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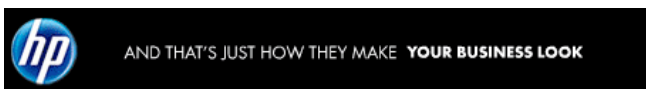
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LASTMA's bid to seize truck causes men's death

By Simon Ejembi

Tuesday, 14 Jun 2011

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Two weeks after a Lagos State Traffic Management Authority official allegedly caused the death of an official of Man O' War, Mr. Richard Emeto, while trying to **seize a truck**, the family of the deceased have expressed worry that the LASTMA official would never be arrested.

Besides, they said due to the controversy surrounding Emeto's death, it had become difficult for them to bury the deceased.

According to Man 'O War officials attached to the Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area, 30-year-old Emeto was killed on Saturday, May 28, in an accident alleged to have been caused by a LASTMA official at Festac.

"The accident occurred when the LASTMA official tried to **seize one truck** that was carrying iron (metal rods)," one of the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, adding that the issue had "caused a lot of problems."

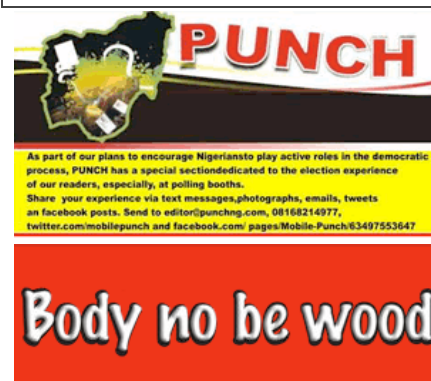
"Our boy (Emeto) was riding on his motorcycle behind the trailer, and as the LASTMA official tried to **seize the truck**, the truck lost control and the goods it was carrying fell and crushed him," he added.

PUNCH METRO gathered that another motorcyclist and a tricycle rider, who were also reportedly involved in the accident, were rushed to a hospital.

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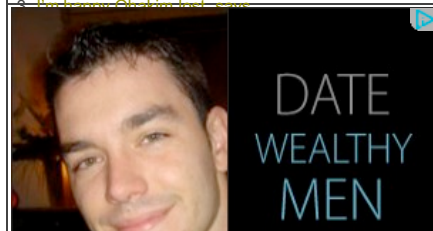
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Emeto

After the accident, Emeto's corpse was said to have been taken to the General Hospital, Isolo, Lagos and his elder sister, Mrs. Millicent Nwose, was immediately contacted.

Our correspondent learnt that the truck's driver was arrested and was being detained at the Festac Police Station. Meanwhile, the goods, which the **truck** was conveying have, however, been released to the owner.

PUNCH METRO investigations revealed that as at Tuesday, June 7, the **truck** involved in the incident was parked in front of the local government secretariat, along with the motorcycles and the tricycle involved in the crash.

But, the family of the deceased is not pleased with the way the case is being handled and the effort being made to compensate them.

"In an accident involving human lives, all the exhibits are supposed to be kept. Yet, they released the vehicle and the iron rods it was carrying," the family's lawyer, Mr. Aloy Stephen-Duru, said.

But the owner of the **truck**, Alhaji Ibrahim Yahaya, said based on the advice of the police he and others involved were meeting with the family of the deceased to reach a settlement. Yahaya also confirmed that the driver was being detained, while the goods had been released.

"We had to move it [the goods] because we could not just leave it outside like that," he said, adding that his business was "down" as the seized **truck** was the only one he had.

Emeto's colleagues said they were not happy with the aftermath of the incident.

"After the accident, some of our boys went to the LASTMA office to protest what happened; they did not go there to fight and we do not have guns. But when they reached the place, riot policemen attached to the LASTMA office started to shoot in the air and arrested five of our boys and detained them for five days," one of them said.

Emeto's family also expressed disappointment over the absence of the unidentified LASTMA official as they believed it was affecting efforts to reach a settlement.

After a meeting involving Emeto's family, their lawyer, the **truck** owner and a member of the National Association of Road Transport Owners on June 7, a member of the family said an agreement could not be reached because the parties involved "feel it is the fault of LASTMA. So, no one else is ready to take the blame. The owner of the **truck** are only interested in getting their **truck** back."

Stephen-Duru, however confirmed that "a token" was offered by the **truck** owner but the family had not accepted it, adding that the family would issue a statement on the case after further deliberation.

Responding to claims that one of his officials caused the accident, the Chief Executive Officer of LASTMA, Mr. Young Arebamen, said it was all down to a mix-up as an official was "wrongly arrested."

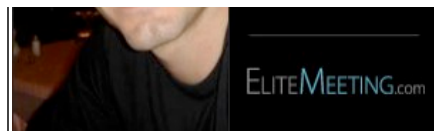
He said, "We allowed them (the police) to carry out their investigations without interference, we are aware their investigations have been concluded and he [the official] has been exonerated.

"That LASTMA man was not even at the scene, but I would not want to speak for the police. All I know is that they have released our man without any condition."

Although Stephen-Duru agreed that there was a mix up in the arrest of the LASTMA official, he explained that it was a LASTMA official that was responsible for Emeto's **death** nonetheless.

"The official, who caused the accident reportedly ran away and another one, who was spotted close by was arrested instead," he said.

When contacted on Wednesday, the Police Public Relations Officer, Lagos State Command, Mr. Samuel Jinadu, referred PUNCH METRO to the Divisional Police Officer of Festac Police Station, Mr. Usman Ndandabo.



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Ndandabo, who later spoke with our correspondent, said, "Yes the accident happened and one person died on the spot. Another person later died in a hospital."

He also confirmed that the driver of the **truck** was in police custody but he declined to provide more details as, according to him, the PPRO is the authorised person to provide information to the press.

The DPO added that a report about the case had been sent to the PPRO's office.

But when contacted again on Sunday, Jinadu said he had to contact Ndandabo for details of the case. Efforts to reach the PPRO on Monday were unsuccessful as he did not pick his calls.

As the case lingers on, the family head, Cornelius Emeto, said he was concerned about how to bury his nephew. "No amount of money can bring him back," he said, adding that "but the money they are bringing as compensation is too small when you look at what we have to go through just for his burial."

Comments :

- What are the functions of LASTMA?, does it include seizing of trucks carrying Iron Rods meant for specific assignment, if not, the authority that appoints them should check their excesses to promote the sanctity of life. No man/organisation is beyond control.

Posted by: A.A.Evwiehor , on Tuesday, June 14, 2011

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- The elections have been won and lost, and LASTMA has resumed their terrorism of motorists. While we agree the agency has helped traffic a lot in Lagos, the methodology and unrefined mode of its operatives leaves a lot of sour taste. Opposite their Maryland yard yesterday June 13, it was the same situation. The use of nonuniformed personnel on their team is more threatening! They need training and working aids.

Posted by: inno , on Tuesday, June 14, 2011

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- This lastma hooligans are glorified semi illiterate area boys so what do u expect from them, yes chaos chaos and chaos.

Posted by: olumide , on Tuesday, June 14, 2011

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