

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Dockworkers threaten strike over death of colleagues

Babatunde Oke

DOCKWORKERS have threatened to withdraw their services from the Lagos ports, especially Tin Can Port, to protest the death of two of their colleagues who died on Sunday while working at berth seven of the port.

The deceased persons, Mr. Benjamin Omogun and

Mr. Zakari Abdulahi – died around 1:00am, when a crane was mistakenly lowered on them while working on some containers.

Our correspondent also learnt that one of victims died on the spot, while the other one was rushed to Lagoon Hospital in Apapa, where the management of the hospital allegedly demanded a deposit

of N500,000 before treatment.

Some of the workers, who spoke with our correspondent lamented the pathetic working conditions at the ports, saying they were still being regarded as casual workers.

According to the Secretary of the workers for berth 7/7A, Mr. Rotimi Edebor, “The victims had been work-

ing since 7:00pm, loading and discharging containers. As the spreader (crane) came down swinging, in order not to push the workers away, it has to be rested on the container first. But unfortunately, it rested on them.

“There was no way we could get that amount at that time of the day. So from 1am to 3am, there was no medical attention before the second person died.”

He alleged that Sifax, operator of the berth, had no medical provision for the workers.

The President of the Dock Workers Union of Nigeria,

Mr. Anthony Emmanuel Nted, alleged that the conditions of work at the ports are “pitiable,” as most terminal operators had no equipment, such as gadgets, helmets, ambulance and clinic, to cater for any emergency situation.

He added that the essence of port reforms, which the workers supported, was to improve productivity.

Nted said that the workers would abandon the ports if something was not urgently done to address their precarious situation.

Mr. Wole Adetumi of berth 5 and 6, explained that “the

plights of the workers at Tin-Can ports is very deplorable,” alleging that 90 per cent of the workers were afflicted with different diseases, as a result of exposure to dangerous substances.

The senior police officer on duty, Chief Superintendent of Police, Mr. B.E. Williams, however, lauded the workers for protesting peacefully.

Our correspondent gathered that the Commissioner of Police, Ports Command, Mr. Vincent Ojo, who visited the scene later, asked the workers to continue to maintain peace.

AON to meet Obasanjo, Borisade on

Akin Olukunle

DOMESTIC airline operators under the aegis of the Airline Operators of Nigeria, may have agreed to meet President Olusegun

rising cost of aviation fuel

tors revealed in Lagos on Sunday.

The cost of a one-hour flight currently stands be-

tween N10,000 and N14,000 depending on the airline and available booking procedure.