



•The crash, yesterday.

Train/BRT crash: We begged driver to wait but he refused —Survivor

- 4 survivors die in hospital •Death toll hits 7
- FRSC charges NRC to install iron bars at crossings
- Buhari sympathises with victims

By Esther Onyegbula

LAGOS—NO fewer than seven persons have been confirmed dead, while others sustained injuries, in an accident involving a moving train and a Lagos State government staff bus, at Shogunle area of Ikeja, Lagos, yesterday.

One of the survivors of the accident, simply called Titilayo, revealed that they begged the driver of the bus to wait for the train to pass, but he refused.

According to the middle-aged female staff of Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, LASUTH, Ikeja, who sustained injuries on her lower limbs, "I boarded the staff bus while going to work this morning (yesterday). The incident happened around 7.15am. When we got to the intersection at PWD in Ikeja, the driver continued driving.

"Passengers inside the bus, including myself, begged him to wait for the train to pass before crossing, but he didn't listen.

"Midway, just before he could finish crossing the rail tracks, the accident happened. Many of us were rushed here, while five others were taken to Gbagada General Hospital."

Meanwhile, Lagos State Commander, Federal Road Safety Corps, Babatunde Farinloye, has advised the Nigeria Railway Corporation, NRC, to install iron bars at railway level crossings, to prevent trains from running into vehicles.

Recounting what he witnessed at the accident scene, Musa Hayatou, a resident of Sogunle, said: "From what I saw, so far, two people died on the spot.

Many of them were rescued from the ill fated bus, but some of them were critically injured and it will take the grace of God for them to survive. Some victims who suffered broken bones were rushed to the hospital. I don't know if more people have passed on. Another victim was hit by a large stone. I don't know whether he was still living or not before he was eventually taken away by officials of Lagos State Emergency Agency, LASEMA.

"I think the fault is from the driver, because before a train gets to a level crossing, it begins to horn from a kilometre away and, if you are a good driver, you should be aware of the loud horn alerting people.

"This is the first time an accident involving a train and a BRT bus happened here. However, we usually have accident involving BRT buses with other vehicles at the bus stop."

Meanwhile, reports from hospitals where victims of the crash were rushed, indicate that the death toll has increased to seven.

Two died on the spot while five others, who were among the 71 that sustained varying degrees of injuries, later died at LASUTH.

Vanguard learned that the train ran into the staff bus, which was conveying 85 workers of the state government to work, as it tried to cross the rail line at PWD bus stop, and dragged it to Shogunle, where it finally halted and victims were rescued.

According to Babatunde, who witnessed the accident: "The keepers of Nigerian Railway Corporation at that level crossing tried to stop the driver from

passing because of the incoming train, but he refused. I guess he thought he could pass before the train caught up with him. Unfortunately, the reverse was the case."

Confirming the accident, South West Zonal Coordinator, National Emergency Management Agency, NEMA, Ibrahim Farinloye said the State Government staff bus was trying to cross the PWD/Sogunle rail crossing while the train coming into Lagos from Abeokuta trapped the bus on its rail. The dead and several injured are being evacuated by officials of LASEMA, NEMA, Police, FRSC, Civil Defence and Nigeria Railway Corporation team.

Giving a situation report on the accident, Dr. Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu, Permanent Secretary, LASEMA, said on arrival at the scene, the agency's response team discovered that a Viale BRT bus with an unknown registration number and a train were involved in an accident at the above mentioned address.

"Investigation gathered revealed that the immediate cause of the incident was due to reckless driving on the part of the BRT bus driver while trying to beat the train traffic signal before the moving train rammed into the BRT bus. Unfortunately, two adults were confirmed dead and several people seriously injured.

"The injured victims have been administered first aid treatment by the agency's medical team (paramedics) and LASAMBUS officials, were stabilised and being transported to trauma centre at LASUTH, Ikeja for further treatment.

"The agency's LRT at Cappa alongside LRT at C3, LRU paramedics at C3, Onipanu, Cappa, LASAMBUS officials, Nigeria Police Force, LASTMA, LNSC and Nigerian Army are responders present at the scene of incident."

However, Lagos state commander of Federal Road Safety Corps, FRSC, Babatunde Farinloye has advised the Nigeria Railway Corporation, NRC, to install iron bars at railway level crossings to prevent trains from running into vehicles as has been the case in recent times.

Reacting to the train accident at Ikeja level crossing that claimed some lives, the Sector Commander noted that there used to be iron bars at railway crossings that were dropped when a train was in motion thereby preventing vehicles and pedestrians from using the crossing.

According to him, in addition, there is usually advanced warning at the crossings (horning) signalling that a train was passing but we no longer see such things these days.

He blamed the disappearance of these facilities on the activities of vandal, stressing that Nigeria Railway must install bars at rail crossings as well as ensure that advanced warnings are given when a train is passing to avoid future occurrences.

The Sector Commander who visited scene of the crash with other senior security officials and the Lagos State governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, said that the driver of the bus should be prosecuted if found guilty and his driver's license revoked.

He said that eyewitness account has it that the accident was as a result of wrongful overtaking by the bus driver as his bus got hooked on the rail line.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ, Lagos State Council has commiserated with the Lagos State Government and families of victims of the accident, involving a state government staff bus and a train in Lagos, yesterday.

Lagos NUJ Council in a statement by its Chairman, Adeleye Ajayi and Tunde Olalere, Secretary, on Thursday, said: "We are saddened by the fatal accident which claimed some lives and left several occupants of the bus injured.

"We commend the quick response of Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who visited the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital in deep sympathy with the victims and called for urgent medical attention to those injured.

"We, however, advise that the Nigeria Railway Corporation, NRC, and governments at all levels should ensure strict compliance with the rules at rail crossings.

"We pray that God will console the families of those who lost their lives and also pray for quick recovery of those injured in the Accident."

Buhari sympathises with victims

Meanwhile, President Muhammadu Buhari, yesterday, expressed sympathy over the accident involving a train and Lagos State BRT staff bus.

Reacting to the incident, President Buhari, in a statement by his Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity, Garba Shehu said: "The accident at the level crossing involving the train and the BRT staff bus is distressing and extremely sad. I pray for the souls of the deceased and quick recovery of the many who were injured."

Keepers of Nigerian Railway Corporation at that level crossing tried to stop the driver from passing because of the incoming train, but he refused...I guess he thought he could pass before the train closed in but, unfortunately, the reverse was the case