**Lightning kills 2 students, injures 83**

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TWO teenage students died and 83 others were injured after a lightning bolt struck Chinatsa Secondary School in Marondera District on Thursday.

**BY JAIROS SAUNYAMA**

A sombre atmosphere gripped villagers in Marondera East’s Chinatsa area following the tragic incident that forced the school to temporarily close.

When NewsDay Weekender visited the school yesterday, it was deserted, as students did not turn up for classes while parents were seen milling around in shock.

Mashonaland East provincial education director, Christopher Chihota confirmed the incident.

“I can confirm the incident and the unfortunate death of two children. I am yet to get a briefing from the district education inspector, who is currently at Marondera hospital, hence, I am not certain of the number of those who are detained. However, I am told that they are in a stable condition,” he said.

Chihota would not say when the school would re-open.

“We have not discussed anything and it depends on the recommendations from our officials on the ground. We have not provided any help yet because there are discussions going on. But the Civil Protection Unit met this morning to discuss the issue,” he said.

The lightning strike left a visible trail of destruction, burrowing a 200m trench across the school yard, while burnt uniforms and shoes were strewn all over the place.

According to a police memo gleaned by this paper, on January 26, at around 3:20pm, students were gathered under a tree near the assembly point waiting for dismissal when lightning struck, leading to the death of the two.

The deceased students are Munashe Munemo (15) and Blessed Muchenga, (17) who were in Form 2 and Form 4, respectively.

NewsDay Weekender gathered that the injured students were taken to the nearby Wenimbe Clinic, where 57 of them were treated and discharged, while 25 were transferred to Marondera Hospital, where they were still admitted as of yesterday.

According to villagers who were at the school yesterday, the incident was a mysterious, given that no rains fell on the day. The villagers said a bad omen had befallen the area.

Among those who reacted to the tragedy were Defence minister Sydney Sekeramayi (pictured), Marondera Central legislator Lawrence Katsiru and Marondera Rural District Council chairperson Patrick Chidhakwa, who visited Marondera Hospital where they met the victims.