

NEWS

Two dead in a drain of horror

In an effort to combat the perennial Lagos Mainland flood, four ditch diggers were contracted, last Monday, to desilt the underground drain in Oyingbo Market. Two hours later, two of them could not be found. Rescue workers, including engineers from Julius Berger and Hitech, joined in the frantic search. When they were eventually found, they were dead. **DELE ADEYANJU** reports

IT was not an unusual job — clearance of a drain to save residents from flooding. But the job turned out to be nasty — and more. Two of the workers died — in the drain.

Engineers from construction giants, Julius Berger and Hitech were in a last-minute effort to rescue two persons trapped in a huge underground drain in Oyingbo market, Lagos Mainland.

The trapped ditch diggers entered the drain last Monday morning to desilt the huge drain.

The move, according to Mr. Ifeanyi Eboniye, a resident,

would reduce flooding, a perennial problem of Lagos Mainland during the rainy season.

He told *The Nation* that residents contracted four men to clear the drain. They were promised N18,000.

Trouble, however, started when after two hours, nothing was heard from the two people who entered the drain.

"Because the drain is big and long, nobody thought that the untoward might have happened to them, even two hours after they (two of the diggers) have entered the drain."

"It was after about two hours, when nothing was heard from

them that the other two entered and reported hearing scream and shouts for help," he explained, with tears streaming down his face.

A disconsolate Abdullahi Abdukadiri, whose younger, Abubakar is one of the trapped diggers, explained that residents have done everything to rescue them.

We don't try our best. We dey even pump the water but e be like say as we dey pump am, na so the water dey full the more, he said in Pidgin English.

Abdullahi's statement that more water was coming into the drain despite the heavy pump-

ing was corroborated by Mr Eboniye.

He expressed regret that efforts to drain the edifice failed because water from flooded streets rapidly entered it.

The huge underground drain, located at the end of Cole Street and Ebutte-Metta junction is the primary outlet for effluent and rain water into the lagoon.

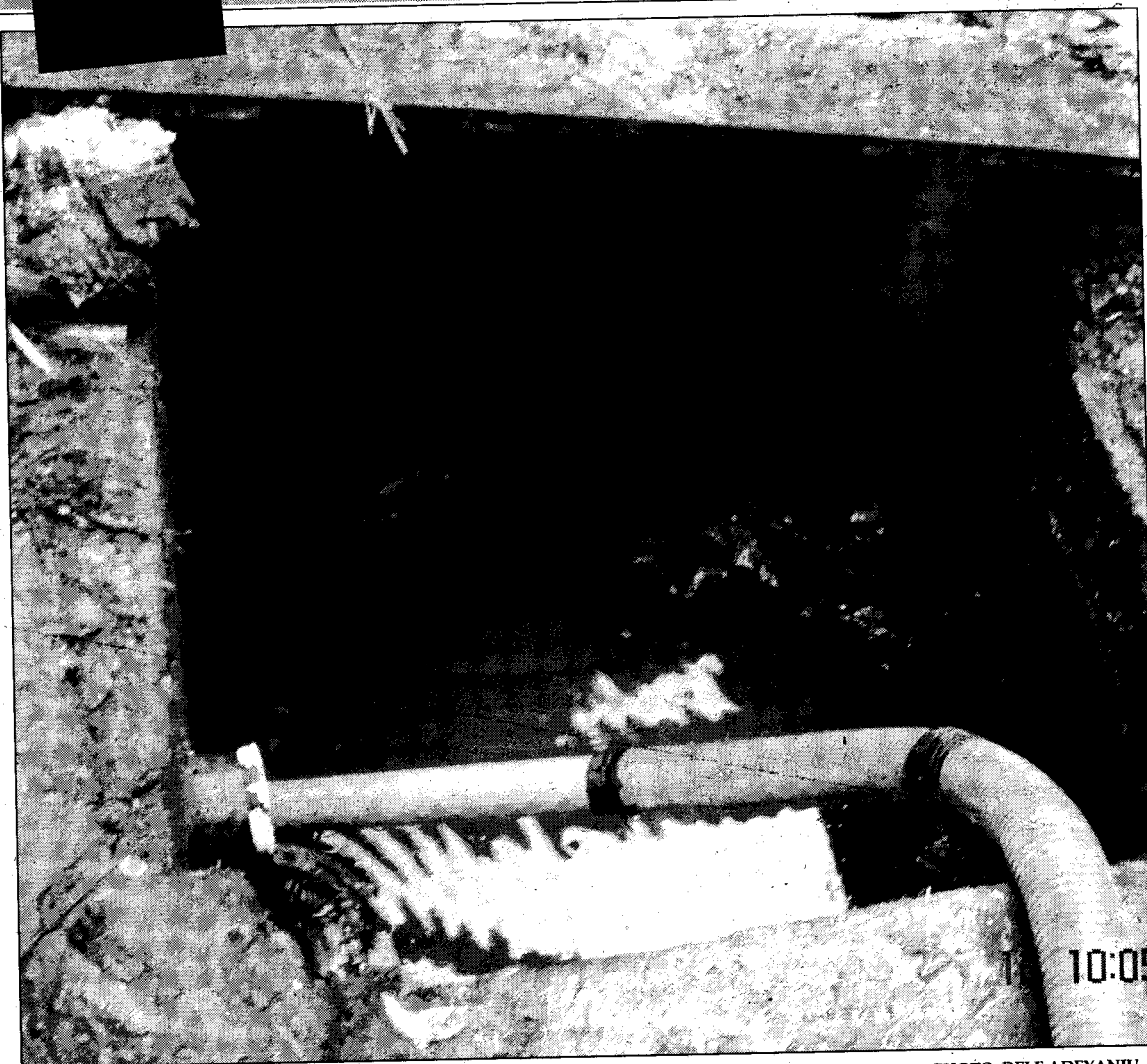
Joined in the frantic search were officials of the Lagos State Ministry of Health and the police, who were seen, cordoning off the area.

Dr. Jide Disu, the Permanent

Secretary of the Lagos State Ministry of Health, equally expressed regrets that effort to remove the trapped diggers stalled.

"We hope that with the presence of the construction companies, we would be able to reach them and that is why we have our ambulance here in case they are still alive," he explained.

Afraid that they would be held responsible after failing to clear the drain, none of the Lagos Island Local Government staff was available for comments.



• The underground drain in which two workers died.

PHOTO: DELE ADEYANJU

AC warns against money politics in Ekiti Assembly