

Two sisters die as building crumbles

TWO sisters were died yesterday when a two-storey building collapsed at Jakande Low-Cost Housing Estate in Isolo, a Lagos suburb.

The building came down barely 30 minutes after a tenant, Amodu Omoniyi, reportedly raised the alarm about its likely collapse.

Toyin and Bukky Coker were pulled out dead by rescuers, but their mother was injured and rushed to the Isolo General Hospital.

Block M20 collapsed at 12:30am. Residents said the Cokers may not have died had they heeded warnings to leave the building.

Toyin was a medical doctor at the agos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH); her younger sister, Bukky, just graduated from the university.

Omoniyi, who resides on the ground floor, said he was the first to notice that the building "was shaking."

"At about 11:30 pm, I realised that the building was shaking and my door could not close. So I became uncomfortable because we had always feared that the building might collapse."

"I immediately went upstairs to tell mama that it seems the building wants to collapse but she said God will keep them safe till morning and went back to bed."

"So, I quickly woke the other neighbours, went to my apartment and picked some important documents; as I was stepping out, with three others, the three blocks collapsed," he said.



•The collapsed building

PHOTO: PRECIOUS IGBOWELUNDU

Controversy trails collapsed building

WERE residents of the collapsed building advised to evacuate it before it went down early yesterday?

Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) General Manager Femi Oke-Osanyintolu and his Lagos State Development and Property Corporation (LSDPC) counterpart Biodun Oki said the residents were warned. The residents denied the claim.

Oki said the residents were warned earlier to vacate the building, which was erected about 18 years ago.

He said: "Some of the buildings have been marked before now; in most cases, four years back. If you mark the buildings, they wipe off the paint and paint the building again. They have been served eviction notice several times."

According to the residents, the agency only came yesterday morning to mark some other buildings for demolition.

Victor Daramola, a resident in the block said: "You see that these buildings were marked this morning. They also gave a 48-hour quit notice to all residents of M Blocks. I wonder why government officials like reactive measures. Where do they want us to go now?"

By Precious Igbowelundu and Miriam Ndikanwu

Neighbours are enraged that there was no response to their calls to the emergency agen-

He said: "I hate the hypocrisy that goes on in this country. For the past four years, we have written several letters begging the relevant authorities to come and inspect this building but they did not."

"When they became embarrassed perhaps, they sent some of their agents last year to come and see the buildings. After their inspection, they told us the situation was not that bad, that we should stay as the building will not collapse any time soon. Here we are today."

An official of the Residents' Association, who refused to be named, told reporters that the buildings in the 'M-zone' were built in 2001 by the government.

"Alhaji Lateef Jakande did not finish building all the estates, so successive governments continued on it. I'm not sure they have good foundation, if not 11 years is not enough for the building to collapse," he said.

Another resident said the government sold all the buildings to private investors who do not bother about renovating them.

"I moved into the estate in 2006. I renovated my building myself, despite paying N250,000. If you complain to the landlord, they will ask you to leave because there is someone willing to take the place".

cies for help. They said rescuers used bare hands and crude tools to rescue Mrs. Coker and pull out the bodies of her

daughters from under the debris.

"People were using sledge hammers and other crude

2000 get hearing

A US based charity, Starkey Hearing Foundation, has distributed 2000 pairs of hearing aids worth N720 million to hear-