

COMMENT

Tuesday, November 29, 2011

ENOUGH OF THESE HUMAN SLAUGHTERING!

THE spate of road accidents in the country in recent times has become alarming and posing a serious threat to national development.

The constant slaughtering of energetic and hardworking citizens of this country by some reckless and incompetent drivers give cause for concern.

We have on numerous occasions used this medium to caution drivers to be extra careful on the road and observe traffic regulations but these appeals have fallen on deaf ears and the killings and maiming of innocent people continue unabated!

The week-end's fatal crash at Pong-Tamale in which 27 people were reported killed with 35 others seriously injured, was most unfortunate.

Looking at the extent to which the two vehicles - the Mercedes Benz and the Metro Mass Transit bus - were mangled beyond recognition, one could imagine the speed at which the drivers of both vehicles were travelling.

We regret this shocking disaster and appeal to the Motor Traffic and Transport Unit (MTTU) of the Ghana Police Service to intensify its patrols on the country's highways and deal drastically with recalcitrant drivers who refuse to obey traffic regulations and create hardships for families and the country as a whole.

It is a fact that during this time of the year, when we are entering into Christmas, road accidents are more rampant, and we need to do something urgent to check drivers who have put profit motives above everything and are killing and destroying the lives of innocent people.

It is unfortunate that at the time when every efforts are being made by the government to construct new roads and reshaping those that are in deplorable conditions, human lives are continuously being lost through careless driving.

We hope that the various drivers unions would sit up and bring to book all those bent on tarnishing the image of the driving profession, before they cause more harm to the unions.

The *Times* expresses its condolences to the families of the departed souls and wish the injured a speedy recovery.

These disturbing accidents are indeed, destroying a lot of families since those who perish are in most cases the bread winners and also people whom society can rely upon, in nation building.

Human lives are precious and we need to protect them. Enough of these reckless human slaughtering on our roads!

Demo rocks ECOWAS Ministers Forum on EPA

By Matthew Avoo & Malik Sulemana

MINISTERS of Trade and Trade Experts of member countries of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) have begun a three-day Ministerial Monitoring Committee (MMC) session on the Economic Partnership agreement (EPA) between ECOWAS and the European Union.

The meeting, which is a prelude to the 7th Ordinary Session of a Trade Ministerial Conference that also began yesterday will discuss the status of implementation of the MMC's recommendation on May, 7, 2010, EPA Development Programme (EPADP), market access offer of goods from the region, the creation of an EPA Regional Fund and protocol on the rules of origin and mutual administrative assistance in the area of customs, among others.

But before the ministers, and trade experts would sit and discuss the issues, civil society and organised labour groups held a peaceful demonstration against the EPA.

The demonstrators included members of the Economic Justice Network (EJN) Ghana, the Platform of West African Civil Society Organizations on Cotonou Agreement (POSCAO), and the Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC).

The demonstration started from the TUC grounds to the Ministry of Trade and Industry where the demonstrators registered their displeasure about the government's intention of signing the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union (EU).

They held placards some of which read, "EPA Poverty," "EPA will take away Policy Space", Madam Tetteh Support Regional Solidarity Fund," and "Africa is not for Sale" among others.

According to the Secretary of the group, Mr. Sackey Ofei Nkansah, the demonstration was in response to the pronouncement made earlier by the Ministry of Trade and Industry that Ghana was under pressure to sign its bilateral Interim EPA with the EU, outside the framework of a common ECOWAS agreement.

"At the moment what is needed is pressure to roll back the agenda of the European Commission that will divide the ECOWAS region and lock Ghana and sister West African states of import dependency on the EU, as well as dependency on raw materials."

However, this need not happen if Ghana and sister West African governments, show vision and leadership and put the defence of ECOWAS' integrity as the common central priority and shared destiny.

He said the national economy would be at the brink of collapse if government went on to sign the agreement.

Mr. Sackey urged Ghana to pull back from the brink of unilateralism to ensure the development of the country.

"Ghana cannot ride on two horses at once. Two horses going in different and opposite direction will tear the rider apart and trample him underfoot".

He also called on ECOWAS Trade Ministers and governments to play their part by riding together towards the same destination and destiny for collective mutual protection and benefit.

Mr. Sackey asked ECOWAS to define a collective solution that would address any losses that Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and other countries would face in the absence of their interim EPAs.

Opening the session, however, Trade Minister, Ms. Hannah Tetteh urged the participants to give the session the needed attention and come out with recommendations that would ensure fair trading of goods from the sub-region in the EU markets.

She said lack of fair and access to market was a major challenge to business and trade in the sub-region and challenged the participants to come out with recommendations that would effectively address these challenges.

Throwing more light on the session, the Director of the Trade Department of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Dr. Gbenga Greg Obideyi, said the participants would deliberate and recommend for the consideration of Trade Ministers, quality and favourable trade agreements for the sub-region.

Dr. Obideyi said that agreements that would favour the region and alleviate poverty and promote business, would engage the attention of participants.

He disagreed with the assertion that negotiations on the EPA with the EU had stalled and that the session was a gimmick in view of the fact that not much had been achieved since the negotiations began seven years ago, explaining that "we would not sacrifice quality for time".

The EPA seeks not only to ensure access to the EU market but also ensure fair, balance free and equal opportunity for goods of the sub-region at the international market.



Ms. Hannah Tetteh (INSET), addressing the opening of the ECOWAS ministerial meeting in Accra yesterday. Photo: Maxwell K. Bilson

Man killed over yellow fever jab

Contd from page 1

himself. The police said Nimako grabbed the hook and stabbed Ben thrice on the chest.

Ben bled profusely and fell unconscious.

He was rushed to the Tema General Hospital by neighbours but was pronounced dead on arrival.

Chief Inspector Turkson said the body of the deceased had been deposited at the Police Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The suspect has been arrested and police are investigating the incident.