

# Marijuana farmer kills friend in a forest fight

By Dayo Johnson, Akure

**A** 27-year old labourer, Owalum Benedict Ochin has been ordered to be remanded in prison custody by an Akure Chief Magistrate's Court for the murder of his friend, Ekon over the content in his pot of soup. The two friends were said to be co-labourers who illegally cultivate Indian hemp in a forest reserve in Ipele area of Ondo State.

The Ondo State Police command had arraigned Ochin before the court sitting in Oke Eda, Akure for allegedly hacking to death and cutting off the head of his friend and colleague, Ekon.

Police prosecutor, Inspector Uloh Goodluck, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on November 29, 2020, at about 6:30pm at Jungle forest via Ipele in the Ondo State Magisterial District.

The offences were said to be contrary to sections 516, 316 and punishable under section 319(1) and 390(1) of the Criminal Code Cap 37 Volume 1, Laws of Ondo State 2006. The plea of the defendant was not taken when the charge was read to him. According to the statement of the defendant taken by the police, he made a confession that he killed the deceased in a fit of anger because they both had a quarrel.

He confessed that; "I killed my friend, Ekon because he provoked me. We were cooking soup and he went to pluck a leaf he knew would upset my stomach and put it inside the soup.

The defendant told the police that anytime he consumed the leaf, it always upset his stomach and he explained that he told the deceased, Ekon, not to add the leaf inside the soup pot but he refused to listen to his directive which angered him.

He stated that a quarrel ensued and they exchanged fist blows.

According to Ochin, the fight got out of hand as they both went for their cutlasses and began to fight with it which made both of them to sustain varying degrees of injuries.

The defendant stated that he had the upper hand and was able to hack his friend all over his body, before he made the last deadly swipe at his head and he fell at the stroke of the cutlass.

He said that after he cut his friend's head, he packed it inside one bag and hid it inside the bush so that his crime would not be discovered.

The defendant told the court that he came all the way from Calabar, Rivers state to Ipele town in Owo Local Government in search of a job and was introduced to Blessing Opor and others who are marijuana cultivators in the area. The prosecutor, prayed the court to remand the defendant in police custody pending advice from the office of the Director of Public Prosecution.