

LAGOS FAMILY STILL IN PAINS OVER 19 MEMBERS WHO DIED IN SALLAH BOAT MISHAP

■ Wants Sanwo-Olu to reconstruct community's only access road



■ Mr. Jimoh walking towards the house of the one of the victims.

By Vera Wisdom-Bassey

BEFORE the state's slogan was changed to Centre of Excellence, Lagos used to be known as the 'State of Aquatic Splendour' in recognition of the lagoon and the once beautiful beaches in different parts of the former federal capital.

For centuries, water transportation by canoes and boats has been a key part of the life of people in the state, and dependence on it has been growing in recent times.

But for relations of the 19 people who perished in a boat mishap in the Mile2 area on August 6, water transportation will always evoke a sad memory of a journey to death that began at 7:45p.m on the fateful day. The victims were joyfully going home, to Ibeshe, to join their kith and kin for the Sallah celebration. Instead, the journey ended in sorrow and left the Sumola Aniajogun family in Ibeshe community grief-stricken.

When Sunday Sun visited the community, a member of the family and Personal Assistant to the Ovor of Ibeshe, Oba Alani Gausu, and Public Relations Officer of Ibeshe Community, Mr Jimoh Mutawakilu (also known as Jimalio) recounted the loss that befell the extended family, just as he expressed the appreciation of the community to the Peoples Democratic Party governorship candidate, Abudul Azeez Olajide Adediran, popularly known as Jandor, who visited to condole with them.

Mutawakilu said the family

lost 12 females and seven males, among them were a national youth service corps member, two undergraduates of the University of Lagos (UNILAG) and Lagos State University (LASU). There were also children aged between three and four years. Others were brothers and wives within the family. The members of the family who perished in the tragic incident were coming from Mushin and Mazamaza, where they normally reside, to participate in the joint sallah celebration.

"All the 19 people that died in the tragic boat incident were children of my brothers and sisters. They were coming home for the Eid-El Kabir festivity. I was supposed to be on that boat. I am lucky to be alive.

"On that fateful day, I was supposed to pick them from the Mazamaza jetty. My elder brother, Alhaji Jimoh Ikilu Alosho, who lives in Mushin was calling me and I was also calling him back, but due to network issues, we couldn't communicate well with each other. We initially agreed that I would go at 4:00p.m pick them, but due to network issues, I couldn't hear my elder brother very well on the phone. When he couldn't reach me, he called the son of one of our brothers, Jimoh Alosho Gafau, also called Akube in the community, to go and pick them from the jetty.

"It was my wife that later called me and said that Alhaji, my elder brother, was angry that he couldn't reach me on the phone.

"It was a sad day for our



■ Ferry jetty where victims were supposed to stop before going to Ibeshe.

family because we could not mark the Sallah. All our relations who died were fasting that day because that was the day of Arafat. They had not eaten anything, even if any of them could swim, there was just no strength in them to swim. So for us, there was no Sallah. We were all in grief due to the unfortunate incident.

"The female corps member, Jimoh Mariam Adejoke was serving in Ilorin, Kwara State; the undergraduate in UNILAG was Jimoh Famiat, a 200-Level student of Mathematics while the one in LASU was Jimoh Muinat Bisola, a 300-level student of the Mass Communication," Mutawakilu said.

An incident notice on the mishap released by the government stated that a fibre boat conveying the passengers from Mile-2 to Ibeshe in the Ojo axis of the state capsized when a tide caused it to drift towards a stationary barge.

Apparently, the boat hit the barge with some force as a result of the pull by the tide and made it capsize as it was overloaded.

All the passengers on board, including children, were not wearing life jackets. A trip to Ibeshe from Ojo Ferry Terminal usually lasts about 40 minutes. The round trip fare is N1000.

On the boat ride to Ibeshe, Sunday Sun learnt from a man, identified simply as Baba Ibeji, that the government has not been steadfast in supervising the boat operators, to ensure that ensure everybody going through the waterways comply with the rules.

One major reason people in the locality depend on the boats to reach the community is because the road to Ibeshe is the Ijegan-Marwa Road, which is in an absolutely terrible state and completely unmotorable.

"If the government had done the road, our people would have been using it. They would not



■ Vera and others on the boat to Ibeshe.

have taken the boat and died in the water," Mutawakilu told Sunday Sun, as he made a manly effort to suppress tears.

What do you want the government to do for Ibeshe to end the menace of boat mishaps, he was gently prodded? And he said: "The government should come to teach the boat operators about safety measures, and to monitor the waterways so that a boat that is supposed to carry 10 people does not carry more than that number. Safety is the key thing, so we want both the Federal and state to come and do this.

"We don't have a hospital in Ibeshe, only an antenatal clinic. So, when there is emergency, we cannot carry the patient out. We need government support; they

said health is wealth. The only private hospital we can go to is at Agboju, Mazamaza. So, before we get there the patient will die.

"As we say, seeing is believing. Government officials cannot stay in Alausa to know what is happening in our community. Some of the secondary schools here have no fence, so we need them to provide them for us.

"As Kabiyesi said we want the government to insist that before any boat leaves the Ibeshe Jetty, there should be permission from the Kabiyesi. Once most of these boat operators start making money, nobody can talk to them again. So, we need the government to help us enforce discipline among the boat operators. They need re-orientation."