

20 Fulani herdsmen die in boat mishap

By Peter Duru

MAKURDI—20 Fulani herdsmen, were Monday, confirmed dead when the boat they were traveling in to escape a reprisal attack from their host community in Guma Local Government Area in Benue State, sank in River Benue.

According to the Benue State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Emmanuel Deebom, who confirmed the incident on the 30th of June, 2007 at about 10am at Ukumbar Dam of Imamde Dam village of Uvir council ward of Guma Local Government Area, one Barnabas Nyietagher was conveying his 24 years old son Sarakuna Ukumbar, to his residence. But along Pakena village road they were attacked by some Fulani herdsmen who macheted the boy on his face while the father escaped unhurt.

The boy died of the wounds he sustained from the attack. His body was later recovered from the scene of the attack by men of the state police command and deposited at the North Bank General Hospital in Makurdi.

However, the police could not affect any arrest when its men visited "Ruga Fulani" in Guma Local Government Area which was the place of commission of the crime because the inhabitants on suspecting police action and reprisal attack deserted their settlement.

According to Mr. Deebom, it was in their bid to run to Makurdi for safety about 4-5am on Sunday that 40 of the Fulani herdsmen with their luggage crammed themselves into a boat heading towards the Uni-Agric end of Makurdi, even against the wish of the boat operator.

However, their journey was cut short at the middle of River Benue when their boat capsized. 20 of them according to marine police swam to safety while 20 could not be accounted for. 10 corpses have so far been recovered from the river by the combined efforts of the boat driver, some Fulani herdsmen and men of the marine police.