

NEWS PLUS

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On Wednesday, April 29, *Daily Sun* ran a features story on the danger lurking on the Oshodi-Apapa Expressway. The story informed that commercial bus operators, popularly called *danfo* drivers, have constituted themselves into a lawless group, driving against the traffic on the highway even in the full glare of policemen and traffic management officials.

Entitled 'Disaster Waiting to Happen', the story partly reads: *The newly reconstructed Oshodi-Apapa Expressway is one road where such risky driving is on the increase. These days, it is impossible not to see commercial bus operators that drive against oncoming vehicles in a total violation of safety road regulations. The driving pattern, which has little regards for the lawful road users, is clearly a disaster waiting to happen on the road.*

For motorists facing Oshodi from the Apapa end, it is by sheer luck that they avoid road crashes everyday on that route. From morning till late in the night, commercial bus drivers from Oshodi veer off their rightful lane at Cele Bus Stop, take the flyover through the service lane, and come down on the other lane used by Oshodi-bound vehicles. They face oncoming traffic, driving along the service lane until they get to Ijesha. They then drive straight into the main carriageway en route to Mile 2, facing vehicles coming from Mile 2 and Apapa. Sometimes, they form two lanes on the three-lane road, speeding like a group of demons on a date with death.

On Monday, a man was knocked down and run over on the road by a *danfo* bus operator driving against the traffic. The incident happened between Sanya and Second Rainbow Bus Stop.

The man was run over by a speeding commercial bus driver as the victim made to cross the road. His mangled body parts littered the expressway before the remains were later evacuated by government officials. The *danfo* driver sped off immediately.

Shortly afterwards, some officials of the Lagos State Ambulance Service (LASAMBUS) arrived at the scene with some policemen. A roadblock was mounted by street urchins, causing a gridlock for vehicles moving towards Oshodi from Mile 2 and Apapa.

The pandemonium that ensued was not unexpected, as the angry mob exchanged words with the policemen and LASAMBUS officials at the scene, preventing them from taking the remains of the accident victim away.

Speaking with *Daily Sun*, an official of LASAMBUS, said he and his colleagues answered the distress call immediately they were contacted.

His words: "We really don't know how it happened; we just received the call this morning that a hit-and-run commercial bus had killed someone. Immediately, we swung into action, thinking we would still be able to provide essential first aid and medical services to the victim and to probably get him revived. But, as it is, the fellow was dead even before we got here."

Some sympathisers who spoke with our correspondent stressed that it was not the first time that somebody would be knocked down on the road by a commercial driver running against traffic.

"We learnt now that the victim had come from Kaduna for an assignment. So, he was a visitor in Lagos. Because anybody that is in Lagos and plies this road would know that driving the wrong way is very common around here, and would watch the road on both sides, knowing that some reckless drivers are always going to be driving against the traffic. Some people just picked the phone in the pocket of the deceased to

Man driving against traffic kills pedestrian on Oshodi-Apapa Expressway

• Days after *Daily Sun's* story on vehicles taking the wrong way to Mile 2, commercial bus crushes man in Lagos



• A crowd at the scene of the accident



• Commercial vehicles driving against the traffic

When *Daily Sun* spoke with the Public Relations Officer of the Lagos State Traffic Management Agency (LASTMA), Mrs. Bola Ajao, before last week's story was published, she denied that the state had relaxed its laws on traffic operations. She also denied knowledge of bus drivers and commercial motorbike operators on the road. She noted that safety could not have gone on break because of the elections, reassuring Lagos residents that the recklessness on the Oshodi-Apapa Expressway would soon be brought under control.

She had said: "The last time we checked on that axis, some two weeks ago, there was nothing like motorists or commercial buses facing oncoming traffic or the influx of commercial motorcycles on the expressway. But, as you have brought my attention to it now, I can assure you that the situation would be brought under control. I will call the commander covering the region, and that was the reason I asked for the particular spot where you have noticed such. And I can guarantee you that the situation would be checked."

It was not clear if the LASTMA spokeswoman had contacted the commander covering the region, as she promised.

Again, the reporter informed Mrs. Bola Ojo on the telephone of the accident involving the *danfo* driver yesterday, seeking to know what the agency was doing to stop the reckless practice. But she said she was not aware of the accident. "I still maintain what I told you last week," she told the reporter.

call his relatives, who told us that the victim was living in Kaduna," one of those at the scene told the reporter.

A policeman at the scene, Francis Adebayo said the police had wanted to take the corpse to Sanya Police Station for proper documentation before being taken to the mortuary, but said they were prevented by some people in the area.

"As these people - the police - are here, we do not trust them. If they take this dead body away now, they might begin to play smart with it, or use it to frame other people

up. Our argument was that they should wait here with us as the deceased's brother whom we called had informed us that he was already at the airport in Kaduna, and that he would join us here soon," another eyewitness, who described himself as Uche, explained.

Many at the scene of the accident called on the police and road management officials in Lagos to be more alive to their responsibilities by curbing the recklessness of commercial bus operators and motorcycle riders driving against traffic on that road.