

Bandits attack motorists on Uyo highway

Stories: **Soni Daniel,**
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PASSENGERS on the Ogoni-Uyo road now grapple with extortion by the security agents and the menace of armed robbers.

Men of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad were deployed on the road last October following the atrocities committed daily by armed men on the highway.

Armed men had killed not fewer than five motorists, disposed them of large sums of money and raped dozens of women before the policemen were drafted to the scene.

However, investigations by our correspondent revealed that despite the presence of the policemen, armed men still struck on the road and robbed drivers at gunpoint.

A driver, who gave his name as Iwe Matthew, told our correspondent on Tuesday, that the robbers shot a Volvo driver on the shoulder after collecting the sum of N50, 000 from the victim.

Matthew said the commercial driver incurred the wrath of the hoodlums for daring to move after parting with all the money on him.

The driver said before the incident, a mini-bus driver was robbed by the gunmen on Thursday a few metres away from the police checkpoint on the road.

Our correspondent who monitored the operations of the policemen on Tuesday, observed a total of seven police checkpoints between the Akwa Ibom State boundary with Rivers State and the road junction that leads to Bori, the headquarters of Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State.

It was learnt that while men of the Federal Highways Patrol allegedly collected N100 bribe from each commercial driver passing through the road, those of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad demanded N200 each from every commercial driver.

Four other checkpoints on the road collected N40 from each commercial motorist. The implication is that each commercial driver pays between N620 and N1,000 as bribes to policemen between Uyo and Port Harcourt for a one-way trip.

But when contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Mrs. Ireju Barasua, said the command would look into the report.

She said that the command wanted to ensure the safety of passengers and their property on the road and would not allow anything to disrupt its operations.

'Why I stepped down from Reps race'

TREASURER of the Port Harcourt Refinery Depot of the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria, Chief Erasmus Ekeowa, said on Tuesday that he withdrew from the race to the Udi Federal Constituency in Enugu State in deference to the state Governor, Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani.

Ekeowa, who is the Coordinator of Ebeano, a political pressure group in Enugu State in Port Harcourt, said that he had to step down so as to pave the way for the political interest of his bosses in the party.

He said, "My withdrawal as the Udi Federal House of Representatives aspirant

was due to an understanding with the Ebeano family.

"We believe that the consolidation of the achievements of the government of the day should be supported so as to move Enugu to the next political level."

Ekeowa stated that he was not compelled to step down from the race and that he was not also given any form of gratification by anyone or group to influence his decision.

He said that contrary to insinuations in certain quarters, the congress of the Peoples Democratic Party was very peaceful and orderly because of the level playing field provided by the leadership of the party in the state.