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## Anger as nine-year-old pupil dies in soakaway



The scene of the incident.

| credits: Samson Folarin

There was anger on Thursday morning on the Apata Street, Somolu area of Lagos after a nine-year-old child, identified as Riliwan, fell into a soakaway and died.

Riliwan, a primary six pupil of a primary school in the area, was to attend his graduation ceremony that morning where he was billed to be given prizes for coming first in his class, when tragedy struck.

A resident said his parents, who were devout Muslims, had sent him to pour away a bowl of dirty water they had rinsed their hands in after eating *Sahur* (Ramadan pre-dawn meal), when he fell into the pit.

The resident, who did not want his name mentioned, said, “The incident happened around 4am. There was no power supply. His parents had finished eating the early morning meal, preparatory to the fasting, when they asked him to empty a bowl of dirty water inside the gutter.

“As he went out in the dark, he stepped on a covering on the soakaway, which gave way.”

Another resident said after his parents did not see him return, they became worried and searched everywhere for him.

It was only about seven hours later that one of his foot wares was seen at the mouth of the soakaway.

“People rallied round and tried draining the water in the soakaway, before they were able to bring him out. But he had died,” he added.

A crowd of sympathisers were seen in front of the house condemning the owner of the building for not sealing the soakaway before giving out the apartments.

Our correspondent observed that there were two openings on the soakaway.

The holes were said to be covered with used printing plate sheets.

An angry resident ran to the place where the victim fell and pulled back one of the plates to the pit surface to demonstrate how “anybody could have fallen victim at that time of the night”

“This house was completed four months ago and the owner did not deem it fit to cover the

soakaway with slabs. This is evil, sheer wickedness,” he added.

Men of the Lagos State Fire Service and policemen from the Somolu division were sighted by our correspondent at the scene.

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that council officials had been informed and had visited the house.

When our correspondent approached the father of the victim, he said he had no comment.

“Please we have nothing to say. We don’t want this matter blown out of proportion. We will be burying him soon,” he said.

Our correspondent could hear a woman wailing, “Riliwan, Riliwan” as people in the room tried consoling her.

The deceased’s father asked *PUNCH Metro* to leave the house, and the gate into the house was shut.

Nobody was ready to point out the owner of the house for comment.

However, an executive member of the Community Development Association, who pleaded anonymity, told our correspondent that septic tanks in Apata and Debari streets were not well constructed.

She said, “If the soakaway was well constructed, since its a new house, the boy ought to have fallen into an empty space. It will be easy for him to cry out for help.

“But landlords in Apata and Debari streets make their soakaways in such a way that whenever it rains, they can release wastes into the gutters.”

She appealed to the state’s Ministry of Environment to conduct a check in the area for the safety of residents.

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