

ANOTHER TRAGEDY...



•Rescue Operations at a collapsed building site in Abuja ...yesterday

Collapsed Building, Accident Claim 12 Lives in Abuja

•35 trapped •NEMA urges people to stay away from uncompleted building

No fewer than 12 people lost their lives in two incidents involving a collapsed three-storey building at Ikolie Street, Area 11 and an auto accident involving a trailer that crashed into about 14 vehicles at A.Y.A Junction, Asokoro District, Abuja, yesterday.

About 40 squatters were said to be residing in the uncompleted building when it collapsed around 5 a.m., trapping the occupants who included women and children.

Five persons, including a pregnant woman who later died from injuries from the concrete beam that fell on her, were initially rescued from the building around 10 am.

As at 2.30 pm, about 14 people had been brought out from the building and taken to the National Hospital for medical attention.

The structure, which collapsed at precisely 5:03 yesterday morning, is the third building to crumble in the territory since January. Seven people were rescued alive while about 35 persons, including children, were trapped.

A combined team of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Nigerian Civil Defence and Security Corps (NCDDSC), Nigerian Police, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Julius Berger Construction Company, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and some foreign missions were involved in the rescue operations.

The building, a hotel, was said to have been under construction since 2001 and was later marked for demolition by the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) owing to the owner's failure to meet required specifications. He was alleged to have added an additional structure making it a four-storey building as against the specified three-storey building which consequently collapsed the structure.

The owner was alleged to have challenged the matter in court which lingered until the incident occurred.

One of the survivors, David Ibrahim, said his younger brother, alerted him yesterday morn-

From Yemi Akinsuyi, Kingsley Nweze and Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

ing that there were vibrations around the building. On getting to the balcony of the second floor where they lived, they noticed that half of the structure was already giving way, prompting them to jump to the ground and safety.

Bruised all over, David said so many of their neighbours, mainly artisans and illegal occupants, were still trapped.

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Bala Mohammed, condemned the

incident and said the full weight of the law would be brought to bear on those that erected the structure.

NEMA boss, Dr. Charles Agbo, while regretting the unfortunate incident advised on the need for all the relevant agencies including the police, FCDA, to ensure that construction sites and uncompleted buildings do not become places of habitation for illegal occupants since these could harbor all sorts of criminals.

The agency in statement signed by the Chief Press Secretary, Mr. Segun Imohiosen, said NEMA working jointly with

other rescue personnel have been able to rescue about ten people including a twelve year old boy from the rubbles on the collapsed structure.

"We have been able to rescue about ten people including a twelve year old boy. These ten people are alive but other three people were brought out dead", he said.

He said NEMA in collaboration with other disaster management agencies undertook a search and rescue operations at a collapsed building site yesterday morning as soon as the alert on the incident was brought to its notice.

IBB: I'd Do Only One Term

•Says South-east should provide president in 2015

From Aisha Wakaso in Minna

Former military president, General Ibrahim Babangida, has said categorically that if elected president in 2011, he will not seek a second term in office.

Babangida who ruled the country as military president for eight years from 1985 to 1993 said his intention to run for the office of President come 2011 is only for one term.

He also said after one-term in 2011, it would be his desire to see that power moves from the North to the South-east to demonstrate the full integration of the Igbo into the mainstream of the country, pointing out that, that is the only way to put an end completely to the 30 months civil war.

The unstated problem about zoning, which is tearing the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) apart, is what happens in 2015.

If the North, which is insisting that power should revert back to it to complete its two terms truncated by the death of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, gets back to power in 2011, what is the guarantee that it would not insist on another term.

And what is also the guarantee that President Goodluck Jonathan, for whom those canvassing that zoning be jettisoned are rooting, will also do just one term if given the opportunity.

But the former president, who spoke to THISDAY in a tele-

phone interview yesterday in Minna, said he is aware that the North has one term left after the demise of late President Yar'Adua, stating that he is not interested in remaining as president beyond 2015 if given the mandate.

Babangida added that his intention to spend one term as president if elected is to further reinforce the zoning idea and allow other parts of the country have a fair share of the topmost office.

The former president is one of the Northern leaders pushing for the retention of PDP zoning arrangement under which they insist power should return to the North by 2011.

PDP National Executive Committee (NEC) is meeting today in Abuja to take a decision on zoning and other crucial issues.

"In 2015, I will love to see that an Igbo man becomes President of this country so that it will fully put an end to the civil war matter and fully integrate them into Nigeria. After the civil war, they need to completely feel like Nigerians," he said.

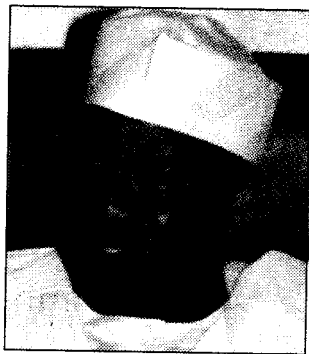
Babangida said his advocacy for zoning is not a war against President Goodluck Jonathan but a crusade for equity, justice and

fair play as well as peace and unity, which General Yakubu Gowon fought to keep the country together.

He said: "When we were advocating for zoning, it was not because anyone had or has anything against our President Jonathan but we were advocating for zoning to maintain equity, justice and fair play in the country"

Babangida further stated that the idea of zoning, which has been causing uproar in the country in recent times, would only be complete after an Igbo man becomes the president of Nigeria in 2015.

"If we must make every one believe that he belongs to this country, then it is after an Igbo man has been given the opportunity of being president in 2015 to complete the programme of fighting for the unity of this country by General Gowon," he added.



•Babangida