

2 students feared killed, others injured as protest rocks Plateau poly over exams postponement

●Police deny knowledge of deaths, injuries

By Marie-Therese Nanlong

JOS—TWO students were yesterday feared dead while several others sustained various degrees of injuries following protest by students of the two campuses of the Plateau State Polytechnics, over sudden postponement of their semester examinations by the institution. It was gathered that the students were from the Heipang and Jos campuses of the institution.

Similarly, hoodlums were said to have taken advantage of the protest to smash windcreens of motorists, as angry students blocked the Yakubu Gowon Way, a major highway leading into and out of Jos.

Vanguard gathered that the students had expected to start their examinations yesterday morning without the knowledge that the Academic Staff Union of all state-owned tertiary institutions (apart from the state university in Bokkos) had Friday begun an indefinite strike over unresolved issues with the state government.

Lamenting the postponement, Miss Deborah John, described the decision of the management to postpone the examination as an attempt to truncate their academic journey.

According to her, "We came to school this morning (yesterday) to start our examinations only to see a circular that our lecturers have been on strike since Friday. We were not informed; nobody said anything to us. We just discovered that we cannot start our examinations.

"This is why we are protesting and it is a peaceful protest because all we want is go in and write our examinations. We have spent over three years in just one semester owing to COVID-19 lockdown, but largely due to the various strikes embarked upon by our lecturers.

"We keep paying for our accommodation, school fees, and other expenses. More so, we are getting old and by the time we graduate, we can't find jobs

because of age."

Another student, Isreal Longdu, decried the incessant strikes by the lecturers, noting that the development had stagnated their progress, saying: "Nobody has come to address us on the issue and we feel this is not right. We demand proper explanations from the management on why we cannot start our examinations today (yesterday). We are tired of this; our academic journey is suffering and this is not good for us."

A staff of the institution who spoke on condition of anonymity, said "Plateau State Government in October last year said they were implementing new minimum wage, at the end of the day, government did not add any kobo to anyone's salary.

"They rather shortchanged us and deconsolidated our salaries. we said no, if you say you want to implement new wage and we have not seen anything, take us back to where we were before. We don't even want the consequential adjustment of the new minimum wage.

"Government refused but keeps making deductions. They will deduct cooperative, they will not remit. They will deduct union check-off dues, they will not remit and if they look at your salary and feel it is big, they will cut any amount they want and put it as cooperative when they know they will not remit.

"In July this year, about N44, 000 was removed from my salary and put as union dues but they know they will not remit to union. I am not the only person this is happening to. They keep doing that to reduce what you will be paid at the end.

"Government introduced a Health insurance scheme called PLASHEMA and said all of us must enroll. Before anyone could enroll, they started deduction since January this year. And since January till date, nobody has benefitted from it."

On the death of students, he said, "It is not just one student that was killed, I have just received information that one ND1 Mechanical Engineering student was also killed at

Heipang. I have not confirmed the department of the one that was killed in Jos campus."

Reacting, the State Police Command through its Public Relations Officer, Gabriel Uba said, "Yes, there was a protest this morning (yesterday) by the Polytechnic Students. Immediately, officers of the Command were deployed to the areas and instructed that they should be civil, polite but firm; and ensure that there is no breakdown of law and order by the protesters."

Uba said he was unaware of any injured or killed student.

But Dr Filimon Golwa, the Chief Medical Director of Plateau State Specialist Hospital where some of the injured students were taken to, said: "About 10 students were brought to the hospital injured. Maybe somebody was killed but they did not bring the corpse here so we did not record any death. Some of them had been treated and discharged but some are still here. I don't have the number of those still around, I will check and get back to you."

HERDSMEN KILLINGS: Benue PDP stakeholders want Miyetti Allah, others proscribed

By Peter Duru

MAKURDI—THE kinsmen of Governor Samuel Ortom under the aegis of Nongov Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, Stakeholders have called on the Federal Government to proscribe Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore and other violent Fulani socio-cultural groups. They also demanded the arrest of their leaders who publicly accepted responsibility for the killings in Benue State.

They also urged the All Progressives Congress, APC, leaders in Benue State to prevail on Federal Government to establish the North Central Development Agency to cater for the needs of victims of herdsmen crisis as well as rebuild destroyed communities in the state rather

than mounting sustained attacks on the governor.

The Nongov Stakeholders yesterday in Makurdi, were reacting to the recent media outing of a group, the Ihyarev APC leaders, who leveled several allegations against Governor Ortom and his government, but declared support for the Minister of Special Duties and Inter-Governmental Affairs, Senator George Akume who recently berated the governor.

The Ihyarev APC leaders had among others kicked against the Benue grazing law, blaming Governor Ortom for mismanaging the herdsmen killings in the state as well as keeping Internally Displaced Persons in the state for political gains.

But countering the allegations Governor Ortom's kinsmen led by Dr. David Tsevende, among

others, urged the Ihyarev APC leaders to "instead of resorting to baseless accusations against the Governor, impress on President Muhammadu Buhari to provide adequate security with a marching order to apprehend armed Fulani herdsmen and also support the implementation of the ranching laws of Benue and other states.

"They should also prevail on the President to redeem the N10 billion pledged for the reconstruction, rehabilitation, and resettlement of IDPs in Benue State."

The stakeholders also called on President Buhari to proscribe Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore and other violent Fulani socio-cultural groups and order the arrest of their leaders who had publicly accepted responsibility for the killings in Benue State.