

Church building collapses, kills 22 in Benue

From Hir Joseph (Lafia) & Toryila Kajo (Markurdi)

ABOUT 22 worshippers died on Saturday during an Easter vigil mass at St. Robert Catholic Church, Adamgbe in Mbayongo area of Vandeikya Local Government Area of Benue State, when the church's roof collapsed on them following a windstorm.

About 31 worshippers also sustained injuries.

Witnesses said the incident happened when the worshippers were in the church rehearsing songs and dances preparatory

for the celebration of Easter Monday. Sources said the windstorm blew at about 9pm, when the worshippers were waiting for their priest, Rev. Fr. Cosmos Jooli, to enter and begin the night's mass for the celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Survivors said they all assembled under a large mango tree in front of the church in compliance with the church leadership's directives because the congregation that attended the mass was too large for the building to contain.

"The church is too small to contain all of us. People came from various zones to

celebrate Easter here, so we were too many for the church. But we decided to run into the church when the wind started blowing," said a survivor.

She said no sooner had the worshippers cramped into the hall of the church, than the wind swelled, forcing the roof off the building.

But the roof caved in instead. The wind could not blow the roof away. The roof was too heavy; so it caved in, landing on people's heads", Mrs. Grace Ugbo, a survivor told *Daily Trust* at the adjoining St. Elizabeth's Hospital, where she is receiving treatment.

Another survivor, Felicia Nyiyongo, and SSS III student, said, "it is the first time this kind of thing is happening here. But I know those who died will make heaven."

Witnesses said women and children were the most hit by the disaster.

Church congregation at the scene of the disaster said the church was built in 1933, by White missionaries, and has not been worked upon in various ways including facelift.

Spokesman of the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi, Rev. Father Celestine Aayongo, confirmed the disaster in a telephone chat with *Daily Trust*.



PIC: SENATE PRESIDENT OFFICE
PRESIDENT of the Senate, Sen. David Mark (left) receiving Holy Rosary from Rev. Kenneth Odeh of Augustine's Catholic Church Otukpo as his birthday gift during the thanksgiving mass to mark his 64th birthday in Benue State yesterday.

Pension for ex-govs: Katsina excludes Yar'adua

From Yusha'u A Ibrahim, Katsina

KATSINA State government said late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua will not be among the beneficiaries of the N580 million pension fund recently approved for former civilian governors and their deputies.

The state Head of Service, Alhaji Lawal Aliyu Daura, who stated this yesterday in a phone interview, said: "The pension law provides that whoever serves the state as governor but was elevated to a higher position such person should not benefit from the provisions of the law."

Yar'adua served the state as governor for eight years before he became president and died in May 2010.

Daura explained that the exclusion was because Yar'adua became president shortly after

he completed his second tenure as governor of the state.

Governor Ibrahim Shema recently approved N580 million as 13 years pension arrears for three former governors and their deputies.

The development followed the amendment of Katsina State Pension Law by the state House of Assembly few months ago. Only civilian governors were eligible. The beneficiaries are: Ex-governors Alhaji Sa'idu Barda, Alhaji Lawal Kaita and Alhaji Abba Musa Rimi. The deputies include Alhaji Tukur Jikamshi, Alhaji Abdullahi Garba Aminci and Alhaji Surajo Umar Damari.

The law also provides that the beneficiaries would be entitled to a new car every year or its equivalent and a house within the state capital or its equivalent.

Kaduna blast: Some people are determined to destroy Nigeria — ACF

From Isa Sa'idu, Kaduna

THE Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) said yesterday's explosion in the city centre of Kaduna is an indication that some people are determined to undermine the peaceful coexistence of the country.

The National Publicity Secretary of the forum, Anthony Sani, made this known in a statement yesterday shortly after the blast that killed many.

He said that Nigerians should not be discouraged by the recurrent security threats.

"The news of bomb explosion in Kaduna, which claimed many lives and destroyed properties today (yesterday), suggest that some people are determined to

undermine the needed peaceful coexistence and national security. This is unconscionable and so condemnable. Few things are less pleasing to God when innocent people are killed in the name of God.

"Yes, ACF asks Nigerians not to be discouraged by the spate of bomb explosions. Rather, they should regard the challenges by the insecurity as a collective responsibility by living up to the collective challenges.

"ACF therefore condemns the bomb explosions and condolees with those who lost lives and properties, as well as pray for the repose of the souls of those who died. May He make it possible for replacements many folds," Sani said.

Maiduguri: 3 killed in JTF, Boko Haram gunfight

From Hamza Idris, Maiduguri

THREE suspected members of the Boko Haram sect were reportedly killed in Maiduguri yesterday while two others were arrested during a gun duel between the sect members and operatives of the Joint Task Force (JTF) at Bulabulin area of the state capital.

The spokesman of the JTF in Borno State, Lieutenant Colonel Sagir Musa, told journalists that the suspects were responsible for the killing of 11 people, including nine Igbo and three Kanuris at the Maiduguri Monday Market on Wednesday.

Though the Boko Haram sect was yet to make pronouncement on the killings at the market, the JTF spokesman said they were able to track down the suspects following a tip off.

According to him, "information received from good Samaritans revealed that the Boko Haram terrorists responsible for the killings in Monday Market were in Bulabulin.

"Consequently, the exact area was cordoned off and searched in the early hours of today (yesterday) which resulted in an attack on the hideout that led to the death of 3 and arrest of two suspected Boko Haram members," he said.

Sagir said one FN ripple, 185 rounds of assorted ammunitions were recovered.

He added that the bomb disposal arm of the JTF had succeeded in demolishing an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) which was planted by the roadside along Gamboru road in Maiduguri.

According to him, "the explosive device was discovered at Kwanar Yobe at about 15.30 hours today (yesterday)."

Meanwhile, one Abdullahi Ali Fika, popularly known as Ukari was killed Saturday night in Maiduguri.

Witnesses said two gunmen killed Ukari at a pharmacy store at Bulabulin area in Maiduguri metropolis around 6pm.