

Collapsed building: Death toll hits 31

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LAGOS — DEATH toll in the collapsed two-storey building at the Lagos Railway Terminus, Iddo, in the Ebute-Meta area of Lagos Mainland, Sunday, has risen to 31, from the 18 dead bodies earlier recovered from the rubble.

The dead said to be mainly from the North, according to one of the survivors, who sim-

ply identified himself as Nura Alli, have been buried according to Islamic rites.

Men of the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), yesterday, combed the site with excavators and other earth-moving equipment for possible survivors.

Speaking on the rescue operation, General Manager/CEO of LASEMA, Dr. O.D.

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Oke-Osanyintolu, noted that his men were targeting trapped residents who were still alive.

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plained he had the mandate of Boyloaf to attend the meeting. His words, "It is Boyloaf that called me to represent him at the meeting. I did not know about the meeting before, he was the one that called me and I know that many people called him to find out whether he sent me to the meeting and he told them he was the one, so I don't know what Jomo Gbomo is driving at. I even spoke to Boyloaf this morning (yesterday).

Also speaking to *Vanguard* yesterday morning on the Arerebo matter, Boyloaf said: "Cletus Arerebo has been representing me at several meetings; I sent him to represent me in this one in question".

Oil rises above \$70

U.S. crude for August delivery rose to a high of \$70.80 per barrel, up \$1.48, before slipping back slightly to \$70.50 by. London Brent crude was up \$1.30 at \$70.22. "The Nigerian situation is the main factor in the market," said Mike Wittner, global head of oil research at Societe Generale. "The attacks appear to be removing some oil production capacity from the market."

Pipeline bombings, attacks on oil and gas installations and kidnapping of industry workers over the past three years have prevented Nigeria from pumping much above two-thirds of its installed oil output capacity of 3 million barrels per day (bpd).

The loss of output has been a supportive factor at a time when global recession has bitten deep into oil demand. The IEA, adviser to 28 industrialised countries, has cut sharply its medium-term forecast for oil demand, saying there was a chance of an extended contraction, but added the threat of a supply crunch had only receded, not gone away.

Help came for two of such trapped victims who were said to have made desperate and frantic calls on their mobile phones at about 12 midnight on Sunday and were rescued.

Oke-Osanyintolu noted that while all the injured persons had been taken to hospitals for treatment, most of the corpses from the incident had been deposited at the mortuary.

According to him, "As you can see, the operation personnel of LASEMA with their equipment have been working non-stop alongside our stakeholders since the building collapsed. We are combing the area to ensure that no survivor is still trapped in the rubble."

Alli, a native of Kano State, told newsmen that he was rescued from the rubble around 9a.m. on Sunday, six hours after the building caved in.

Alli, who had bruises on his head, hands and legs said he occupied a room with his wife who also escaped death by the whiskers, on the second floor.

Recounting how it happened, he stated, "I was deeply asleep with my wife. I did not know how it happened but when I woke up, I felt a heavy weight on me. Tried as I could to turn to the other side, the weight on me prevented me. The entire place was dark and wet. I could hear voices but could not fathom what they were saying. I could have stayed for eternity when all of a sudden I heard people shouting that they have found someone alive. That was how I was dragged out with my wife.

"No fewer than 18 of my Northern brothers were brought out of the rubble dead. But they were kept away from the Red Cross and buried according to Islamic rites. We did not want them taken to the mortuary because there would not be any money with which to pay the mortuary bills."

Alli added that the building housed over 60 tenants with some of them sleeping in the veranda and balcony.

Sympathisers and relatives of victims believed to still be trapped under the rubble thronged the site yesterday.

Two persons; a male and a female were said to have made frantic calls at 12 midnight, Sunday, begging for quick rescue operations. But when the numbers were dialled yesterday, they could not be reached.