

Rev King: 13 devotees perish in boat mishap

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A pall of grief yesterday enveloped the Christian Praying Assembly (CPA) Ajao Estate, Lagos, as no fewer than 13 of its devotees were feared dead in a boat mishap few metres to the church premises.

General Overseer of CPA, Rev. Emeka Ezeuko, popularly known as Rev. King,

Awu warns integration

people fight for honour, you sir, have earned it.

'Your role as a leader and an elder statesman in strengthening and sustaining our nascent democracy cannot be overemphasized. At a time when workers were being laid off and our country being faced with the harsh reality of unemployment, the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA) under your able leadership created jobs for over 400 Nigerian youths.

"Even economists are yet to unravel the correlation between our economic reality and your ability to create employment. It will not be out of place to

was sentenced to death by hanging January 11, 2007 for allegedly setting ablaze six members of the church, including Ann Uzuh who died.

However, *Saturday Champion* gathered that the latest tragedy which took place at about 6.45 am claimed the CPA devotees mostly women who were returning from a vigil held in the church premises.

Three people, two of who are non-worshippers survived the tragedy.

One of the survivors, Mr. Wilson Akoma, who is not a member of CPA, narrated his experience to our correspondent.

'I don't just know how to thank God for my life. It was Jesus that just saved me, it happened as we were trying to cross to the other side (Isolo) of the canal. We were about 16 in number. About three or four of us were non members of the CPA inside the boat. It was raining heavily and the current was so strong that the "Baba" who was paddling the canoe could not control it as we were moving against the current.

"Suddenly the Baba lost control and jumped into the canal. We were then helpless as the boat started drifting slowly and the occupants became apprehensive but I was encouraging them to relax.

"But a young man who is not a member of the church jumped into the canal as the boat was already drifting. So, the CPA devotees started shouting "G.O., G.O", while I was shouting Jesus, Jesus! Eventually, the boat capsized while myself, another male non member of CPA and their member swam out. The rest were just unfortunate and could not escape," he said.

Akoma, a landlord and a native of Umuahia, Abia state noted that the "Baba" and other residents made frantic efforts to save the victims but all to no avail.

At the church premises which is a few metres away from the accident scene, the CPA devotees wore a mournful look. Effort by our correspondent to interview them was unsuccessful as they declined comment on

the matter.

However, it was mixed feelings among the residents at Ajao Estate as some were making jest of the matter whereas others were sober about it. Some of the residents who were seen discussing the tragedy in groups said the incidence might lead to the closure of the church by the government.

Reacting to the incident, police spokesman, Mr. Olubode. Ojajuni confirmed that some people were rescued, but declined to comment on the actual number of casualties.

Ojajuni, a Superintendent of Police (SP), said the police are investigating the story to ascertain the cause of the incident.

He added that the survivors are assisting the police to get to the root of the matter. *Saturday Champion* recalls that Rev. King was sentenced to death by hanging for burning to death, Ann Uzuh, and attempting to kill five other members of his church, July last year.

He however, appealed against the judgement even as the Appeal Court is yet to fix date for hearing at the case.