

Three die, three rescued, others trapped as 21-storey building collapses in Lagos

By Bertram Nwannekanma and Victor Gbonegun

THREE dead bodies were recovered, while three persons were pulled out alive of the rubble of a 21-storey building, which collapsed yesterday at Gerard Road, Ikoyi, Lagos. The Guardian learnt that some workers were still trapped, as of the time of filing this report. The building, which is the tallest in the area, collapsed around 2:00p.m. on construction workers on site as well as cars parked in the premises.

An eyewitness said: "We learnt that people who were on the top of the building were trapped in the rubble as the generator and the machine needed to cut iron rod, which they were trapped in, did not work early enough."

There were efforts by emergency rescue officials from Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Lagos State Building Control Agency (LASBCA), the Police and others, who climbed the rubble as part of attempts to rescue the trapped victims.

The total number of victims could not be ascertained as at press time as rescue operations were still on.

Lagos State Deputy Governor, Dr. Obafemi Hamzat, who led emergency responders to the site, lamented non-adherence to physical planning law by developers in the state.

Hamzat assured the people that the government would do what it can to rescue all those stuck in the building.

Also, an official of Lagos State government, who spoke to The Guardian in confidence, said, respon-



The collapsed building in Lagos



Members of Nigeria Red Cross Society and other responders carrying other trapped workers from rubbles of 21-storey building that collapsed along Gerald Road in Ikoyi, Lagos...yesterday.

Sanwo-Olu orders probe

ders have covered much ground on the rescue operation.

He said that the developer of the proposed Gerrard Terraces, Fourscore Limited had approval for only 15

floors, but decided to go higher to 21 floors.

According to him, the developer was sometimes arrested by Lagos State Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Devel-

opment, Dr. Idris Salako, but he continued construction without authorisation.

However, controversy has trailed the collapse of the building as a letter emerged, showing that the

structural engineer handling the project resigned in February last year.

In the letter obtained by The Guardian yesterday, dated February 20, 2020, the engineering firm, Prowess Engineering had allegedly withdrawn its structural consultancy service from the proposed Gerard Terraces for Fourscore Limited.

The letter signed by the Managing Director, Prowess Engineering Limited, Muritala Olawale stated: "We arrived at this decision due to the fact that we no longer share the same vision with you as our client in terms of how the project is being executed. "We can guarantee the integrity of the first two buildings and also works done up to the fourth floor of the third building supervised by us provided specifications have been met in terms of the required concrete strength," the letter added.

But a senior government official said the engineering firm is liable as the withdrawal of the firm stood to nothing. According to him, when the consulting firm withdrew from such a high-rise building, they did not send any copy of the letter to the authorising agency or to the Physical planning.

"Did he send the copy of the letter to even the professional body to let them know why he was withdrawing. "All that is a story. When did he write the letter? He knows where he is supposed to send it to, which is the regulatory office, in this case, the building control agency. He never wrote to the building control. We don't know any-

thing that was going on until the incident," the official stated.

Reacting on the development, the immediate past president of the Nigerian Institute of Building (NIOB), Adekunle Awobodu, said it was sad to witness such a collapse of a high-rise building in a high brow area like Ikoyi.

According to him, the incident also brought doubt to the integrity of others buildings, which the developer has developed along that axis.

Awobodu said high-rise construction should not be handled by those without experience but by construction professionals with requisite experience.

While sympathising with those who lost their lives, he said developers should pay attention to details to avoid such recurring incidents.

Also, Coordinator, Ikoyi Obalende Cell of Building Collapse Prevention Guild (BCPG), Bola Ailesere, said an eye witness, who happened to be a construction professional, told him that he suspects foundation design/construction error.

According to him, the building might have been under designed or overloaded

MEANWHILE, Governor MBabajide Sanwo-Olu has ordered an investigation into the incident.

The commissioner of information, Gbenga Omotoso, who disclosed this in a statement, called for calm over the collapsed building.

He stressed that the State Rescue Unit (LRU), Lagos State Fire Service and Lagos State Ambulance Services (LASAMBUS) are on the site, battling to save the lives of those still under the rubble.

Three passengers die, others injured in Kwara road crash

From Odun Edward, Ilorin

of one of the tyres.

gers were first given first aid