

# Hell on Lagos-Ibadan

• Three burnt to death, many injured, vehicles razed in fuel tanker fire

By Christopher Orji and Tessy Igomu

It was a tragic morning yesterday in Lagos. Three men were burnt to death in a multiple accident involving six vehicles on the Kara Bridge, along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

The accident, which occurred on the Lagos outbound lane of the bridge at about 3am, forced several drivers to abandon their vehicles on the road as they fled the scene.

According to eyewitnesses, the accident took place when a heavy-laden goods truck lost its brake and ran into a tanker. An immediate explosion followed and the subsequent fire saw other trucks and a Toyota Corolla car at the scene engulfed in flames.

According to another source, Tiamiyu, a driver, the driver of the tanker in the accident was over-speeding and ran into a broken-down truck that was undergoing repairs by the side of the road; after the trailer sped past, there was a loud explosion with balls of fire shooting into the sky on the Kara Bridge.

"When people were able to get there, we discovered that the speeding tanker had crushed several other trailers parked on the road," he said.

Vehicles caught in the inferno included two container-laden trucks, two trailer trucks, one fuel tanker with 33,000 litres of diesel and one Toyota Corolla.

Speaking on the incident, the General Manager, Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Mr. Adesina Tiamiyu, said the agency received a distress call at about 3am concerning the multiple accident with fatalities.

He disclosed that preliminary investigation carried out at the scene showed that the tanker fully laden with diesel caught fire after running into a truck carrying brewery products at high speed. According to the LASEMA boss, it took the combined efforts of the agency's emergency response team, Lagos State Fire Service, Nigeria Police Rapid Response Squad, Federal Road Safety Corps and the Ogun State Traffic Compliance and Enforcement Corps to put out the fire. The road was cordoned to prevent further loss of lives. Also speaking on the carnage, Ibrahim Farinloye, South-West public relations officer of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), who confirmed the number of fatalities

and vehicles involved in the accident to *Daily Sun*, described it as a monumental tragedy. He said immediately after the incident, officers of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) cordoned off the area to prevent further losses and motorists were immediately diverted to Ikorodu Road, to avoid the gridlock that had built up.

It was gathered that the accident caused a gridlock on the expressway as well as other link roads in the area, causing severe hardship for residents of areas like Arepo, Mowe, Ibafo, Prayer City and Warewa, who commute daily to work in Lagos.

As at 8am, after the accident, traffic from Kara bridge, close to the popular Berger Bus Stop, had stretched to Asese, a few kilometres away from the Redemption Camp. Commuters were also trapped in the gridlock that stretched from the scene to Magodo, opposite the Lagos State Secretariat complex. Also affected by the gridlock for hours were travellers going in and out of Lagos.

Consequently, many intending passengers travelling outside Lagos were stranded at various bus stops due to unavailability of buses.

As at late yesterday, emergency response teams were still evacuating the smouldering ruins of vehicles that were razed in the



inferno, while scores of commuters were forced to trek long distances before they could board vehicles to their destinations.

A butcher, Suraju Fadele, claimed he witnessed the accident at about 3am.

"I was waiting by the road side for my friend with some others to display our beef for the early morning market sale when, suddenly, I saw a trailer at top speed moving toward our side and past us. A few metres away from us, we heard a loud explosion, which made us run for our lives. Afterwards, we saw huge billows of fire on the bridge.

"We realised that the trailer must have rammed into other articulated vehicles because there were many of them there as of that time. The problem with the accident was that nobody could move near the scene because of the raging fire."

Another witness, who identified himself

as Bashir, lamented the reckless and dangerous attitude of drivers on the road.

"What caused the accident was simply over-speeding. The driver of the tanker was on top speed and I wonder why he was driving like that. Before I could look ahead, he had rammed into another trailer.

"When the trailer sped past us, we remarked that its driver was speeding and within the twinkle of an eye we heard the loud bang followed by a raging fire.

"There was another trailer under repair on the bridge, which I think was loaded with rice. The tanker must have rammed into it."

The Lagos-Ibadan expressway, arguably Nigeria's most important trunk road, has witnessed similar accidents this year, one in January and another in July. Both incidents led to the loss of lives and carnage that brought activities to a standstill for hours.

## When Igbo monarchs made Eze Onunk

By Brown Chimezie

EXCITEMENT filled the air recently at Igboekwu in Anambra State. The occasion was the appointment of Eze Ebuka Josephat Onunkwo, the Eze Ndigbo of the Republic of Benin, as the Cultural Ambassador of the Igbo in the Diaspora.

The appointment was made by over 50 traditional rulers, led by the traditional ruler of Igboekwu, Anambra State, His Royal Majesty, Igwe Martin Ezech (Idu), at the 2016 Igbo Annual National New Yam Festival, held at Igboekwu.

Coordinator of Ndi Eze in the South East, Eze Samuel Ohiri, said the appointment was well-deserved and timely, just as Secretary-General of Nigerians in the Diaspora Organisation (NIDO), Chief Godwin Odinuko, also said the appointment was additional motivation for a man that had done a lot to lift the lives and image of not only the Igbo in Benin Republic but



Eze Onunkwo (3rd left) with Miss Nigeria, Eze Ohiri and other Igbo chiefs

other Nigerians as well. He encouraged others to toe a similar path.

The new cultural ambassador, Eze Onunkwo said the event was a call to duty. Benin Republic is home to more

than one million Igbos. They are found throughout all the regions of Benin Republic where they are mostly involved in commerce. Many of them have children that can hardly communicate in the Igbo