

Death Toll from China Sunken Ship Rises to 396



Beijing, June 6 (RHC)-- At least 396 people have been confirmed dead after rescuers lifted a Chinese cruise ship that capsized with 456 people on board on the Yangtze River in the Jianli county in central Hubei province five days ago.

Sources say only 14 passengers on board the Eastern Star have been rescued since it overturned on the night of June 1st in a storm on the Yangtze. The death toll is likely to rise as more passengers are still missing. A massive search operation is currently underway to find the missing passengers of the capsized vessel.

The tragedy is set to become China's worst shipping disaster in nearly 70 years once the final toll is confirmed. Earlier on Friday, cranes slowly raised the 76.5-meter-long (250 feet) sunken vessel in a delicate and risky operation.

Weather officials earlier said a small but fast-moving tornado hit the area at the time. The captain and the chief engineer, who both survived, say the vessel was caught in a cyclone.

President Xi Jinping has called a high-level meeting with top leaders to discuss the tragedy and its aftermath. Senior officials in Beijing have pledged to carry out a "serious investigation" into the incident.

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