

Baby killed as overzealous LASTMA officer causes accident

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Scene of the accident

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A five-month-old baby has been reportedly killed and several others injured after an official of the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority attempted to arrest a commercial bus driver for violating the traffic law around the Awoyokun end of Ikorodu Road.

The yet-to-be-identified culprit was said to be among a team of traffic officials from the LASTMA's Anthony office.

PUNCH Metro gathered that the bus driver had picked up a passenger by the roadside when the officials began trailing the vehicle.

One of the LASTMA officials was said to have jumped into the front seat in a bid to arrest the driver.

It was learnt that the driver, whose vehicle was filled with passengers, continued driving in a bid to evade arrest.

Our correspondent was told that in the ensuing struggle, the LASTMA official allegedly pulled out the ignition key as the bus crashed into a stationary refuse truck.

A witness, who did not identify himself, said the incident happened at about 12pm.

He said, "The driver was caught picking a passenger on the road and the LASTMA officials pursued him. They caught up with him and one of them quickly jumped into the bus and told the driver to give him the key. The driver refused and continued driving. The LASTMA officer started fighting for the control of the steering with him. Before we knew what was going on, the LASTMA man removed the key from the ignition. At this point, the bus rammed into a refuse truck."

A commercial driver, Sola Adeyemo, said the impact of the collision flung out many of the passengers, some of whom sustained fractures.

"They broke their hands and legs. It was a serious accident. Even the bus driver was injured. A few of them were laid on the road. Those that sustained the most injuries were those by the door. A woman was critically injured and it will be a miracle if she survived it," he added.

It was learnt that the LASTMA official responsible for the accident was equally injured.

A witness, who captured the official extricating himself from the bus, said he limped out.

He said, "He climbed out while we were trying to save the lives of the passengers and the driver. He stood on top of the bus and then jumped on the refuse truck. From there, he jumped over a nearby fence and ran away."

All the victims were reportedly taken to the casualty ward of the National Orthopaedic Hospital, Igbobi, Lagos.

An official said the hospital's Chief Medical Director was not available.

However, some officials at the casualty ward confirmed that a baby was killed.

One of them said, "Some people were brought here and they sustained injuries. Immediately they came, they were attended to and those whose injuries were not serious left.

"The mother of the child who died was brought here and she was treated. The baby's remains were taken away by the family."

The LASTMA Public Relations Officer, Mamud Hassan, denied that any life was lost, adding that the driver of the bus was the architect of the crash.

He said, "The commercial bus driver is a serial traffic law violator. He had been warned several times and he did not cease his habit. On Monday, he did it again and our officials gave him the opportunity to drop the passengers at the nearest bus stop before they tried to take his vehicle into LASTMA yard, but in his desperate attempt to escape, he continued driving and making calls to his friends to come and deal with the officials.

"It was in his desperation to escape that he rammed the bus into a stationary truck. About three people sustained minor injuries, which included the official, the driver, and one other passenger.

"No life was lost. Drivers and motorists should please assist us to do our jobs. If any of our officials are caught doing anything wrong, they will be punished."

The Police Public Relations Officer, Joe Offor, confirmed the incident, which was reported at the Ilupeju Police division.

He said passengers, who made statements alleged that the accident was caused by the LASTMA official.

"However, we do not have any record of death, except that few people sustained injuries," he added.

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