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A week of tragedies, drama in Imo

ON DECEMBER 6, 2017 5:09 AM / IN [METRO](#), [NEWS](#) / [COMMENTS](#)




By Chinonso Alozie, Owerri

It will not be an exaggeration to say that at some point, Imo people became apprehensive and did not know what next, going by the happenings.





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*Okpokiri Petrol station along Orji road in Owerri North Local Government Area where gas exploded. Photos by Chinonso Alozie

At a particular stage, the people were enveloped in fear of fire incidents and explosions which claimed lives.

While at the other side of the story, it appears politically the end has come, hearing that for the first time in the history of Imo State, since the return of democracy, the governor of the state, Rochas Okorocha, failed to present the 2018 budget.



South-East Voice monitored the developments in Owerri and discovered that the scenario created a bigger suspicion in the minds of the citizens. They are wondering what the outcome could be.

At this point, some people recalled the ugly story of multiple building collapses in the state in which lives were said to have been lost as well as property worth billions of naira.

Some of the locations of the building collapse were Wetheral Road, Fire Service Roundabout in Owerri Municipal council where an 18-year-old girl, Osinachi Nnabue, among others, were said to have died.

In another development, a three-storey building under construction at Umuguma in Owerri West Local Government Area, as well as a two-storey building under construction along Owerri/Aba road among others. The incidents occurred between July and August 2017, with casualties recorded.

At a point, citizens became weary of any storey building under construction.



*Stone Castle Hotel in flames, along Orji Road in Owerri North Local Government Area.



Concerned citizens began asking the question why standards are disregarded in a construction work. At first, professional bodies in the area of construction started raising alarm over the level of substandard work both in the private and public sectors.

It got to a stage that the people of the state rose up and spoke against the inferior works in the state. However, the much talked about building collapse fizzled out as soon as the state stopped recording building collapse incidents.

After two months, the citizens were faced with another set of tragedies resulting from fire outbreaks and explosions.

They all happened in the month of November, in just a week. First, it was an explosion by a truck laden with gas, it was said to have killed over 20 people. The incident took place at the ever busy Owerri-Umuaka-Okwudor-Orlu road.

In that scene, an 18-seater bus was burnt beyond recognition.

After two days, a gas explosion occurred at Okpokiri Petrol station, a tragedy said to have killed about four persons.

The next day, just a stone throw from the Okpokiri Petrol station, it was another fire outbreak in Stone Castle Hotel located along Orji Road in Owerri North Local Government Area, where the generator house went up in flames and the generators were badly damaged. It also affected some parts of the building.

*Scene of the explosion of a tanker
laden with gas along Owerri-
Umuaka-Okwudor-Orlu road.

As the citizens were trying to get over the devastations, what looks like a political battle set in, where presentation of Imo 2018 budget could not hold on the

scheduled date.

It was planned for Tuesday, 28 November, 2017; however, to the chagrin of the masses, the lawmakers were not seen in the Assembly complex which suggested that there was a disagreement between the executive and the legislators.

The botched presentation of Imo 2018 Budget was followed by a story of suspension of the Clerk of the House, Mr Chris Duru, over alleged 'gross misconduct.' A committee was set up to look into the issues and return a report to the House within a week.

The motion was raised by the Majority leader of the Assembly, Mr Lugard Osuji.

While the people were still discussing the reasons behind the failure of the lawmakers to appear for the budget presentation and the suspension of the clerk, the Speaker of Imo State House of Assembly, Mr. Acho Ihim, said the Clerk was never suspended and that until the allegations levelled against him (Duru) were substantiated, Mr. Chris Duru remained in his position.

According to Ihim's Chief Press Secretary, Mr Marcel Ekwezu: "Imo State House of Assembly has debunked the various mass media reports falsely claiming that Clerk of Imo State House of Assembly, Mr. Chris Duru has been suspended from office.

"Sequel to the motion which alleged under-performance and non-compliance to certain laid down rules and procedures of the house in the discharge of his duties as basis for the motion. A five-man Committee led by Honourable Kennedy Ibeh, member representing Obowo State Constituency was set up to investigate activities of the Clerk beginning from 2011 till date to ascertain the veracity or otherwise of the allegations against Mr. Chris Duru."



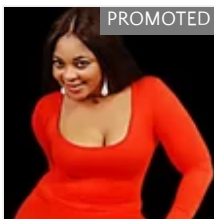
However, as the events continue to unfold *South-East Voice* will update you on the development.



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