

Embrace Christlike virtues, support govt devt drive, EIRS chairman urges citizens

The Chairman of the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS), Hon. Oladele Bankole Balogun, has called on the people of Edo State to emulate the virtues of Jesus Christ in their daily lives.

In his Easter message, Balogun described the season as a time for sober reflection on the ultimate sacrifice made by Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind.

He emphasised the importance of love, unity, and selfless-

ness, urging citizens to embody the spirit of Easter not just during the holiday, but at all times.

He also encouraged the people of Edo State to critically assess the current administration and consider how best they can

support the government's efforts to advance the state.

"We must put our acts together and build a state that will leave a legacy for generations yet unborn," he said.

"We cannot afford to hand

over a future defined by hatred, conflict, or division when there is so much to achieve in terms of development."

Addressing the political class, Balogun advised politicians to accept electoral outcomes in

good faith and adopt a progressive mindset in line with the slogan, 'A New Edo Has Risen.'

"You can't win all the time. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, but you must learn to be gracious in defeat," he added.

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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Uromi in deadly insecurity vice-grip
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Easter: Okpebholo, other leaders salute Edo people

● Call for unity, hope, collective renewal

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State has extended warm Easter greetings to all residents of the state, both at home and in the diaspora, urging them to embrace the season's spirit of renewal, unity, and shared purpose.

In a message marking the Easter celebration, the Governor described the season as a powerful reminder of the triumph of hope over despair, and of the en-

during values of sacrifice, love, and compassion.

He noted that the essence of Easter resonates strongly with the character and resilience of the Edo people.

"As we celebrate this sacred season," Governor Okpebholo said, "let us be reminded of the enduring lessons of Easter: the importance of compassion, forgiveness, and the unwavering belief in a brighter future."

Drawing parallels between

the Easter message and the collective journey of Edo State, the Governor emphasised that just as Easter represents new beginnings, his administration remains committed to steering the state toward greater progress, development, and inclusive prosperity.

He acknowledged the challenges that have tested the state's resolve but expressed confidence in the capacity of Edo people to overcome adver-

sity through unity and faith in one another.

The Governor also reaffirmed his administration's dedication to good governance and sustainable development, stressing that every citizen deserves the opportunity to thrive.

"This Easter, let us rededicate ourselves to the ideals of peace, harmony, and mutual respect," he urged.

"Let us strengthen the bonds that unite us and work together

to build the Edo State of our dreams, a State where opportunity thrives, and every citizen can reach their full potential."

Governor Okpebholo encouraged residents to spend the festive period with their families and to extend acts of kindness to those in need.

He therefore wished all citizens a joyful and peaceful Easter celebration on behalf of the Edo State Government.

SYMBOL OF STATE'S REBIRTH UNDER OKPEBHOLO —APC

The Edo State Chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has described this year's Easter celebration as symbolic of a new beginning for the state, calling on citizens to embrace the spirit of renewal and

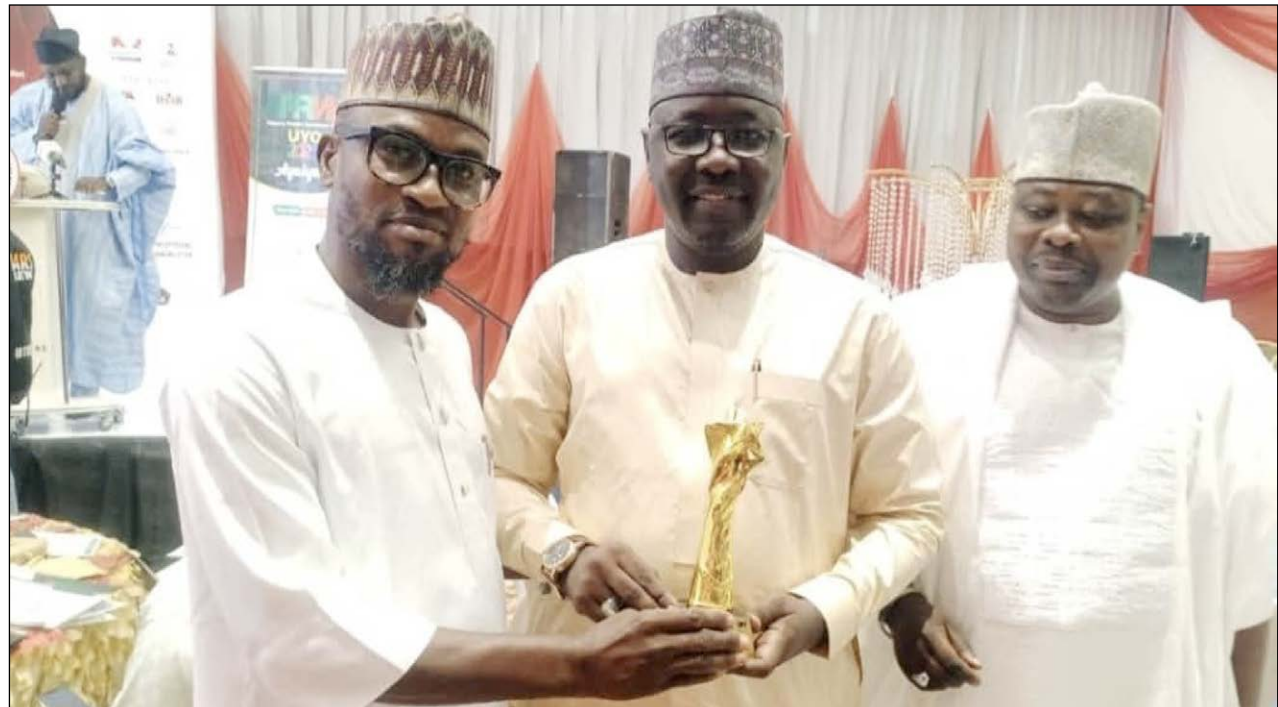
progress already unfolding under the leadership of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

In a press release signed by Barr. Peter Uwadiae Igbiniye, the State Publicity Secretary, on behalf of the APC Chairman, Chief Jarrett Tenebe, the party congratulated Christians in Edo State and beyond on the occasion of Easter, urging reflection on the values of love, sacrifice, and hope.

The statement by Chief Tenebe, declared: "This Easter, more than ever before, symbolizes not just spiritual rebirth, but the political and social resurrection of our dear state.

"After years of stagnation and broken promises, Edo State is rising again under the focused

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NATIONAL SPOKESPERSONS AWARDS:

L-R: Abdul-Kadir Abdullah, Head of Communications and Team Lead, Investment Promotion and Global Outreach Department, Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO); Ismaila Misili, Director General, Press Affairs, Government House, Gombe State, and Ismail Isah, Special Adviser on Media to Kogi State Governor, at the National Spokespersons Awards held in Abuja.

Oborewori greets Christians

AJUWA VICTOR

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborewori, has extended heartfelt Easter greetings to Christians across Delta State, Nigeria, and the world at large.

In a message delivered through his Chief Press Secretary, Sir Festus Ahon, Governor Oborewori described Easter as a season of reflection, renewal, and hope. He encouraged Christians to embrace the values of love, sacrifice, and unity exemplified by Jesus Christ.

He urged the faithful to use the season to pray for unity, peace, security, and sustained development in Delta State and across Nigeria.

The governor commended the resilience of Nigerians amid prevailing socio-economic challenges and expressed confidence in the ability of the people to rise above adversity through faith and collective resolve.

"On behalf of my family, the government, and the good people of Delta State, I wish Christians around the world a blessed Easter celebration.

"As we mark the resurrection of Christ, let us renew our commitment to building a more just, united, and prosperous society," he said.

He reaffirmed his administration's dedication to good governance, enhancing social welfare, and creating opportunities for every Deltan.

Oborewori assures oil firms of secured operating environment
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North 'll determine political direction ahead 2027 —Baba-Ahmed
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Edo govt clarifies tax policy amid protests by private school owners

● Commits to food security in Edo

In a bid to address rising concerns over alleged taxation of private schools in Edo State, the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) and the State Ministry of Education met with representatives of the Coalition of Private School Owners at the EIRS Corporate Headquarters in Benin City.

The meeting followed a protest by members of the coalition,

who had recently petitioned the Ministry of Education over what they perceived as unfair taxation imposed on their schools.

Responding to the concerns, the Executive Director of Income Taxes at EIRS, Hon. Akhimien Patrick Idiako who represented the Executive Chairman, Hon. (Barr) Oladele Bankole-Balugun clarified that the Revenue Service is not levying taxes on schools as

institutions, but on the personal income of their proprietors, in accordance with the law.

"What we are taxing is the personal income of the school owners, not the schools themselves," Hon. Idiako stated, adding that this is in line with the provisions of the tax law governing personal income taxation in the state.

A press release signed by the

Head of Corporate Communications, Courage Eboigbe, noted that proprietors who dispute their tax assessments have the legal right to file written objections.

According to EIRS, such objections will be reviewed individually and on their merit, with the assurance that genuine concerns will be addressed.

In a conciliatory gesture, the

EIRS disclosed that school proprietors have been allowed to pay ten percent of their assessed taxes while their objections are being processed.

Hon. Idiako emphasised that the administration of Senator Monday Okpebholo is committed to fairness and is not out to impose hardship on business owners.

"This government listens. We're not targeting the poor. We want schools and businesses to flourish," he said.

Commissioner for Education, Hon. (Dr.) Paddy Iyamu, who was also present, praised the prompt intervention by the EIRS and reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting the growth of private education and business in a stable economic environment.

He urged all stakeholders to continue engaging constructively with government agencies and to play their part in supporting infrastructure and development through timely tax compliance.

Wasah re-elected Chairman of Edo ASCSN

Comrade James Wasah has been re-elected as Chairman of the Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria (ASCSN), Edo State branch, following a peaceful election held in Benin City.

The vote was the highlight of the association's Triennial Delegates Conference, which drew together a cross-section of government functionaries, labour leaders, and senior civil servants.

Among the dignitaries present were the Vice Chairman of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), Edo State, Comrade Alabi Precious; the State Controller of Labour and Employment, Mr Ononyaba Simon; and the Director of Establishment in Edo State, Mr Emma Okeneni.

They all praised the Edo State Government's ongoing support for civil servants and lauded its labour-friendly posture.

The election was supervised by a national officer of the ASCSN, Prince Excellent Efedoma, who stood in for the association's National President, Comrade Mohammed Shehu.

The newly elected officials were sworn in by the Deputy General Secretary of the ASCSN, Dr Igbokwe Chukwuma Igbokwe, who administered the oath of office.

Speakers at the event underscored the vital role of the association in advancing the welfare, unity, and professionalism of senior civil servants across the state.



COMMITTEE'S INAUGURATION:

L-R: Member, House of Representatives Ad-hoc Committee on Oversight of the Administration of Rivers State, Hon. Isiaka Ibrahim; Chief Whip, Hon. Usman Kumo; Speaker, House of Representatives, Hon. Abbas Tajudeen; Chairman of the Committee, Hon. Prof. Julius Ihonvbere, and Deputy Chairman, Hon. Ali J.C., during the Committee's inauguration by the speaker at the National Assembly in Abuja, yesterday. PHOTO BY OMOYE AMINU.

Oborevori urges traditional rulers to honour individuals of proven integrity

AJUWA VICTOR

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevori, has called on traditional rulers to bestow honours, particularly chieftaincy titles, only on individuals of proven integrity.

The governor made the appeal during the presentation of the Staff of Office to Obi Augustine Nzemeke Okolie III, the newly installed Obi of Egbudu Akah in Aniocha South Local Government Area of Delta State.

Represented by his deputy, Sir Monday Onyeme, FCA, Governor Oborevori emphasised the importance of upholding integrity in traditional institutions.

"It is vital that traditional rulers recognise and reward individuals of character, especially when awarding chieftaincy titles," he said.

He expressed delight at joining the celebration, describing the occasion as significant and deeply symbolic.

"The presence of respected traditional and community

leaders, government officials, and well-wishers highlights the importance and dignity of this event," he added.

Reflecting on the smooth succession process, he noted that it reflected the harmony for which Egbudu Akah is known. He praised the legacy of the late Obi Agbogidi Olo-Ome Okolie I, whose reign was marked by peace and development.

Addressing the new monarch, the governor said: "Your Royal Highness, you are inheriting a legacy of peace and growth. I encourage you to uphold and build on the noble ideals left by your predecessor."

He further expressed hope that Obi Okolie III's reign would be one of the most impactful in the community's history and urged the people to give him their full support.

Governor Oborevori also advised the new Obi to adopt dialogue and consensus in governance, stressing that traditional leaders, even under a democratic system, must prioritise peace, transparency, and fairness.

Okpebholo sacks acting Provost of Edo State College of Education

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has ordered the removal of the Acting Provost of the Edo State College of Education, Professor Roseline Osagie.

According to a statement signed by the Secretary to

the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor, the most senior academic staff member of the institution has been directed to assume the role of Acting Provost pending the constitution of a Governing Council for the college.

Oborevori assures oil firms of secured operating environment

AJUWA VICTOR

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevori, has reassured oil and gas companies of a secure environment for their operations and investments in the state.

He gave the assurance while receiving senior executives of Renaissance Africa Energy Company, the new owners of SPDC's stake in the NNPC/SPDC/Total/Agip Joint Venture, at Government House, Asaba.

Acknowledging the critical role of crude oil in Nigeria's economy, the governor emphasised the need for strong partnerships that benefit all stakeholders.

He urged oil firms to maintain positive, inclusive relationships with host communities to foster trust and operational stability.

"The Chairman and MD have prior experience in this region from their time with Shell," the governor said, adding that he himself worked closely with

Shell during his time as Osubi Community Chairman.

"I believe in dialogue over confrontation. With your leadership, I'm confident you will do well."

Governor Oborevori affirmed that Delta remains one of the most peaceful states in the South-South region and assured the visitors that their investments are secure.

"Since assuming office, there has been no record of attacks on oil facilities. Delta remains the top oil-producing state, and I

pray we maintain that position," he said.

"Let us build strong partnerships that add value to all stakeholders."

He pledged his administration's support, noting that mutual success was beneficial to both the state and the companies, particularly in terms of revenue generation through taxes.

Chairman of Renaissance Africa Energy, Dr Layi Fatoma, thanked the governor for the warm reception and acknowledged his past support for Shell.

Easter: Okpebholo, other leaders salute...

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and people-driven leadership of His Excellency, Senator Monday Okpebholo."

Highlighting the achievements of Governor Okpebholo within a short time in office, the party said, "From roads and infrastructure to education, health, and agriculture, the seeds of development are being planted with purpose. Governor Okpebholo is a breath of fresh air, a humble servant, not a ruler. A listener, not a dictator. A doer, not a talker."

The APC used the occasion to call on all Edo people to come together in unity, irrespective of religion, age, or location, and to support the ongoing efforts to reposition the state.

"The era of media propaganda, failed white elephant projects, and elitist governance is over," the statement read. "This is a new beginning. A New Edo,

built on justice, inclusion, and progress, has begun."

Wishing everyone a joyous celebration, the party prayed that the blessings of Easter bring peace, renewed hope, and lasting prosperity to all families in the state.

"The stone has been rolled away. Edo has risen. And together, we march into a brighter tomorrow," the statement concluded.

IZEDONMWEN URGES UNITY, DECISIVE LEADERSHIP IN EDO

As Christians across Nigeria mark Easter Sunday, former Edo State governorship candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) and public affairs analyst, Engr. Osarenren Derek Izedonmwun, has called on Nigerians to embrace the spirit of unity, compassion, and purposeful leadership in confronting the nation's mounting challenges.

In a press statement issued on

Sunday, Izedonmwun described Easter as a powerful reminder that after darkness comes light a symbol of hope, sacrifice, and renewal.

He extended warm greetings to all Nigerians, with particular emphasis on the "resilient people of Edo State," urging them to draw strength from the enduring lessons of the season.

"Now more than ever, we must embrace love not as mere emotion, but as a principle that shapes how we lead, serve, and live," he said, likening Nigeria's collective strength to a broom, which can only function effectively when its strands are bound together.

Addressing pressing governance concerns, the ADC chief-tain urged both federal and state authorities to prioritise the welfare and security of the people.

He insisted that any government that claims to care must make meaningful investments

in healthcare, education, agriculture, and social welfare, while tackling insecurity with urgency and resolve.

Turning his appeal to the state level, Izedonmwun called on Governor Monday Okpebholo to take "urgent and decisive action" to curb the growing insecurity in Edo, especially the violence reportedly perpetrated by armed herdsmen and other non-state actors.

He warned that the crisis threatens not just lives and livelihoods, but the social fabric of communities across the state.

"Easter calls us not only to pray, but to act with compassion, with courage, and with purpose," he stated, encouraging Nigerians everywhere to play their part, however small, in healing and rebuilding society.

He expressed optimism that the Easter season would inspire a renewed national commitment to love, unity, and service.

NEWS

Okpebholo vows sweeping devt as he returns to Uromi

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has reaffirmed his administration's dedication to delivering on its electoral promises, with a renewed focus on far-reaching infrastructural projects aimed at transforming the state.

Addressing worshippers during a thanksgiving service at St. Anthony Catholic Cathedral in Uromi, Governor Okpebholo revealed that his government has already awarded several key road construction contracts

intended to boost the state's infrastructure and economic capacity.

Speaking alongside top members of his cabinet, the Governor said these developments reflect his resolve to bring visible, meaningful change to Edo people.

Governor Okpebholo used the occasion to express gratitude to God for his electoral victory and the favourable outcome of the election tribunal, which he described as a reaffirmation of divine support and

the will of the people.

He recounted his past visits to the same cathedral, where he had sought spiritual support ahead of both his senatorial and gubernatorial contests, now returning in triumph to thank both God and the faithful.

Promising that the coming months would see rapid and impactful development across all sectors, the Governor called for greater cooperation from local communities, noting that partnership between government and citizens was essential

to achieving lasting progress.

Among the major projects highlighted was the construction of a dual carriageway linking Uromi to Ubiaja, aimed at improving transport connectivity and enhancing trade in the Esan region.

He announced that construction had already commenced from the Ubiaja end, and disclosed plans to expand the road further, underscoring his administration's intention to leave a legacy of infrastructure that meets modern standards.

Governor Okpebholo also disclosed plans for an alternative road network to ease traffic and connect underserved areas. One such route will link Uromi to Iworah via Unewa and Uwe-san, where he said preliminary work is already visible.

In a show of solidarity with the Church, he made a financial donation to support the continued growth of the Cathedral, reinforcing his personal connection to the religious community and his administration's commitment to grassroots de-

velopment.

Reflecting on the recent unrest in Uromi, the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Uromi, Right Reverend Donatus Ogun Osa, commended the Governor for taking proactive steps to restore peace and security.

The Bishop praised him for being the first sitting Governor to visit the Cathedral personally to offer thanksgiving, calling on citizens to unite behind the Governor's vision for a more developed and prosperous Edo State.



YOUTH COUNCIL VISIT:

Chairman, National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), Edo State chapter, Comrade Moses Agwinede (right), presenting a giant portrait to the Chairman, Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS), Hon. Oladele Bankole-Balogun, when the leadership of the council visited the EIRS boss in Benin City.

Oshiomhole to deliver *ITV/Radio Founders'* Day lecture April 30

Former Edo State Governor and Senator representing Edo North, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, will deliver the 28th Independent Television and Radio Founders' Day Lecture on 30 April

2025 at the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub, Airport Road, Benin City.

Oshiomhole will speak on the theme "Nigeria Quo Vadimus - Where Are We Going?" focusing on the nation's trajec-

tory, current challenges, and prospects for progress.

A statement by ITV/Radio Managing Director, Engr. Elvis Obaseki, named Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, as the guest of honour.

The event will feature enlightenment activities and is expected to draw prominent figures and members of the public.

Guests are expected to be seated by 9:30 a.m. Attendance is open to all.

Kidnappers to die by hanging in Edo —Okpebholo

● **Vows ruthless crackdown on criminals**

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has announced that kidnappers convicted in Edo State will face the death penalty, specifying that execution will be carried out by hanging.

The governor made this declaration during a stakeholders' meeting held at the Uromi Town Hall, where he addressed leaders and members of the Arewa community living in Esan land.

This announcement comes in the wake of a recent legislative development by the Edo State House of Assembly, which passed a bill amending the Kidnapping Prohibition Amendment Law of 2013.

The revised law now stipulates the death penalty for kidnapping offences and grants the state authority to confiscate and demolish properties used

to facilitate such crimes.

Governor Okpebholo expressed zero tolerance for the current state of insecurity, particularly kidnapping and killings, which he said his administration would tackle head-on.

He stressed that under the new law, lands and properties tied to criminal activities will be seized, demolished, and replaced with vigilante offices.

The governor added that convicted kidnappers would be executed publicly in accordance with the law, and he assured the public that he would not hesitate to sign the necessary death warrants.

He appealed for a collaborative approach to security, insisting that maintaining peace and safety was a collective responsibility and not that of security agencies alone. Governor Okpebholo announced

that vigilante personnel would be properly recruited, trained, and paid salaries—marking a departure from the past, where individuals operated in uniform without formal engagement or compensation.

He also revealed plans to begin profiling individuals arriving from other states who claim to be from the North, to prevent infiltration by criminal elements.

Measures such as fencing local markets, installing streetlights, and constructing abattoirs were also outlined as part of broader efforts to improve public safety.

The governor credited President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his swift intervention following the recent Uromi incident, which he said helped to avert further destruction. According to him, many of those inciting

violence in Edo are not Nigerians but foreign nationals, and President Tinubu has committed to restoring peace across the country.

The chairman of the Arewa community in Edo Central, Alhaji Bawa Umar, commended the governor and the Onojie of Uromi for restoring calm to the area. He affirmed the community's support for Okpebholo's administration, particularly in its security efforts.

Similarly, Alhaji Isah Muhammad, Chairman of the Uromi Cattle Market, praised the Governor's response to the Uromi incident, saying it was key in reducing tension.

Retired General Cecil Esekhaigbe urged the Arewa community to create a database of their members and monitor their conduct to discourage criminality.

Another Edo-born music maestro, "Sasco Breez," set to rock Europe

FRIDAY OBANOR

Following the global successes of Challipopil and Rema, another Edo-born rapper, Sasco Osayamen, professionally known as "Sasco Breez" is poised to make his mark on the international music stage.

The Afrobeat artiste is currently making waves in Italy and other parts of Europe, gaining recognition for his unique sound and compelling story.

Born on August 3, 1995 in Kano State, Nigeria, to a family of five boys, Sasco Breez was raised by his single mother, Osasuyi Osayamen.

He began his musical career at the age of 16, drawing inspiration from personal life experiences.

Having grown up in the trenches of the Aduwawa axis of Benin City, Edo State, his music is deeply rooted in the struggles and realities of ghetto life.

The dancehall Afrobeat artiste, who is also a songwriter, producer, and DJ, shared in an exclusive interview that life in the Aduwawa and Ikpoba Hill areas was extremely difficult.

He recounted witnessing the

tragic deaths of many of his peers, aged just 14 to 16 who fell victim to gun violence and gang-related conflicts, often tied to drug issues.

"While some of my friends ended up in juvenile prison, I chose to remove myself from that environment," he said.

"Seeing my mother struggle to raise five boys without a husband's support pushed me to seek a better path."

Reflecting on a particularly painful episode when he was accused of stealing 500,000 while working as a car washer, he explained how that experience became a turning point.

"I decided to learn music as a way to liberate myself from the circle of friends involved in crime," he said.

Determined to transform his life, Sasco Breez enrolled in a European college, where he found further inspiration through music.

He cited legendary artistes such as DMX, 50 Cent, Lucky Dube, Sir Victor Uwaifo, and Fela Kuti as early influences, while he continues to draw motivation from contemporary stars like Wizkid, Burna Boy, Davido, Sean Paul, D'banj, and 2Baba.

2027: Isoko nation backs Tinubu, Oborevori

AJUWA VICTOR

The Delta State Commissioner for Health, Dr Joseph Onojaeme at the weekend joined other Isoko leaders from across party lines and business moguls from various sectors at Uzere, in Isoko South Local Government Area of Delta State.

Speaking at the gathering, Dr Onojaeme underscored the importance of unity within the Isoko Nation. He stated, "The interest of the Isoko Nation supersedes individual ambitions. The unification of Isoko people is crucial. We must come together and speak with one voice as a nation."

Prominent figures present at the meeting included Hon. Pst. Jonathan Ajirioghene Ukodhiko, Member representing Isoko Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives; Hon. (Elder) Prince Godwin Ogorugba, Chairman of Isoko North LGA; Hon. Comr. Warri Ovoke Friday, Chairman of Isoko South LGA; Gen.

Alexander Ogomudia (Rtd), former Chief of Defence Staff; Hon. Bernard Odior, Majority Whip, Delta State House of Assembly (DTHA); Hon. Ferguson Onwo, Member, DTHA; and Hon. Chief Goodnews Emamusi, Commissioner for Lands and Survey.

Others included Hon. Bino Owhe, Member, DTHA; Chief Kome Okpobor, EDFEA; Chief Emmanuel Ezezi Okpomor, Executive Assistant to the Governor; Barr. Jay Ogor; Hon. Emmanuel Emmanuel Ajiri Egababor, State Organising Secretary of the PDP; Prof. Chris Akpotu, President General of the Isoko Development Union (IDU); Comr. Zino Onaemor; Chief Eta Enahoro, MD/CEO of Skyward; Rt. Hon. Emmanuel Okoro, Pioneer Speaker of the Delta State House of Assembly; Hon. Karo Ilolo, APC Chieftain; Hon. Pascal Akpor Emeluaha, Leader of the Isoko North Legislative Arm, as well as several technocrats, educationists, and industrialists.

Edo govt issues over 9,000 C of Os in 6 weeks

KEN ABU

The Edo State Government has announced the successful registration and issuance of more than 9,000 Certificates of Occupancy between February and 17 April 2025.

This achievement was disclosed by Dr Tony Ikpasaja, Managing Director of the Edo State Geographic Information Service (EdoGis), during a courtesy visit by journalists on

Easter Sunday.

Dr Ikpasaja, who was appointed by Governor Monday Okpebholo in January 2025, noted that the remarkable output was accomplished despite the inherited setback caused by employees of the previous administration under Governor Godwin Obaseki, who had shut down the agency's digital systems to control its operations.

He stated that the agency's revitalisation under his leadership,

powered by a newly deployed software system, marked a sharp contrast to the performance of the previous government, which managed to process only about 1,000 Certificates between 2023 and February 2025.

He revealed that EdoGis recently acquired advanced equipment aimed at boosting productivity and ensuring prompt attention to land registration applications.

He also disclosed that the

agency inherited more than 7,500 pending files from applicants seeking to have their land properly registered and integrated into the EdoGis database.

Dr Ikpasaja assured all applicants that their files are currently being processed and that the agency is committed to clearing the backlog.

He stressed the importance of obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy, warning that any property without one is not le-

gally recognised as an asset. He urged landowners to take the necessary steps to regularise their documentation.

He remarked, "As of today, I can boldly tell you that we have captured and processed over 9,000 files of Certificate of Occupancy. We have also been signing and issuing them accordingly.

"When I assumed office, I encountered approximately 7,500 unattended applications. It is disheartening to see people

pay for registration and then have their files ignored."

He affirmed that the new structure in place prevents such neglect, stating that the system now in use designed to meet World Bank and international standards no longer allows for file hoarding.

"What we have today is a complete departure from what existed before. Staff are now working in line with international best practices," he added.

Court sentences 23 internet fraudsters in Benin

Between April 11 and 17, Justices W.I. Aziegbemhin and A.N. Erhabor of the Edo State High Court sitting in Benin City convicted and sentenced twenty-three individuals for their involvement in internet-related fraud. The cases, prosecuted by the Benin Zonal Directorate of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), culminated in a series of judgments that saw the accused handed various jail terms or options of fines after pleading guilty to separate one-count charges.

The convicts—Uzorchukwu Peace Udoka, Erubasa Oghenetega, David Ogunwu, Jude Okolie, Lucky Ehizojie, Chineye Isioma Christian, Obadiunor Josoph Ikechukwu, Ugochukwu Adingwu, Ifeanyi Okechukwu, Patrick Chinedu Chukwujekwe, Ugboh Chibuzor, Monday Shedrack, Udochukwu Onuka, Uzodion Luke, Ehighola Emmanuel Akhere, Godstime Osunde Oskpolor, Promise Onyugboh, Onuka Patrick, Chinonso Peter Iwuchukwu, Ajayi Aisosa, Aiwansoba Prince, Goddey Jeremiah and Ojimah John Oseni—were charged with offences bordering on obtaining by false pretence, possession of fraudulent documents, and retention of proceeds of crime.

In one of the charges, Chinonso Peter Iwuchukwu was ac-

cused of being in possession of documents containing false pretences, an offence that contravenes Sections 6 and 8(b) of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act 2006 and is punishable under Section 1(3) of the same legislation.

All the accused persons pleaded guilty when the charges were read to them. Following their pleas, the prosecuting counsels—F.A. Jirbo, I.M. Elodi and K.Y. Bello—urged the court to convict and sentence them accordingly.

Defence counsel, while not contesting the charges, pleaded for leniency, noting that the defendants had shown remorse and were willing to change.

Justice A.N. Erhabor sentenced sixteen of the convicts—Chinonso Peter Iwuchukwu, Jude Okolie, Obadiunor Josoph Ikechukwu, Ugochukwu Adingwu, Ifeanyi Okechukwu, Patrick Chinedu Chukwujekwe, Ugboh Chibuzor, Monday Shedrack, Udochukwu Onuka, Ehighola Emmanuel Akhere, Godstime Osunde Oskpolor, Promise Onyugboh, Onuka Patrick, Chinonso Peter Iwuchukwu, Ajayi Aisosa, Aiwansoba Prince, Goddey Jeremiah and Ojimah John Oseni—to two years' imprisonment each, with an option of a two hundred thousand naira fine.

Chineye Isioma Christian and Uzodion Luke were sentenced to three years' imprisonment each, also with an option of a two hundred thousand naira fine.

Pastor Okeze urges christians to embrace sacrifice

AJUWA VICTOR

Pastor Idowu Okeze has called on Christians to embrace the spirit of sacrifice for the greater good of unity, peace, political stability, and progress in Nigeria during this year's Easter celebrations.

In his Easter message issued on Good Friday, Pastor Okeze urged Nigerians, particularly those in Delta State, to use the holiday as an opportunity for self-reflection on what more can be done to promote peaceful coexistence and contribute to a better future for all.

"As Christians, we must reflect on the meaning of Easter not only in our relationships with fellow Christians but also with people of other faiths," he said.

He called on Nigerians to

shun bitterness and violence, noting that the nation's peace and progress depend on good neighbourliness and harmonious living among its diverse population.

According to him, a culture of peaceful living would significantly reduce the prevalence of insecurity, including banditry, herders' clashes, kidnapping, and other societal ills plaguing the country.

Okeze urged Christians to let the message of Easter be evident in their actions, especially in these challenging times.

He reminded believers that after forty days of fasting and prayer, Easter provides a fresh chance to shed burdens that have hindered national progress and to embody true love—not only toward others but also toward society.



MEMBER OF MS-13:

US President Donald Trump, displays the hand of the man his administration deported to his native country, El-Salvador on suspicion of terrorism, but the Democrats feel should be brought back to the United States, as "a fine and innocent person," even though he has MS-13 (a terror group) tattooed on his knuckles, and two highly respected courts found that he was a member of MS-13, beat up his wife, etc.

Edo ICTA launches indigenous email platform for public servants

EDEBOR ESTHER

The Edo State Government, through its Information Communication Technology Agency (Edo ICTA), has launched a locally developed, government-owned email solution designed to improve data security, reduce operational costs, and increase digital efficiency across public service delivery.

At the official launch event, Mr Eghosa Urhoghide, Managing Director of Edo ICTA, emphasised the significance of the development, noting that

the State had previously depended on a third-party email provider whose servers stored official data externally.

"When we came on board, we met a system where we were paying licenses for email services. Our data were stored on external servers," he explained.

Mr Urhoghide said that the transition to an indigenous solution hosted within Edo State's own data centre represents a more secure and cost-effective approach.

He noted that the system leverages existing ICT infrastructure, allowing government staff to

access their emails and files even during internet outages, provided they are within the State Government's internal network.

He added that with the proper authorisation, officials can also securely access files from anywhere in the world.

He further highlighted the capability of the State's data centre, which not only stores information but also provides processing power to government agencies.

"The data centre is robust. Agencies can connect their computers and borrow processing capabilities from the central facility," he said.

The success of the project, according to Mr Urhoghide, is a direct outcome of Governor Monday Okpebholo's visionary leadership and prioritisation of innovation and technology in governance.

To ensure effective adoption, Edo ICTA has conducted training sessions for senior personnel across ministries, departments, and agencies. These trained officers are expected to disseminate the knowledge within their organisations, covering aspects such as email setup, password management, system upgrades, and digital best practices.

WAEC bars 574 schools over exam malpractice

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has withdrawn the licences of 574 secondary schools in Nigeria due to their involvement in examination malpractice.

The Council confirmed that

the affected schools will not be allowed to conduct the 2025 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), which begins on Thursday, 24 April.

The disclosure was made by Dr Amos Dangut, WAEC's

Head of National Office, during a press conference at the organisation's Lagos headquarters.

He said, "This year, we've forwarded to the Nigerian government a list of 574 schools whose recognition has been withdrawn. These schools are

barred from hosting our exams."

Dr Dangut added that a total of 1,973,253 candidates from 23,554 schools had registered for the 2025 examination—979,228 of them male and 994,025 females.

North 'll determine political direction ahead 2027 —Baba-Ahmed

Dr Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, former Special Adviser on Political Matters to President Bola Tinubu, has declared that the North will soon determine its political direction ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Speaking in a viral video interview alongside Professor

Usman Yusuf, former NHIS boss, Baba-Ahmed said the region will make its position clear within six months. He insisted that no presidential candidate can succeed without northern support.

Baba-Ahmed, who has returned to advocacy after resigning his role with the

President, said the North suffered disproportionately, especially during the Boko Haram crisis.

He stressed, "Northerners now understand who truly serves their interests. We want leaders who understand and can solve our problems."

He warned against elector-

al manipulation and regional marginalization, emphasising that the North's political decision will be pivotal.

"If they plan to rig the election, they should think twice. It won't end well for Nigeria," he warned, noting that continued injustice and exclusion would no longer be tolerated.

Feature

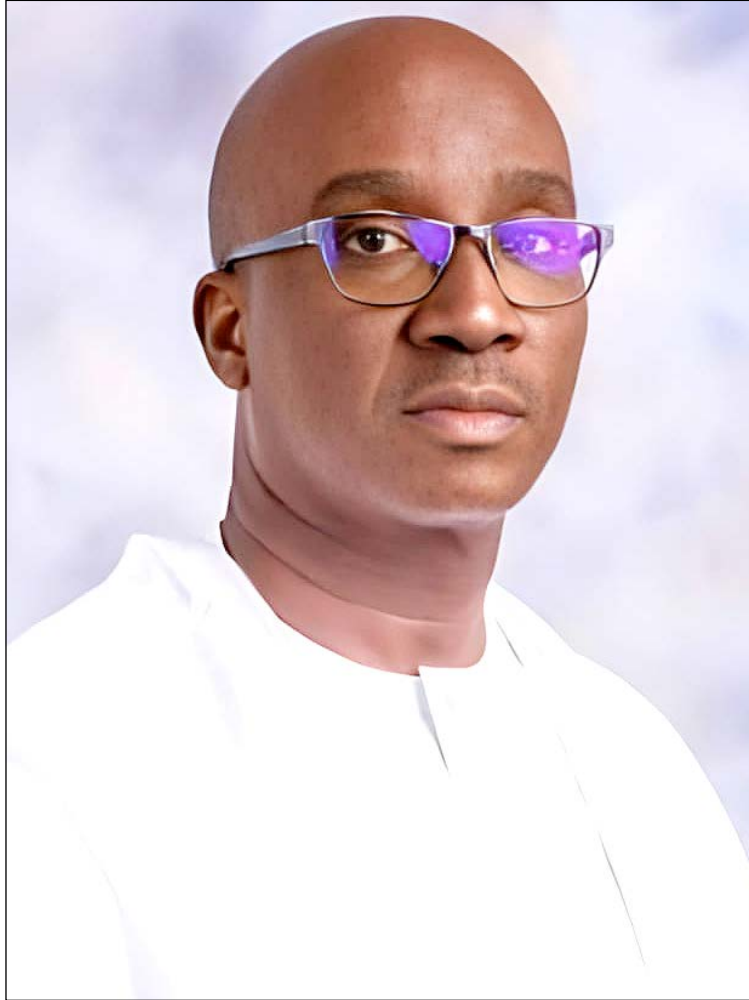
Uromi in deadly insecurity vice-grip *Part 1...*

AUSTIN ISIKHUEMEN

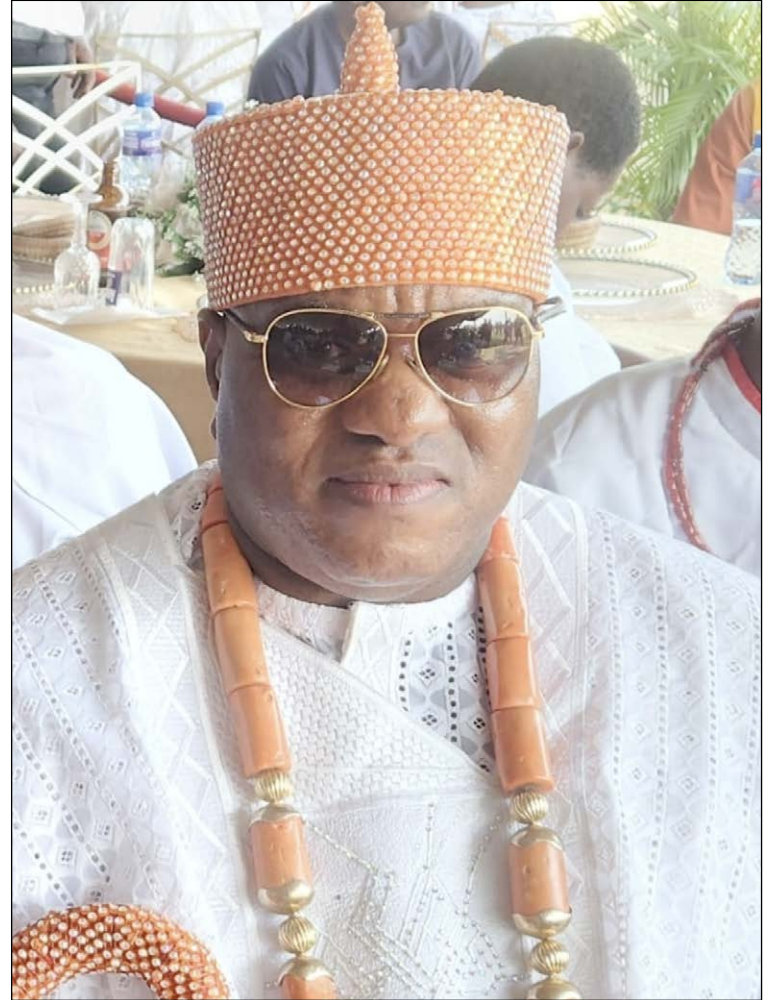
INTRODUCTION

My condolences to the Uromi 16 and their parents, well-wishers and Kano State. And to my northern friends across Arewa and the Middlebelt. Such wanton taking of life without recourse to judicial process, no matter what fate or experience have thrown way, lawful adjudication is still the right way in civilized societies. Else we go the Hobbesian way where life is brutish, nasty and short! But, hold it, I hope Nigeria hasn't gone the way of Hobbs as numerous incidents across the country indicates. Even if so, those 16 were victims of the Hobbesian state and but not the formulators that did so, and pauperized them, long before they faced that condemnable fate. I will return to this.

An examination of Uromi history, contemporary happenings in the town and the impact in the people's lives would be useful, in my humble view, to help understand the contending forces whose unfortunate victims became collateral damage to a disease that was long allowed to fester. This is not a justification for the incident of 5 April, 2025 which involved the death of 16 of our compatriots. This effort is being made by me, without consultation with anyone, to bring enlightened discussion and solutioning to the real issues of which these deaths were but a symptom.



SENATOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO, GOVERNOR, EDO STATE



AIDENOJIE II, OJUROMI OF UROMI

THE HISTORICITY OF UROMI

Uromi, currently the Headquarters of Esan North East Local Government Area, is located in Edo Central Senatorial District also called Esanland. It had powerful kings through history. It is well known that in the present Edo State, even the old Bendel/MidWest Region, after the burning, killings and looting by the invading British forces that sent Oba Ovonramwen N'Ogbaisi (may his soul rest in peace) to exile in Calabar, the main obstacle the British forces sought to subdue was the Uromi Prince known as Ogbidi. He was sure to create serious trouble to the white people who had razed Benin City down, looted the Oba's palace and was threatening to invade Uromi.

Ogbidi prepared and mobilized men and war implements with cutlasses, dane guns, charms, bows and arrows. Even with superior firepower with gatling guns and artilleries, a sample of which is now mounted in the front of the Admin Block of Guinness Brewery, in Benin City. As unequally yoked as the ragtag Uromi army was against the invading forces, Ogbidi and his selected able-bodied men held out the British soldiers for six whole months before they could subdue him and arrest him due to betrayal. He was the only traditional ruler across the Mid-West, exiled to Calabar to join the exiled great grandfather of Oba Ewuare II, n'Ogidigan, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba of Benin, if my recollection of our history, as told, is still accurate.

Ogbidi escaped and returned to his beloved people to the utter consternation of the British! On being betrayed as to his hiding place, he was taken to Benin City where it was said that the monarch,

A lot of Ibos of Ukp-or-Anambra stock, including the famous Uba, Enyin and the family that owned the Sylvanus Bread, the Enwerems for whom Hope Uzodinma, now Governor of Imo State used to sell the popular bread brand those days and whose family member became Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives. They made Uromi "their home" with their children bearing Esan names and some speaking Esan (anglicized as Ishan). So was Chuba Okadigbo who lived in Uromi and attended St. John Bosco's College at Ubiaja. But for the identity politics that we play, Uromi could have justly claimed to have produced a Speaker of the House of Representatives, a Senate President and a Governor of Imo State! Even Senator Ifeanyi Ubah could have chosen to identify Uromi as his downtown because he grew up there.

not being comfortable with the presence of the radical and recalcitrant royalty, approached the colonial usurpers to take him elsewhere. Calabar was out of the question as he could be a bad influence on the other exile. So, he was exiled to Ibadan.

There were said to have been several sightings of him at Uromi while in exile in Ibadan. To cut the long story short, he was later returned from Ibadan to King of his people and an influential authority in Esanland to help the British indirect rule system. He was the judge of the Ubiaja court, the only court at that adjudicated cases for the whole of what is now known as Edo Central and Edo North. The reigning Ojuromi, HRH Zaiki Anslem

Eidenojie II, is his direct line progeny.

Uromi was the most cosmopolitan city in Esan. Its market was the largest where lorries loaded foodstuff and or commodities from for supply to the North and East those days. It is said that Uromi, in those days, was where most people in Esan and even Owan environs, went to source commodities, things like motor cycles, bicycles and cement, mechanics and spare parts and even clothes.

As early as the 50s, UAC had warehouses and pipe-born water had been flowing and freely available in public taps in most streets during the Western Region days. Uromi had cinema halls and renowned boxes came to fight at Uromi, some were

even challenged by locals like Alade, who nearly had his waist broken!

The town's premier commercial position was aided in large part by Ibo traders who settled at Uromi to push their craft. Locals watched them closely and started their own. Others did apprenticeship and tutelage under Ibo traders, following them to Onitsha to purchase merchandise or he was left in care of the sales when "master" traveled to buy stuff for re-stocking.

A lot of Ibos of Ukp-or-Anambra stock, including the famous Uba, Enyin and the family that owned the Sylvanus Bread, the Enwerems for whom Hope Uzodinma, now Governor of Imo State used to sell the popular bread brand those days and whose family member

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They had to leave during the civil war, abandoning their trade and properties. A number of those that stayed were shot when the Federal forces of the 2nd Division arrived Uromi. I, as a toddler knew the one people called "Ukpomi-Igbo" - meaning the "small Igbo" because of his stature. We wept. Uncle Mambus was made to dig graves and bury killed Igbo civilians at gunpoint. When the war ended, most came back and the Ojuromi welcomed them with open arms and they simply returned to their houses, shops and businesses.

Buvel Oil business arose from his relationship of integrity with the Igbo returnee who owned the petrol station Mr. E. K. Okoeguale managed for him throughout the war. Uromi never did what happened to Ibos in Port Harcourt and so the issue of abandoned properties never arose. Those who left Uromi did so either due to old age, to settle down in the South East or the need for the grown children to pursue livelihood and greater opportunities in bigger cities like Lagos, Benin, the East and the North. (To be continued....)