

11 die in Lagos

IT was a grim harvest of tragic events yesterday in Lagos as no fewer than 11 people lost their lives in two separate events that occurred in the city.

The two incidents were not unrelated to the heavy down pour that enveloped the city leading to the tragic incidents. A building collapsed in Karaole Estate in Ifako/Ijaiye, Lagos, leaving three people dead.

The incident occurred at about 3.45 a.m. and also left five others seriously injured.

Tragedy also struck in the Oke-Afa, Isolo area when a boat conveying 16 members of the Christian Praying Assembly (CPA) capsized in the canal, killing about eight people.

The victims were said to be on their way home after a vigil when the incident occurred.

According to one of the survivors, Wilson Akoma, they boarded the boat at around 6.30am in the morning.

He disclosed that a few minutes into the journey, there was panic as the passengers perceived that the boat had developed technical problem. This made some of them to start jumping.

He said it was in the process, that the driver lost control, causing the boat to capsize.

Also speaking with *The Nation*, the driver of the boat, Jimoh Aremu disclosed that over six persons had been rescued.

Aremu said the accident was caused by the passengers, some of whom began to jump out of the boat for no known reason.

When *The Nation* contacted the command police spokesman, Mr Olabode Ojajumi, for comments, he disclosed that the incident was not reported at any police station, but that when they (police) got the information, some officers were deployed to the scene.

Though he did not confirm the number of death, Ojajumi said a lot of people have been rescued.

CPA belongs to Rev Ezugo King, who is at present waiting for the hangman's noose at Kirikiri prison in Lagos having been sentenced to death on January 11, 2007 over the murder of one his church members, Anne Uzo King, then an undergraduate at the University of Lagos Akoka.

It would be recalled that thousands of innocent souls perished in the same canal on January 28, 2002 when they attempted to escape from bomb blasts that occurred at the Ikeja Military Cantonment, Maryland, Lagos.

Most of the victims then were women and children.

At the scene of the collapsed building yesterday was the Chairman of the local government, Mr. R. A. Akinpelu, who wore a mournful look, he blamed the disaster on the flood caused by the heavy rain.

"I think it started with the heavy downpour. You know, it has been raining for about three days now."

"It is unfortunate that it happened at an odd hour when the victims were sleeping. That was why they were trapped in the (collapsed) building."

"Three of them were confirmed dead, while five others were wounded," the chairman lamented.

Admitting that the terrain was not conducive for habitation, Akinpelu said his men were surveying the area in order to determine the next line of action.

The engineer, however, said that residents of the affected houses would soon be given quit notice to enable his men tackle the flood.

The two children said to have been confirmed dead were identified simply as Oreoluwa and

■ Jude ISIGUZO and Kayode ABOYEJI ■

Nemoth, while the identity of the third victim could not be immediately ascertained.

Two of the survivors, namely Sherifat (mother of the deceased children) and Pelumi (a primary three pupil), were being treated at AB-10 Hospital located in the area.

Sherifat said she did not know how the whole thing happened because she was fast asleep.

"I don't even know what happened," she said. "I was told they dug me out of the debris."

Irrespective of Sherifat's frail appearance and Pelumi's swollen head, a medical officer at the

How Obasanjo plotted Anenih's removal from abroad

■ Segun OTOKITI ■

FORTY-eight hours before he arrived the country on Tuesday, former President Olusegun Obasanjo plotted the removal of Chairman of the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Tony Anenih from Jamaica where he spent his vacation.

In fact, the need to remove his former friend now turned sworn enemy expedited his return to the country during the week, *The Nation* learnt.

It was gathered before party Secretary Chief Ojo Maduekwe sent circular for the National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting which held on Monday, he contacted Obasanjo who was holidaying in the reggae beat country.

Obasanjo was reported to have asked for the agenda which included among others, the formation of a Reconciliation Committee to be headed by former Vice President Alex Ekwueme and the scheduled meeting of the party with members of the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Action Congress (AC).

Satisfied, he was said to have asked for what the meeting would do on the BOT chairmanship.

During the December 16, 2006 national convention of the nine-year old party, its constitution was amended making Obasanjo life leader and paving the way for him to become the next BOT chairman. A source said Maduekwe, who is being tipped as the next national chairman of the self-acclaimed biggest party in Africa, was silent for minutes, following Obasanjo's enquiries "Don't worry, I will call Yar'Adua." Obasanjo was reported to have said. When he called President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and asked the same question, the president was reported to have told his predecessor that he (Obasanjo) should wait till he comes back to the country before taking over from Anenih.

But Obasanjo added a condition: the NEC meeting should be silent on the BOT chairmanship.

The source said Obasanjo's plan was to return to the country yesterday or today, rest for one or two days before heading for Abuja for the BOT meeting.

"Obasanjo was shocked when the NEC meeting announced that Anenih should continue as BOT Chairman. In fact, he was furious. He knew Anenih must have manipulated the NEC members and party leadership to include that section in the communiqué."

He immediately called President Yar'Adua

AB-10 Hospital, who identified himself as Umeh, said the duo were responding to medical treatment.

A neighbour, who joined in the rescue operation also blamed the rains for the collapsed building.

The landlord of the collapsed building could not be reached on Friday as he was said to have gone to report the incident at a police.

When our correspondent visited Ogba Police Station, an officer who preferred anonymity said the matter had not been reported.

General Manager, Lagos State Emergency Management, Dr O. D. Oke-Osanyintolu told *The Nation* that the wounded have been treated at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital.

All the stakeholders in the emergency management including members of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, Lagos State Emergency Agency were on ground to rescue the people.

and asked him for what led to such announcement and the president told him that his (Obasanjo's) physical presence would be needed urgently to effect the desired change.

The source said Obasanjo immediately placed calls to Maduekwe, Deputy National Chairman (South) of the party, Chief Bode George, Senate President David Mark and Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mrs Olubunmi Etteh; and told them his plans: "I'm coming back to take over fully." He was also reported to have called billionaire tycoon Alhaji Aluko Dangote to make one of his private jets available immediately for his return to the country.

This was done and he returned on Tuesday morning.

On arrival, he called Yar'Adua and his allies in the party telling them that BOT meeting would hold the next day.

Anenih, who was aware of Obasanjo's arrival, also called the BOT meeting in his Abuja house for Tuesday night.

On Wednesday, Obasanjo flew to Abuja with some of his aides and headed straight to the Aso Rock Presidential Villa which he left less than a month ago.

Yar'Adua already had some scheduled meetings but Obasanjo was reported to have told him to cancel them for the BOT meeting.

When Anenih, who was in Benin, the Edo State capital, learnt of Obasanjo's move, it was too late.

He made some frantic calls, to no avail. Within hours, Anenih was removed, replaced by Obasanjo who also made one of his aides and former Nasarawa State Governor Adamu Abdullahi, the Board Secretary.

According to Maduekwe, Obasanjo has effectively taken over the ruling party.

The crisis between Obasanjo and Anenih started two days after Obasanjo's exit from Aso Rock.

A few days to his exit, the party leadership met and endorsed Mark and Mrs Etteh as the Senate President and Speaker.

But a few days to the inauguration of the sixth National Assembly on June 5, Anenih moved against Mark, seen as Obasanjo's choice.

This prompted Obasanjo to call and warn him. But Anenih replied immediately saying as an old man, Obasanjo should not talk to him like that again.

Both are septuagenarians.

Since then, the crisis between the duo has deepened.

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Ex-Kogi governor, Audu must face trial, Tribunal insists

THE Code of Conduct Tribunal has insisted that former Kogi State Governor, Prince Abubbakar Audu must face trial on the six count charge filed against him by the Federal Government.

Chairman of the Tribunal, Justice Constance Momoh in her ruling on an application for preliminary objection assumed jurisdiction of the case.

But shortly after the ruling of the Tribunal, the former governor described his trial at the Tribunal as being politically motivated.

Audu was accused of abuse of office and conversion of public property while in office as the governor of Kogi State between 1999 to 2003 by the Federal Government.

Justice Momoh in her ruling held that the law establishing the Tribunal vested on it sufficient powers to prosecute a former public officer for contravention of the code of conduct committed while he was a public officer.

She held, "there is no provision in the Act or Constitution disallowing the prosecution of any former or retired public officer for

contravention of the Code of Conduct committed while in office as a public officer.

"Whether in service or not, such person is triable by the tribunal and not by the regular courts of law for such contraventions committed either while still in office or after leaving office. The regular courts of law have no jurisdiction over breach of Code of Conduct unless the conduct constitutes a crime chargeable under the Penal Code, Criminal Code or any other enactment and made triable by the courts."

"The Code of Conduct concerns itself with offences of contraventions of the Code of Conduct by public officers and not with crimes triable by courts of law as allowed by paragraph 18(2) of the 5th Schedule to the 1999 Constitution."

"In conclusion, the charges against the accused being limited to contravention of the Code of Conduct are triable by the Tribunal as contraventions. What is relevant is the fact that he was holding the office of Governor of Kogi State during the period the contravention was allegedly committed."

"That fact brings the charge against him properly before the Code of Conduct Tribunal. The objection to jurisdiction raised on the submissions that Code of Conduct Tribunal has no jurisdiction over ex-public officers is misconceived and his motion is liable to be dismissed. The accused is to appear before the Tribunal for his trial."

The judge dismissed the submission by counsel to Audu that the case before the Tribunal was an abuse of court process because there is already a criminal case before a high court in Lokoja.

Audu who is also the gubernatorial candidate of the All Nigeria peoples Party [ANPP] for the state is being charged for breaching the Code of Conduct set for public officers among others.

In his objection, Audu had challenged the jurisdiction of the tribunal to entertain charges against ex-former public officers. According to his counsel, Prince Orji-Nwafor Orizu, section 18 of the 5th Schedule to the 1999 Constitution, which creates the tribunal, only empowered it to hear cases against serving public officers.