

Scores killed as canoe conveying traders capsizes in Kogi

By Abubakar Sadiq Isah & Tijani Labaran (Lokoja)

Scores of passengers were feared dead after a speed boat conveying traders capsized on River Niger at Bagana in Omala Local Government Area of Kogi State.

A relative of one of the deceased, Ibrahim Dantani, who is a native of Umaisha in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, said the incident happened around 9:12 pm on Sunday when the canoe carrying 47 passengers capsized.

He said the victims, who were mostly traders and natives of Umaisha town, were returning to Umaisha after attending a local market in Bagana.

It was learnt that the speed boat crashed into a tree in the middle of the river and suddenly capsized.

Dantani added that all the occupants including women and children on board drowned.

"They were actually returning from Bagana village market through the River Niger back to Umaisha when the boat hit a tree in the middle of the river

and suddenly capsized," he said.

He said some corpses had been recovered while a rescue operation was still ongoing.

The Ohimegye of Opanda-Umaisha Kingdom, Alhaji Usman Abdullahi, confirmed the incident on the telephone to our reporter on Monday.

He said those affected were people from his kingdom, including some Hausa traders and scavengers who were returning from the Bagana market to Umaisha.

"I am yet to get details and the total number of people involved

in the canoe accident. It was one of the people in my palace who called to inform me about the incident while I was away," he said.

The monarch, however, promised to get back to our reporter after getting details of the casualty.

The Chairman of Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Abdullahi Aliyu Tashas, also confirmed the incident but said he had yet to get details.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in Kogi State, SP William Aya, who also

confirmed the accident, said it happened on River Benue at the side of Nasarawa State and not under the state police command's coverage.

However, when the General Manager, Corporate Affairs of the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), Jibril Dardau, was contacted, he promised to reach out to the Benue State officials of the agency and get back because the agency had no office in Nasarawa State.

He had yet to do so as of the time of filing this report.