

22 Persons Feared Dead In Benue Boat Mishap

TOR VANDE-ACKA
MAKURDI

- 13 Bodies Recovered – Police
- Ortom Condoles With Families Of Victims

About twenty-two persons were feared to have lost their lives in a boat mishap that occurred on Wednesday night at the Buruku crossing of River Katsina-Ala in Benue State.

Most of the victims were mourners who were on their way to attend a funeral ceremony in Buruku, Buruku Local Government Area (LGA) of the state, as well as some women returning from Ugba Market in Logo LGA of the state.

However, the Benue State Command of the Nigeria Police, which confirmed the incident, said only thirteen persons lost their lives, and that their bodies had been recovered.

But one of the locals who

spoke with Daily Independent on phone, on Thursday, said many more were still missing, and suggested that more persons may have lost their lives when the boat capsized.

He explained that the incident which happened at dusk on Wednesday made it difficult to rescue the victims.

According to him, most of the passengers of the mishap were under the influence of alcohol when the incident occurred.

Daily Independent further learnt that the boat was overloaded with passengers and motor bikes at the time of the incident.

We further gathered that the boat was loaded with about forty or more persons

as well as fourteen motor bikes, which was unusually high for a boat, the size that was conveying the victims.

Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Benue State, command of the Nigeria Police, Moses Yamu, confirmed the report.

Although he would not give the actual figure of those that lost their lives, he said thirteen bodies may have so far been recovered.

He, however, said rescue operations were ongoing, an indication that more persons were still missing and may eventually be recovered.

Daily Independent gathered that none of the bikers that drowned were yet to be recovered.

Meanwhile, State Gover-

nor, Samuel Ortom has sympathized with families of victims of the boat mishap.

Represented by Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Professor Anthony Ijohor, SAN, visited the scene of the incident accompanied by the Chairmen of Buruku and Logo LGAs.

He described the boat mishap as unfortunate and painful, stressing that a similar incident which claimed seventeen lives occurred at about the same point five years ago.

Chairman, Benue Motorcycle Association, Ugon-
dozua branch which lost 17 members to the mishap, Felix Ikyaajime, said they were heading for a burial in Buruku when the boat capsized.