

7 die in stampede as customs sells seized rice

From Eugene Agha, Lagos

Seven persons have been killed in a stampede during the buying of seized rice put on sale by the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) in Lagos State.

Dozens of people turned up for the open sales on Friday at the customs' zonal office on Harvey Road, Yaba, Lagos, with a 25kg bag of rice sold for N10,000.

The customs had said that the move was to cushion the economic hardship occasioned by the soaring costs of essential food items in the country.

The sales which started on a peaceful note were monitored and supervised by the Comptroller General of Customs (CGC), Wale Adeniyi.

It was learned that a pregnant woman and six others died in the stampede when armed hoodlums in camouflage gear attempted to force their way into the venue.



■ Comptroller General of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Bashir Adewale Adeniyi

Speaking with our correspondent, a witness, Comfort James, said, "You can see videos of the stampede online on X, but I tell you it was worse in reality. I got there by 11am and met an uncontrollable crowd. Customs tried everything they could to control the crowd but couldn't succeed. It wasn't organised as we thought it would be.

Police came but they didn't come to aid the distribution; they came to collect bags of rice for themselves."

The 27-year-old woman further said people were trampling on others just to get into the premises.

Customs' spokesman, Abdullahi Maiwada, said, "I can't say if there was any death, but some people fainted during the stampede and were rushed to the hospital.

"The activity started peacefully, with the CGC on ground monitoring till 5pm. Our men controlled the crowd until the stampede occurred."

A medical doctor, Adunola Yemoka, in a post on X, said one of the victims who was rushed to her hospital later died.

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Lagos State said one of its members, Mrs Adebajo Comfort Funmilayo, was among the victims of the stampede.