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Collapsed building: Two bodies recovered, others trapped in Lagos

By Eniola Daniel

TWO bodies have been recovered, while others are trapped in the rubble of a seven-storey building, which collapsed in the early hours of yesterday at Palace Estate, Oba Abiodun Oniru Road in the Iru/Victoria Island, Lagos State. The collapsed building also fell on another building. In the safety board of the site marked LSC/CON/B/0309, the name of the contractor, contact were not there as stipulated by the state's building guideline.

However, the Lagos State Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, Idris Okanla Salako, yesterday, said the state government would investigate reason contractor of the collapsed building broke the seal to the site thrice, threatened the men of the Lagos State Building Control Agency (LABSCA) and continued the building, after it was sealed on February 18, 2021.

Salako, who refused to disclose the name of the developer, said: "We have a developer, who is hostile and who contravenes the law of the Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning, 2019, as amended. He did not get the necessary planning permit that will allow him do that, he did not have the prerequisite authorisation to commence construction on the site.

"Severally, LABSCA officials have visited the site and the attitude of the contractor has been that of hostility, he has

Commissioner blames powerful developer, orders arrest of developers, professionals

been using his personal security to stop them from carrying out their lawful duty. But, the government will look at the site and investigate and we will look at the necessary things to be done; the law is clear on what should be done and we will apply it.

"The developer has been dropping names any time our officers visited the place; we have sealed the site three times and he kept breaking the seal. Again, what were those trapped doing on site that time?" He queried.

Asked if the developer is bigger than the law of the state, he answered: "You are a journalist, you must have re-

ceived one or two slaps in the course of your duty, is that person bigger than you? At times, these officers will not report immediately at the office, we have had instances where our officers were macheted and guns used on our officers. I have been shot at thrice in different sites. I was slapped several times as a junior officer in Oshodi-Isolo.

So, we are human." Speaking on measures to prevent building collapse, he said: "We will continue to talk to developers and enforce the law."

Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Dr.

Oluwafemi Oke-Osanyintolu: "At 3:15a.m., we received emergency calls that a seven-storey building collapsed and we activated the Lagos State Emergency Management line and all the key stakeholders moved to the scene. When we got here, we discovered that this site had been sealed, since February 18, 2021.

"Six persons were in the building when it came down, with combined efforts, we were able to recover two bodies and we took them to the mortuary.

"We are very aggressive in our operation and we are concerned about saving lives,

as we approach ground zero, our emergency response is swift, prompt, effective and efficient."

Asked why work was allowed to continue after the place was sealed more than a year before the collapse, he said: "We are going to carry out a holistic investigation and we are going to come out with answers to that.

"I want to assure Lagosians that we are on top of all the challenges. We have sophisticated equipment. So, they should remain calm." Also, Southwest Coordinator of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Ibrahim Farinloye said: "We are hoping to rescue those trapped alive.

MEANWHILE, Lagos State government has ordered the arrest of the developer and building professionals working on the collapsed structure.

Salako, in a statement, after his visit to the site, said the developer and professionals on the building were culpable for their disregard for the planning laws of the state, having embarked on construction without a valid planning permit and ignoring official warnings against continuing the building works.

He stressed that under no circumstances should anyone construe the filling of application for permit through the Lagos State Physical Planning Permit Authority (LASPPPA) as a ticket to commence construction, as there must be a valid planning per-

mit from the aforementioned agency, in addition to letter of authorisation, stage inspection at every stage and certification by LASBCA to ensure that construction works were carried out in conformity with the approval granted.

He noted that while the state government was investigating the circumstances surrounding the collapse, the police had started a manhunt for the developer and all professionals involved in the project such as architects, builders and engineers on the project.

Salako expressed concern with the pace of disregard for law and order by actors in the built sector, stressing that the state government is determined to restore sanity and orderliness to the sector, where it had declared incidents of building collapse intolerable.

He urged Lagosians to join hands with the government in maintaining vigilance in the built environment of the state by reporting any untoward developments in their vicinity through any of the Ministry or state government communication channels, particularly, the Lagos State Ministry of Physical Planning (MPP&UD App) and the LABSCA.

Also, the Lagos State Police Command's spokesperson, Benjamin Hundeyin, has said police are yet to arrest the contractor, but promised to make his name available to the public after arrest.



Scene of the collapsed building..yesterday.

PHOTO: ENIOLA DANIEL