



President Goodluck Jonathan (right) receiving a letter of credence from first Macedonian Non-Resident Ambassador to Nigeria, Amb. Darko Angelov, during a reception for the diplomat at the State House, Abuja, yesterday. Photo: Abayomi Adeshida.

16 die, 81 others injured as lorry crashes into forest

BY LUKA BINNIYAT

KADUNA—NO fewer than 16 people died, Wednesday night, while about 81 others sustained serious injuries when an open lorry with about 119 passengers crashed into the forest in Birnin Gwari, 60 kilometres from Kaduna State metropolis while heading towards Lagos.

The haulage vehicle with number plate, Kano XC 230 GML, was reportedly travelling on a high speed to Lagos from Kano with the passengers said to be mainly youths when it allegedly swerved into the bush and rammed into a tree even as the driver dozed off, apparently due to tiredness.

Eyewitnesses told newsmen: "When we heard of the incident early in the morning (yesterday), we came out in good numbers to rescue those that we could," adding that altogether, about 16 people died instantly while 81 others were seriously injured.

The eyewitnesses also said many of the survivors sustained spinal cord injuries even as they blamed most truck drivers plying the road of being in the habit of endangering the lives of other road users in the past.

Explaining reasons for the high casualty figure, they said: "Just imagine how bad the road is, yet motorists do not only drive above speed limit, but drive dangerously even when they are overloaded, without caring about what happened to other road users.

"Most of these drivers,

because they do not like to drive empty when travelling back to Lagos from Kano State or other parts of the far north, normally carry many passengers, mostly youths for as cheap as N1,000.

"Most of these young people sit on the bare floor of the trucks while others stand, not minding the distance or implications, just

because they want to get to Lagos at all cost."

An official of the Federal Road Safety Commission, FRSC, in Kaduna State, Mohammed Ibrahim, described the incident as "quite unfortunate," pointing out that "most times, some of these avoidable accidents occur because road users do not adhere strictly to safety rules."

According to Ibrahim, "most people drive in the night without good head lamps, and even when they have, they do not deem light for fellow drivers approaching from the opposite direction. Apart from overspeeding, they also carry more people than necessary because they want to make quick money."

NDIC to flush out unfit bank directors

BY EMMA UJAH

ABUJA—MANAGING Director of Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation, NDIC, Alhaji Umaru Ibrahim, has said that its axe dangles over bank directors who are involved in any form of infractions and insider abuse that jeopardise any bank and that such persons will be flushed out forthwith.

Exchanging views with a delegation of the Bank Directors Association of Nigeria, BDAN, in Abuja, yesterday, he said the unsavoury experience in the banking industry in the recent past was due, largely, to gross insider abuse which would no longer be tolerated.

Ibrahim told the directors that a continuous performance assessment would be carried out on each bank director with a view to removing anyone found wanting in terms of character.

His words: "As directors, I believe you have responsibilities entrusted on you by the law. Therefore, given what has happened in the

last couple of years, the bad experience we have had with the banks, probably could have been avoided if directors were truly independent and cared to carry out their responsibilities.

"But you know in that environment, how directors are picked. In some cases, it was a network, depending on whom you knew and whom you were comfortable with to be on the same board.

"But as regulators, we have a responsibility to make sure that the right people come on board and this leads me to the issue of the need for a continuous assessment of the performances of directors, especially in terms of not just adding value to your institutions but also on the issue of character. It is very critical.

"That is why we have to continually devised the means of continuously assessing performance and performance can be assessed in very many ways.

"As you are all aware, one of the things that ruined the banking system is the phenomenon of gross inside

abuse. This could only be done by people of doubtful character who abuse the trust that has been given to them.

"That is why we believe that together, we should do everything possible to fish out and flush out people who are not fit and proper to be entrusted with board membership because banking is sensitive, it is critical and should not be left to all-comers, it doesn't matter how much money you have."

Review of compensation

On the request by the association for a review of their compensation, the NDIC boss said as regulators, the authorities of the organisation would not delve into such issues as Nigeria had become a free market economy.

His words: "As far as we are concerned as regulators, it is a free market and we do not want to delve unnecessarily into issues like this. We leave it to individual organisations to pay executive and non-executive di-