

LAUTECH Hospital Collapse:

Five Feared Killed

From Iyabo Lawal,
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NO fewer than five people were feared dead when part of the massive Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Teaching Hospital (LAUTECH), Ogbomosho currently under construction by the Oyo

• Mystery Hail Renders 10,000 Homeless In C'River

State Government collapsed on Thursday evening.

The five, according to eyewitness, were among the casual workers at the site.

Alao Akala conceived the hospital project during his 11-month tenure after the impeachment

of Senator Rashidi Ladoja to serve as the medical wing for the University of Technology in the ancient town.

The collapsed building, according to sources, was the pharmacy section of the multi million-naira project.

Men of the Federal

Road Safety Commission (FRSC), fire brigade, Man O' War, Civil Defence Corps and the Police were at the site of the accident.

As at 4pm yesterday when The Guardian left the scene, the rescuers who arrived the scene as

early as 8am were yet to rescue any of the trapped workers for rescue operation.

The incident, according to sources occurred on Thursday evening when the slab on the fourth floor of the building suddenly collapsed on the third floor thus trapping

the few workers who were preparing to go home.

State Director of Fire Service Department, Mr. Oladipo Gbolagade, who led his team to the scene, told reporters that though they responded swiftly to the distress call, they could not do much due to lack of

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equipment.

Gbolagade, who could not give much information, said the identity of the contractor was not known.

He nonetheless blamed the incident on poor quality of materials and poor supervision. He said: "We have advised contractors several times to direct building plans to us so that we can make input by way of incorporating safety devices and gadgets into the structure. We will continue to insist on this because we have not got the right response yet. We will continue to tell them. I will advise contractors to seek advice before starting their projects. They should also make use of competent professionals to handle each aspect of building construction to avert this type of disaster. Structural engineers, especially, should super-

vised closely."

In a related development, over 10,000 people have been rendered homeless and 680 houses destroyed in Ekureku, Abi Local Council of Cross River State following an unusual ice rain that ravaged the area recently.

Not fewer than seven villages were affected in the ice rain that perforated all the corrugated roofing sheets of houses in the area.

This is the second time in two weeks that Abi Council has been hit with a natural disaster as the state government had a few days ago distributed relief materials to victims of a recent windstorm, which destroyed many houses.

Victims said the "stone rain" lasted for over one hour and the objects were piercing the roofs like sharp metals.

The Director General of the State Emergency

Management Agency (SEMA), Mr Vincent Aquah who visited the affected community, described the phenomenon as "very rare in the history of disasters..."

A statement signed by the Assistant Director (Information) Mr. David Akate assured the victims of prompt government help.

The Abi Council Chairman Mr. Chuks Agube who expressed extreme shock over the incident described it as "colossal" saying, "every house top is affected in the area causing panic among the people."

Accordingly, Agube appealed to the state and federal governments to come to their assistance to enable the people re-roof their houses.

Paramount Ruler of the area Eval Lawrence Egbe who was also affected said the disaster was strange to his community.