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Flood kill 10 in Onitsha

•Relations, survivors of Lagos accident decry neglect

By CHRISTOPHER OJI, MATTHEW DIKE (Lagos), GEOFFREY ANYANWU, Awka and NWABUEZE ANYANWU, Onitsha

Wednesday, August 18, 2010

No fewer than 10 persons were feared dead in Onitsha, the commercial centre of Anambra State, yesterday following heavy flood that virtually took over the city occasioned by torrential rainfall. The down pour which was said to have started at about 5pm on Monday also damaged shops and stalls.

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Ogbaru, Ochanja, Ogboefere, street markets among others were devastated by the rain as flood took over every space in the area making it difficult for people to identify the gutters.

Both traders and other residents including travellers were stranded at the Upper-Iweka- Coca-Cola Junction. Some people who attempted to cross the surging flood were reportedly swept away by the flood. Though eyewitness account put the number of casualty at 10, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) for Okpoko Police Station, Abubakar Isa, confirmed only four.

He also said families of the victims had visited the police station for permit to carry the corpses of their relatives. Eyewitness account also had it that the flood killed some people at Tarzan area, Nkpor and 3-3, all suburbs of Onitsha, adding that the flood was worsened by gully-erosion created by previous flood at the expressway, which was not seriously addressed.

Describing the incident as 'terror in Onitsha', the Director of Information, Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Mr. Uchenna Madu, said the flood had caused "wailing, hopelessness and anxiety among the residents of Onitsha."

Meanwhile, relatives of victims and survivors of the Sunday's accident at the Berger Bridge in Lagos that claimed over 40 lives had expressed disappointment over the shoddy treatment being meted out to them by government agencies. Particularly, they expressed sadness over failure by the authorities to set up information centres. Some of those who were at the scene of the accident in search of their own were thrown into confusion as the carcasses of vehicles and charred remains of victims have all been evacuated by the Lagos State Environmental Task Force.

One of the survivors, Gift White from Bayelsa State said he received information that the names of the victims of the ghastly accidents were being compiled by the Federal Road Safety Corp but when he arrived there he was referred to the police station.

He claimed that at the Isheri police station, he was again referred to the Lagos State Government House Alausa. According to him, at the state house, he was told that such an exercise was not going on in the place.

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