

Perished: How 300 died in Kwara boat mishap



Stephen Olufemi Oni

24 hours ago

7 minute read



SHARE

May we never embark on a journey of no return”, is a common prayer point in Yoruba land, particularly as they want to embark on any trip. It is, however, saddening that about 300 persons in Gwajibo Mudi, a riverine community in Kaiama Local Government Area of Kwara State may have died. They had embarked on an ill-fated trip to Gwajibo community, a neighbouring community in Niger State, to celebrate the Maolud Nabiyyi on Tuesday, October 1, while most of them did not return home alive. Most of them perished as the wooden boat they boarded capsized just about one kilometre to their destination in Niger State, according to one of the few survivors of the unfortunate incident.

It was gathered that 93 bodies have so far been recovered from the river where the boat capsized, while four children, who reportedly survived the incident were said to be receiving treatment at the Primary Healthcare Centre, Gwajibo Mudi and are likely to have been discharged. It would be recalled that no fewer than 103 people, including a father and his four children, who were returning from a marriage ceremony, lost their lives in a boat accident at Egbu village, in the Patigi Local Government Area of Kwara State, in June 2023 when the boat conveying them capsized. Checks by this medium revealed that the people of Gwajibo Mudi in Kwara State and the residents of Gwajibo community in Niger State are closely-knit. It was gathered that a leadership disagreement which occurred several years ago among the age-long brothers and sisters made them separate and settle apart, while the river served as the boundary between the two communities. In separate interviews with some residents of the rural community, the people cited overloading and night travelling as major factors for the cause of the tragic incident which occurred at about 8:30 pm. It is noteworthy to state that road travel from Ilorin, the Kwara state capital, to Kaiama, is about six or more hours’ journey, while another five

hours, on a long stretch of a dilapidated road, would be spent before arriving at Gwajibo community, where the sad incident happened. It was also gathered that the means of transportation between the two communities of Gwajibo community in Kwara State and Gwajibo in Niger State is water transportation, as the people use boats to move from one area to another for socioeconomic activities. However, as people of the Gwajibo community still mourn their loved ones, they appealed to the Federal Government to provide them and other riverine communities with ferries and more life jackets to put an end to the annual occurrence of boat accidents across the country. According to one of the residents and the lawmaker representing the area in the State House of Assembly, Hon. Haliru Danbaba, he said that ferry would provide safer transportation means to the people than wooden boats that are commonly used by the people in the area.

New Telegraph in your inbox

Subscribe to our newsletter to receive the latest
news updates instantly!

Enter your email

Sign up

The lawmaker, however, added that he would collaborate with federal National Inland Waterways to provide ferries to the area. He said: “We would present the issue under matter of general public importance in the House”, which he said would encapsulate the provision of the ferry.” The Emir of the community, Alhaji Muazu Umar Sheu, who expressed sadness over the incident, commended Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq for sending a three-man delegation, led by the Speaker of the state House of Assembly, Yakubu Danladi-Saliyu, on a fact-finding mission and to sympathise with the people of the area. Also, Governor AbdulRazaq has expressed shock and sadness over the tragic boat incident. In a statement by his Chief Press Secretary (CPS), Rafiu Ajakaye, the Governor expressed deep concern at this devastating incident and sent his heartfelt commiserations to the Emir of Kaiama, Alhaji Omar Mu’azu Shehu and the people of Gwajibo on the development. The Governor has also directed the state emergency management agency to join the humanitarian efforts for the victims, the survivors, and their families. Meanwhile, the Emir of Ilorin and Chairman of Kwara State Traditional Rulers Council, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari, has commiserated with the state government over the unfortunate incident. The monarch, in a condolence message, commiserated with the Emir of Kaiama, Alhaji Omar Mu’azu, over the tragic incident which reportedly claimed the lives of about 169 persons. “The incident is regrettable, saddening and worrisome considering the number of victims and lives involved”, the Emir said. The monarch, however, commended the state governor, AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq for promptly directing the state emergency management agency to join the humanitarian efforts to provide succour for the survivors of the incident and the families of other victims. He appealed to the residents of riverine areas to always put on safety jackets while travelling on the water as a precautionary measure.

The Speaker, Kwara State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Engr. Yakubu Danladi Salihu, who led a state government delegation to condole with the people, conveyed the heartfelt sympathies of the government at the palace of the Emir of Kaiama. “We are here on behalf of the Governor to register his heartfelt sadness over the unfortunate incident. As a compassionate leader, the Governor decided to send this powerful delegation to Kaiama to commiserate with the Emir, the victims, and the people of Gbajigbo as well as to obtain firsthand information about the boat mishap”, the Speaker stated. “It is important to remind our people, especially the sea travelers that wearing life jackets and adherence to other safety protocols are essential in preventing this kind of sad incident. I, therefore, implore the sea travelers in Gbajigbo and across the state, in general, to make use of life jackets already provided by the government”. “On behalf of the Governor and government of Kwara State, our hearts go out to the Emir of Kaiama, victims and families of the deceased as well as the entire community, we pray to Almighty Allah to forgive the departed, grant them Aljanat Fridaas and give us all the strength needed in this trying time and beyond.” The Emir of Kaiama, Alhaji Muazu Shehu Omar Bagidi Kiyaru IV, while responding to the message of the state delegation, acknowledged the reactivity of Governor AbdulRazaq moment he heard of the incident and also appreciated the delegation, praying for their safe travels in and out of Kaiama. Rt. Hon. Engr. Danladi-Salihu later departed to Gwajibo where he visited the survivors of the accident and the port of departure of the capsized boat in the company of Alhaji Muhammad Tukur Umar; the Ciroma of Kaiama Emirate and other community leaders.

The Speaker, earlier in Gwajibo paid homage to the village head; Alhaji Ibrahim Usman, and interacted with the stakeholders in the community where they commended Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq for his prompt response to the mishap and his fatherly disposition to the people of the community. They prayed for the Governor and the government of Kwara State. At the interactive session with the stakeholders, the Speaker announced the cash donation of a sum of million for the medical bills of the survivors of the mishap and the family of the deceased, assuring that the government through the State Emergency Management Agency would also come to their aid. He also promised that the basic health centre and primary school in the community would soon be refurbished to enhance their effectiveness. On the state delegation’s condolence visit to Gbajigbo were Hon. Saidu Baba; Bani/ Adena/Gwanabe /Gweria, Hon. Abdullah Halidu Danbaba; Kaiama/Kemanji/Wajibe, Hon. Muhamma Baba Salihu; Òkúta/ Yashikira, Hon. Abdullah Bata; Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon. Abdullah Danladi; the Executive Chairman, Kaiama Local Government, Hon. Isa Jibril; the Executive Chairman, Baruten Local Government, Alhaji Umar Danladi Shero; Chairman, Local Government Service Commission, Hon. Sadiq Buhari; Adviser to the Governor on Social Investment among others. Meanwhile, life has continued in the area after the sad incident, as people with business concerns have continued to transport their goods and services across the river.