

# Call from rubble: 'Rescue us, please!'

**S**OME Lagos residents trapped in a four-storey building, which collapsed on Tuesday night (yesterday), continued their battle for life.

Buried in the rubble and completely cut away from those who could rescue them, the survivors reached out for the only link they had with their relations: The mobile phone.

About noon yesterday, a

woman holed up in the rubble put a call to her husband, narrating her fate and those of the children.

The desperate husband rushed to the building at 56, Bola Street, Ebute Metta East, pleading with the rescue team to save his wife.

In apparent confusion, he went to the ruins, dialling the victim's number to know her situ-

- 50 victims in hospitals
- Lagos govt to sanction developer

*By Regina Akpabio, Tunde Alao, Farotimi Oluwole and Onyedika Agbedo*

ation and that of the kids.

Each response from his hearthrob was followed with prayers for her survival and prompt rescue.

Looking at the wreckage, the husband called

again: "Let me hear the children speak." Even in anguish, her love for husband still flowed as she replied: "We are alive, come rescue me and our kids, dear!"

The state Commission-

er for Physical Planning, Mr. Abolaji Abosede, confirmed to journalists yesterday that some of the trapped tenants had made phone calls to their relations.

He said: "We have to be very careful because many people are still

trapped and are calling for help through their mobile phones. But we have to be careful so that we don't complicate issues for them.

"What we are doing now is to try and bore some holes to let in fresh air to where the victims are so that they can still

have air to breathe.

Already, some victims of the incident, which occurred at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday, have been identified while 50 others have been rescued by sympathisers and aid workers.

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## Death toll in Israeli, Hezbollah fighting rises to 237

**I**T may have begun like a mere skirmish, but seven days later, the fighting between Israeli forces and Hezbollah militants snowballed into a major battle with human casualties at both ends.

As at yesterday, about 25 Israelis and 212 Lebanese, including soldiers and civilians had been killed in the week-long hostilities.

According to Cable News Network (CNN), two Israeli soldiers were

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## Scientists probe link of liver damage to painkiller

*By Ben Ukwuoma and Chukwuma Muanya*

**A**POPULAR painkiller, Tylenol, is currently being investigated by United States scientists who claim that the drug causes liver damage.

In Nigeria too, the Director-General of the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Prof. Dora Akun-

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• Searching for survivors... yesterday. (More stories and photos on Page 13)

PHOTO: SAM OLUSEGUN

## African leaders seek more foreign investments

**P**RESIDENT Olusegun Obasanjo and 12 other African heads of states and governments, yesterday decried the low level of investment in the continent.

The leaders, who attended the presidential plenary of the seventh Leon Sullivan Summit in Abuja, preparatory to its rounding off today, called for greater economic co-operation for the attainment of the continent's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The leaders took turns to propose long and short

*From Madu Onuorah and Oghogho Obayuwana (Abuja)*

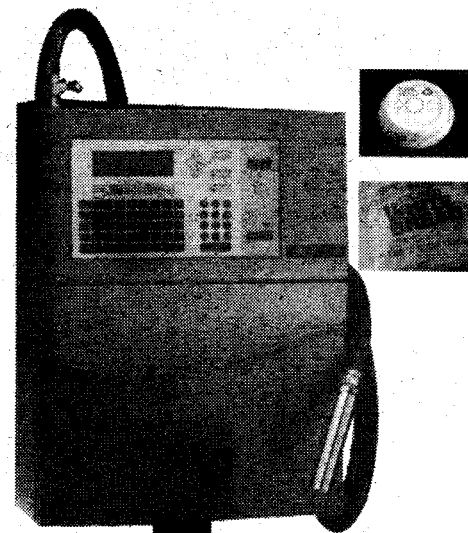
term socio-economic measures that, they believed, could reverse the current trend where Africa's share of the world's international market is a meagre 0.7 per cent.

They included Abdulaye Wade (Senegal), Ould Valli (Mauritania), Blaise Compaore (Burkina Faso), Yaya Jameh (The Gambia) and Boni Yayi (Benin). The others were

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# Collapsed building's victim cries for help

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One of the victims was Mr. Rotimi Folawiyo, a cousin of the Baba Adini of Yorubaland, Alhaji Iyanda Folawiyo. He died with his wife and three children in the disaster.

His friend, Mr Adesina Rufai, the last person he visited at the nearby 42, Ibadan Street, said: "My friend was with me yesterday, we ate together before he told me he was going home, I never knew that would be our last moment together."

At the scene yesterday, even the strong in heart broke down as they paced into the ruined building.

The sight of a young girl looking for her relations made the most emotional sympathisers to weep.

She sprawled, wailed uncontrollably and hit the ground as if she expected it to open for her to enter the collapsed structure. She refused to be consoled.

According to the woman who was trying to pacify her, the girl escaped the mishap when by a stroke of providence she ran out only to realise that other members of her family were still trapped.

"Where is my father. Mummy, where are you. Answer me. Don't make me an orphan. Somebody should help me," she sobbed right there.

This was the plight of many children who were weeping, praying that their family members should be rescued from the rubble.

Each time the rescue team brought out a victim, the crowd of relatives and friends would jostle, peering to see if they could identify the survivor.

Fortunately, about 50 were rescued yesterday by aid workers and sympathisers who have been at the scene since Tuesday night.

Abosedé, a town planner, said he and the team of commissioners had been working at the scene since Tuesday night till yesterday morning.

"I and other commissioners had to contact Julius Berger to bring in their equipment to facilitate the rescue work. Since that yesterday, we have been able to rescue about 50 victims who were still trapped in the rubble and they are alive."

To avoid a re-occurrence of such an ugly incident, the commissioner said residents of

other high-rise buildings in the area have been directed to vacate them.

Some of the occupants of such structures were moving out their property yesterday.

Special Adviser on Property and Infrastructure, Adesegun Oniru, who was in company of Abosedé, said since the area was flood prone, the foundation of such buildings may not be solid enough.

Among the survivors were a man, two women and a two-year-old boy, but the whereabouts of his twin brother is yet to be ascertained.

A resident of the area said the building was in bad shape.

"It was an accident waiting to occur. Less than six months after people packed into the building, the staircase linking the third and the second floor collapsed and for about two weeks, movement in the building was restricted.

"So we knew that as a structure, it wouldn't last the test of time," he said.

Governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu also visited the site of the collapsed structure yesterday. He vowed to ensure the prosecution of the own-

ers of the building.

Tinubu added that the state government would confiscate all other structures by the developer with noticeable defects.

The governor appealed to residents of the area that converged on the rubble to allow rescue operations go on unhindered.

He directed them to move out of the structure on which majority of them were standing, warning that by standing on it additional pressure was being piled on survivors that were still buried in the rubble.

He told the sympathisers that the state government would get to the root of the matter, allaying fears of some of the residents, who claimed that the owner-developer had fled.

The governor, who wore a mournful look, prayed for the repose of the souls of those who died in the incident, and directed that more rescue equipment and personnel be deployed to the scene.

The combined team of Police, Red Cross, Civil Defence and residents of the area carried out the rescue operation.

The Lagos State Police Public Relations

Officer (PPRO), Mr. Bode Ojajuni, said the police rescue team on being alerted to the incident quickly moved into action and with the assistance of sympathisers rescued 25 victims.

Construction firm, Julius Berger was at the site yesterday with two ACTROS lorries with registration Nos. XB 842 BWR and XG 167 ABC, removing the debris and rescuing trapped victims.

The residents called for the neck of the estate developer over its shoddy job on the collapsed house.

The year began with a three-storey building, which collapsed in January, killing about seven occupants, including a new-born baby in Amukoko area of Lagos.

On March 22, some floors of the 24-storey building of the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB) now Bank of Industry (BoI) caved in, trapping some workers.

In April, a pillar at a building site collapsed, crushing one of the labourers.

Barely three weeks ago, another building caved in killing two persons in Orile-Iganmu area of Lagos.