A Boat Tragedy :

At least 22 dead as tourist boat capsizes in India's Kerala state

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At least 22 people have died after a double-decker boat capsized off the coastal town of Tanur in the Malappuram district of India's southern state of Kerala, local authorities said.The boat, which was carrying about 40 inbound passengers, overturned at about 7pm local time on Sunday evening as it was overcrowded, said Abdul Nazar, Malappuram district's junior superintendent of police.

"We have recovered 22 bodies, which include women and children. The rescue operation is still ongoing," Moosa Vadakkethil, a senior fire official in Malappuram, said on Monday.

It was not clear what caused the tourist boat to overturn near Thooval Theeram beach in Tanur.The state's sports and fisheries minister V Abdurahiman, who was helping to coordinate rescue efforts, said most of the victims were children on school holidays.The death toll was likely to rise as the boat was stuck in muddy waters and was being pulled out to rescue those trapped inside, Abdurahiman told reporters on Sunday night."Pained by the loss of lives due to the boat mishap in Malappuram, Kerala," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a tweet.The state's chief minister, who will visit the area

later on Monday, tweeted his condolences to the victims' families and urged the district's authorities to oversee the rescue.

Monday has been declared a day of official mourning, the Press Trust of India news agency reported, quoting a government statement.Survivors alleged the boat was overcrowded, with most passengers not having safety life jackets, according to Indian media reports. The boat reportedly did not have a safety certificate either, the NDTV website said in its report.Police have registered a case for culpable homicide against the boat's owner, local reports said.

Boating accidents are common in India, where many vessels are overcrowded and have inadequate safety equipment.In September 2020, 12 people drowned when a sightseeing boat capsized on the swollen Godavari River in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.In May 2018, 30 people died when a boat capsized in the same region.