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Six die after Amala meal

From Abiodun Fagbemi, Ilorin

SIX people, members of the same family, were yesterday confirmed dead in Nimgurumi town in the Baruten Local Council of Kwara State after taking cassava flour suspected to have been poisoned.

Four others are receiving medical attention at a private hospital in the town as a result of the incident.

The development occurred as women and leaders of the Association of Yam Sellers in Ilorin, the state capital, warned yam sellers to ensure that only safe and treated yam flour is sold for consumption. There were fears among residents, perhaps triggered by the Nimgurumi incident, of the sale of unwholesome yam flour in the market.

Health Commissioner Hajia Ayinke Saka who confirmed the incident, told reporters preliminary reports linked the deaths to a squabble between two families in the area over a parcel of land.

She cautioned people against exposing their food items.

Reports indicated that one of the families had spread the cassava flour outside their house to dry before preparing it for consumption. The other party, however, allegedly poisoned the substance during the process. The unsuspecting family was reported to have prepared the local cassava meal (Amala) from the poisoned flour which members of the family shared, leading to the disaster.

The state's police spokesman, Mr. Dabo Ezekiel, told reporters in Ilorin that the command had begun investigation into the incident and would make its findings public.

The latest deaths bring the number of casualties from food poisoning in the state to 19, and the third between 2005 and this year.

Three persons, the District Head of Alapa in Asa Local Council, one of his wives and one of his traditional chiefs died on June 20, 2005 from eating a meal of Amala prepared by his third wife. The deceased, whose names were given as Alhaji Shuaib Ajape Oniso, the District Head, his wife, Alhaja Belawu and Alhaji Saidu Akanji, the Mogaji Alapa reportedly, died a few hours after eating the food.

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