

Anger as 16-year-old school girl drowns in Owerri

From Collins Osuji, Owerri

IMO State government and the management of a commercial bank have been called out following the death of a 16-year-old student of Imo Girls Secondary School, Owerri, last Thursday.

The deceased got drowned after she mistakenly stepped into an open manhole in front of the bank, situated at Okigwe Road roundabout, opposite Government House, Owerri.

The *Guardian* gathered that the unsuspecting school girl in company of her friends was going home amid heavy rain on that fateful day.

It was further gathered that the flood, which occasionally submerge the area during heavy rains had covered the manhole, leaving the deceased and her friends unaware of the risk therein. Immediately the teenager lost one of her legs into the manhole, the heavy flooding forced her into the deep drainage.



The manhole and Governor Hope Uzodimma

Passersby and good spirited individuals made frantic efforts to save her, but before they could recover and rush her to a nearby hospital for resuscitation, she died. Some residents and traders around the area who spoke over the ugly incident, blamed both the state government and the bank for the incident. They said: "Given the risk the scene posed to road users around the area, especially pedestrians, the government and management of the bank could have earlier taken precautionary measures to forestall such a tragedy."

According to a trader, who simply identified himself as Johnbull, it was most unfortunate that even after five days of the ugly incident, nothing had been done on that exact spot. "Ordinarily, if the bank is concerned about the welfare of their customers, because today it was a school girl, tomorrow it could be any of their customers, they could have at least covered the manhole or put a caution sign around it.

"Also, if truly our govern-

ment is sensitive enough and genuinely committed to protecting lives and property of the people, they could have

called the bank to question or do the needful for the safety of the citizens," he said.

Another resident, who spoke



on condition of anonymity, expressed concern over the prevailing flooding around the area and some other parts of the state capital.

She urged Governor Uzodimma to intervene and ensure that the menace and its inherent risks are addressed for the overall safety of the residents and citizens at large.

When contacted, the State Commissioner for Environment, Major Emenike, said he will immediately visit the scene and take appropriate measures to address the risk.

Police nab oil rig worker for defiling teenager in Rivers

From Obinna Nwaoku, Port Harcourt

THE police in Rivers State have arrested a 42-year-old man known as Kolowale, who is an oil rig worker, for allegedly defiling a 13-year-old female housemaid at Ejekwu Street, Eneka Community in Obio/Akpor Local Council.

The *Guardian* gathered that the suspect was arrested by Human Rights Desk of the Rivers State Police Command

Headquarters, Moscow Road, Port Harcourt, following a complaint by concerned neighbours, who the teenage girl ran to after the alleged defilement.

Before the arrest, it was learnt that some women in the vicinity had examined the private part of the teenage girl to ascertain the veracity of her claim and were shocked to observe the

level of damage done to the minor's female organ.

According to a source, based on the strength of their findings, the neighbours quickly alerted the police on the incident.

Confirming the development, spokesperson for the state Police Command, Grace Iringe-Koko, said the suspect was in custody, and an investigation was ongoing.

Lagos traders defy ultimatum to leave rail tracks