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Expressway to death

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BY OUR REPORTER ON MARCH 8, 2014 ·

COVER

- Casualty figure rises on Lekki-Epe highway as pastor knocks down banker

By CHIOMA IGBOKWE

Tears flowed freely at No 6, Abeni Close, Soluyi, Gbagada area of Lagos when the news of the death of a banker, Mr. Ogoni Robert Itua filtered in. The deceased, who worked with the Zenith Bank, Lekki branch, was knocked down along the Lekki-Epe highway by a driver who was later identified as Pastor Olusegun Okedoye.

The death of the banker on February 10, 2014 increases the number of promising lives and destinies that have been cut short on the tolled expressway as a result of reckless driving.

Saturday Sun gathered that the late banker was attempting to cross the expressway when the pastor, who was driving against traffic, knocked down Itua. Terrified by the result of his action, the pastor was said to have attempted to flee but was apprehended by the police who were at the scene of the accident. Itua unfortunately died before they could rush him to the hospital.

Findings revealed that the highway has indeed turned to a death trap where road users lose their lives almost on a daily basis. Besides the unreported death of scores of ordinary citizens on the road, prominent and high net worth individuals are also having their share of the calamity befalling users of the road. **One of such was the much celebrated case of a Nollywood actress, Ibinabo Fiberesima who killed a medical doctor identified as Suraju Giwa while allegedly driving under the influence of alcohol along the Lekki-Epe expressway about four years ago.**

The Nollywood actress was later convicted of manslaughter and was sentenced to seven years imprisonment by the Igbosere division of the Lagos Magistrate Court. In the same vein, a female banker, Mrs Yinka Johnson has been taken to court for alleged reckless driving.

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Johnson, an employee of Stanbic IBTC, reportedly drove her Range Rover Jeep with Lagos Number plate CY276LSD against traffic at Mega City, Ikota along the expressway which led to the killing of an official of the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA), Hammed Balogun.

However, witnesses said the LASTMA official was killed by a bus driver who was driving ahead of Johnson and fled the scene upon realising what had happened.

At their residence, widow of the latest victim, Mrs. Peace Itua, told Saturday Sun that her husband, who was an engineer attached to Zenith Bank, was always on the move to attend to his schedule for the day which included supervising some of the branches within the island.

On the fateful day, her husband took out time to visit her shop and promised to help her renovate it. She was so happy and hugged him passionately. Going down memory lane, Peace who is still trying her best to accept the reality on ground, described her husband as the best thing that has ever happened to her. “It appears that he saw it coming, as he was abnormally happy on Sunday. He was singing praises to God aloud that our neighbours in the other compound called to ask if he had won a jackpot. I asked him severally and he told me that he was just in the mood to praise God for His mercies. I know him as a jovial person, but that day was so different.

“He requested that I should prepare a special dish for him, which I did and the whole family ate together. The next day we left together and he followed me to my shop where unlike him he noticed that things were not in order. He promised to replace my cooking gas and renovate my office. I was excited at whatever that made him so happy, and prayed silently that it will continue. We hugged passionately before he left for his office at Lekki.

“He told me that he was going to give me a special bonus to enable me to change my wardrobe. I was so excited that I kept calling him every hour, up till about 6pm when he told me that he was heading back to the office and will soon be on his way home. I was actually in a boutique around 6.30pm doing window shopping when I received a call that my husband had been hit by a vehicle,” Peace said battling to hold back her tears.

Shocked, Mrs. Itua rushed out while she alerted friends and colleagues of her husband who were on the Island. “By the time I got to the hospital, he had already given up. I was later told by the police and eyewitnesses that my husband was knocked down by a man who was driving against traffic.

“It was later that I got to learn that he is a Redeemed Church pastor. He claimed that he was psychologically disturbed over the loss of his mother and wife two months ago. He told me that he had just returned from their burial. If he knew that he was not sound enough to drive, why risk the life of an innocent man? I was also told that my husband could have survived the accident if they had rushed him to the hospital as soon as the accident happened. Rather they were busy making case while my husband bled to death. The incident happened around 6.30pm but he was taken to the hospital few minutes to 8pm. It is so sad that instead of looking out for the victim, the suspect was given much attention”, the widow lamented.

The late Itua has been buried at his Ekpoma hometown, Esan West LGA, Edo State while investigation is ongoing on the fate of the pastor who is on bail.

Confirming the incident, Lagos State police command deputy spokesman, Ikechukwu Ozoani said: “Investigation has shown that the suspect while driving against traffic hit the late Robert Itua who died minutes later. The suspect was arrested and detained for onward prosecution, but the family of the deceased agreed to settle the matter out of court.”

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