

3 die, scores injured, arrested on closed Third Mainland Bridge

...Traffic is moving, says Olagunju, Lagos FRSC commander

By Uduma Kalu

THE partial closure of the Third Mainland Bridge linking Mainland Lagos with Lagos Island has claimed its first victims. They are three commercial motorcycles who tried to maneuver the ban on the repaired portions of the Adekunle end of the bridge. Some of the bike riders were also injured. Also, many motorists who disobeyed the rules in order to beat the logjam in the area have been arrested. Some of those arrested include military men. No one is spared.

However, despite the partial closure of the Third Mainland Bridge, the traffic is moving, though slowly. This is unlike what many people thought that the closure was total, rather it is partial. Even then, some hours are open for vehicular traffic on the bridge. Also some measures have been put in place to erase the traffic congestion that was envisaged to occur during the partial closure.

The closure of the 11.8-kilometre bridge is expected to last till September 6.

This was the comment of the Lagos state sector command, Mr. Kayode Olagunju in an exclusive interview with Saturday Vanguard at his Ojodu office of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC).

He however recognised the heavy traffic in Lagos even before the closure of the bridge and noted that "The traffic density in Lagos is very high." Lagos, he went on, is just about 3,557 square kilometres, which is about 8.4 per cent of Nigeria. But it accommodates about 23 per cent of Nigeria's population.

"The road network capacity has remained the way it is. The rail system has not been that effective. That's why Lagos state has been talking about having a metro system to move a lot of people. The ferries have not been encouraging. Everybody relies on the road, even pipelines, he explained.

Even though in-bound vehicles to Lagos Island, is 30 per cent, the road safety boss said "I can say that there is no more traffic congestion. In fact, I will say unexpectedly, as expected too by so many newspapers the traffic has been moving, though slowly, steadily. Many people thought traffic was going to be compounded. You realise the fact that Lagos was never free, but we put in our measures to discover that in spite of the closure of Third Mainland Bridge, the whole place is free."

Bridge, the whole place is free."

Olagunju said that the first day of the partial closure resulted in heavy congestion because the people did not believe the bridge could be closed. Some Lagosians had arrived at the bridge and began to argue that they did not know about the ban and that there was nothing they could do. But by the next day, the traffic officers and the motorists had understood each other.

Explaining that there are three alternative routes- Ebute Meta-Herbert Macaulay-Oyingbo-Iddo to Lagos Island; the Oworoshoki-Anthony Oke-Ikorodu Road to Lagos Island; and the Ojota-Ikorodu Road/Western Avenue to Lagos Island, the Commander reeled out measures on how his men were able to see to the movement of vehicles, adding that vehicles from the Oworoshoki end of the bridge will be diverted at the Adekunle Junction to the out-bound lanes, which will be closed between 5am and 12 noon daily. And opened from then for those returning from the Island. The vehicles are also allowed during the open hours to use sections of the road by driving on other lanes.

However, as from 1pm daily, the bridge will be re-opened to Oworoshoki-bound traffic. But it will be closed to traffic from Oworoshoki which will be diverted to Herbert Macaulay Road/Ebute Meta.

But trekking and bikes on the repaired portion, are not allowed on the routes. There is no hawking there too. All these, he said, slow down vehicles. The indiscipline of most Lagos drivers led to arrest of many of them

He pointed out that last Thursday evening, there was smooth vehicular movement on the bridge as well as other routes but noted that the areas where there was congestion were at the Carter bridge and because of the bad portions on them.

He said that traffic officers from the Federal Road Safety Commission, the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority and the traffic police were drafted to ensure orderly vehicular movement.

He condemned the attitude of Nigerians to use so many cars on the road as well as use of bad vehicles which break down at traffic jams. According to him, a look at most Nigerian cars show that most of them have only one or two passengers in them.

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