

'Thunder kills 15 in Gombe, Yobe'

From **Njadvara Musa**, Maiduguri

FIFTEEN people, including three children and four women, were on Tuesday in Gelegu and Potiskum communities of Gombe and Yobe states killed by thunder while tilling their farmlands and buying firewood at 2.00 p.m. and 3.45 p.m.

The thunder, according to Spokesman of North-East Zone of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Ibrahim Farinloye, was caused by three-hour rainstorms in the two communities. He said the reports they received from the two states confirmed that 12 people were killed in Gombe and three in Yobe.

Confirming the death toll, **Gombe State Police Commissioner, Erubebe**

Ebikeme, said: "Yes, it happened. The Divisional Police Officer of Balanga Council Area sent in a distress call to us that about 12 persons were killed in the thunder that struck Gelegu community on Tuesday afternoon.

"There was nothing the police could have done to save their lives. Rain comes from God and He takes away life whenever He wishes".

In Potiskum Town in Yobe, three people were also killed. Abbati Mohammed (49), a Potiskum firewood merchant, said the thunder struck the firewood market and caused pandemonium, killing three people, a woman and two men. He added that the lighting and sound of the thunder were mistaken for a bomb blast at the Kampala area where drugs

were sold openly.

He said: "Today, we experienced a sad incident at about 4.00 p.m. when we saw a thick black cloud over Potiskum skies, and barely 15 minutes after, there was a heavy down pour of rainstorm. When we started to take cover from the heavy rain, suddenly, thunder struck the premises of the office of the chairman of the firewood sellers' association, killing three people on the spot".

The guardian of the deceased woman, Mallam Musa Audu (56), lamented: "I feel the killing of my beloved daughter. Her mother only sent her to buy firewood to cook. She was asked to return to the market to buy dry firewood instead of wet one when the thunder struck her to death".