

50 Die in Bayelsa as Boat Capsizes

No fewer than 50 people, mostly women and children have been confirmed dead in Angiama, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa when their passenger boat capsized along the River Nun in the early hours of yesterday. There was no survivor.

THISDAY gathered that the ill-fated wooden passenger

*From Segun James
in Yenagoa*

and cargo boat popularly called *Pepepe*, had taken off from Swali waterfront in Yenagoa, loaded with passengers mostly traders and merchandise and was headed for Korokorosei community in the Southern-Ijaw LGA when the boat cap-

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50 DIE IN BAYELSA *Cont'd from P1*

sized.

This is happening just as the Bayelsa Volunteers, the paramilitary outfit setup by the state government to battle militants operating along the creeks and coast of the Niger Delta recovered houseboat belonging to an oil servicing company and 15 rifles seized by the militants from soldiers during attacks on an oil flow station at Egbeagalbiri, Southern Ijaw local government area of Bayelsa State belonging to the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC).

Eyewitness account has it that the boat went under shortly after departing the Angiama jetty where it dropped some passengers when it ran into turbulent weather.

THISDAY however gathered that the boat may have sunk under its own weight as it was

overloaded with cargo by the operator. It was said to have developed a mechanical problem which made it easy for the waves to overcome it during turbulence. According to the eyewitness, it was difficult for any one to survive because the incident happened during heavy rains when all the passengers on the top deck, including the boat deckhand, were forced to relocate to the ground deck to avoid the windy rain. As at press time, only three bodies have been recovered by rescue team who are still battling to retrieve the remains of the other trapped passengers as the river was full and muddy.

When contacted, chairman of the state Maritime Workers Union, Comrade Sylvanus Egele confirmed the incident.

Meanwhile, disclosing the

issue of the recovered boat with rifles to newsmen in Yenagoa, the Coordinator of the Bayelsa Volunteer, Chief Joshua Benemesia said his men in a surprise raid on the hideout of the militants caught them unawares as 12 of the militants were arrested in an operation that lasted less than 20 minutes.

According to him, the apprehended men were part of a gang that attacked the flow station late last year and made away with the military weapons and two Houseboats.

Benemesia said the other Houseboat has been dismantled and the barge upon which it was mounted sold by the gang.

He said his boys encountered little resistance as the raid was well timed but the men of the Volunteer Force were able to overpower the militants even as

some of them escaped to the surrounding mangrove forest abandoning their loots.

He said there were no casualties recorded during the raid and also refused to say if anybody was injured.

The twelve apprehended suspected militants, he confirmed, have been handed over to the authority of the Joint Task Force (JTF) in Warri for further interrogation.

SPRING BANK

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titled "Re: on-site verification of bank's compliance with the provisions of the code of corporate governance for banks in Nigeria," and signed on behalf of the CBN's Director of Banking Supervision by one Ahmad Abdullahi, "contravenes Section 6.1.8 of the code of cor-

RESIDENCY *Cont'd from P1*
