

Students fume at grants delays

Thousands of students are fuming because they have yet to receive their national students financial aid scheme grants nearly four months into the year.



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The delays, which the DA estimated could affect as many as 200,000 students, has seen the University of Free State's QwaQwa campus shut down indefinitely this week, while the University of Venda has suspended "all services".

Limpopo police spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Moatshe Ngoepe said four students were arrested at the University of Venda this week for public violence.

The DA said it would write to the chairman of the portfolio committee to request that it summon National Student Financial Aid Scheme chairman Sizwe Nxasana to the committee to explain why students still hadn't been paid.

"[On Tuesday] the portfolio committee could not meet at the University of Venda due to violent protests triggered by the delays in the payment of NSFAS grants.

"These grants, distributed through the 'sBux' voucher system, are used by students to pay for private accommodation, food, books and travel," the DA said.

It said a "technical problem" had led to the inability to make the payments.

A Unisa student, who requested to remain anonymous, said he hadn't received the allowances he should have as an NSFAS beneficiary. "I have been calling them for updates for the past six weeks.

"It is a nightmare, because the institution is continuing with the academic programme and yet we need to pass tests without the textbooks," he said.

University of Venda spokesman Takalani Dzaga said students were protesting over the nonpayment of NSFAS textbook and food allowances.

"We've suspended all services. We're engaging with students and they're maintaining they can't go back to class until this issue is resolved," he said.

Dzaga said students indicated they would return to class "today if they receive the payments".

He said NSFAS would try to resolve the issue this week.

NSFAS spokesman Kagisho Mamabolo referred queries to the Department of Higher Education, which said it was speaking to NSFAS about the problem.

Source: The Times

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