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21 feared dead in boat mishap in Benue

ON JULY 6, 2020 7:08 AM / IN [NEWS](#) /

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*Demonstration of Boat mishap*

•DVC Makurdi varsity dies of COVID-19

By Peter Duru

No fewer than 21 persons were feared dead Sunday after a canoe they were traveling in capsized in River Benue. Vanguard gathered that the ill fated locally made boat was conveying mainly members of the ECAN Church Ijaha in Makurdi Local Government Area to a meeting across the river when it sank at Kwaghtan Sule in Guma LGA.

According to the source, the canoe which had a capacity to carry not more than 15 passengers was overload with over 30 passengers and midway into the journey sank.

"The number of people in that canoe cannot be ascertained because the operators do not keep records of the number of passengers that get on board but they may be over 30 in that boat which should not carry more than 15 passengers, says a source.

The source continued: "Though two persons were rescued alive, some others have not been seen but the search is still ongoing and it is being carried out by local fishermen and the police."

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Meanwhile a statement by the State Police Command signed by the Public Relations Officer, Deputy Superintendent, DSP, Catherine Anene indicated that 21 persons were missing in the mishap that occurred at about 2:30pm.

Part of the statement read: "We received information at about 2:30pm Sunday (yesterday) that 23 members of ECAN Church Ijaha, Makurdi Local Government boarded a Boat to attend a conference across River Benue, at the midstream, the boat sank. Marine Police search party were deployed to the scene where two persons were rescued alive while 21 persons are still missing."

In another development, the Vice Chairman of the Benue State Action Committee on COVID-19, and Deputy Vice Chancellor, DVC, Administration of the Benue State University, BSU, Makurdi Professor Godwin Achinge, has reportedly died of COVID-19 complications.

Though family sources have not confirmed the death of Prof. Achinge, Vanguard gathered that he died Sunday afternoon (yesterday) in Jos the Plateau State capital where he had gone to seek medical attention.

A member of the Action committee who spoke on condition of anonymity confirmed the death of Prof. Achinge to newsmen.

"We lost our Vice Chairman, Prof. Achinge to the virus this afternoon in Jos, but we are still waiting for the family to be briefed on the development," he said.

When contacted, the state Commissioner for Information and member of the committee, Mrs. Ngunan Addingi, said she was yet to confirm the death from the chairman of the committee and Deputy Governor of the state, Mr. Benson Abounu.

Vanguard recalls that Governor Samuel Ortom had Saturday in his routine briefing and update on the virus disclosed that the deceased had tested positive for the virus alongside 36 others.

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