

Again, Boat Mishap Claims 20 Lives in Taraba

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From Wole Ayodele in Jalingo

No fewer than 20 fishermen lost their lives in the early hours of Monday when the boat in which they were travelling capsized on River Benue.

The tragic incident, according to the Chairman of Taraba State Water Transportation, Jidda Suleiman, who broke the news to journalists in Jalingo, occurred between Chinkai and Anyeci area of Wukari Local Government Area of the state.

This is coming barely two weeks after 70 people lost their lives when a boat conveying traders from Mayo Renawo fish market in Ardo Kola Local government Area capsized at Karim Lamido in Karim-Lamido Local Government Area of the state.

Suleiman told newsmen that the fishermen, who were mostly from Wukari and Ibi Local Government Areas of the state, were on their way to Kwara State in search of greener pastures before the unfortunate incident occurred.

According to him, “The boat was conveying fishermen, comprising people from Ibi and Wukari Local Government Areas of Taraba. I was informed that the fishermen converged and boarded the boat to Kwara State in search of greener pastures, and along the way, they had an accident and over 20 people died.

“Twelve of the victims are from Ibi, while some are from Gareji in Gindin Doruwa, Wukari LGA of Taraba.”

Suleiman noted that it is the tradition of fishermen from Taraba to travel around December to various places particularly Cameroon, Chad and other places for fishing where they stay till around August of the following year.

He however appealed to the state and Federal Government to come to their aid by providing life jackets in order to prevent future occurrences.

Meanwhile, Governor Agbu Kefas has described the incident as a terrible tragedy and unfortunate, coming on the heels of the tragic incident at Karim Lamido Local Government Area.

Speaking through his Special Adviser on Media and Digital Communications, Mr Emmanuel Bello, the governor condoled the families of the deceased and the entire people of Ibi and prayed God for the repose of their souls.

Kefas stated that this occurrence is even more unfortunate coming shortly after the tragic boat mishap in Karim Lamido that threw the entire state into mourning, adding that the government was already on top of the situation and would conduct investigations to unravel the immediate and remote causes of the boat accidents in the state just as he reiterated his commitment to making water transportation safe for commuters.

The governor pledged to embark on a tour of the affected areas soonest with the aim of meeting with local stakeholders in the waterways transport sector, stressing that aqua tourism and investment are central to his overall economic agenda.

He said that old boats would be soon be phased out, while use of life jackets would be made compulsory.