

3 feared dead in Onitsha building collapse

ALPHONSUS NWEZE, *Onitsha*

FACTS have emerged on why uncompleted three-storey located at Oguta Road, Onitsha, in Anambra State collapsed Wednesday evening with about 30 persons, including labourers escaping death.

However, unconfirmed reports said at least three persons out of those rushed to the hospital may have died from injuries sustained during the incident.

Daily Champion investigation revealed that the carpenter's and other workers were said to be roofing the building before the tragedy occurred.

According to a tenant in the house, who occupies the ground floor and who pleaded for anonymity, the owner of the house sacked the engineer in charge of the building project over a disagreement on the quality of products being used for the house.

The source told *Daily Champion* that the landlord of the house, a United States of America (USA)-based medical doctor, who has relocated to Nigeria insisted on using "inferior and sub standard materials" to save costs against the advice of the engineer.

Our source said when the engineer stood his ground, apparently to avoid this type of ugly incident; the landlord terminated the contract him.

The collapsed building was said to have trapped at least six people who were later rescued, as others trading on

the ground floor were working outside when the incident occurred.

Among those said to have been trapped included a pregnant woman, two hawkers and three workers

roofing the building as at the time of the incident.

Efforts to trace the landlord of the building proved abortive, but the Onitsha Area Police Commander, Mr. John Nwele, who confirmed the

incident, said no death has been reported so far.

But *Daily Champion* gathered that three of those rushed to the hospital after the collapse of three storey have died.

N180m fraud: EFCC files fresh charges against Nyame

THE Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC has filed fresh proofs of evidence against former governor of Taraba state, Rev. Jolly Nyame over his ongoing trial in N180 million scam preferred against him by the anti-graft agency. The additional evidence was filed at the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja before Justice Adebukola Banjoko.

The (EFCC) also filed before the court an additional list of witnesses who have volunteered information that would be useful in the prosecution of the case. Some of the witnesses include bank staff and serving government officials.

Among the additional proofs of evidence brought forward by the EFCC against Nyame are banks' account opening packages by some aides of Nyame; certified true copies of account opening packages of some of the aides of the former governor, certified true copies of statements of accounts and certified true copies of 18 different cheque books.

At the resumed hearing of the case on yesterday, Lateef Fagbemi, leading 14

other defence counsels, filed preliminary objection to the EFCC's additional proofs of evidence describing the action as persecution instead of prosecution.

In his response, prosecution counsel, Rotimi Jacobs told the court that the EFCC's action of filing additional proofs of evidence was within the ambit of the law. "We are not limited by law to file additional proofs. The filing of preliminary objection to the prosecution's proofs of evidence is novel in law, we would surely need to argue that out," he said.

Nyame who is being tried on allegations of stealing, criminal breach of trust, diversion of public funds, bribery and misappropriation of funds amounting to N180 million belonging to Taraba State government is facing a 41 count charge for fraudulent award of contracts and receiving gratifications.

He had tried to quash the charges preferred against him as he filed an application on October 10, 2007 to that effect. In the application, he claimed that there was no prima facie case against him and for want of jurisdiction. Justice Banjoko dismissed the application for

lacking in merit.

However, Nyame proceeded to the Appeal Court which equally dismissed the application on February 24, 2010. He further went to the Supreme Court to seek for the same relief. Upholding the ruling of the lower court, the Apex Court in its ruling read by Justice Olufunlola Oyelola Adekeye, ruled that the FCT High Court has jurisdiction to try Nyame.

The apex court specifically held that there was a foundation upon which the Abuja High Court can go on with the trial.

"On this score, we have before us two concurrent findings of the two lower courts that the charge before the FCT High Court, Abuja is competently before the court and the criminal charge can now proceed to hearing. This court has no cause to interfere with the two decisions. Appeal is dismissed for lacking in merit."

With the matter now before her lordship, Justice Banjoko warned counsel to both parties that she would not entertain frivolous applications or unnecessary delay as she was willing to see the case to the end.