

## Bloody day in Lagos

•Pregnant woman, unborn child among six killed at Oshodi bus stop

BY WOLE BALOGUN

**T**ragedy struck yesterday in Lagos where about six people died in a multiple auto-crash at about 10.35am at Oshodi bus stop.

Whereas many people including a baby that fell off her mother's back, escaped unhurt, some sustained various degrees of injury as the accident occurred in a very busy area frequently patronised by motorists and commuters, hawkers and roadside sellers as well as shop owners.

Our correspondent who witnessed the accident, said a five-year old baby girl and her mother — both crushed and a pregnant woman who had her tummy ripped open were part of the victims. Five vehicles — a SUV jeep, three Volkswagen LT passenger buses painted in Lagos State commercial colours, and a trailer, belonging to a popular church located at Ijesha along Oshodi-Apapa Expressway, were involved in the tragedy.

The accident happened so suddenly that many who were at the scene could not tell exactly which of the vehicles caused the tragedy. A witness who does not want to be named, said a jeep, which was seen at the scene, was racing towards Apapa from Oshodi and appeared to have lost control before hitting a mass transit bus, which in turn hit the other passenger buses on the queue. Another woman who claimed to have witnessed it said the trailer, which was on its way to Mile 2, had a brake failure, skidded off the road and headed towards the crowded area and rammed into three stationary buses, which were picking passengers on the fateful morning.

The tragedy, which attracted a large number of traders and sympathisers caused panic and grief as people, were seen crying at the sight of the victims.

"It took a while before people could gather themselves together to return to the scene of the multiple crash and rescue the victims. It was a gory sight that first drew tears. Most gruesome was the sight of a fat woman — who was pregnant, and whose legs were crushed by the tyres of one of the vehicles. Her protruding tummy was slit open as she lay stone dead. Equally gory and pathetic was the sight of the body of a little girl of about five years old that lay lifeless in between the legs of the woman. The little girl had her head and leg crushed.

Many, who rushed to the scene including the men cried like babies on seeing the bodies of the woman and her child."

Further checks around the crash spot revealed four other women and an elderly woman lying lifeless at different spots. Among the victims could be hawkers whose wares were scattered all over the place.

A baby girl that was rescued at the scene was probably with her mother when the tragedy happened; she apparently fell off her mother's grip. She was handed over to some of the policemen who were supervising the rescue operation.

Meanwhile, the state police command has said that the driver of the trailer, was arrested shortly after the accident.

In a statement, the command's spokesperson, Ngozi Braide, said the vehicle, which lost its brakes, caused the crash.

"The tipper with registration number JJJ 824 XD, lost control due to brake failure and ran into three stationary vehicles in the motorpark.

"Five yet-to-be-identified female pedestrians lost their lives. One of the deceased was a pregnant woman, whose foetus also died, bringing the casualty figure to six. About five people were also injured and they are currently receiving treatment at LASUTH," she said.