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Niger governor escapes death in boat mishap, three die

By Francis Falola, Minna

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The Niger State Governor, Dr. Muazu Babangida Aliyu, on Thursday narrowly escaped death in a boat mishap on River Mariga in the Mariga Local Government Area of the state.



Photo file

Dr. Babangida Aliyu

The incident occurred around 6p.m. when a canoe in the governor's entourage capsized as it returned from the inauguration of a general hospital at Bangi community. The ill-fated canoe was one of the 10 hired by the state government for the trip.

Our correspondent gathered that of the number in the canoe, the state commissioner for higher education, Dr. Peter Sarki, and the Vice-President of the Nigerian Tennis Federation Association, Alhaji Sani Ndanusa, survived while 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, died.

Ndanusa who is also the Niger State commissioner for Transport and Infrastructural Development, was rescued and revived by local divers. Saturday Punch gathered that the construction of the modern hospital had followed an appeal by the Bangi community at a session of the periodic Jamaar Forum (Peoples Parliament) initiated by the governor.

Aliyu and his entourage, it was gathered, had to reach the community, which had been inaccessible due to poor road network, through the River Mariga. Speaking shortly after the incident, Aliyu said, "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."

The rescue team had, as at Friday, been able to recover the corpses of the lawmaker and one other person. Aliyu, who vowed not to leave the scene until all the corpses were recovered, was still monitoring the search for the third victim on Friday.

Meanwhile, a top government official said the state government would declare three days of mourning, adding that the details were still being worked out.

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The Chairman of the Niger State House of Assembly Committee on Information, Alhaji Isa Kawu, expressed sadness over the death of the lawmaker and the other officials.

He described the incident as unfortunate, adding that the family of the deceased lawmaker had left Minna for his hometown, Nasko, for the burial.

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