

Two die, three injured as buildings collapse in Jalingo, Anambra

Justin Tyopuusu and Ikenna Obianeri

Two persons were confirmed dead and three injured when a storey building under construction collapsed in Jalingo on Friday afternoon.

The Commissioner for Urban Development, Alhaji Saleh Sa'ad confirmed this to journalists when he visited the site of the collapsed building located opposite the Taraba State Polytechnic in Jalingo.

Sa'ad, who expressed sadness over the development, said the state government had ordered the arrest of the owner of the building, Chief Uche Obi.

"The developer did not follow due process. He ignored all the stop-work orders issued to him and government will get him arrested. Two out of the five persons who were trapped in the building died, while three were rescued alive," he said.

An eyewitness said the building collapsed at 12:30 pm when workers were working on the structure.

One of the survivors, Adamu Mohammed, told journalists that the building collapsed when they were working on the structure.

Mohammed explained that he used his hands to pull the rubble and was aided by people around, who helped to rescue him.

"I heard the sound of the collapse and was mentally confused. After some minutes, I saw an opening and I pull the rubble to come out.

"I was helped by people who gathered at the scene. One of my colleagues close to me died instantly," he narrated.

Some experts, who visited the site, blamed the collapse on the use of substandard materials.

The developer, Chief Uche Obi, is currently facing a legal battle with the Standard Organisation of Nigeria at the High Court in Jalingo for allegedly selling substandard building materials.

In a related development, the Anambra State Enforcement Team of the Physical Planning Board has sealed the site of the collapsed five-storey building in Oba, Idemili South Local Government Area of the state.

The building located near the palace of the traditional ruler of the town, which was said to be under construction, collapsed late on Thursday.

The cause of the collapse was not stated, but eyewitness attributed it to the soft nature of the land.

The government team led by the Executive Chairman of the Board, Mr Chike Maduekwe, sealed the site

on Friday and said investigation into the cause of the collapse would commence immediately.

He added that the developer would be arrested and made to face the law.

The team also sealed off some sites at the Oba Airport whose structures did not have requisite government approvals.

The President, Umuogali village, Oba, Dr Kingsley Obasoanya, blamed the collapse on the incompetence of the workers as he observed that the job was awarded to quacks and promised to arrest the site engineer and hand him

over to relevant authorities for disciplinary measures.

When contacted, the state police spokesman, Ikenga Tochukwu, said there was no casualty as the workers in the site had gone home before the incident happened.

He said, "Nobody was trapped and there was no loss of life in the incident. The area has been cordoned off and our operatives are currently on the ground to forestall possible breakdown of law and order."

But some eyewitnesses, who spoke to our correspondent, revealed that several of the workers

were inside the building as of the time the building caved in, while some said there was nobody trapped under the rubbles.

When our correspondent visited the scene, there was no presence of an excavator or any other equipment to determine if some people might have been trapped.

When asked, a government team, who did not want his name mentioned, said, "There was no need to deploy excavator or any equipment as all the workers reported for duty this morning which means that nobody was trapped."

PWDs, widows, others to benefit from COVID-19 support scheme

Godfrey George

The Chairman, Senate Committee on Industries and the lawmaker representing the Lagos East Senatorial District, Senator Mukhail Abiru, has added 2,500 more vulnerable people to his COVID-19 financial support scheme.

This brings the total number of

persons in his safety net to 2,820 drawn across 98 wards in the 16 local governments and local council development areas.

For 15 consecutive months, persons with disabilities, widows, the aged, unemployed youth and women have been receiving support from Abiru on a monthly basis.

In a statement on Friday by the

Special Adviser to the senator on Media and Publicity, Enitan Olukotun, Abiru was quoted to have said, "My concern for the plight of the poor at this challenging period, especially the recorded food inflation, necessitated the continuation of the financial support to ease the hardship of the vulnerable at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid."

Russia-Ukraine war: Nigerian medical students resume lectures online, commence training in local hospitals

Deborah Tolu-Kolawole, Abuja

Nigerian medical students and other escapee students who fled Ukraine during the height of the Russian aggression in the European country have been directed to commence studies online, *Saturday PUNCH* reports.

Saturday PUNCH gathered that the medical students had also been granted waivers to have their practical medical lessons in hospitals in their countries of residences.

A letter from the Karazin Kharkiv National University signed by the acting Director, International Education, Andrii Polivantsev and obtained by our correspondent partly reads, "Karazin Kharkiv National University informs you that all foreign students of all countries have classes online in spring semester 2021-2022 academic year and don't have opportunity to take part in practical works due to the situation in Ukraine.

"So, we ask local government officials to allow all international students of Ukrainian universities

to go through practical work in local private or government hospitals as it depends on students' courses in their countries.

"The report on practical training at the homeland drawn up on the form of a medical institution that indicates the amount of acquired practical skills signed by a doctor, head of practice, will allow the university to enroll in practical training for students in spring semester 2021-2022 academic year."

Saturday PUNCH had earlier reported how the Russian aggression in Ukraine had led to a series of tension.

The *PUNCH* had also reported how students in Ukraine who were of Nigerian descent had sent SOS messages to the government of Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.).

At the beginning of Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine, Nigerians were initially told to be responsible for their own safety and security, according to a statement by the Nigerian Embassy in Ukraine.

However, following outrage from Nigerians, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NiDCOM stepped in to begin preparations

to provide safety to Nigerians who could find their way to neighbouring countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Romania.

Coordinating with the embassies in those countries, Nigerians escaping the war were allowed safe passage after facing initial difficulty from border control.

The National Assembly also called for the immediate evacuation of Nigerians stranded in Ukraine, prompting the Federal Government to partner with private airlines to begin evacuating them.

The President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.), approved over \$8.5m for the evacuation of over 5,000 Nigerians stranded in Ukraine, most of whom were students.

Following the evacuation from Ukraine, Onyeama had said that students who were evacuated would be able to continue their education in other European countries.

Some of the students in separate interviews with this newspaper had expressed uncertainties over the continuation of their education which was put on hold as a result of the Russian aggression.