

Undergraduate, caterer drown as boat capsizes in Delta

Dennis Naku, and Dele Ogunyemi 4 October 2021

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Nigeria Maritime University

A student of the Nigeria Maritime University, Okerenkoko, in the Warri South-West Local Government Area of Delta State, has drowned in a boat accident along the Warri River.

A caterer attached to the varsity was also reported dead in the private boat accident.

Sources said the ill-fated boat capsized on Friday when the deceased and other passengers were travelling from the university community to Warri.

PUNCH Metro gathered that aside from the two victims, other students who boarded the boat survived.

A student, who survived the accident, said some of the passengers, including locals, did not wear life jackets and did not know how to swim.

The student, who did not want his name in print, noted that the lifeless bodies of the deceased were later recovered by local divers.

Our correspondent gathered that the deceased student, an Ijaw, was buried by his family on Friday, while the corpse of the caterer was deposited in the Warri Central Hospital morgue.

Confirming the incident to journalists, a top official of the university said the boat driver had been arrested and handed over to the police.

The official, who asked not to be identified, said, "The deceased boarded a private boat against the school rule that students and staff should only make use of school-owned boats and any other provided by management to ferry students to Warri.

"It was on their way going that the boat capsized. Unfortunately, one of our students and caterer drowned.

"We don't know exactly what happened, but the boat driver is already answering questions from the police."

The state Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Bright Edefe, could not be reached for comment as of the time of filing this report.

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Meanwhile, the Rivers State Police Command said it had launched an investigation into the collapse of a jetty in Isaka community, in the Okrika Local Government Area of the state.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Nnamdi Omoni, who spoke to our correspondent on the telephone on Sunday, said one person was confirmed dead in the accident.

PUNCH Metro learnt that local divers were having a hard time searching for persons who went missing after the incident.

A witness, simply identified as Walter, had said the incident occurred on Saturday when mourners who attended a burial in the Isaka community were hurrying to board a boat back to Port Harcourt before it went dark.

He told our correspondent that the would-be travellers piled pressure on the rickety facility, which was long overdue for repairs.

Walter said, "Today (Saturday), we had a burial at Isaka and a lot of people were in attendance. On our way back, people queued to board a vessel (speedboat).

"In that process, the jetty caved in and many people fell into the river. A few of them were rescued. I was a little away from the point that caved in, so, I survived it. They were many; more than 70 on the jetty.

"The local divers are still combing the area to find survivors. Some were rescued due to the presence of other flying boats there."

On the number of casualties, he said, "To be candid, I will not be able to give you an exact number, but I know that they are up to 20."

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Contact: theeditor@punchng.com

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