

der. Some suspects were arrested in various hideouts and 10 of

also set free.

"There was another break-

one horse and three donkeys were recovered from Kotonkoro

Gusau. The suspect fabricated 40 fake motorcycle number

arms. The suspects will soon be charged to court.



Crossing the river of death.

# RIVER OF DEATH

From **Abdullahi Hassan,**  
Zaria

## ...Kills 9 girls in Zaria canoe mishap

**GALMA** River Valley, Wuciciri village in Zaria Local Government Area of Kaduna State, is now a dark spot. This is the aftermath of tragic and mysterious deaths of nine girls. They lost their lives on July 15, 2019, while being ferried across the river.

Their deaths brought back memories of different sad stories about the river and the suspicion about the river. A fisherman, Mallam Bala Salihu, familiar with the tales of the river, told Daily Sun that the river has become a path of

death for innocent passengers, especially women and young girls, many of whom had met their untimely deaths crossing the river:

"Many girls have lost their lives while trying to cross this river to the other side, anytime from 6:00pm. That is why we always advise them not to cross over without any man inside the canoe. I was born and brought up here, but honestly, I don't trust this river. I remember my parents used to tell me not to go close to the river at night.

"That is why I make efforts to keep away from the river at night. In fact, I do my fishing activity in the morning, sometimes up to afternoon, but not in the night."

A farmer in the village, Al-haji Ibrahim Suleiman, however insisted: "There is really nothing wrong with the river. Some people had over time developed a superstition around the river, suggesting that there were spirits in the river."

He argued that fuelled by this unfounded belief, some people, hiding in the curtains of the night,

perform various forms of rituals on the banks of the river: "All these created a fitting impression of evil about the village river.

"Yes, there were lost of lives in the past, but certainly not through a canoe mishap. I remember that some girls died last two years and another set of women was drowned a few months after. This is the only time they were dealing with a canoe mishap or accident."

Fatima Idris is one of the village girls who survived the accident. She still cannot afford to erase the sad memory of the fate-

ful day when she thought her world had ended:

"It was on Friday, July 15, 2019, around 6 pm, while we were returning from a village called Hayin Sarkin Fito. It was a rainy night, with dark heavy storms. But we were determined to get home. The 16 of us decided to board a canoe to the other side of the river.

"At first, we paddled steadily. Then suddenly, as we were



## 'How we survived canoe mishap'

**FROM PAGE 21**

in the middle of the river, the canoe began to shake and sink. It was clear that we were going down and we were all afraid.

"And as there was nothing to starve off the impending tragedy, seven of us jumped out and swam with all our strength. The nine, who remained in the canoe died. We screamed for help, but nobody was near or could hear our shrilling cries. Because of the rain and the thick darkness that enveloped that night.

"But God was wonderful, extremely wonderful. Somehow, we were ferried by then same water to safety and we found ourselves out of danger." She said although the level of rain was not enough to

cause the mishap, it was surprising that they sank the way they did: "The operators of the canoe themselves were experts having done the same thing for years."

The Village Head of Tudun Iya, Alhaji Muhammadu Musa, recalled that the incident was a big tragedy in the community as six of their daughters, who were on the verge of getting married, were killed in the mishap. He said they retrieved five bodies, and the following day, three additional bodies were recovered at Kaku village.

The last of the deceased girls was recovered at Garu Rubuchi, some five kilometres away from the spot of the incident. The deceased were immediately buried according to Islamic rites. He ad-

vised canoe operators to always put safety consideration first and avoid the unwholesome culture of overloading their canoes with passengers simply for monetary gains.

Chairman, Zaria Local Government, Aliyu Idris, expressed sympathies to the families of the bereaved and prayed Allah to grant them the fortitude to bear the losses. He assured the survivors that the council would endeavour to assist them.

In his condolence visit, member representing Zaria City Constituency, Alhaji Sulciman Wakili, donated two brand new canoes to the community to ease the difficulties they face traveling across the river.