

Fear of ritual killers grips Suleja

•Deaths not linked to rituals – Police

Francis Falola, Minna

Residents of Suleja, a town in Niger State, are gripped by the fear of ritual killers, as the rumour of beheaded victims make the rounds.

On Thursday, two victims of ritual killers were said to have been beheaded and their remains dumped at the Eid Praying Ground while a letter was said to have been written by the gang to traditional rulers and security agents on their preparedness to behead more victims.

Following the spread of the rumour, parents and guardians trooped to secondary and primary schools in the area to withdraw their children and wards from the schools.

A resident, Mr. Sulaiman Muhammed, while speaking in a telephone interview with our correspondent on Thursday expressed fear over the issue. According to him, "There is this information about a letter purportedly written by a gang of ritual killers in which they alerted the public on their intention to get 50 heads for rituals and following this development parents and guardians have been running helter-skelter to withdraw their children from schools."

He expressed concern over the increase in criminal activities and spate of assassinations in Suleja and its environs, while appealing to security agencies on the need to ensure safety of lives and properties of the people.

The Police Public Relations Officer for the Niger State command, Mr. Richard Oguiche, however, denied knowledge of the purported letter from the ritual killers.

"I don't think that the rumour about two people beheaded in Suleja is true as our men have combed the area for bodies without success. I'm sure the reason

why all these speculations are making the rounds in the area may not be unconnected to the killing of a woman whose body was found strangulated and dumped in a refuse bin and the body of a man stabbed to death by unknown assailants while taking his bath in a stream. But all these deaths are not linked to ritual killings," Oguiche said.

The Chairman of Suleja Local Government Area, Alhaji Rabiul Barde, also debunked the claims of the purported letter from the ritual killers. He attributed the high prevalence of crimes in Suleja and its environs to their proximity to the Federal Capital Territory and over population.

IITA improves grain quality with

Everest Onyewuchi

Nigerian farmers participating in the biocontrol of aflatoxins using Aflasafe, a biocontrol product developed by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, say grain quality improved after application of the product, signalling prospects of a significant drop in aflatoxins on the grains.

A statement issued by the IITA said the trials being conducted on about 85 hectares of farmlands across Nigeria were coordinated by the Kaduna State Agriculture Development Programme and funded by the African Agricultural Technology Foundation and European Union's MycoRed project.

"There has been an improvement in grain quality. With the application of Aflasafe, the maize cobs are neater," a maize farmer in Kaduna, Christie Kpatuwak, who is participating in the trials, was quoted as saying.

Another farmer, Mr.