

Activist dies in Ogun after NGO protests hike in DStv, GOtv rates

A human rights activist lost his life yesterday shortly after joining others to protest against what they described as arbitrary charges in DStv and GOtv subscription rates in Nigeria.

The activist, whose name could not be ascertained at press time, died in an accident along the old Lagos-Abeokuta Expressway when their vehicle lost control apparently due to brake failure.

New Telegraph gathered that the crash, where 15 persons were also injured, happened about 1:00pm at Ayedere-Oba Omo axis in Ewekoro Local Government Area of Ogun State.

The protesters had earlier gone round major roads in Abeokuta, the state capital, to protest alleged exploitation and corruption in the services offered by the cable network providers.

Speaking under the aegis of Peoples Against Corruption and Injustice (PACI), when they stormed the Iwe Irohin Press Centre of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Abeokuta, the protesters also threatened to seek redress through legal action.

Led by the founder of PACI, Comrade Solomon Bankole, and a human rights lawyer, Samuel Adeola, the civil society members accused the National Assembly and Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) of complicity in the increase in subscription rates.

Our correspondent learnt that MultiChoice, in April, announced a price adjustment of five percent on all its DStv and GOtv packages effective from May 1, 2017.

The Managing Director, MultiChoice, John Ugbe, had reportedly said the decision was taken after careful consideration of the market and review of its business operations.

But, yesterday, Bankole said his group was alarmed by the continued outrageous rates being charged by the company saying the Federal Government should have compelled them to adopt pay per view policy.

The PACI founder lamented that the organisation had written the NCC several times about the development but nothing was done about it till date.

He said, "We are here to register our anger and discomfort on what is happening in the system. We are protesting against the bad policies of cable networks. The DStv, GOtv and Startimes are exploiting us. As we speak, our families are not at home yet the card is reading even when there is no signal, when rain falls and when the decoder gets spoilt.

"They cannot continue to exploit us. We have been to South Africa and other European countries where they do pay per view. You pay for what you watch. We are saying enough is enough."

Bankole stated that a suit would soon be instituted at the Federal High Court, Abeokuta if nothing was done to address the problem by the concerned authorities.

Meanwhile, one of the protesters died when their vehicle was involved in a fatal crash yesterday.

The Public Relations Officer, Ogun State Traffic Compliance and Enforcement Corps (TRACE), Babatunde Akinbiyi, who confirmed the incident in a statement made available to reporters, said three vehicles were involved.

According to him, the vehicles included a white truck loaded with granite with registration number 44F95FG; a wine Almera car marked Ogun TTD 884 AA and a white chartered commercial bus with registration number Lagos FST 435 XD.

Akinbiyi attributed the accident to over-speeding and brake failure on the part of the truck.

"As a result of this, the truck rammed into the wine Almera car from behind and the Almera also got the white commercial bus from behind," he said.

He said the remains of the deceased have been deposited at the Federal Medical Centre, Idi-Aba, Abeokuta morgue, and the injured victims (15) have been taken to Joseph and Christiana Specialist Hospital, Oke-Ilewo, Abeokuta.

"Two persons (driver and the motor boy) were the two occupants in the truck. Five passengers, including the driver were in the Almera car, while 10 passengers, including the driver and the conductor were in the white commercial bus," he added.