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Colleagues attribute Kogi magistrate's death to unpaid salaries

THE death of a Kogi State Magistrate and Deputy Chief Registrar (Litigation), Mr. Zekery Aguye, has led to disquiet in the state judiciary service.

Aguye's colleagues are attributing his demise to the backlog of unpaid salaries.

He reportedly died at the National Hospital last week after a protracted battle with prostate cancer.

According to the magistrate's colleagues, Aguye stopped treatment due to alleged inability to offset his medical bills.

The Chief Registrar of the state High Court, Mr. Yahaya Adamu, who confirmed the sad development, described Aguye's death as pathetic.

He described the deceased as one of the best hands in the state judiciary.

Adamu said: "I am very sorry to say that even as we subscribe to the will of Almighty Allah, who gives and takes life, you and I know certainly that sometimes there are deaths that are evitable. In this particular one, we feel it may have been further delayed if we had continued to manage his ailment as we were doing in the past before the judiciary was financially grounded."

From James Azania,
Lokoja

According to him, the Magistrate's illness surfaced two years back, when he was diagnosed of the disease.

He added that with quick and appropriate response and the concerted attention of the family and the judiciary, the deceased received the proper medical treatment.

Adamu said: "He was taken to the National Hospital, where he was treated, to the extent that he even started driving his car by himself, having survived the critical period of the illness, which also affected his spine.

"When it all started, we thought it was one of those usual ailments. But when it became obvious that he needed to be handled by specialists, we headed for the National Hospital. You will agree with me that treatment there was highly capital intensive. So, in conjunction with the family and other wells wishers, he was revived.

"He was subsequently placed on drugs and periodic examinations by the hospital, which we consistently complied with. This processes costs between N400,000 and N500,000 monthly, depending

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on the result of the tests.

"By the grace of God and with the cooperation of the family and others, we were coping with the management of the illness. However, we started having problems with his treatment as from the middle of last year when the Kogi State Judiciary started facing funding crises.

"At this point, his salary, allowances and even the little assistance the judiciary was giving him ceased to come

anymore. His care suddenly became the exclusive responsibility of the wife and the family alone. You'll surely agree with me that, coupled with the children's demands, it will be difficult for the wife to bear this enormous burden.

He added: "As a matter of fact, before he finally gave up the ghost, he was withdrawn from the National Hospital for lack of fund. It was at the critical point of his death that he was rushed back to the hospital by which time it was already too late."

He appealed to Governor Yahaya Bello to find solution to the impasse between the state judiciary and the state government to avert further loss of lives.

"I will like to use this medium to ask well-meaning Nigerians to plead with His Excellency, Governor Yahaya Bello, to save Kogi judiciary and the state similar calamities by releasing the judiciary funds, so we can pay the nine months we owe our workers.

"As I speak with you, many others are hospitalised, their children withdrawn from schools and some even homeless resulting from tenancy problems with their respective landlords," he pleaded.