

Black Friday In Ibarapa: 64-Year-Old Man, 13 Others End 120km Journey In Mortuary

•Families, relatives besiege hospital for recognition of badly burnt corpses •Oyo CP expresses shock, reads Riot Act to drivers

By Soji Ajibola On Sep 12, 2022

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Scene of the Friday's crash at Maya junction, Lanlate-Eruwa road, Ibarapa East Local Government Area. Inset: Mother of one of the survivors of Ibarapa road mishap, Babatunde Adewale beside his hospital bed at Awojobi Clinic, Eruwa

Barely 250 metres to the destination point, the journey of 120km embarked upon by 14 passengers including a 64 year's old man, Oluwagbemiga, who was on his way to attend the burial planning meeting of his late dad who died on Tuesday from the commercial nerve centre of the country, Lagos to the ancient town of Lanlate in Ibarapa East local government area of Oyo state, was terminated at the morgue of Eruwa General Hospital at the weekend.

Families and relatives had gathered at the various motor parks in Lanlate to welcome the passengers onboard an 18-seater Toyota Hiace bus and Sienna space bus to their respective destinations but were shocked on hearing the news that the two vehicles had been involved in an accident at the popular Maya junction with only two survivors.

Their port of arrival had been shifted to the morgue of the Eruwa General Hospital where families, friends and relations were battling hard to identify the corpses that had been burnt beyond recognition.

The families of the deceased could not hold back tears when they sighted the remains of their loved ones whom they bade goodbye less than one and half hours earlier at Lagos and Iseyin motor parks respectively

Amidst sobbing and gnashing of teeth, Raphael Babatunde said his father, Babatunde Oluwagbemiga Elijah, aged 64 left Lagos to attend the family burial meeting of his dad in Lanlate when he met his untimely death. Raphael, who managed to identify the corpse of his father though it was badly burnt disclosed that his father died five days after the demise of his grandfather.

“My father left Lagos early Friday morning to attend the burial planning meeting of his father who died on Tuesday in Lanlate community not knowing that death was lurking around the corner.

“I am still in shock seeing the burnt corpse of my father. Though he is badly burnt, I can still recognise him. What we want now is for the government to release his corpse so that we can give him a befitting burial.”

An Islamic cleric, whose tears will not allow him to disclose his identity, shares a similar experience with Raphael. He identified his wife as Alimotu Ebedi, a.k.a Iya Monsurat.

“That fat burnt corpse is my wife. That is Iya Monsura. This is not how we planned it. Her son is over there (pointing towards the gate of the General Hospital. I am appealing to the relevant authority to release her corpse in order to give her a befitting burial in accordance with Islamic rites. It has happened, it has happened,” he said.

While the likes of Raphael and the Islamic cleric were able to identify the corpse of their parent and wife, others are battling to identify the corpses of their relations.

Expressing shock over the incident that he described as unfortunate but avoidable during an on-the-spot assessment, the State Commissioner of Police, Adebowale Williams, commiserated with the families of the victims and prayed God to give them fortitude to bear what he described as irreparable loss.

On the identities of the victims, he said the Police authorities will intensify efforts at getting the passengers manifest at the various loading points. We shall try our best to get the family to claim the bodies, but where it happens that nobody claims the bodies, we will think of the next thing to do.”

Already six bodies have been identified by their families but eight are yet to be cleared. The Commissioner of Police who blamed the incident on overspeeding and recklessness on the part of one of the affected drivers, said the police authorities, in conjunction with the Federal Road Safety Commission, (FRSC), and Oyo State Traffic Management Authority would commence enforcement of all traffic regulations across the length and breadth of the state with commensurate sanctions of defaulters.

He, therefore, warned that it shall no longer be business as usual, highlighting indiscipline as a major contributory factor responsible for the needless loss of lives. On the root cause of the accident, the Commissioner said investigation would soon commence on the matter but added that the authorities would soon establish a link with the two survivors who are recuperating at different hospitals in the state.

One of the survivors, a motor boy who is identified as Babatunde Adewale is still in a state of unconsciousness at Awojobi clinic in Eruwa. His mother who just came in from Iseyin expressed hope and confidence that he will bounce back to life.

The owner of the hospital, Mrs Felicia Adetilewa Awojobi who confirmed the admission of the two survivors said one of them, a driver of the Sienna space bus has been moved to the LAUTECH University Teaching Hospital, Ogbomoso for intensive medical attention. Mrs Awojobi who shared the same feelings with the

parent of Adewale said though his two legs are badly burnt, he is responding to medical treatment.

Meanwhile, conflicting reports have continued to trail the cause of the incident. Some people blamed it on the recklessness of the drivers while others attributed it to the explosion of jerry cans of petrol that were loaded inside one of the affected vehicles.

In his account, the Area Commander, Eruwa Police Command, Immanah Sunday said it was a head-on collision involving a Sienna bus that is heading towards Lagos and an 18-Seater bus that is heading towards Eruwa.

He disclosed that the driver of the Sienna bus lost control due to a burst tyre and collided with an oncoming bus from the opposite direction, resulting in the death of 14 passengers and two survivors including the driver of a Sienna bus and motor boy of an 18-seater bus. He added that remains of the affected 14 passengers have been deposited at the morgue of the Eruwa General Hospital where families and relations of the affected victims are expected to come for proper identification before the release.

The chairman of Ibarapa East local government, Gbenga Obalowo described the incident as unfortunate but avoidable. He used the opportunity to sympathise with the families of those who died in the accident.

He, therefore, appealed to motorists, particularly commercial drivers to be more careful while on the wheel. “It was a gory sight. We counted 14 human bodies burnt completely. I learnt they had a head-on collision and the two vehicles, a commercial bus and a Sienna space bus which was also conveying passengers caught fire and got burnt beyond repairs,” he added.