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LAKE VICTORIA: Investigators on a boat work on the capsized ferry MV Nyerere which killed 170 people in Lake Victoria, Tanzania yesterday. — AFP

# Tanzania ferry disaster toll passes 200

## Tanzanians mourn as president orders arrests

**NAIROBI:** The death toll from a crowded ferry capsizing in Lake Victoria rose sharply to 207 yesterday, a Tanzanian minister said, as rescue workers found a lucky survivor. Public radio quoted the transport minister as updating the number of dead from 170 earlier in the day. Joseph Mkundi, a lawmaker for the Ukerewe district, told AFP there were 41 known survivors among the passengers of the MV Nyerere - a ferry built to carry 100 people, according to state media. It capsized on Thursday close to the pier on Ukara Island.

Although hopes were fading of finding any more survivors by day three of the search effort, workers rescued an engineer who had managed to locate a pocket of air in the vessel. According to Mkundi, the engineer had shut himself into a "special room". Tanzanian President John Magufuli on Friday ordered the arrest of ferry management. Witnesses told AFP the ferry sank when passengers rushed to one side to disembark as it approached the dock. Others blamed the captain, saying he had made a brusque manoeuvre.

In a speech broadcast on TBC 1 public television, Magufuli said "it appears clear that the ferry was

overloaded". He added: "negligence has cost us so many lives... children, mothers, students, old people. "I ordered the arrest of all those involved in the management of the ferry. The arrests have already begun," he added.

### National mourning

The president declared four days of national mourning and said the government would cover the funeral expenses of the victims. State television cited witnesses reporting that more than 200 people had boarded the ferry at Bugolora, a town on the larger Ukerewe Island. It was market day, which usually sees the vessel packed with people and goods. "I have not heard from either my father or my younger brother who were on the ferry. They had gone to the market in Bugolora to buy a school uniform and other supplies

for the new school term," said Domina Maua, among those seeking information about loved ones.

Sebastian John, a teacher, said such tragedies had become part of life for those living on the lake. "Since my birth, people have gone to their deaths on this lake, but what are we to do? We did not choose to be born here, we have nowhere to go," he said.

### Overloading and 'negligence'

Tanzania's Electrical, Mechanical and Services Agency, which is responsible for ferry services, said it was unknown how many passengers were aboard the MV Nyerere. The ageing vessel, whose hull and propellers were all that remained visible after it overturned, was also carrying cargo, including sacks of maize, bananas and cement, when it capsized about 50 m from Ukara dock. The cause of the accident

was not immediately clear, but overloading is frequently to blame for such incidents. The country's opposition has accused the government of "negligence".

"We have often raised concerns about the poor condition of this ferry, but the government turned a deaf ear. We have repeatedly denounced this negligence," said John Mnyika, deputy secretary general of Chadema, the main opposition party. Mnyika said overloading was "another failure of the authorities" and criticized "inadequate relief efforts as well as delays" in the rescue operation. Russian President Vladimir Putin and the leaders of Uganda and Kenya offered their condolences, while Pope Francis in a statement expressed "the greatest solidarity with those who have been bereaved".

With a surface area of 70,000 sq km, oval-shaped Lake Victoria is roughly the size of Ireland and is shared by Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. It is not uncommon for ferries to capsize in the massive lake, and the number of fatalities is often high due to a shortage of life jackets and the fact that many people in the region cannot swim. —AFP



## Survivor pulled from capsized ageing vessel

## Tornado batters area near Ottawa

**OTTAWA:** A tornado sparked chaos near the Canadian capital Ottawa yesterday, injuring dozens as homes were damaged, cars flipped over, and over 130,000 people left without power, local media said. Meteorologists reported gusts whipped up to around 120 miles per hour, with the city of Gatineau, about five miles north of the capital, taking the brunt.

Images on social media showed homes with damaged rooftops and trees torn apart, as debris was seen swirling through the air in dramatic video footage. "There was a power cut and less than a minute later, the wind began to hit

the windows," Vincent-Carl Leriche, who filmed the video said. "The debris was flying everywhere, I had never seen anything like it except in Hollywood," the 30-year-old, from Gatineau's Mont-Bleu neighborhood said, adding he saw sofas and freezers that had been blown into the street.

Ottawa emergency services official Anthony Di Monte told local media around 30 people were injured, five seriously. Meanwhile, electricity company HydroQuebec reported over 130,000 customers were without power in the Ottawa area Friday evening. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau urged residents to check on neighbors who might need help. "We're monitoring the situation and thinking of everyone affected," he said on Twitter. A weather alert was put in place Friday afternoon for all of southern Ontario and Quebec. Winds eased by the time they reached greater Montreal, which was hit by heavy rains but escaped major damage. —AFP



MONT-BLEU, Canada: Destroyed buildings and cars are seen in Mont-Bleu, Gatineau, Quebec, close to Ottawa after a tornado shattered Canada's capital. — AFP

## Mexicans hunt for missing relatives; Truck full of dead bodies found

**GUADALAJARA:** Dozens of people from across Mexico who are searching for missing relatives this week journeyed to the city of Guadalajara, where a scandal has erupted over a truck full of unidentified bodies that overflowed local morgues. A wave of violence linked to powerful drug cartels has sent the number of missing persons in the country soaring to more than 36,000, and families of the "disappeared" often search fruitlessly for them for months or years. Guadalajara, the country's second-largest city, has been hit particularly hard by the violence as home base to the brutal Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

It emerged over the weekend that the city's morgues are so full, authorities decided to rent a refrigerated trailer to hold the bodies of 278 murder victims. The truck caused outrage when the authorities parked it in a series of impoverished neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city. Residents protested over the smell, flies and risk to public health. Officials then moved it to a prosecution storage facility in the city center. The governor has fired the state prosecutor and coroner over the debacle. The gruesome affair drew some 100 people from across the country to the western city,

where they demanded to know if their loved ones were among the bodies.

"When I heard this awful news, I said, we have to go," said Yadira Gonzalez, 36, who has been searching for her missing brother Juan for 12 years, and belongs to a group for people with missing relatives in the central city of Queretaro. They drove some five hours to picket outside the Institute of Forensic Sciences for Jalisco state, of which Guadalajara is the capital, demanding to know whether their loved ones were in the truck. "Our family members disappeared in Queretaro, but they could be anywhere in the country, really," said Gonzalez.

### 'We've lost all trust'

News media have broadcast footage of the open trailer of the truck, with piles of bodies in black bags and a man in white boots stepping on the bags. "Society has lost all trust in government institutions and their leaders," said another woman seeking a missing family member, Guadalupe Aguilar. "That's why we're here picketing. We won't leave until we get answers." The number of murder victims in Mexico has exploded in recent years.

Since the government deployed the army to fight the country's powerful drug cartels in 2006, Mexico has been hit by a wave of violence that has resulted in more than 200,000 murders. Last year, the country registered a record 28,702 homicides. Mass graves are regularly discovered containing dozens or even hundreds of unidentified bodies. Nearly 4,000 such corpses have been found since 2007, according to the National Human Rights Commission. — AFP