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KENYA

Thursday November 25, 2004

Lightning kills 6 pupils

Standard Team

Six pupils have been struck dead by lightning in two separate incidents.

The first incident occurred at Mang'ere Primary School in Ogembo division in Gucha on Wednesday afternoon, killing two pupils.

In the second incident, four pupils of Mosobeti Primary School in Nyamira were struck dead by lightning and 13 injured.

The pupils had sheltered outside their classrooms following a heavy downpour on Wednesday afternoon.

Mosobeti was yesterday closed down by the district commissioner, Jamleck Baruga, and the 250 pupils sent home indefinitely.

Baruga was accompanied by area MP Mwancha Okioma and Nyamira Knut branch executive secretary Richard Kibagendi.

A teacher, Mr Laban Atuta, identified the dead pupils as Omweri Nyang'ate (14) and Julius Nyangaresi (13).

He said both pupils had been promoted to the next class after doing well in their exams.

He said Nyang'ate had been promoted to Class Eight, while Nyangaresi had gone to Class Seven.

Atuta termed the incident as unfortunate. He described the two as bright pupils, whose futures had been shattered by the sudden deaths.

The local DO (one) Mr Magu Mutindika and the Kenya Red Cross Society Samuel Nyairo appealed to the Ministry of Education to install lightning arrestors to the local schools.

The four dead students at Mosobeti, were identified as Nyang'au Momanyi, Tiberius Mogendi, Mary Ndemo and Carol Kibagendi.

The injured pupils were admitted to Nyamira District Hospital.

The district medical superintendent, Dr Raymond Oigara, said they were out of danger and would be released soon.

The head teacher, Mr Peter Osanya, said all the classrooms had been destroyed by lightning.

The area is prone to lightning incidents, which have destroyed property and killed scores of people.

In 1984, eight pupils from four schools were struck dead by lightning in Nyamira District.

In 1981, Biego Primary School in Nyamira Division lost 11 pupils to the calamity.

Although efforts have been made to install lightning arrestors, the problem is yet to be completely solved.

In 1997, lightning struck a blue gum tree only metres away from an arrestor.

School heads have been urged to install lightning arrestors to help curb tragedies.

Education minister George Saitoti made the appeal yesterday when he comforted the families of the six pupils killed by lightning.

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