

Dead corper found in oba's shrine

**From Olumide Bajulaiye,
*Lagos***

Policemen from the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Panty, Lagos at the weekend discovered the body of a missing National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) member in a shrine at the palace of the Onitire of Itire, Oba Lateef Abayomi Dauda.

The corper, a Chemical Engineering graduate of Lagos State University (LASU), was found tied with a rope around his neck. He was identified as Abiodun Seriki.

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Police sources at SCID, Panti said a report on the missing youth corper was initially lodged at the Itire police station three days before his dead body was found. The parents of the deceased had also bought airtime on radio and television seeking information about their missing child's whereabouts.

A police source told our correspondent that a young boy of about 14 years, who had scaled the back fence of the palace to pluck mango fruits, discovered the dead body. He immediately rushed to Itire police station and reported the find, the source said.

The police then mobilised and stormed the palace, where the dead body was recovered. They promptly arrested the entire members of the Oba's household, including his two wives and seven children.

The Oba himself later visited the Homicide Department of the SCID and police sources said he made a useful statement.

Report from the police indicated that the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DC) in charge of SCID, Panti, Mr. Oyeleye Oyeade, last Friday ordered the detention of the

Oba.

An irate mob attempted to burn down the palace, prompting the police to beef-up security around the premises. A resident of Itire, who pleaded anonymity, yesterday accused the royal family of being behind many disappearances for ritual

purposes.

"They have just finished their Oro festival. Each time they do this Oro of a thing, this is how they murder people. The police should not bungle this case as we are watching," he said.

Mr. Leye Oyeade, the DC

at Panti, who spoke to our reporter, said.

"All I can tell you now is that a dead body was discovered at the palace. What we are investigating now is homicide. Investigation will reveal if it is murder, manslaughter or suicide."

Zimbabwe power-sharing talks break down

Power-sharing talks between Zimbabwe's opposition and negotiators for President Robert Mugabe have broken down, the *Associated Press* reported yesterday quoting officials. One said the talks stalled over Mugabe's insistence that he remains president.

Two officials said the chief negotiators for Mugabe—Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa and Social Welfare Minister Nicholas Goche—were flying home. They were expected to consult Mugabe about their mandate, one of the officials said.

Another official, in South Africa, said opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai had left the country and was driving to Pretoria, the South African capital where the talks were held, to consult with his negotiators.

The officials—all close to the power-sharing talks—in-

sisted on anonymity because all parties agreed to a media blackout during the talks, which began Thursday.

Tsvangirai and his Movement for Democratic Change won most votes in the first round of elections in March, but Tsvangirai pulled out of a June runoff following months of escalating state-sponsored violence.

Mugabe ran alone and declared himself winner, but the election was widely discredited internationally as a sham. The biggest obstacle to any agreement always was who would lead a new government.

According to the *BBC*, dispute has apparently arisen yesterday over a push by Mugabe's party to have Tsvangirai appointed "third vice-president".

The MDC sources said this was "insulting", and reflected negatively on the talks' facilitator, President Thabo

Mbeki of South Africa.

Tsvangirai has said that an agreeable settlement must recognize only his victory in the March elections. Mugabe, who has survived years of attempts to oust him even by his own party, insists he should head any government.

The agreement to hold power-sharing talks was reached a week ago with increasing violence and some 2,000 supporters in jail putting pressure on the opposition while intense international disapproval—including some African governments saying they could not recognize Mugabe as president of Zimbabwe—appeared to sway Mugabe's ruling party.

The agreement also calls for the government to reverse an order barring non-governmental organizations from distributing food.