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FESTAC BOAT MISHAP: Bodies of 3 siblings, boat boy, 9 others recovered

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LAGOS—Tragedy struck Tuesday night in Festac Town, Lagos, when a boat mishap killed 18 persons in a canal. 13 bodies have been recovered. Five persons were rescued by local divers.

Among those that lost their lives were three siblings, identified as Timothy, a student of Festac Junior Grammar School; Joshua and Paul, both primary school pupils.

Others include the 10-year-old boat handler and a local diver whose bid to rescue the helpless passengers failed. The incident occurred Tuesday at 8pm, following apparent overloading.

The wooden boat, which usually conveyed passengers between the 4th and 6th avenue, was built to carry 12 passengers. But it reportedly was conveying 24 passengers when the accident occurred.

Eyewitnesses told *Vanguard* that the number of casualties would have been minimal had help come on time.

It was learnt that football lovers at a viewing centre, who were going to take the boat to their respective homes, discovered those who managed to swim to the shore and raised alarm.

I warned them— Survivor

One of the survivors, a woman who does not want her name in print said she warned the boat boy and passengers about overloading.

She said: “When I saw that the number of persons was more than the boat could ordinarily take, I warned the paddler and passengers about it.

“I even asked them to get down that the boat would come again to take them. When they refused I told them I would

have nothing to lose if any disaster happened because I could swim.

“I was shouting at the top of my voice that those who could not swim should get down when I noticed the boat was sort of wobbling.

“We had barely taken off when the first sign occurred. Before we knew what was happening, the boat capsized. I was the first person to swim out of the canal to the sixth avenue end. I could not save anyone because it was dark.”

It was gathered that two other men swarm to the 4th avenue end and passed out from exhaustion.

How boat boy died

The 10-year-old boat boy, as gathered, attempted to also swim to safety. But two of the drowning passengers reportedly held unto him in a bid to save themselves. This led to his death. His body was also among those recovered yesterday.

When *Vanguard* visited late Timothy’s school, Festac Junior Grammar School, the school was having its annual inter-house sports.

Contacted, the South West Information Officer of the National Emergency Management Authority NEMA, Ibrahim Farinloye, confirmed that 13 bodies, comprising those of 11 men, a woman and a baby had so far been recovered.

Rescued

He gave the identities of those rescued alive as Samuel Ochina, Joseph Essien, Mane Temisan, Etukow Godfrey and Davis Peter.

He attributed the mishap to absence of a link bridge, adding that tragedy would have been avoided if there was a link bridge. He added that none of the passengers was wearing a life jacket.

Farinloye and the General Manager Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, LASEMA, Femi Oke-Osanyintolu, said they got a distress call around 11pm.

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