

Three pupils die as Anambra boat capsizes

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File image: Capsized boat

Tony Okafor, Awka

Three siblings have reportedly drowned in River Niger after their boat capsized while going home from school over coronavirus threat.

It was learnt that they were asked to go home on Monday by the school hierarchy following a directive by the state government that all schools should close as a measure to contain the spread of the pandemic.

Our correspondent learnt that they were the children of one Mr Chukwuemeka of Urum-Etiti in Anam, Anambra West Local Government Area of the state.

A source told our correspondent, “They were students of Community Secondary School, Atani, Ogbaru Local Government Area.

“They were on their way home from school at Ochuche, a riverine community in the same council area, when they met their untimely death.

“They were asked to leave for home because of the coronavirus pandemic. So on their way home they met their untimely death.”

The Public Relations Officer of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps in the state, Mr Edwin Okadigbo, confirmed the incident.

He said the students were declared missing on March 23.

Okadigbo said, “Following a distress call, the NSCDC Ogbaru divisional office, was alerted that three students of Community Secondary School, Atani, had drowned after their canoe capsized on River Niger. And they were declared missing.

“Preliminary investigation revealed the three students on their way to Ochuche in the Ogbaru LGA of Anambra State were children of one Mr Chukwuemeka of Urum-Etiti, Anam in Anambra West but residing in Ochuche.

“The cause of the incident was attributed to river turbulence, following a downpour.

“Two out of the five students that were in the canoe, however, survived.

“We are making efforts to recover the missing three.”

According to him, the pupils were paddling the boat when it capsized.

Meanwhile, the Igwe of Nnewi, Dr Kenneth Orizu 111, on Wednesday placed restrictions on visitors to his palace to help contain coronavirus spread.

He also cancelled all social gatherings, including traditional marriages and burials in the commercial city of Anambra State.

In a statement by the Crown Prince, Obi Orizu, the monarch, who is also Grand Patron of Anambra State Council Of Traditional Rulers, also ordered the suspension of the sittings of the Palace Arbitration Panel.

He urged Nigerians to “adhere strictly to all safety procedures as directed by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, as well as the federal and state governments” and called for prayers for the eradication of the disease and the quick recovery of victims.

The Igwe commended the federal and state governments for their efforts to stop the virus from spreading while commiserating with those suffering from the deadly virus.