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Governor escapes death, as lawmaker, others die in boat mishap

Written by Aideloje Ojo and Ayegba Israel Ebije, Minna, on 30-08-2008 00:00

Views 127

Niger State Governor, Dr. Muazu Babangida Aliyu and the Vice President of the Nigerian Tennis Federation Association, Alhaji Sani Ndanusa Thursday escaped death in a boat mishap at the River Mariga in Mariga Local Government Area of the state.

Three top government officials including the member representing Magama constituency in the Niger State House of Assembly, Alhaji Usman Bahago Nasko, the Principal Private Secretary 1 to the governor, Alhaji Yusuf Muazu and a top official of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party in Niger State, Alhaji Yisa Lapai were however not so lucky as they lost their lives in the mishap.

Ndanusa who is also the Niger State Commissioner for Transport and Infrastructure Development was rescued and revived by local divers.

The incident occurred at around 6pm Thursday when the government officials were returning from Bangi where the governor commissioned a General Hospital built by the state government. The building of the hospital followed an appeal by the community at a Jamaar Forum (Peoples Parliament) on the need for government to build a hospital for the community and its environs.

Aliyu and his entourage, it was gathered, had accessed Bangi which had been unreachable due to bad road, through the River Mariga that has no bridge. The local divers and other rescue team as at yesterday been unable to recover the corpses of the lawmaker and another victim while efforts were still on to recover the body of the others.

The governor described the incident as tragic and very saddening. He spoke shortly after the incident.

"I had earlier been warned by the people at the bank of the river not to embark on this journey but I believe that since this is the only way through which these people have access to the outside world, we must experience what the people have been experiencing," he said, vowing not to leave the scene of the incident until all the corpses are recovered.

A top government official told Weekly Trust that the state government would declare a three day of mourning over the tragedy.

The official said details of the arrangement were still being worked out and that the governor would make the pronouncement as soon as he returned to Minna.

The Chairman of the Niger State House of Assembly Committee on Information, Alhaji Isa Kawu expressed sadness over the deaths, describing the incidence as very unfortunate, adding that the family of the deceased lawmaker had left Minna for Nasko, the hometown, for his burial.


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