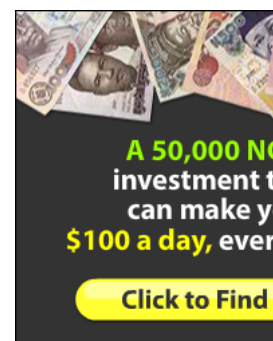
The operation was supported by two bulldozers; four forklift trucks; two black Maria and about 13 Hilux pickup vehicles, among others.

Chairman of the taskforce, Mr. Olubukola Abe (a Superintendent of Police), led his men in the assignment that started from Bolade to as far as inwards Charity on Lagos-Apapa-Oshodi Expressway. It involved the clearing of wooden stalls and metal kiosks extensions in sight.

An eyewitness, who gave his name simply as Emeka, said the taskforce came in commando style and went after the hoodlums that were taking shelter around kiosks and stalls.

He said some of the hoodlums, who tried to resist arrest, engaged the officials in a fight, which led to one of the taskforce drivers being mobbed and stabbed severally.

The victim, whose name was not immediately known and who was newly employed as a driver about a month



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ago, later passed on in an undisclosed hospital.

The cleanup exercise came after governor Akinwunmi Ambode and state officials visited Oshodi last Wednesday to see things for themselves. Ambode was in the market for 20 minutes to view the place.

It was also gathered that before the the taskforce officials came to the place, its officials had engaged the traders, National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) among others in a stakeholders meeting, informing them of the exercise.

Chairman of the Taskforce, Abe, who had on assumption of office, announced zero tolerance for environmental offences, said the exercise was a huge success, but Oshodi would have to be closely monitored to ensure compliance.

Abe said that the arrested 200 suspected hoodlums were presumed innocent until the court decides their fate.

However, at 9:15am, Chairman of the NURTW, Musiliu Akinsanya, popularly called MC Oluomo, standing next to Abe, was in a telephone conversation with someone, who he later claimed to be the state governor, announced that "His Excellency" has ordered that the seized vehicles should immediately be released on the spot.

The development threw the whole of Oshodi into frenzy, as men of the NURTW began to sing praises of Oluomo, saying: "power pass power."

In a related development, the Lagos State government will henceforth begin to arrest and prosecution any found to be polluting the environment with used motor vehicles in the state.

The measure, which is directed at motor mechanics and workshops across the state, is to protect the environment and enhance health of the public.

Also, the state government has entered into partnership with a private organisation on the use of Ecocycle Technology, to provide simple and safe way to dispose off used oil.

General Manager of the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA), Ademola Shabi, said it would interest Lagosians to know that Section 21 of the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency Law CAP L23 of the Lagos State Law 2004, on the prohibition of manufacturing or storage of petroleum products in industries or residential areas, had been in existence with little or no enforcement.

But henceforth," Shabi said, "my agency would begin to enforce the rules, especially in the light of high rate of contamination of underground water, as a result of injection of used oil from various mechanics garages, workshops and other facilities."

According to him, these actions not only contaminate the water recharges, that is the aquifers, the waste oil contamination goes with significant health issues of skin disorder from irritation and also carcinogenic.

He added that concerned stakeholders would be properly sensitised and be made to contribute to the proposed guidelines and regulations on waste oil management in Lagos State at the one-day summit holding Tuesday, August 25, 2015.

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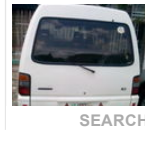
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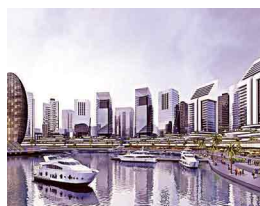
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