

# A reopens Apapa port, clears blockade

Comfort Oseghale

THE management of the Lagos Port Complex, the Nigerian Ports Authority, on Tuesday announced the dismantling of the blockade mounted by clearing agents and reopened the nation's major seaport for business.

Aggrieved clearing agents had for nine days shut the port over alleged high charges by terminal operators.

The Port Manager, LPC, Mr. Nasir Mohammed, said the port was now open and that people were free to come in and transact their business.

Policemen and other security operatives have been put on alert to provide adequate security to anyone willing to transact business at the port, according to him.

Mohammed said in a statement, "We have

informed the agents that while they have the right to protest, they do not have the right to block the port from others who have legitimate business at the port. They saw reason with us.

"We assure all port users that their security is guaranteed. The police and relevant security operatives have been duly informed; adequate security will be provided to all port users. Trucks are free to come

into the port, load and exit without entertaining any fear.

"Mediations are ongoing between the agents and APM Terminals with a view to reaching an amicable solution, but port operations will continue as the talks hold."

The Seaport Terminal Operators Association of Nigeria had earlier described the blockade as "a reckless act capable of hurting Nigeria's economy."

It is estimated that the economy was losing about N5bn daily as a result of the agents' action.

While the Apapa Area Command of the Nigeria Customs Service is said to be losing an average of N1.4bn daily, shipping lines, manufacturing companies, haulage/trucking firms, terminal operators, NPA, importers, clearing agents and other agencies of government are collectively said to be losing about N3.6bn.

The Area Project Manager, Apapa Area Command, NCS, Mr. Yusuf Malanta, said that while some documents could be processed online during the blockade, containers could not exit the port because they could not be examined by customs officers.

Dunch  
Blakey  
P-40