

How 21 people died in culvert collapse



Jigawa deputy gov at the accident scene



Damaged road

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Residents of Rabadi in Gwaram Local Government Area of Jigawa State went to bed last Saturday expecting to continue their normal daily struggles the following morning, but fate had something else in stock for them as they woke up to discover that the only road linking their village with their area council, and the Northeastern part of the country, has been severed; no thanks to the heavy rainfall that night.

The unfortunate development was blamed on the culvert constructed along a local stream, which caved in as a result of torrential rainfall on the night the incident occurred. Not only were the villagers denied access to other parts of the local governments, but unsuspecting travellers along the road on the night of the incident became victims as no fewer than 21 persons in two separate accidents were confirmed dead and one person who survived suffered serious injury.

Daily Trust Saturday gathered that of the deceased, about 18 persons were said to have been travelling from Kano to three Northeast states of Adamawa, Borno and Taraba in a Gombe State-bound Toyota Hiace bus which plunged into a ditch in the midnight on Saturday unknown to them that the road had cut off as a result of the downpour. It was also gathered that, prior to that, a Canter Lorry carrying three passengers had fallen into the ditch, killing all the occupants.

Sources said that eight among the dead were youths, who had gone for the military recruitment training screening at the Falgore Forest in Tudun Wada Local Government Area of Kano State, but were unsuccessful. A breakdown of the figure showed that Adamawa State had the highest figure of the casualties, followed by Borno and Taraba states.

Some residents of the area told newsmen at the scene that it was the big bang of the bus carrying so many passengers falling into the ditch full of flowing water at about 1am on Sunday morning that led them to discover the Canter lorry with three passengers already dead in the ditch. According to a police statement, only one Simon Chinapi, 26, from Mubi Local Government Area of Adamawa State survived the accident.

The spokesman of the State Police Command, Lawal Shisu Adam, said in the statement that the Commissioner of Police Aliyu Tafida, in company of the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Operations (ACP-OPs) and other officers had visited the scene of the accident, where he ordered a discreet investigation into the incident. The victims were eventually evacuated to the nearby Basirka hospital, where they were confirmed dead.

The Jigawa State Deputy Governor, Umar

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Namadi, also led other top government officials to the scene to assess the damaged portion of the road. On his entourage were, the Commissioner for Works, Engr. Aminu Usman, his Permanent Secretary, Engr. Datti Ahmed, among others.

Experts blamed the collapse of the culvert on age and coupled with the fact that the materials used in constructing the culvert had become outdated. The culvert was said to be built in 1981, during the administration of the late Muhammad Abubakar Rimi of old Kano State, which present Jigawa was part of.

The state government about three weeks ago placed a ban on articulated vehicles plying the Gwaram-Basirka bridge, in another village. The deputy governor, who clarified the decision, said repair work on the bridge had almost gone about 80 or 90 percent, "but with the situation now, we will try to bring it back to use immediately. For now, we will close the road to reduce casualties, but I assure you we will take every action that will bring back the road to use by God's grace."

Asked when work would be completed on the road, the deputy governor said it was not easy to predict, especially with the rainy season at its peak. However, he said remedial measures were being put in place to ensure that the road is open to public use as soon as possible.

His words, "You know we are in the rainy season, this kind of major work during the rainy season is not easy, but like I said, definitely this road is a very strategic one, and so we are not saying that until the rain has stopped, but we are going to definitely do some temporary job here to make sure that the road is habitable and motorable within a few days and then after the rainy season, the major work can be done."