

TRANSPORT

NRC Shores up Revenue, Re-opens Lagos-Kano Line

The Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) has shored up its revenue, even as it resumes its operation on the old Lagos-Kano rail-line.

Operations returned last Friday after closing for about 16 months.

Managing Director of NRC, Mr. Jetson Nwankwo, said major work on the washout points had forced the corporation to close the line last year but re-opened on completion.

"Downpour caused serious damage to some portions of the track in the Northern part of the country," he said.

At present, NRC plans to run some special trains from Lagos to Ilorin to ease the travel problems usually experienced on road during festive seasons.

Nwankwo, who told journalists in Lagos that the massive reconstruction work was independently undertaken by the corporation engineers, said 18 of the washouts had been fixed.

The only point left to cover, he said, could not in any way disrupt traffic.

"Trains going from Lagos to Kano have resumed. We want to tell our customers

By Justina Okpanku

that the line is now free for passengers and freight traffic," Nwankwo said.

He explained that in August 2007 NRC had series of washouts and about 19 major points were identified. Adding: "We were able to meet 18".

Despite the challenges, the managing director said NRC was able to meet its target for 2007. The Corporation, he said, rehabilitated over 50 locomotives, 100 wagons and 30 covered coaches this year.

According to him, NRC revenue for the year increased by about 20 per cent over what it recorded last year.

The increase was mainly from its intra-city mass transit trains, especially in Lagos which increased from three to six trips daily.

The NRC boss was optimistic that the resuscitation of Lagos-Kano line would further shore up NRC's revenue substantially.



Marketing Manager of Pirelli Tyres, Mr Sunil Chhadha, receiving an 'Award of Excellence' from Sector Commander, FRSC Mr John Akolo as recognition of Pirelli's partnership with the commission to promote safety on roads

Carsownship to Expand Operations

Chief Operating Officer of Carsownship, Orby Iwinwa Chukwuka, has said that plans are in top gear to complete its after-sales facilities.

Iwinwa who has a decade plus experience in automobile business, also said customers, who acquire vehicles from them, would be offered the best incentives and first class after-sales back up. "In addition, the customer would be entitled to "manufacturer's warranty", he said.

Chukwuka made the assurance while conducting interviews round its facility recently.

It can be recalled that Carsownship which recently opened for business on Victoria Island, Lagos has uplifted the fortune of the group.

Despite being new, it is gathered that the company

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has sold some units of Toyota siblings.

In the same vein, Carsownship Executive Director, Prince Martins Okorwurie, said the feedback so far received indicated that the new company has taken the right step, which, according to him is intended to protect and promote both the company and its prospective customers.

Due to rapid development, the company would later expand its network to Abuja, Port Harcourt, Kano and other locations across the country.

Chukwuka said the company has put necessary structures in place to provide first class service in order to meet the demand of more customers in 2008 and beyond.

The Economics of Road Accidents

As 2007 rolls to an end, yet again, majority of people are going to hit the road to make it to their various destinations in time for the Christmas and New Year holidays. Unfortunately but truthfully, not all of us are going to get there in one piece; but before you scream, please note! I am not a prophet of doom. The reality is that events have shown that the rate of accidents tend to rise in the yuletide period, which the Federal Road Safety Commission, FRSC has added to be caused primarily by, drunkenness, lack of road discipline, tyre punctures, blowouts, overloading, poorly maintained vehicles, impatience and bad roads amongst others.

Now, carefully consider these statistics made available by the FRSC: 4,944 Nigerians reportedly died in 9,114 road accidents, while 17,390 sustained injuries. In August 2007, 1,042 accident cases were reported resulting in 473 deaths and 2,246 injuries with

By Kayode Thomas

five children dead prematurely. However you want to look at it, despite the dearth of data, statistics above is a very fair and conservative representation of accidents on our roads. The fundamental question therefore is: what can we genuinely do to reduce these accidents on our roads?

One common feature to all my various business interests is traveling. In other words, I do an awful lot of traveling, by air and mostly by road. This means, unlike the vast majority of people, I see a greater amount of incidents on our roads.

According to Charles Darwin "it is not the strongest of the species or the biggest which survive; it is the one most responsive to change". Therefore we must as a matter of urgency respond to change in our attitude to driving on the road. FRSC officials have conceded that the most frequent causes of accidents on our

roads are due largely to tyre punctures, tyre blowouts, speed limit violations and dangerous driving.

As an entrepreneur myself, I have considered the resultant effect of these accidents on our businesses; it is either your most loyal and effective staff is involved in any of these accidents and therefore the person becomes incapacitated, productivity becomes low, and ipso facto, return on investment is affected. The truth is that almost all motorists have either experienced a puncture or know someone who has experienced one. Still, many will never have one again; they are dead!!! The FRSC states that "about 80% of road accidents in Nigeria results directly from bad tyres, tyre punctures or blowouts; bad tyres, tyre punctures or blowouts; 80%!!!

In certain industries (manufacturing, oil & gas, construction, mining, etc), safety is not an option. Where I used to work, safety was mandatory and any one caught in an unsafe act was instantly dis-

missed. Yes, dismissed. In fact we had the SHE (safety, health and environment department) that regulates all safety policies. We called the department SHE who must be obeyed. Unfortunately, motorists in our country have come to see safety as a choice and this choice could be between life and death.

However, in normal circumstances choices should primarily not exist in cases of life and death. So the sole choice therefore should be life, which thus entails safety. If the FRSC says a major cause of accident is tyre puncture, therefore the only choice is to take good care of our tyres. A revolutionary product that helps address this issue is: The ride-on tyre protection system, a product known more for its safety features than any of its many other benefits.

As Nigerians should begin to realize, that because of the uniquely terrible nature of roads bequeathed on us, there is the urgent need to see the wisdom in protecting our tyres and by inference, our lives. The truth is that there is a huge Presence of accidents on our roads due to bad tyres, punctures and blowouts; a huge Presence of unwanted costs and downtime in our operations and now a huge Presence of a tried AND tested AND proven product now in our country. Which would we rather have?

The world of Ride-on tyre protection is a world where punctures and blowouts are happily a thing of the past. Ride-on: Saves lives - by reducing punctures and blowouts in tyres. Saves time via reduction in down time. Saves money by prolonging tyre life and better fuel efficiency and ultimately provides total peace of mind. As the year closes, let us close, let us all be safe than sorry.

Kayode Thomas is a professional speaker.

Indian Govt Urged to Waive Taxes on Intra-city Buses

Buses used for public transportation in India could get cheaper next year if its Finance Ministry were to accept a proposal by the Urban Development Ministry seeking duty waivers from the Centre on sale of buses used for public transport.

However, the proposal, according to Agency report recently, comes with a rider as the Urban Development Ministry proposes to reduce its share of Central taxes provided the State Governments waive their share of

taxes imposed on the buses used for intra-city public transport.

"For Volvo buses, all taxes and duties taken together account for about 30-35 per cent of total cost," official sources said.

The idea is to make public transportation cheaper while improving the quality of fleet, explained sources. The proposal would affect intra-city transport only as the Urban Development Ministry deals with "urban transportation".

According to data compiled by Transport

Research Wing of Road Transport Ministry, the average age of Government-owned bus fleet for cities like Ahmedabad (10.2 years), Chennai (8.47 years) and Kolkata (6.38 years) is on the higher side. For buses owned by eight Municipal undertakings including Ahmedabad, Kolhapur, Mumbai, Pune and Navi Mumbai, the average age of fleet operated is about eight years for the first quarter of fiscal 2006-07.

Meanwhile, during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, the Urban

Development Ministry has sought encouraging investment in premium bus systems. It has allocated an investment of Rs 38,000 crore in "modern buses" during the Five-Year Plan period.

In fact, the Urban Development Ministry has also started an exercise to standardise the kind of buses being used for public transportation to improve the quality of public transport.

Stressing that there is an urgent need to take pro-active measures to

port by running modern city bus services, the Ministry has called for use of buses that are ergonomically designed, facilitate level boarding and alighting, have comfortable seating and suspension, advanced passenger information system, vehicle information, tracking systems and are passenger friendly.

The quality of public transport should be such that it can be sold to public as a branded product and people take pride in travelling by public transport, the