

Six feared dead in Bayelsa boat mishap

By Samuel Oyadongha

YENAGOA — SIX persons were feared dead Sunday night in a boat mishap in Bayelsa State.

The incident which was blamed on poor visibility coupled with the tricky and snaky nature of the waterways *Vanguard* learnt occurred between 8pm and 8.30pm on the Nun River, some distance from Ikibiri in the Southern Ijaw local government area.

Sources told *Vanguard* that the ill-fated boat was carrying about ten passengers when it rammed into a huge stationary wooden cargo boat having engine problem.

Six occupants of the ill-fated passenger boat, said to have sailed from the Yenagoa waterfront after the stipulated departure time by the state maritime authority including its driver, a woman, a teenager, a CDC chairman and secretary from Mbugbene and another youth from Oporoma reportedly lost their lives while four others swam to safety.

It was learnt that the impact of the collision was so strong that the passenger boat was shattered with the body of its driver thrown into the cargo boat while others were thrown overboard.

The victims it was learnt were returning to Mbugbene, a riverine settlement in the Southern Ijaw council after attending a traditional marriage ceremony in Port Harcourt.

According to sources, the accident could have been avoided if the victims had taken the advice of the groom to stay till the next day before proceeding home as it was already late but that they insisted on going to Mbugbene when tragedy struck on the way.

As at the time of filing in this report yesterday, five corpses have been recovered from the Nun River, scene of the accident and deposited at the Federal Medical Centre, Yenagoa.

When contacted on phone,

the state Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Iniobong Ibokette (DSP) confirmed the incident but said he was not in his office to furnish this reporter with the detail. It would be recalled that night travelling by marine transporters has been banned in the state because of the incessant boat mishaps in the coastal area.

But the 5pm departure deadline is still being flouted by the transporters who are using it to fleece stranded and desperate commuters.

Militants release abducted Italian

By Jimitota Onoyume

PORT HARCOURT—A 54-year-old Italian, Mario Pavesi who was abducted on August 24 at Saipem premises in Port Harcourt was yesterday released to his company by the Rivers State Government.

At the hand-over ceremony in Brick House yesterday, the Commissioner of Budget, Mr. Mike Enyikwe who represented the governor decried hostage taking in the region. He called on those behind it to retrace their steps as it was beginning to affect the economic life of the area. Adding, he said indulgence in criminalities was not a solution to

assured that the government would do all within its powers to continue to ensure the safety of lives and properties in the state.

Earlier, the hostage while coming down from the vehicle that brought him told the *Vanguard* that he was well treated by his abductors. The Human Resources, Legal Matter and Public Affairs Head of his Saipem Company, Mr. Alphosus Okwese who received him thanked the state government for helping to secure the unconditional release.

It would be recalled that the Italian, Mario Pavesi was taken hostage at the premises of his company at Aker Base area of the state capital after