

•Death should have taken me in his stead, says bereaved dad

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It was tears and sorrow recently at the Federal College of Education, Pankshin, in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State, when lightning killed a final year student during a thunderstorm on Monday, September 2.

On the fateful day, the rain started at about 10am and persisted until evening. Many students of the college defied the downpour and went to school for their examinations.

Twenty-seven-year-old diploma student, Ponyak Danladi, was among them.

The rain continued all through the day, but without causing any major havoc. Ponyak, who finished his examination with other students, left for his apartment in the rain.

It was his last semester in the school, and he was in high spirits. His aged parents had also sent him food to enable him to eat well while writing his examination.

Ponyak had waited, to no avail, for the rain to subside to enable him collect the foodstuff sent to him by his parents. He eventually went in the rain to meet the driver that his parents sent with the foodstuff.

Unfortunately, on his way back to the campus, he was struck by lightning. He fell to the ground and was burnt to death. The incident scared everyone in the vicinity, and they scampered to safety.

His remains were later taken to Pankshin General Hospital, and deposited in the mortuary.

The death brought sorrow and agony, not only to the students of the college, but to the entire Pankshin community, as it was the first time such an incident would occur in the area.

Since then, fear has pervaded the entire community. Each rain now brings fear and painful memories, as no one knows if it would come with a thunderstorm.

Ponyak, who hailed from Nwur in Langtang North Local Government Area, was a student of Music/Social Sciences before his death.

President of the Plateau State Students in the college, Renan Ibrahim, described the death as unfortunate and said that was the first time the institution was recording such a disaster.

“He had just written his first paper, and was passionate about making good grades when he met his end in such a pathetic manner,” he said.

Ibrahim noted that the rain, which started in the early hours of the day, was characterised by hailstones and thunder.

He said, “Thunder rumbled many times before the heavy rainfall, which caused a lot of damage for the students. Everybody was scared, but nobody knew that the situation would claim the life of our colleague. This is the first time such a tragedy would be happening in the school.”

His aged father, a retired pastor with the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), Rev. Danladi Dulfu, was dumbstruck when his attention was drawn to what had happened to his son. He lacked the words to express his pain and sorrow, while his wife was crying and wailing, asking questions to which no one could give answers.

The visit of the parents to the institution the following day brought tears to many eyes. As the father spoke, tears flowed freely as everyone close to Ponyak was just giving his or her testimonies and encounter with him.

The father said: “I sent my son to school but he couldn’t return home. He requested foodstuffs, saying that he was going to start his examination. In my character, I felt granting his request would make him settle down for his studies.

“I didn’t know that his life would be consumed in the process of collecting those foodstuffs. How I wish that death had taken me and left him to fulfil his destiny!

“Ponyak was all that I had. I wanted to train him to become the breadwinner of the family but death has snatched him away from us, I don’t have anything to say. May he rest in peace.”

Dandam Vendiya Sule, a friend to the deceased, said Ponyak died a painful death.

“His skin was deeply burnt by the fire caused by the thunder strike. We will forever miss him,” he said.