

Commercial drivers on the rampage in Lagos

Olalekan Adetayo

COMMERCIAL bus drivers in Lagos took to the streets, on Monday, in protest against alleged extortion and high-handedness by officials of the Lagos State Transport Management Authority.

The early morning protest, which spread from Oshodi to Palm Groove and Maryland on the Lagos-Ikorodu Expressway left many commuters stranded as the drivers withdrew their services.

Drivers who were unaware of the protest were forced by their protesting colleagues to discharge their passengers on the Oshodi-Oworonshoki Expressway and join the fray.

When our correspondent visited the trouble spots, eyewitnesses gave two versions of the cause of the confusion.

Some commercial drivers told our correspondent that the protest was to register their displeasure over the continued extortion by LASTMA officials under the pretence of enforcing a law that prohibits drivers from picking passengers on the service lane.

Others said the protest was necessitated by the killing of a commercial bus driver by security operatives attached to the LASTMA on Friday.

But LASTMA's Chief Executive, Mr. Young Arebame, denied the second story.

He said he was not aware that his men had altercation with any driver, not to mention of killing anybody.

While the early morning confusion lasted, riot policemen drafted to the scene used teargas to disperse the rampaging drivers while pedestrians scampered to safety.

Unconfirmed reports said some persons, including the protesting drivers and commuters, were injured during the unrest.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Olubode Ojajuni, a deputy superintendent of police, told our correspondent on the phone

that the command was "on top of the situation."

He said the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Emmanuel Adebayo, had invited leaders of all transport unions in the state to an extraordinary meeting.

Ojajuni said the meeting was aimed at putting an end to the incessant breakdown of law and order involving commercial drivers in the state.

He denied knowledge of any casualty in the protest.

Police arrest varsity students for robbery

Fidelis Soriwei, Owerri

MEN of the Imo State Police Command have arrested 10 students of one of the universities in the state capital, Owerri, for alleged armed robbery.

The command's Public Relations Officer, Mr. Isah Mohammed, a deputy superintendent of police, told our correspondent in an interview in Owerri, on Monday, that the suspects were arrested at the weekend in Emeabiam, a community in Owerri West Local Government Area of the state.

Mohammed said the command's headquarters responded to a distress call from the police at Nekede about a robbery operation that was said to be in progress in the area.

He said the suspects were arrested with the aid of the local vigilance organisations.

According to him, the police recovered a locally made revolver pistol, a live .9mm live ammunition, two hand bags, two masks and

some tyres from the L 300 bus inside which they were arrested.

Mohammed said two of the suspects had made useful statements during interrogation.

He was quoted as saying that they (the suspects) were on their way to a robbery operation when the police arrested them.

Mohammed said the command had ensured increased police presence along Owerri-Aba Road following the rampant cases of armed robbery recorded.

He said the police had the responsibility of ensuring the safety of lives and property along the road.

According to him, with the increased police presence on the road, it would be difficult for robbers to terrorise innocent road users.

He, therefore, advised those complaining that the delay at police checkpoints on the road was making them miss their flights, to bear with the command.