



## I'll Only Talk With Assembly Members At The Instance Of Leaders, Fubara Opens Up

The Governor of Rivers State, Sir Similayi Fubara, has affirmed his willingness to engage with members of the Rivers State House of Assembly to chart a clear path for the state's development. However, he expressed concern that key stakeholders responsible for facilitating such meetings have yet to take the necessary steps. The Governor made this known during the commissioning of the 28.4 km

*...says He Has No Issues With Legislators*

Ahoda-Omoku newly dualized road on 10 December 2025.

Highlighting that the road was a campaign promise he made during his governorship campaign, Fubara used the occasion to address circulating political speculations, describing them as misleading. He stated, "I personally do not have any disagreements or anger against my Members

of the National Assembly or the Rivers State House of Assembly."

The Governor also revealed his efforts to foster a stronger relationship with the State Assembly for the peace and growth of Rivers State. He explained, "I have made every effort to meet with the Assembly Members, but it is not within my leadership to initiate the meeting

process." Fubara indicated that he believes the Minister of the FCT, Barr. Ezenwo Wike, holds the responsibility to bring all relevant parties together.

He further assured, "Personally, I have told the assembly members that whatever their needs, I am ready to meet them so that peace can reign in the state."

The Governor said that a recent meeting with

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu informed a "bold decision" aimed at fostering unity and progress across Rivers State.

"I also want to use this medium, because there's this insinuation that is going around — let me say it here: you are aware that I went to see Mr. President a few days ago, and when I came back, we took a bold decision yesterday," Fubara said.

He explained that while

he has made every effort to meet with members of the Rivers State House of Assembly, the meeting is pending arrangements through proper channels.

"So, whoever is saying that I refused to meet you, or that there's an arrangement that was presented to me and I said I am not going to do it — it is not true," he added.

Fubara called for unity among political leaders and citizens, emphasizing that development cannot

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*"I have made every effort to meet with the Assembly Members, but it is not within my leadership to initiate the meeting process," - Fubara*

## I'll Only Talk... *Cont'd from cover*

be achieved in an atmosphere of disunity or crisis. He assured the people of Rivers State that his administration remains committed to delivering the dividends of

democracy and maintaining peace across all communities.

The commissioning of the road, a key campaign promise, is expected to enhance economic

activities in Ahoada, Omoku, and neighboring areas, while also addressing security concerns along the route.

Governor Fubara concluded by thanking the people of Rivers State for their support and urged them to continue to

embrace peace as the foundation for development.

Describing the project, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Works, Dr. Austin Ezekiel Hart, said the road was previously a single lane and has now been dualised to 14.6

meters wide, complete with solar-powered streetlights. He highlighted that the road significantly reduces travel time between Ahoada and Omoku while improving economic activity in the region.

In his welcome address,

Chairman of Ogbia-Egbema-Ndoni Local Government Area, Hon. Chuku Shedrack Ogbogu, described the road as a symbol of unity, oneness, and development, thanking Gov. Fubara for fulfilling his campaign promises.

## PDP Presents Certificate of Return To Ekiti Governorship Candidate

The Peoples Democratic Party has formally presented the Certificate of Return to its Ekiti State governorship candidate, Dr Oluwale Olyede, yesterday, December 10, 2025.

The event held at the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre in Abuja at 2pm.

The PDP had announced in a statement issued on Monday by the PDP National Publicity Secretary, Comrade Ini Enemobong.

"Following the successful conduct of the Ekiti State Gubernatorial Primary Election of our great Party, the Peoples Democratic Party and the Appeal Panel

ratification, the National Working Committee hereby schedules the Presentation of Certificate of Return to our Candidate, Dr Oluwale Olyede, for the June 20, 2026 Governorship Election in Ekiti State, as follows: Date; Wednesday, December 10, 2025," the statement read.

Leaders, members of the National Executive Committee, PDP governors, serving and former members of the Board of Trustees, current and past lawmakers, and other stakeholders attended the ceremony.

The event underscores the party's commitment to uniting its structures ahead of the 2026 governorship



Oluwale

poll.

Gist reported in November that Olyede, a medical expert, emerged as the PDP governorship candidate in Ekiti State.

He emerged victorious in the party's primary election, which held on November 8 through the early hours of November 9.

He polled 279 votes to

defeat Funso Ayeni, who scored 239 votes, and Funmilayo Ogun, who had 17 votes.

Fubara's Defection Sparks Rapid Exodus Among Supporters

Governor Fubara's recent announcement to leave his former political party has sent shockwaves through the political landscape, triggering a swift and unprecedented wave of resignations from his previous allies. Many politicians and party members are abandoning their long-standing affiliations to join him in the All Progressives Congress (APC), signaling a major realignment ahead of upcoming elections. Analysts say this move could significantly alter the balance of power in the state.

Minutes after Fubara declared his defection, Rt. Hon. Chief Promise Reginald, the former chairman of Omuma Local Government, officially resigned from the Action Peoples Party (APP). His resignation was formally received by Ward 2 Chairman Hon. Chinedu Nwokogba, who described the development as a "natural shift in loyalty" given the governor's growing influence. Chief Reginald cited the

opportunity to "join a moving train" as his reason for abandoning his previous party.

The political exodus showed no signs of slowing down. On Wednesday, December 10, 2025, Chijioke Ihunwo, the former chairman of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, also announced his departure from the APP. The resignation, confirmed by Ward 1 Chairman Engr. Wopara Adolphus Obinna, highlighted a growing trend among local leaders to align with Fubara's new political direction.

Efforts to reach Chief Reginald and Mr. Ihunwo for further comments were unsuccessful at the time of reporting. Nevertheless, political observers note that the departures underscore the extent of Fubara's influence and the potential for a domino effect, as more party members are likely to reconsider their positions in the coming days.

The defection has sparked debate among political analysts, with some describing it as a strategic maneuver to consolidate power ahead of crucial legislative contests. "This is not just about one individual switching parties," said political commentator Dr. Eunice Akpan. "It reflects a

broader calculation among local leaders who are repositioning themselves to remain relevant in the state's political landscape."

Party officials in the APP have expressed concern over the growing departures, emphasizing the need to retain key members to maintain stability. "We are aware of the resignations and are engaging with our members to ensure they understand the party's vision and commitments," said an APP spokesperson, who requested anonymity.

Meanwhile, APC officials have welcomed the influx of new members, describing it as a "vote of confidence in the governor's leadership and vision for the state." They further stated that they are preparing mechanisms to integrate the incoming supporters smoothly and leverage their experience for upcoming campaigns.

As the situation continues to evolve, political watchers are keeping a close eye on the next wave of resignations and potential realignments. With Fubara's defection clearly reshaping local politics, the coming weeks are expected to be crucial in determining which party will emerge stronger in the forthcoming elections.

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## RSG Commences 10-day Project Inauguration Schedule 18 Days After Emergency Rule

Rivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, has unveiled a comprehensive 10-day project commissioning programme, coming 81 days after his return to office following the suspension of emergency rule in the state.

The rollout begins on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, with the inauguration of the 27-kilometre Ahoada-Omoku Road extension, and will run through Tuesday, December 23, 2025, when a new Federal High Court complex will be

commissioned in Port Harcourt.

Among the key projects slated for commissioning are the Egbeda-Omerelu Link Road, the Ikwerre Road-Igwuruta-Airport Road, the flag-off of the Bypass-Airport-Tollgate Project, the Greater TAF City Housing Estate/Anniversary Celebration, and the Ihuowo-Ihuama Road and Ahoada-East Ring Road.

Also listed are the Obodhi-Ozochi Road and Bridge straddling Ahoada-East and Ahoada-West LGAs, the Ogbakiri Roundabout-Ogbakiri Waterfront Road, the newly

completed Ahoada Zonal Hospital, and the Permanent Secretaries' Quarters in Elimbu, Obio/Akpor LGA.

Briefing journalists on Monday, December 8, 2025, the Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Benibo Anabraba, said the events are designed to showcase the Fubara administration's "modest but steady" achievements in repositioning Rivers State's development trajectory.

According to him, the lineup underscores Governor Fubara's resolve to push forward with infrastructure renewal and service delivery despite the political headwinds of recent months.

# 2027 Countdown

## SDP Faces Its Biggest Test Yet



As Nigeria edges toward the 2027 general elections, the air is already thick with intrigue, hesitation, and political recalibration. Parties are measuring their strengths, testing their loyalties, and re-examining the promises they once made. In the midst of this shifting landscape stands the Social Democratic Party (SDP), facing what may be its most defining moment yet.

The turbulent resignation of former Kaduna State Governor, Mallam Nasir Ahmed El-Rufai, from the party did more than stir headlines—it opened a window into the soul of the SDP, exposing both its aspirations and its unresolved tensions.

In a formal statement, National Chairman Comrade Adamu Abubakar Modibbo acknowledged El-Rufai's exit with measured courtesy. But beyond the politeness lay a sharper, more introspective message: the party can no longer serve as a political “halfway house” for those unwilling to give it

their full allegiance.

Modibbo's warning was a call to ideological clarity, a reminder that political identity cannot thrive in the fog of dual loyalty. His insistence on honourable exit for the half-committed carried the tone of a party trying to shed old skins and grow new ones.

El-Rufai's departure quickly became the centre of ongoing commentary. From some quarters, attempts were made to cast his membership as a destabilizing experiment that had finally run its course. One voice from Ondo State went as far as deploying unusually harsh rhetoric, suggesting the party never truly embraced him.

But not everyone agreed with such emotional outbursts. More level-headed party members stepped in, warning that the politics of insult has a way of eroding credibility. Kaduna-based member Darius Kurah urged decorum, arguing that parties seeking moral high ground cannot afford to embrace the language of bitterness.

By Amieyeofori Ibim

His caution resonated deeply. For a party that hopes to win public trust, the internal conversation must rise above the instinct to vilify. The SDP's challenges, after all, are rooted not just in personalities but in deeper structural fractures.

Beneath the surface, the party continues to wrestle with long-standing internal cracks—factional struggles, competing visions, and power blocs that often appear more suspicious than united. These tensions have persisted like a quiet fever, occasionally spiking into open conflict.

Many insiders admit that while external interference has worsened the situation, the internal disagreement created fertile soil for such disruptions. The party's vulnerability, in truth, lies in its divided house.

With 2027 drawing closer, elders, loyalists, and emerging voices are urging accelerated reconciliation. They fear

that without deliberate healing, the party might approach the elections weakened, fragmented, and unable to present itself as the alternative Nigerians may be yearning for.

The National Working Committee under Modibbo insists it has followed every legal and constitutional requirement to affirm its leadership. National Secretary Dr. Ekpenyong Ambo maintains that INEC has been duly notified and that due process forms the anchor of their current rebuilding strategy.

Ambo describes the perceived quietness within the party not as inertia but as a deliberate recalibration—an effort to clean up inherited crises, restore administrative order, and lay a fresh foundation. To him, this is the necessary prelude to any meaningful electoral engagement.

Even so, impatience is growing from the grassroots. Ward members want clarity. State chapters want direction. Supporters

want the party they once knew—a disciplined, socially responsive organisation capable of inspiring confidence.

The SDP, once celebrated as the “beautiful bride” of Nigeria's political class, now faces whispers that it risks becoming the opposite: a structure discoloured by internal quarrels and leadership tussles. Such metaphors, though unflattering, reflect genuine anxiety within and outside the party.

Yet political decline is not destiny. Nigeria's current climate—heavy with economic hardship, insecurity, and governance fatigue—has created an opening for any platform capable of offering principled, coherent leadership.

The SDP, with its social-democratic heritage, has the ideological tools to fill that void. What it lacks, at this moment, is the cohesion and strategic alignment needed to translate those ideals into electoral energy.

Reconciliation, clarity of purpose, and disciplined

reorganisation are not optional; they are the pillars upon which any future success will rest. Without them, even the noblest manifesto will evaporate in the heat of political competition.

But if the party chooses unity over ego, structure over improvisation, and sincerity over theatrics, it can still reinvent itself before the race begins in earnest. Nigerian politics may be unpredictable, but it has always rewarded persistence anchored in preparation.

The months ahead will therefore test not just the SDP's leadership, but its character—its ability to stand firm, to self-correct, and to present a credible alternative to a nation hungry for change.

Ultimately, the SDP's journey to 2027 will not be defined by defections or heated press statements, but by the quieter, more enduring work of rebuilding trust within its ranks. Whether it succeeds or falters will determine whether it becomes a force in Nigeria's political future—or merely a footnote in its political memory.

## Editorial

## RIVCHPP

## The Need For Action, Not Just Advocacy

**T**he Rivers State Contributory Health Protection Programme (RIVCHPP) has shown vision and urgency through its recent advocacy visits to ministries across the state. However, these visits GIST observes have in good time, exposed stark naked realities: millions of Rivers residents remain outside the safety net of health insurance.

Most of the uninsured are in the informal sector—the traders, artisans, drivers, and small-scale entrepreneurs who drive the state's micro economy. They remain one illness away from financial non-remedials highlighting a gap that the 2021 RIVCHPP law sought to foreclose.

The law is clear: any organisation with five or more workers must provide health insurance. Four years on, compliance remains weak. Gist notes laws alone are not enough. Enforcement, awareness,

and accountability must follow.

We commend RIVCHPP's outreach to the Ministries of Commerce and Transport, but health insurance is a statewide responsibility. Every ministry, department, and agency (MDA) interacts with citizens who should already be enrolled. Their role is critical to achieving universal coverage.

The Ministry of Health has set an example by ensuring that every hospital visitor is sensitized and encouraged to enrol. This model can—and must—be replicated in all other ministries. Health insurance is not just a health sector concern; it is a cross-government obligation.

We posit that ministries must actively mobilise unions, cooperatives, SMEs, and informal sector groups with measurable outreach strategies. Awareness must translate into sustainable

enrolment.

The Ministry of Commerce oversees thousands of businesses, markets, and cooperatives that maybe untapped by RIVCHPP. The Ministry of Transport supervises unions operating in high-risk environments. Both ministries—and all others—hold the key to expanding coverage net to thousands of uninsured citizens.

To this end, beyond compliance, there is a moral and economic imperative. Health insurance protects families, strengthens productivity, and reduces avoidable strain on hospitals. Every uninsured person represents preventable suffering and lost economic potential.

Governor Siminalayi Fubara has demonstrated political will by keeping RIVCHPP functional while making healthcare a priority to deepen his people-focused RIVERS

FIRST agenda—a vision he has matched with action.

On the other hand, Ministries must take ownership of the programme within their respective domains.

The informal sector, the majority of Rivers State's population, cannot be ignored. They need structured, continuous engagement, not occasional advocacy or photo opportunities. Ministries must track results, enforce compliance, and report progress.

Accountability is key. MDAs must set clear enrolment targets, liaise with unions and associations, and ensure strict adherence to the law. Failure to act is failure to serve the people.

Community mobilisation is equally vital. Local councils, ward structures, and grassroots organisations should partner with RIVCHPP to bring insurance awareness

to every eligible resident. Top-down efforts alone will not suffice.

The cost of inaction is high. Without universal coverage, preventable illnesses and accidents will continue to plunge families into poverty, hospitals will remain overwhelmed, and economic growth will be undermined. Health insurance is not optional—it is essential.

RIVCHPP has issued a clear warning: ministries and MDAs must act decisively. Universal coverage demands collective responsibility, cross-sector collaboration, and sustained commitment.

Rivers State must rise. Every ministry, agency, union, and community has a role. The health of citizens, the strength of the economy, and the promise of sustainable development leave no room for half-measures.



## Police Pullback From VIPs: Reform Or Rhetoric?

**W**hen President Bola Ahmed Tinubu stepped out of a closed-door security meeting on Sunday, 25 November, and announced the immediate withdrawal of police officers attached to Very Important Persons (VIPs), it was a moment that resonated far beyond the Villa. To many Nigerians, it sounded like an overdue attempt to rebalance a policing system long distorted by elite privilege. To others, it was another announcement in a familiar cycle of policy pronouncements that struggle to survive contact with reality.

For decades, the Nigeria Police Force—underfunded, overstretched, and burdened by an ever-expanding security landscape—has faced the near-impossible task of securing a rapidly growing population. Yet a significant portion of its trained officers have been diverted from communal safety to personal protection for political office holders, business executives, celebrities, and other influential individuals. Estimates suggest that nearly one-third of the police workforce is attached to VIPs, leaving rural and suburban communities underserved.

Against this backdrop, the president's directive appears to be a course correction many have long advocated. According to the statement issued by the Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, the intention is to address a structural imbalance that has left many communities vulnerable due to low

police presence.

Under the new policy, VIPs requiring legitimate protection will be reassigned operatives from the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), thereby freeing police officers to return to core duties—law enforcement, crime prevention, and community policing.

The decision emerged from a security meeting that included the heads of key agencies, signalling a coordinated attempt to restructure how security assets are deployed nationwide.

To understand the significance of this shift, it is necessary to recall how Nigeria arrived at its current model. Over the years, the allocation of police escorts evolved into a mix of necessity, political patronage, and social status. Long convoys, often accompanied by multiple armed officers, became common, even as many local police divisions struggled with insufficient manpower, inadequate equipment, and minimal operational resources.

Some rural police posts operate with fewer than ten officers and no operational vehicles, while high-profile individuals navigate urban centres with large retinues of armed protection. Security analysts have repeatedly warned that this uneven deployment undermines the police force's capacity to perform its constitutional duties.

In addition to the withdrawal directive, President Tinubu approved the recruitment of 30,000 new officers and the upgrading of training facilities. On

the surface, this indicates an effort to strengthen policing capacity. However, the key question is whether these new officers will be properly trained, equitably deployed, and insulated from the same VIP pressures that diluted previous reforms.

Reactions across the country are mixed. Many citizens—especially those in communities grappling with armed robbery, kidnapping, and communal violence—welcome the prospect of increased police presence. They see it as a step towards restoring neighbourhood safety and improving public trust.

Yet others remain cautious. Nigeria has witnessed similar directives in the past, only for them to fade quietly under political pressure or logistical constraints. There are concerns that informal arrangements may re-emerge, allowing influential citizens to regain police escorts through the backdoor. Some VIPs are already privately questioning whether they should trust NSCDC operatives with their personal security.

This moment therefore tests not just government resolve, but public discipline and institutional integrity. Whether political officeholders and influential citizens will accept this new reality remains to be seen.

The broader context cannot be ignored. Nigeria faces multilayered security challenges—from insurgency and banditry to oil theft, cybercrime, and

communal conflicts. The police cannot effectively confront these threats when manpower is diluted and deployment skewed. Redirecting officers to communities has the potential to strengthen intelligence gathering, improve response times, and rebuild relationships between citizens and the police.

In principle, the president's directive is timely and necessary. In practice, its success will depend on consistent implementation, transparent monitoring, and the ability of security agencies to resist undue influence.

Will this initiative mark the beginning of a more community-centred policing model? Will communities genuinely feel a renewed sense of safety? And importantly, will the reforms continue beyond the announcement stage?

Nigeria does not simply need more police officers; it needs a more rational, accountable, and community-focused deployment of its security resources. If this directive becomes a foundation for broader, systemic reform, it may one day be remembered as a pivotal turning point.

For now, Nigerians watch with cautious optimism—hopeful that this time, the reform trajectory will hold.

*Aniefiok Akpan wrote from PH.*

# Amaewhule, 16 Rivers Lawmakers Not Registered Members of APC, Investigations Reveal

Despite their high-profile declaration of defection to the All Progressives Congress (APC) on December 5, 2025, investigations reveal that Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Martins Amaewhule, and 16 other lawmakers have not been formally registered as members of the party.

Gist investigations indicate that no official procedures, as required by law, have been carried out by the 17 legislators to formally resign from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and obtain membership credentials from the APC.

By Gist Correspondent

Sources within the APC in Rivers State told Gist that the public announcement made at the House of Assembly does not automatically confer legal recognition of their membership in the new party. The sources added that the party could deny their membership, a position that is likely to be upheld in court, citing the recent Supreme Court ruling on the lawmakers' first defection saga as precedent.

On December 5, 2025, Amaewhule announced the

lawmakers' defection during plenary, citing divisions within the PDP as the primary reason. "Distinguished colleagues, APC is my new party. I will do all that is needed to be done towards ensuring that the party card of the All Progressives Congress is issued to me in no time," Amaewhule told the Assembly.

He praised President Bola Tinubu's leadership, saying the President "means well for Nigeria" and has demonstrated love for Rivers State. Amaewhule stressed that

supporting the President from within the APC was now a priority, asserting that internal PDP divisions made continued membership untenable.

Since late 2023, Rivers State politics has been marked by a tense rift between Governor Siminalayi Fubara and lawmakers loyal to former Governor Nyesom Wike. Amaewhule, seen as a Wike loyalist, has led several Assembly maneuvers, including attempted impeachment motions, which heightened the political tension.

The internal PDP crisis has also generated conflicting court rulings regarding the legitimacy of the Amaewhule-led Assembly, with various judgments at different times recognizing either Amaewhule or Edison Ehie, now Chief of Staff to

Governor Fubara, as Speaker.

Speaking on the development, Minister of the Federal Capital Territory and former Governor, Nyesom Wike, said the defecting lawmakers were free to leave the PDP but urged those remaining to continue strengthening the party. "Well, it's unfortunate. I have always said that everybody has the right to make a choice. The party is fully factionalised. And the requirement of the Constitution is that when a party is factionalised, they are allowed to leave the party," Wike stated.

He added, "I'm still in the PDP. So those who have remained, we'll continue to work together. And I have said to the party, put your



Amaewhule

house in order. Because at the end of the day, if you don't put your house in order, it's the party that will lose. Those who have left are free, but those who remain will continue to be a relevant opposition."

Political analysts say the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the lawmakers' official status in the APC could have serious implications for governance and party politics in Rivers State.

## Communities Celebrate Historic Link As Tinubu Opens Bodo - Bonny Road Corridor

Meshach Alaputa Jaja

For the people of Rivers State, Friday felt like history unfolding in real time. As news broke that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu had temporarily inaugurated the long-awaited Bodo-Bonny Road, communities across Ogoni and Bonny erupted in joy — a kind that comes only when a decades-old burden is finally lifted. For many, this was not just a road opening; it was the beginning of a new way of life.

Standing among a small crowd of residents in Bonny, Mrs. Atonye Green could hardly contain her excitement. "I'm over excited... it's a big relief," she said, her voice cracking under the weight of emotion. A daughter of Opobo Kingdom married into Bonny Kingdom, she explained how the project carried both personal and cultural meaning. "Every son and daughter of Bonny Kingdom will be happy. This road will boost economic activities in these communities," she said, smiling as though years of waiting had finally been rewarded.

Her words echoed the sentiments of many families whose lives have long revolved around water-only access to Bonny Island. For generations, travel meant braving unpredictable tides, expensive boat rides, and the emotional strain of knowing that help — in emergencies — could be hours away. The new road,

residents say, is more than concrete and asphalt; it is freedom.

Among those celebrating was Chief Jolly Benjamin Ngor, a community leader from Tai Local Government Area. To him, the project represents a major turning point for Ogoni communities. "It will increase the economic growth of Tai people,



Tinubu

especially K-Dere, B-Dere, and Biara," he said. "Travel time from Port Harcourt to Bonny will drop drastically, and the risks of water travel are gone. It will also revive tourism in Bonny Kingdom." His voice carried the optimism of a man who had waited years to see his people finally connected to opportunities on the mainland.

That sense of anticipation filled the air on December 8, 2025, when President Tinubu — represented by Minister of Works, Senator David Umahi — officially declared the 37.9-kilometre road open for temporary use. The ceremony, held in both Bodo and Bonny, marked the first time in Nigeria's history that Bonny Island enjoyed a functional land link. With 11 bridges and nearly 38

kilometers of engineered roadway, the project stands as one of the nation's most significant infrastructure feats in recent memory.

Under the temporary access arrangement, the road will operate from 7am to 7pm for light vehicles only, while trucks, motorcycles, and tricycles remain restricted until full completion expected in March 2026. Still, even this partial access feels monumental to the everyday commuters who have long hoped for safer, cheaper travel between the island and the mainland.

Rivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara — represented by the SSG, Dr. Benibo Anabraba — hailed the project as a breakthrough for the state's development. "This may be a temporary opening, but it is permanent joy for the people of Bonny, Bodo, and Rivers State," he said. Yet, he did not hide the state's continued desire for more federal presence, comparing their plea to that of "Oliver Twist" asking for a greater share.

Stakeholders across the region also praised the federal government's commitment. Senator Barinada Mpigi, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Works, assured continued legislative support, while Julius Berger's Project Manager, Tim Nippert, confirmed that 35 of the 37.9 kilometers were already motorable. He reaffirmed the company's determination to complete the remaining sections by the first quarter of 2026.

## Fubara Pledges Total Loyalty To Tinubu, Says Without Him I Would Have Been Removed

In a stunning political twist that sent shockwaves across Rivers State, Governor Siminalayi Fubara on Tuesday openly declared President Bola Ahmed Tinubu as his "godfather," crediting the President's intervention as the single reason he remains in office. The governor, speaking with a mix of relief and conviction, told stakeholders in Port Harcourt that without Tinubu's timely support, his administration would have crumbled under mounting political pressure.

The declaration came during a tense stakeholders' meeting at Government House, where the atmosphere was thick with anticipation. Supporters, already aware of simmering tensions within the PDP, listened as Fubara finally confirmed what many had suspected: he had severed ties with the party under which he was elected. In a dramatic turn, the governor announced his defection to the All Progressives Congress, taking along a massive wave of loyalists.

Fubara spoke emotionally about his visit to the Presidential Villa the previous day. According to him, the journey to Abuja was not one of political ambition but of survival — a desperate appeal to

safeguard the interests of Rivers State amid escalating political battles at home. His voice at times wavered as he emphasized that the state's stability hung in the balance.

He recounted how he had fully briefed President Tinubu on the unfolding political crisis, expressing trust that the President would intervene decisively where necessary. In an unusually candid moment, the governor admitted that if not for Tinubu's



Fubara

influence, he would have been removed from office long before now. The room fell silent as he spoke — a silence mixed with disbelief, admiration, and the weight of political realities.

With emotion thick in his tone, Fubara explained that his switch to the APC was more than strategy; it was gratitude. He insisted that the best way to thank a man who "kept him standing" was to stand with him fully. Anything less, he said, would be betrayal — a

sentiment that stirred murmurs among his supporters.

"We have the full support and the positive nod to leave where we are," he declared, hinting at deep frustration over what he called a lack of protection within the PDP. His words painted a picture of a man who felt politically abandoned and who now sought refuge under a more powerful umbrella.

As the hall erupted into applause, the governor announced that the mass defection was not his alone. Everyone who had walked with him through months of political turbulence, he said, was crossing over with him. It was a moment that felt both triumphant and defiant — an open challenge to his former party.

Fubara promised President Tinubu unwavering loyalty in the days ahead, assuring that Rivers State would stand firmly behind the APC-led government. His vow came not as a whisper but as a strong, resonant pledge — one he said would be backed by "a loud voice" from the people.

Many supporters, visibly emotional, hailed the decision as a new beginning for the state's political direction. The hall vibrated with chants, signaling a shift that could redefine Rivers politics for years to come.

# A Nation At A Tax Crossroads

## A Critique Of The New Nigerian Tax Reforms

When the Tinubu administration unveiled its wide-ranging tax reform agenda—scheduled to take effect January 1, 2026—it presented the package as a historic restructuring capable of broadening Nigeria's revenue base and reducing dependence on oil. The reforms, promoted as a pathway toward fiscal stability, impressed many observers with their ambition and technical detail, yet also raised deep public scepticism.

The push for tax reform is undeniably born out of necessity. Collapsing oil revenues, staggering debt obligations, and a slowing economy leave the government with little choice. Yet the speed and breadth of the reforms raise concerns about whether an already fragile economy can withstand such extensive fiscal changes at once.

One relief for Nigerians is the assurance that bank transfers, deposits,

withdrawals, and balances will not be taxed, countering viral misinformation. Still, the expanded visibility the government seeks into banking activities fuels discomfort in a country where trust in public institutions remains low and fears of surveillance are real.

The widening of the tax net to include content creators, influencers, freelancers, and other digital earners aligns with global trends. But in Nigeria—where digital work often serves as a lifeline for young people—the move risks being seen as punitive rather than developmental, especially as many question what public value the state offers in exchange.

The revised progressive tax bands promise fairness on paper, offering relief to lower- and many middle-income earners. Yet fairness often collapses in a context where taxpayers

receive little in return. Without visible improvements in infrastructure, power, healthcare, and security, compliance will continue

seeking to tax what it has not fully regulated. Without a clear legal and regulatory framework, enforcement remains questionable.



Edun

to be an uphill battle.

The taxation of crypto gains and digital assets is perhaps the most contentious proposal. While it mirrors global practice, it exposes a contradiction: Nigeria is

Agriculture's five-year tax holiday stands out as a win for food security, yet the manufacturing sector—already battered by high operating costs and FX instability—receives little direct relief. For a

country seeking industrial revival, the omission is glaring.

Small businesses with annual turnover below ₦50 million remain exempt from taxes, a bright spot for MSMEs. Yet many still grapple with multiple levies, local government harassment, and complex compliance procedures that the reforms do not adequately address.

Beyond specific provisions, a fundamental concern remains whether Nigeria has the capacity to implement what it has designed. Ambitious tax laws mean little without accurate data, digital systems, well-trained personnel, consistent enforcement, and—above all—public trust. Nigeria has a long history of strong policies that falter at execution.

The informal sector—over 60% of the national economy—also remains unaddressed. Without a clear strategy for integrating informal

workers, simplifying registration, or incentivising formality, widening the tax net will remain largely theoretical.

At the heart of public debate is a simple question: What do Nigerians get in return for paying more taxes? Citizens are not resistant to taxation; they are resistant to paying into a system that fails to deliver basic services. Tax reform without governance reform is a half-measure.

The Tinubu administration's tax reforms represent intent, ambition, and a step toward modernising Nigeria's revenue system. But they also leave behind unresolved concerns about fairness, execution, capacity, and public value. Until these gaps are addressed, the reforms will remain a bold experiment whose success depends as much on building trust as on policy design.

## Beyond Oil: How The Imo Economic Summit Signals A New Era Of State-led Prosperity

Nigeria's journey toward economic diversification gained fresh momentum in early December as the Imo Economic Summit 2025 convened leaders, financiers, innovators, and global thinkers in Owerri. For three days, Imo State positioned itself as more than a regional player — it cast itself as a model for how subnational economies can lift the nation beyond dependence on oil.

The Summit, themed “Unlocking Imo's Economic Potential: Partnership, Investment, and Innovation,” brought together policymakers and corporate figures from across Africa, Europe, and Asia. Its true significance lies in the growing realisation that Nigeria's economic revival must be built state by state, sector by sector.

In his welcome address, Governor Hope Uzodinma set an ambitious tone. He described the Summit as a “bold step” toward making Imo a hub of innovation and a competitive investment destination, listing infrastructure, ICT,



Delegates at the Imo Economic Summit 2025

energy, tourism, creative industries, and agribusiness as core drivers of future growth.

Much of the Summit's attraction came from its partnership-driven format — from sectoral roundtables to exhibitions — which placed investors and policymakers in direct, practical dialogue. It signalled that Imo State is playing for long-term capital, not ceremonial applause.

Representing President

Bola Tinubu, Vice President Kashim Shettima delivered a message with national implications, noting that Imo is uniquely positioned in Nigeria's diversification drive, especially in gas utilisation, technology, agro-industrial processing, and MSMEs. His reminder that “nations do not rise because one corner of the map ascends while others remain dormant” captured the core spirit of the gathering.

Shettima assured that the Federal Government will widen access to financing through the Bank of Industry and the Development Bank of Nigeria while expanding PPP frameworks in housing, transport, and renewable energy. He highlighted emerging pillars for Imo: Free Trade Zones, Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones, expanded gas utilisation, and digital infrastructure.

One of the Summit's uplifting moments came from Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, former President of Mauritius, who described Nigeria as “a power hub in the making,” celebrating the resilience of Nigerian entrepreneurs. Aliko Dangote reinforced this sentiment, urging African governments and investors to take the lead in building the continent's economic future.

The Summit ended with a clear takeaway — Imo is

pursuing a long-term economic blueprint driven by investor-friendly policies, improved security, and infrastructure expansion. Similar transformation patterns are emerging across states such as Cross River in tourism, Ondo in cocoa processing, and Nasarawa in lithium and solar-energy investments.

Global leaders — from Liberia's President Joseph Boakai to Boris Johnson and Ban Ki-Moon — reinforced the message that subnational leadership is now central to Africa's development. Their presence validated Imo's positioning as a rising destination for investment.

Experts say Nigeria's next economic leap will not emerge from oil or federal policy alone but from competitive states building ecosystems around their unique strengths. The Imo Economic Summit was therefore not just a policy event but a declaration of readiness — and possibly a national turning point if security, infrastructure, and investor confidence continue to improve.

## COMMUNITY &amp; METRO

# Underaged Beggars Surge Across Port Harcourt Intersections

Clusters of underaged beggars, many of them teenage mothers carrying infants, have increasingly taken over major intersections across Port Harcourt, prompting growing concern among residents and calls for urgent government intervention.

The girls, some believed to be as young as 13, are

now a constant presence at Rumuokoro, Garrison, Rumuola, AGIP Junction and other busy points in the city. They move between vehicles in traffic, tapping on windows and stretching out their hands for alms while carrying babies on their backs under harsh weather conditions.

Residents say the rising numbers have become more visible over the past

months, with many linking the trend to poverty, displacement and possible exploitation. Several of the girls reportedly appear to be non-Nigerian, fuelling speculation of cross-border trafficking.

Multiple eyewitnesses told reporters that vehicles have been observed dropping the girls off at various locations early in the morning and picking them up again at dusk,

suggesting an organised system behind their activities. Some of the groups rotate their begging points, while others are seen sleeping under flyovers or washing clothes in public areas.

Business owners and motorists have also expressed worry about increased harassment, traffic obstruction and potential safety hazards involving the infants the girls carry while navigating moving vehicles.

At AGIP Junction, residents say makeshift shelters have begun to appear beneath the flyover, while similar clusters have formed around other intersections in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas.

The situation has raised concerns about the welfare of the infants, many of whom are exposed daily to exhaust fumes, dust, rain and extreme heat. Some babies are visibly malnourished, sparking fears of long-term health risks.

Despite the growing outcry, residents say they



Street Beggars at Rumuokoro, PH

have yet to see sustained action from agencies responsible for child protection, social welfare and immigration enforcement. They note that the number of teenage beggars has continued to rise without coordinated intervention from relevant authorities.

Civil society groups and concerned citizens are urging the Rivers State Government to conduct proper identification and

profiling of the girls, investigate possible trafficking networks, and provide shelters and rehabilitation services. They are also calling for collaborative action involving security agencies, immigration authorities and social development institutions.

Efforts to speak with police authority and Social Welfare department of the state government proved abortive.

## Alesa Community Unveils New Land System to Tackle Fraud and Restore Order

A new chapter may have begun for Alesa community in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, where residents gathered in their numbers on Friday, December 5, 2025, to witness the launch of a land administration system designed to end years of chaotic land dealings. For a community hosting national assets such as the Port Harcourt Refinery, the move signals a push toward order, investor confidence and communal stability.

At the centre of the reform is the newly inaugurated Alesa Land Development Committee (ALDEC)—a body mandated to verify, document and regulate land transactions. The Paramount Ruler of Alesa, Emperor JD Mkpe, presided over the ceremony, stressing that the era of minors, impostors and unqualified individuals selling family property without consent must come to an end.

“People go into another man’s land and sell without his notice,” he said, warning that such practices had strained family relations, provoked

By Aniefiok Akpan

disputes and discouraged investors. “These problems can no longer be allowed to define us.”

Under the new system, no land sale in Alesa will be recognised unless it is cleared by ALDEC. The committee, chaired by businessman Emmanuel Olaka, will also collaborate with the Rivers State government to ensure that legitimate buyers can secure statutory titles, including Certificates of Occupancy.

One of the boldest features of the reform is a development requirement: any plot left undeveloped after five years will be taken over as waste land. The community also introduced an equity model in which buyers set aside a percentage of land value for descendants of a b o r i g i n a l landowners—an effort to ensure that development benefits do not leave foundational families behind.

“This is not just about selling land,” Emperor Mkpe explained. “It is about fairness and protecting the future of our people.”

The launch drew real

estate industry support, including from the Mayor of Housing, My-ACE China, whose “Alesa Sustainable Green Smart City” project is underway. China described the initiative as “the right framework” for protecting investments and reducing fraudulent practices that have long plagued land buyers across the state.

Residents—youths, women, elders and community chiefs—filled the venue, many expressing relief that Alesa was formalising a structure long needed to prevent disputes and restore peace.

In his acceptance speech, ALDEC chairman Olaka described the committee as a safeguard, not an obstacle. “We are here to make Alesa stronger,” he said. “Investors should feel safe, and our people should feel protected.”

For a community that has witnessed its share of land clashes, Friday’s inauguration offered a sense of direction. With the structures now in place, many believe Alesa could set a precedent for other communities in Rivers State seeking to tackle land grabbing and build trust in their land markets.

## Bonny LG Releases N13.5m As Support To 32 Clubs Ahead Of 2025 Festivities

Bonny Local Government Area has unveiled a fresh push to strengthen its cultural heritage with the approval and disbursement of a N13.5 million Cultural Support Fund to 32 cultural clubs across the LGA.

The presentation ceremony, held recently, at the Government Lodge, Bonny, was presided over by the Chairman of Bonny LGA, Amasenibo Hon. Abinye Blessing Pepple. The event drew cultural leaders, club representatives, and community stakeholders who described the gesture as a major boost for grassroots development.

Speaking at the presentation, Chairman Pepple said the initiative reflects his administration’s belief that culture and tourism remain central to community development. He noted that preserving and promoting Bonny’s cultural identity has become even more crucial as modernization continues to reshape

By Meshach Alaputa Jaja communal values and traditions.

Under the approved distribution framework, top cultural clubs—including Okwe-Mma, Siri, Abaji, and Oku Cultural Clubs—received N1 million each in recognition of their long-standing contributions to Bonny’s festive traditions. Other clubs received between N250,000 and N500,000, a model the chairman said was designed to ensure inclusiveness while encouraging growth among emerging groups.

The support fund, coming ahead of this year’s cultural festivities, is expected to stimulate economic activity across the LGA. Cultural events in Bonny traditionally generate seasonal employment and boost local businesses such as tailoring, craft-making, food vending, transportation, drumming, and event production.

The initiative is being coordinated through the Office of the Senior

Special Assistant on Cultural Matters, led by Mr. Richard Ibani Benstowe. Stakeholders say the structured management and transparent process have helped build confidence in the administration’s cultural development agenda.

Community leaders describe the funding as a strategic investment that reinforces unity, strengthens cultural pride, and expands tourism potential. Observers also say Bonny’s approach presents a development model that other LGAs within Rivers State could emulate.

With the 2025 festivities set to begin, the support fund is expected to enhance performances, improve participation, and deepen cultural expression among the clubs.

Bonny LGA’s latest intervention underscores a broader message—that culture is not merely entertainment but a driver of community cohesion and sustainable local development.



Emperor JD Mkpe inaugurating Alesa Land Development Committee at Eleme, recently.

# Women Converge 2025

## Where Unity, Purpose, And The Unstoppable Spirit Of Women Rose In Full Splendour

The second edition of Women Converge unfolded like a tapestry woven with faith, purpose, and the quiet fire that has always defined the women of Rivers State. On November 27, 2025, the Alfred Diete-Spiff Civic Centre in Port Harcourt transformed into a sanctuary of voices—strong, steady, and deeply anchored—gathering women from all twenty-three Local Government Areas. They came as

By Meshach Alaputa Jaja

leaders and learners, professionals and homemakers, entrepreneurs and intercessors, each carrying her own story yet converging into a single, resonant narrative of collective strength.

At the heart of this assembly was the Wife of the Governor, Her Excellency, Lady Valerie Fubara, whose presence carried both grace and conviction. Her words,

warm yet weighty, acknowledged the timeless labour of women—those whose hands build homes, shape communities, steady institutions, and nurture the conscience of society. She reminded them that the prayers of women are never whispered into silence; they are forces that shift seasons and steady nations. Her message was not merely an encouragement—it was an affirmation of identity, endurance, and divine influence.

Lady Fubara spoke to

their resilience, that quiet courage that continues to flourish even in seasons of economic and social strain. She honoured the women who, despite pressure, still rise—running businesses, leading offices, shaping policies, and holding the fragile threads of society together. And she renewed her commitment to ensuring that these women are seen, heard, supported, and celebrated.

The theme—The Woman: In an Evolving World—unfolded through a

series of teachings that reached deep into the soul. Pastor Eno Jerry Eze, delivering the keynote address, spoke with the clarity of one who understands both the emotional weight and spiritual calling of womanhood. She urged women to shed the limiting skins of self-doubt, to build discipline, and to wield confidence not as noise but as quiet strength rooted in God.

The spiritual atmosphere deepened as Apostle

Opuaya Bipimafieye Agha took the stage with her compelling message on Persevering in Praise and Prayer with Thanksgiving. Her words were an invocation—calling women to stand firm, to guard the gates of their minds, and to take possession of the authority heaven has placed in their hands.

The Convener, Amaopuorubo Sotonye Toby Fulton, offered a charge that stirred both heart and intellect. Her

defining question—“Who is the woman in me?”—hung in the air like a personal summons to every listener. She spoke of unity as strength, of identity as power, and of purpose as the compass that guides a woman through the shifting tides of the world. Women, she reminded them, are not rivals in destiny; they are mirrors, allies, and pillars for one another when bound by shared purpose.

The programme did not overlook the physical

vessel that carries all this strength. Dr. Richard Okoye, of Save-A-Life Mission Hospital, explored The Health of a Woman in a Depressing Economy, illuminating the unseen aches borne by women—stress, exhaustion, and the silent sacrifices that often go unnoticed. His call for accessible healthcare, early testing, and better health-seeking behaviour echoed as a plea for women to honour their own wellbeing.

In the realm of enterprise, Dr. (Mrs.) Chinyere Nwoga, President of the Port Harcourt Chamber of Commerce and Industry, offered clear, actionable pathways for women navigating the demanding world of business. She spoke of scaling small ventures, mastering financial literacy, and turning informal strength into institutional influence.

Adding colour, joy, and spiritual warmth to the event, the RWUS Choir and Band delivered soul-lifting

ministration that kept the atmosphere charged with praise. Music minister Preye Odede performed wonderfully, leading the audience into deep worship with his signature sound. Other artists, including the energetic Peter Stone Cold, thrilled the crowd with electrifying performances that left the hall vibrating with excitement and gratitude.

More rhythm, and authenticity that graced the day was a vibrant exhibition featuring

products from all twenty-three LGAs—seafood and spices, woven crafts and farm produce, agro-products and cultural treasures. It was a vivid reminder that women remain the lifeblood of local enterprise, the keepers of tradition, and the silent architects of food security.

In the end, Women Converge 2025 rose beyond the boundaries of an event. It became a movement—a gentle

revolution of spirit, identity, and purpose. It affirmed, as Lady Valerie Fubara so often declares, that when women rise together—praying, working, dreaming, and building—there is no force formidable enough to silence them. For united women are not merely participants in progress; they are its architects, its guardians, and its unstoppable heartbeat across Rivers State and beyond.



Wife of the Rivers State Governor, Mrs. Valerie Fubara, the convener of Women Converge 2025 Amaopuorubo Sotonye Toby Fulton & other dignitaries at the event held in PH, recently.

# Fubara's New Deal For RSU: A Future Built On Funding, Reform, And Hope



At RSU's historic convocation, the Governor outlines a vision that stretches beyond today's celebrations.

The morning air around the Rivers State University campus carried the familiar buzz of convocation day: the rustle of gowns, the hush of proud families, the steady hum of anticipation. But beneath the colour and ceremony, another mood ran quietly through the convocation arena — a sense of turning point.

For Governor Siminalayi Fubara, who addressed the 37th and 38th combined convocation on December 6, 2025, it was not just another ceremonial outing. It was a moment to signal his administration's long-term educational direction: one anchored on sustained funding, structural renewal, and a future-ready university system.

Standing before

thousands of students, staff, and dignitaries, the Governor affirmed that RSU would not be left to the mercy of dwindling budgets or abandoned campuses. His administration, he promised, is settling in for the long haul — confronting infrastructural deficits, tightening campus security, and revitalising neglected satellite campuses.

"We will fulfil our funding commitments," he said, his voice steady over the loudspeakers. "Infrastructure, security, welfare — these are not optional priorities."

It was a message that landed well in a university that has grown, stretched, and persevered under pressure. The Governor praised RSU's steady evolution into a centre of innovation and critical scholarship, urging the institution to sharpen its research edge and channel its thinkers toward solving

the state's most urgent development challenges.

But the day belonged, unmistakably, to the 13,242 graduates whose names were being read, whose futures were just beginning to take shape. Fubara congratulated them warmly, reminding them that the world ahead will demand grit, clarity, and creativity. Entrepreneurship, he noted, is no longer fringe — it is a lifeline in an economy beginning to reform and recalibrate.

"Let hard work, integrity, and honesty guide you," he told them. "Honour those who stood by you by living with purpose and compassion."

Yet he didn't sugarcoat the realities. Life after convocation, he cautioned, carries its own anxieties and storms. But resilience, discipline, and character, he insisted, would help them write their own stories.

From the Vice-

Chancellor, Prof. Isaac Zeb-Obipi, came a different kind of story — one of growth under pressure. In what was his first convocation since assuming office in March 2025, he rolled out achievements that spoke of rapid mobilisation: full NUC and professional accreditation for university programmes, and hostel accommodation solutions for 40,000 students. It was, in many ways, an administrative sprint.

The Governing Council's Pro-Chancellor, Hon. Okey Wali, SAN, was even more ambitious. With a lawyer's precision, he unveiled a five-year Strategic Development Plan (2026–2030), built around the ambition to position RSU as a "University of Choice Globally."

Research, he argued, must no longer gather dust on shelves. It must be transformed into

technologies, products, and solutions that speak to national priorities. And the university's internal culture, he warned, must be cleaned of indiscipline, corruption, extortion, and sexual harassment if RSU is to rise.

Wali did not shy away from the institution's pain points, especially the infrastructural and security breakdowns at satellite campuses — problems severe enough to force the relocation of students to the main campus. But he assured that decisive steps were already in motion.

Then came the Chancellor, His Royal Highness Justice Dr. Sidi Bage Mohammad, whose remark cut through the day's ceremonial tone. RSU, he declared, has become the best-funded tertiary institution in Nigeria under Governor Fubara. It was a bold claim, but he backed it with a challenge: universities

must adapt to a world shaped by technology and artificial intelligence, not shrink from it.

As the convocation arena slowly emptied and families posed for their final photographs, one thing lingered — a shared sense that RSU is standing on the threshold of a new chapter. A chapter where funding becomes consistent, research becomes purposeful, governance becomes stricter, and graduates emerge not just with certificates but with the resilience to navigate an unpredictable world.

It was, in many ways, a day of celebration. But for Governor Fubara, it was also a day to draw a line in the sand:

Education is not a favour. It is an obligation. And the future of Rivers State depends on getting it right.

# Fubara Stuns Political Opponents, Declares Rivers State For Tinubu, APC

Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, on Tuesday stunned political observers after formally declaring his loyalty to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the All Progressives Congress (APC), signaling what many interpret as a decisive shift of Rivers State's political alignment away from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Fubara, who made the announcement during a stakeholders' meeting at Government House, Port Harcourt, said the decision was driven by President Tinubu's "consistent support" throughout the state's prolonged political crisis. He added that Rivers

*...Stakeholders Endorse Decision*

*...PDP Reacts*

*...Wike, Amaewhule-led Lawmakers Mute*

could no longer "offer backyard support" to the President while remaining in a different political camp.

The move comes barely months after waves of defections rocked the state, including the shift of over a dozen members of the Rivers State House of Assembly—led by Speaker Martin Amaewhule—from the PDP to the APC. Fubara acknowledged these developments, noting that aligning with the federal

leadership had "become necessary for stability and progress."

## Stakeholders Back Governor

Present at the meeting were present and former political office holders, leaders, elders, women and youth representatives, all of whom endorsed the governor's decision. Stakeholders described the move as "bold" and "inevitable," saying it reflected the political reality in the state and the

need to consolidate support behind the federal government.

Party loyalists who accompanied the governor argued that Rivers stood to benefit more from constructive alignment with the centre, especially given ongoing reconstruction, security challenges, and economic concerns.

## PDP Reacts Swiftly

The Peoples Democratic Party has condemned the governor's declaration, describing it as a betrayal of the mandate on which he was elected. In a statement issued shortly after the announcement, the PDP said Fubara's alignment with the APC "undermines democratic values" and accused him of abandoning the party at a critical

moment.

Party officials noted that the PDP "remains strong in Rivers State," insisting that constitutional actions would be taken to address what they called a breach of trust. They also urged supporters to remain calm and await further directives from the national leadership.

## Wike, Amaewhule-Led Lawmakers Remain Silent

In a surprising twist, key political actors who were expected to comment—most notably former governor and FCT Minister Nyesom Wike, and the Amaewhule-led faction of the Rivers Assembly—remained silent hours after the development.

Wike, who has been at the center of the political rift in Rivers State and is regarded as Tinubu's ally at the federal level, offered no immediate reaction. His

silence has fueled speculation about behind-the-scenes political negotiations and the future shape of alliances within the state.

Similarly, lawmakers loyal to Amaewhule—many of whom defected earlier to the APC—declined to issue any formal response, despite the governor's dramatic repositioning.

## A Political Earthquake in Rivers

Fubara's declaration marks one of the most significant political shifts in Rivers State since 1999. The state, long regarded as a PDP stronghold, now appears to be tilting toward the APC under the influence of both federal dynamics and state-level realignments.

Observers say the development could reshape the political landscape of the Niger Delta, influence regional alliances, and set the tone for 2027 elections.

## We 'll Work With Fubara To Deliver Tinubu In 2027 – APC National Chairman

*...Urges Supporters To Back Rivers Governor*

The National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Dr. Nentawe Yilwatda, has declared full support for Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State, assuring party members that the APC will work closely with the governor to secure a resounding victory for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in the 2027 general election. Yilwatda stated this during a strategic party engagement on Tuesday, where he emphasized the

Chairman offered unequivocal endorsement, describing Fubara as a crucial partner in the party's future electoral plans. "Tell my brother, His Excellency Governor Fubara, I'm with him 100 over 100. We will walk together. We will walk together with Fubara, and we will deliver President Ahmed Tinubu together with Fubara come 2027," Yilwatda said to loud applause from attendees.

Yilwatda noted that the political atmosphere in Rivers State was shifting

old rivalries. He emphasized that supporting Fubara was not only politically expedient but also beneficial for governance and national cohesion.

He further called on APC supporters across the state to maintain discipline and avoid internal conflicts, stressing that the party's national and state chapters would soon roll out a harmonization plan to integrate new political structures and align interests ahead of the 2027 contest. Yilwatda assured members that the party's doors remained open for all individuals committed to progress.

With Yilwatda's statement, political observers say the APC has formally positioned Governor Fubara as a central figure in the party's strategy for Rivers State, signaling a major realignment that could redefine the political landscape of the South-South ahead of the next presidential election.

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Observers say the development could reshape the political landscape of the Niger Delta, influence regional alliances, and set the tone for 2027 elections.



Fubara



Yilwatda

need for unity and political realignment in the state.

Speaking with party supporters, Yilwatda urged all APC members in Rivers State to throw their weight behind Governor Fubara, who recently signaled his cooperation with the Tinubu administration. He said the party was committed to strengthening its base in the South-South, and that working with the Rivers governor was essential to deepening the APC's influence in the region ahead of the next election cycle.

In a direct message to the governor, the APC National

rapidly and urged party leaders, grassroots organisers, and supporters to stay united under a common goal. According to him, the APC leadership is committed to creating a stable environment where political collaboration can translate into development for the people of Rivers State and strengthened support for the President.

The APC National Chairman also dismissed concerns from critics who questioned the party's growing relationship with the governor, saying that modern politics required strategic partnerships built on shared goals rather than

## Adeleke's Exit To Accord Party Rattles PDP

Osun State's political landscape has shifted dramatically as Governor Ademola Adeleke officially quit the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and joined the Accord Party, signaling a new chapter ahead of the August 2026 governorship election. Adeleke confirmed on his verified X handle that he had completed his registration with Accord Party on November 6, 2025, and will now seek re-election under its platform.

"Stakeholders and residents of Osun State are aware of why we are taking this important decision," Adeleke stated. He added that his decision aligns with his focus on citizens' and workers' welfare, emphasizing that Accord Party's mission of welfarism resonates with his governance approach.

The governor's defection comes after months of internal conflict within PDP over control of the state party structure. Disagreements with national and state leaders regarding appointments, power-sharing, and party direction reportedly deepened the rift. Attempts to reconcile factions failed,



Adeleke

leaving Adeleke frustrated and politically isolated within the party he had helped win in 2022.

Sources indicate that these frustrations prompted his secret registration with Accord Party last month, a move that insiders say confirmed he had decided to leave PDP. Several top figures in his administration, including commissioners, advisers, and campaign aides, are said to have defected with him, aiming to provide Accord Party with a functioning grassroots network ahead of the elections.

Political analysts suggest Adeleke's popularity among civil servants and youth could significantly boost Accord Party's relevance in a state where it has historically been marginal. PDP, however, has condemned the defection as a betrayal,

asserting that the mandate currently enjoyed by Adeleke belongs to the party and not the individual, and promising to present a strong candidate for the 2026 election.

The governor's move has sparked speculation about a major political realignment. What was expected to be a direct rematch between PDP and a resurgent All Progressives Congress (APC) may now become a three-way contest, potentially fracturing voting blocs. Adeleke's challenge will be to convince voters that his defection reflects policy consistency rather than personal political survival.

Founded in 2010, Accord Party has never held a governorship or senate seat in Osun. Adeleke's arrival elevates the party's profile, granting him significant leeway to consolidate power and select candidates. Observers warn, however, that organizational and funding challenges remain, and the real test for voters will be whether the switch leads to improved governance or merely new political conflicts.

# The 2026 Tax Reforms: Hard Huddles Await Tech, Creative Entrepreneurs

Nigeria's new tax regime—effective January 1, 2026—marks the beginning of a stricter, more digitally aware tax environment.

For the tech ecosystem and the creative industries, this reform is both a wake-up call and a revealing signal about the government's priorities.

While the reforms modernise the tax structure, they also expose gaps that affect innovators, creators, freelancers, and digital SMEs. Below is a breakdown of the implications, the blind spots, and the practical realities for both tech and the creative economy.

## 1. Creatives Lose Foreign Income Exemptions — A Major Shift

Under the old system, creatives—musicians, authors, filmmakers, sports professionals—enjoyed tax exemptions for income earned abroad.

That exemption is now gone.

Starting 2026, creatives must pay Nigerian tax on ALL income, whether earned:

- on tour in Europe
- from YouTube monetization abroad
- from international film distribution
- from Spotify and Apple Music
- from foreign endorsements and appearances

This is a big change and significantly increases compliance burdens.

## 2. Digital

## Entrepreneurs, Content Creators & Freelancers Now Squarely in the Tax Net

The new law makes it explicit:

If you earn income in Nigeria OR you are a Nigerian tax resident earning abroad, you must pay tax.

This includes:

- Youtubers
- TikTok creators
- Instagram vendors
- Web designers
- Remote freelancers

- Crypto traders
- NFT artists
- Gamers and e-athletes
- Influencers
- Podcasters
- Online coaches and marketers

The era of “online but invisible” is over.

## 3. Crypto Gains Are Taxable — With No Regulatory Clarity

Tech entrepreneurs and creatives heavily rely on crypto for:

- receiving foreign payments
- protecting value from inflation
- investing their digital income

The law now taxes crypto and NFT gains. But here's the issue:

- Crypto is taxed...
- But access to crypto is still partially restricted in banking systems
- Full regulation doesn't exist
- Compliance frameworks are unclear

It's taxation without infrastructural readiness.

## 4. Remote Workers for Foreign Companies Must Now Pay Tax

If you work remotely for:

- a US startup
- a UK design agency
- a Canadian fintech
- a European creative studio

you must pay Nigerian tax unless that country already taxes your income under a treaty.

For thousands of Nigerian developers and tech freelancers, this increases:

- compliance complexity
- tax cost
- risk of double taxation
- need for professional accounting

This change affects both income stability and competitiveness.

## 5. Foreign Talent Working for Nigerian Tech Startups May Be Tax-Exempt

This is one of the few pro-tech incentives:

Foreigners employed in Nigerian tech companies may be exempt from Nigerian tax if their income is already taxed in their home country.

This helps startups that rely on:

- foreign engineers

- product designers
- global talent for hybrid projects

A small win — but not enough to offset the broader ecosystem challenges.

## 6. Increased Monitoring of Bank and Digital Transactions

Tech entrepreneurs and creatives—most of whom operate digitally—should expect:

- stricter monitoring of inflows from PayPal, Stripe, Grey, and Barter
- closer tracking of bank deposits from content earnings

more scrutiny of irregular transfers

automated profiling through financial data

Financial privacy is decreasing; compliance visibility is rising.

## 7. No Tax on Transfers or Deposits — Good for High-Volume Digital Flows

Digital businesses often have:

- frequent micro-transactions
- multiple payment channels
- recurring global inflows

It's good news that transfers and deposits are NOT taxable, only income.

But every inflow may still require justification during audits.

## 8. The Rent Relief Doesn't Benefit Creative Studios or Co-working Spaces

The new 20% rent relief (capped at ₦500k) applies only to individuals—not businesses.

This means tech SMEs and creatives renting:

- studios
- co-working spaces
- office units
- rehearsal spaces

YouTube filming spaces receive no rent relief.

Given the high cost of urban commercial rent (especially in Lagos and Abuja), this is a major missed opportunity.

## 9. No Incentives for Digital Tools, Software, or Startups

Unlike many innovation-driven economies, Nigeria's reform does NOT provide:

- tax credits for software
- tax deductions for digital equipment
- startup tax holidays
- innovation grants
- R&D tax incentives
- reliefs for tech manufacturing (phones, gadgets, routers)

Instead, it simply expands the taxable pool without supporting innovation drivers.

The reform taxes tech, but does not fuel tech.

## 10. Enforcement Remains the Biggest Threat to Tech & Creatives

The tech and creative sectors share one fear:

Will the tax system understand how these industries operate?

The risks include:

- arbitrary assessments
- tax officers misunderstanding digital income streams
- confusion about foreign inflows
- harassment of freelancers who lack documentation
- multiple agencies duplicating tax roles
- misclassification of digital revenue sources
- pressure to “settle” rather

than comply

Tax literacy in government is still evolving; digital industries could suffer from misinterpretation.

## OVERALL VERDICT FOR TECH & CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS

Winners:

Tech startups employing foreign staff

Creators with structured income and proper documentation

Digital entrepreneurs with clear financial systems

Individuals benefiting from lower income tax bands

Losers:

Creatives losing foreign-income exemptions

Crypto users without clear regulatory frameworks

Remote workers earning high foreign incomes

Digital SMEs in co-working or studio spaces

Informal content creators with inconsistent records

Freelancers receiving irregular international payments

Bottom Line:

The 2026 reforms tax the digital and creative economy...but do not yet support it.

Without dedicated incentives for innovation, digital exports, IP creation, and studio financing, Nigeria risks taxing its most promising industries into informality or relocation.

# Abuja Set To Host Tech Conference to Drive Next-Gen Learning Innovations

Abuja is gearing up to host one of the most forward-looking technology-driven learning events of the year as the International Conference on Education, Distance Education, Instructional and Educational Technology takes centre stage on Monday, December 15, 2025.

The conference, organised by Research Plus, will draw together stakeholders across the education technology ecosystem — from policy makers and academic institutions to student innovators and private sector disruptors — all united by a shared mission: to redefine how learning is delivered and experienced.

With the rapid

By Aniefiok Akpan

acceleration of digital tools in teaching and learning, organisers say the conference will explore breakthrough technologies that are transforming classrooms into smarter, more accessible learning environments. Artificial intelligence in education, immersive virtual learning, digital classrooms, and data-driven assessment models are expected to dominate conversations at the summit.

Experts predict that the outcome of this gathering could influence new policy directions in Nigeria's education sector — especially as the country



continues to grapple with gaps in access, digital literacy, and infrastructure for distance learning. Government officials scheduled to attend will also have the opportunity to

engage directly with researchers and solution providers offering practical pathways to reform.

One unique feature of the event is its focus on cross-sectoral collaboration by

breaking traditional boundaries between academia, tech developers, and corporate industry players. The objective, according to organisers, is to foster a culture of co-creation that will lead to scalable solutions suitable for schools, workplaces, and remote learning environments.

Participants will also have access to knowledge-sharing sessions, exhibitions of emerging technology, and interactive panels designed to encourage the exchange of transformative ideas. Young innovators are expected to showcase prototypes demonstrating how technology can bridge learning barriers in underserved communities.

As global economies now compete on the strength of digital knowledge and innovation, the role of educational technology has never been more prominent. The conference is timely, signalling a renewed urgency to build systems capable of producing future-ready learners.

Ultimately, this Abuja convergence is positioned not just as another academic event, but as a bold step toward a more sustainable, tech-enabled future for education — one that empowers learners, supports teachers, and keeps Nigeria aligned with global advancements in instructional technology.

## HOUSING

# Housing Deficit: Hardship for Nigerian Families Amidst Agency Fees

By Ihuoma Okoronkwo

Across Nigeria, the struggle for decent shelter has grown into a daily battle for countless families already weighed down by inflation, unstable incomes, and the rising cost of living. Yet layered on this economic pressure is another burden—one far less discussed but deeply felt: the excessive, unregulated fees imposed by property agents. These fees, often charged without justification or oversight, have become a painful barrier to securing accommodation, especially for those already living on the edge.

What worsens the problem is that these charges have become normalized across both urban centres and semi-urban communities. A decade ago, the practice of collecting 10–20% “third-party tenancy fees” was associated mostly with licensed real estate firms. Today, it has been adopted by a sprawling network of individuals who operate as agents without any training, certification, or professional grounding. Their activities have turned house-hunting from a hopeful search into a nightmare.

Beyond their sheer numbers, it is the heavy-handed approach of these informal agents that has alarmed many observers. With no official registration and no regulatory framework guiding their operations, many demand fees equal to or even greater than those charged by established agencies. Yet they provide none of the structure, accountability, or transparency that professional practice requires.

For many unsuspecting families, the experience begins with misleading promises. Some agents present apartments belonging to absentee landlords, inflate the rent to increase their commission, or collect multiple fees from several prospective tenants for the same property. Others offer no receipts or written agreements, leaving renters unprotected and vulnerable if disputes arise.

Ironically, many of these same agents live in the very conditions they help perpetuate—cramped, substandard, or unsafe housing. Their involvement in the system is born not out of expertise but out of



economic desperation, and many see property agency as a quick hustle rather than a profession that requires training and ethics.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian family has become the biggest casualty in this cycle. The country's housing deficit—estimated to be in millions—has made accommodation scarce, especially in booming urban centres like Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor. As demand far outweighs supply, the rental market has tilted dangerously in favour of landlords and middlemen.

For many households, even paying rent alone is a struggle. Adding an agent's compulsory 10–20% fee, demanded upfront and non-negotiable, pushes families further into financial distress. The despair is worst among low-income earners who already devote a large portion of their salaries to transportation, feeding, and school fees.

As a result, many have abandoned their search for better housing entirely. Families that might have moved into safer neighbourhoods resign themselves to overcrowded rooms, uncompleted buildings, or decaying tenements simply because the agent fee is beyond reach. The ripple effect is evident: overcrowding has worsened in poor suburbs, and more children are being raised in unsafe, unsanitary conditions.

This situation is further aggravated by the growing ranks of jobless youths who turn property agency into a roadside hustle. Lacking

guidance, regulation, or mentorship, they become quick profit-seekers, often working at cross-purposes with landlords and tenants. Their unchecked influence heightens tension in many neighbourhoods, leading to conflicts, mistrust, and increased housing instability.

The impact of this trend is not merely economic—it is social and psychological. Families forced to live in dilapidated environments experience higher stress levels, insecurity, and health risks. Mothers worry about children growing up near refuse dumps, crime-prone zones, or houses with poor sanitation. Breadwinners stretch themselves financially, sometimes borrowing money to meet arbitrary charges.

It is clear that the current housing space requires urgent intervention. Without deliberate action, the crisis will deepen, and millions more will slip into precarious living conditions. State governments must step in with well-defined regulations to protect accommodation seekers from exploitation.

Part of this intervention should include setting legal limits on agency charges, especially in relation to rent and the realities of the minimum wage. No agent should be allowed to charge arbitrary amounts; fees must be standardized, documented, and enforceable under law. This will not only protect tenants but also encourage professionalism.

Equally important is public education. Many

Nigerians remain unaware of their rights or the lawful guidelines governing tenancy transactions. Governments, civil society groups, and professional bodies should collaborate on campaigns that help citizens differentiate between legitimate agents and opportunistic intermediaries.

Technology also offers a powerful solution. Digital real estate platforms can connect landlords and tenants directly, reduce the influence of middlemen, and ensure transparency in pricing. With proper verification systems, such platforms can provide safer alternatives at little or no additional cost.

But the responsibility does not lie with government alone. Professional associations in the housing and real estate sector must strengthen their oversight mechanisms, discipline erring members, and push for higher standards in practice. Society too must insist on accountability from both landlords and agents.

Nigeria's housing crisis is undeniably real, and the hardships families face are worsening by the day. To allow unregulated practices to continue is to deepen the poverty and frustration already gripping many households. The country must confront this challenge with the seriousness it deserves.

The path forward requires reforms that prioritize human dignity, affordability, and fairness. Until then, the dream of decent housing will remain elusive for millions of Nigerian families trapped

between a widening housing deficit and a predatory system of agency fees. housing estates, and public facilities needed to support their populations. This imbalance creates scarcity, inflates rent, and empowers middlemen to manipulate the system for personal gain. Governments must invest in mass housing projects, incentivize private developers, and revive abandoned estates to make accommodation more available and less vulnerable to artificial inflation.

Equally, the financial system has a role to play. Access to mortgage facilities remains extremely limited for ordinary Nigerians, forcing millions into unstable rental cycles dominated by high costs and arbitrary charges. Developing affordable housing finance schemes, cooperatives, and low-interest loans will provide families with real pathways to homeownership. When more citizens own their homes, the power imbalance within the rental market naturally begins to shift.

Ultimately, addressing the housing deficit and curbing the excesses of property agents is not merely a matter of economics—it is an issue of national development, public welfare, and social justice. A nation where families are trapped in substandard environments or priced out of decent housing cannot achieve meaningful progress. Nigeria must embrace bold reforms, strengthen regulation, empower its citizens with knowledge, and build a fairer housing market where dignity, transparency, and affordability take centre stage.



## ENTERTAINMENT

# The Faces Behind the Rhythm Cultural Ambassadors Bring Onunu Festival 2025 to Life

The 2025 Onunu Festival, held on December 7th at the Model Secondary School Field in Port Harcourt, unfolded as a vibrant cultural story told through

By Tamunotonye Toby the people who brought it to life. With the theme “Dances, Chants and Rhythm,” this year’s edition became a vivid celebration of identity, artistry and

heritage.

At the centre of the festival were the cultural ambassadors — young men and women adorned in riverine regalia, coral pieces, layered wrappers

and symbolic beads. One striking male ambassador stood out in richly embroidered attire, while a female cultural icon beside him radiated elegance and ancestral pride. Together, they embodied the spirit of centuries-old Ijaw memory.

Their appearance on the Culture Carpet offered more than visual spectacle; it affirmed a new generation boldly embracing ancient identity. These ambassadors carried themselves not as performers but as custodians of meaning, reflecting the authority and dignity of the Ijaw kingdoms they represented.

Much of the festival’s warmth and rhythm revolved around these figures. As drums rolled and dance groups moved in sync, the ambassadors anchored the celebrations — leading chants, engaging guests and becoming natural centres of attraction through their authenticity and passion.

Behind this cultural



renaissance stands the festival founder, Belema Nelson Onikio, fondly called “Onunu Boy.” Creative, calm and deeply rooted in Ijaw heritage, he has shaped the event into a living archive of stories,

rhythms and flavours. Through his vision, the festival has grown into a thriving platform that preserves the essence of a people and celebrates those who proudly carry its legacy.

## AYPRAISE: The Physics Graduate Redefining Gospel Worship with Passion and Purpose

Ayomide Otuas, professionally known as AYPRAISE, is a dynamic Nigerian gospel recording

artist, praise leader, composer, and music director whose sound blends heartfelt worship with passionate spirituality. Born on December 29, 1996, and originally from Lagos State, he has become a rising voice in contemporary gospel music.

A graduate of Pure Physics from the University of Port Harcourt, Ayomide’s academic path did not deter him from answering his deeper calling. His journey into music flourished as he served in multiple capacities—leading worship,

writing songs, and touching lives through his growing ministry.

A committed minister of the Gospel, AYPRAISE serves under the leadership of Dr. Perez Araka at RCCG Dominion Center, where he continues to strengthen his foundation in spiritual authority, service, and worship leadership. He also leads as the Music Director of Team: Regal, a worship team known for stirring atmospheres of praise, excellence, and the miraculous.

AYPRAISE shot into the limelight with his hit single “Akachukwu” (The Hand of God)—a powerful anthem of thanksgiving that has resonated widely. Available on major platforms such as Apple Music and Boomplay, the song credits his birth name, Ayomide Otuas, for its composition, reinforcing his gift for creating deeply scriptural, original music.

Driven by the Holy Spirit and a passion for excellence, AYPRAISE continues to rise as one of the refreshing voices shaping the future of gospel worship in Nigeria.



AYPRAISE

## Prince Ebuka: A Dynamic Music Minister Of His Generation

Prince Chukwuebuka, widely known as PRINCE EBUKA, is a distinguished music minister whose passion, energy, and excellence continue to shape worship experiences across Nigeria. Born on February 9 and hailing from Imo State, he has grown into one of the most vibrant voices influencing today’s gospel soundscape.

Over the years, Prince Ebuka has served in multiple capacities within the music ministry — from drummer to keyboardist to choir director — continually proving his versatility and deep commitment to kingdom service.

Renowned for his electrifying praise and worship sessions, his music style resonates strongly

with Gen-Z audiences, thanks to his catchy and spirit-lifting song selections.

As the leader of TEAMEBUKA, he has shared stages with several notable gospel music acts, further solidifying his presence in the industry.

Prince Ebuka’s growing discography includes impactful singles such as “WHY,” “ECHOKE,” “NORMALLY,” “AKANCHAWA MEDLEY,” “ENO GOBAD,” “EXPLAIN TIRE,” “PSALMS 23,” “TRUST,” “WHEN ERED,” and more.

He currently serves at the RCCG Dominion Centre under the spiritual leadership of Dr. Perez Araka, continuing to inspire many through his ministry and music.



Ebuka

## Segun Aniye: The Saxophonist, Coach, and Visionary Shaping a New Sound of Gospel Excellence

Oluwasegun Aniyeloye, widely known as Segun Aniye, is a renowned music coach, director, and accomplished saxophonist committed to spreading the gospel through soul-stirring, Spirit-filled compositions. A proud graduate of the University of Port Harcourt and a devoted member of Gateway International Church, his faith remains the bedrock of his musical journey.

As the founder of THE CYMFONIX, an ensemble of gifted creatives, and THE CYMFONIX MUSIC ACADEMY, Segun Aniye has played a pivotal role in nurturing emerging talents and sharpening the skills of established ones. His leadership extends to two major annual concerts—MUSIC O’CLOCK CONCERT and REFLECTION CONCERT—both of which serve as powerful platforms for praise, worship, and artistic expression.

His growing discography includes

standout releases such as JO, Abba Father, Idinma, My Sound, Actor, Laida, YHWH, and his inspiring EP titled OMOBA.

A respected voice in the music ministry, Segun Aniye is celebrated for his passion for intentional growth, excellent delivery, and energetic worship. His ministry has taken him across various

platforms and events, consistently leaving audiences uplifted and inspired.

As a dedicated music coach, he has trained numerous individuals and church choirs, watching them blossom under his guidance. He champions a simple but profound belief: music can—and should—be done with excellence.



Segun

Sports

# Joshua vs Paul

## Legacy Meets Spotlight in Miami Showdown



December 19 at Miami's Kaseya Center will see heavyweight legend Anthony Joshua face social-media star-turned-boxer Jake Paul in a fight dubbed "Judgment Day." It's more than fists—it's

legacy versus ambition. Joshua enters carrying the weight of expectation. Former two-time unified heavyweight champion, he seeks redemption after defeats to Andy Ruiz Jr., Oleksandr Usyk, and Daniel Dubois. A win

restores glory; a loss deepens doubts. Paul's rise has been unconventional. From YouTube fame to boxing notoriety, he aims to prove he belongs among the heavyweight elite. Victory would silence critics and

elevate his credibility. Physically, Joshua dominates size and power at 6'6" and mid-240s. Paul is smaller but faster and agile. In heavyweight boxing, one lapse can decide everything. Stylistically, Joshua is a

seasoned orthodox heavyweight—jab setups, combinations, and ring IQ. Paul relies on feints, precision, and disruption, making the fight a strategic chess match. Defense and conditioning are key. Joshua's stamina favors long rounds; Paul's youth and speed could offset the weight gap if he manages energy well. One mistake could define the night. Beyond the ring, stakes are huge. Joshua's global fame and Paul's social-media reach promise massive pay-per-view numbers. Sport and spectacle intersect in this bout. Tactics will matter. Early

rounds will test distance and tempo; mid-rounds will reveal stamina; final rounds could hinge on a single punch. Upsets are possible on either side. For fans, the fight blends power, skill, unpredictability, and drama. Joshua brings pedigree; Paul brings speed and media magnetism. The outcome could reshape public perception for years. This is more than a fight—it's a battle of experience versus ambition, legacy versus spectacle. Miami is ready. The world is watching. December 19 will be unforgettable.

### Past Records Of Joshua And Paul

#### Anthony Joshua

StatisticValuePro fights 32 Wins 28 Wins by KO / TKO 25 Losses 4 Draws 0 Record 28-4-0 (25 KOs)

Recent fights (last few): 21 Sep 2024: Lost to Daniel Dubois — Loss by KO.

08 Mar 2024: Defeated Francis Ngannou — Win by KO.

23 Dec 2023: Defeated Otto Wallin — Win by TKO (corner stoppage).

**Background:** Joshua is a former two-time unified heavyweight champion (held WBA, IBF, WBO at various times) and won Olympic gold (2012, super-heavyweight) before turning pro.

#### Jake Paul

StatisticValuePro fights 13 Wins 12 Wins by KO / TKO 7 Losses 1 Draws 0 Record 12-1-0 (7 KOs) Selected fight history:

28 Jun 2025: Defeated Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. — Win by unanimous decision.

15 Nov 2024: Defeated Mike Tyson — Win by unanimous decision (8-round bout).

20 Jul 2024: Defeated Mike Perry — Win by TKO (6th round).

02 Mar 2024: Defeated Ryan Bourland — Win by TKO1.

15 Dec 2023: Defeated Andre August — Win by KO1.

05 Aug 2023: Defeated Nate Diaz — Win by unanimous decision.

26 Feb 2023: Lost to Tommy Fury — Loss by split decision.

**Background:** Jake Paul — originally known as a YouTuber — made his professional boxing debut in 2020. He quickly transitioned to fighting more established/mixed-martial-arts backgrounds, sometimes in heavyweight.

**Notes & Context (Comparative)**

Joshua's career has been at elite heavyweight level: he held major world titles (WBA, IBF, WBO), and has faced top-tier competition.

Paul's record — while solid on paper — includes many fights against non-traditional boxers (MMA fighters, former athletes in other sports, retired fighters, celebrities).

As of 2025, Paul's record is 12-1-0.

Joshua's record is 28-4-0 (25 knockouts) as of mid/late 2025.

As the fight approaches, fans can expect intensity, drama, and moments that could define careers. Early rounds will set the tempo; middle rounds will reveal stamina; final rounds will determine the outcome. In heavyweight boxing, a single punch often tells the story of the night.

## CAF Champions League Rivers United On A Steep Hill

Nigeria's recent struggles in international football appear to be spilling into the CAF Champions League, where the nation's sole representative, Rivers United, has begun their Group A campaign with back-to-back defeats. This continuation of poor continental performance reflects a worrying decline in Nigeria's football stature and raises fresh doubts about the country's competitiveness on Africa's biggest club stage. Their first major test against defending

**By Ishmael Bereba** champions Pyramids FC quickly exposed deep tactical and technical shortcomings. Despite a steady first half, the second half collapsed into chaos as youngster Ahmed Atef punished every defensive lapse with a clinical hat-trick. Finidi George's 4-3-3 formation proved inadequate against the champions' superior pace, structure, and precision, leaving United outclassed and overrun. Finidi admitted after the match that loss of concentration and costly errors sealed their fate,

pointing to deeper issues in execution and mental fortitude. The coach's reflections highlighted a recurring problem: Rivers United struggle to sustain intensity and discipline for the full duration, a flaw that continues to undermine their continental ambitions. Seeking redemption at home, United hosted RS Berkane in Uyo and took an early lead through a deflected effort off Mamadou Lamine Camara. But just when a morale-boosting victory seemed within reach, the team faltered again. Two

late goals from Berkane exposed the same defensive frailties and poor game management, turning hope into heartbreak and leaving United's qualification prospects in serious jeopardy. With group action set to resume in January 2026, the stakes could not be higher. Beyond pride, the financial reward of \$4 million for the eventual champions underscores the opportunity slipping away. Their next match against Power Dynamos on January 23 now carries do-or-die weight — a failure to win could effectively end their campaign. Still, the path forward, though steep, remains climbable. Rivers United must urgently tighten their defence, improve concentration, and show greater tactical maturity. Their response in the remaining fixtures will not only shape their Champions League fate but also determine whether Nigeria can still claim relevance in African club football. The Pride of Rivers must now rise — not just for themselves, but for a nation eager to reclaim its footballing





## UNDER THE LENS

With Amieyeofori Ibim

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# Bodo–Bonny Road: A Landmark in Nigeria's Infrastructure Narrative

The temporary inauguration of the 37.9-kilometre Bodo–Bonny Road by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is more than a ceremonial ribbon-cutting; it is a historic moment in Nigeria's long and often arduous journey toward infrastructural renewal. For generations, the people of Bonny Kingdom and neighbouring Ogoni communities navigated life via river currents or relied on the costly lift of helicopters. This road, finally linking them to the mainland, marks a turning point where national ambition intersects with the daily realities of ordinary citizens.

President Tinubu called the project a “dream come true,” and his words capture the emotional weight infrastructure carries in Nigeria. Roads here are never just concrete and asphalt—they are symbols of hope, arteries of commerce, and bridges to possibility. By connecting once-isolated communities, the Bodo–Bonny Road becomes not just a physical route but a conduit of aspiration, uniting islands of potential long separated by geography.

Though traffic is initially limited to light vehicles from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., the road already quietly transforms daily life. Children no longer have to plan mornings around unpredictable tides, traders can chart livelihoods with newfound confidence, and access to healthcare will no longer be hostage to river conditions. Change, subtle as it may be, often leaves echoes that ripple across generations.

The President also praised Julius Berger and its project team, highlighting a truth often overlooked: infrastructural victories rely as much on technical skill

and persistence as on political will. With 11 bridges spanning marsh-ridden terrain, the corridor is a triumph of engineering tenacity, a testament to those confronting hostile landscapes to turn vision into reality.

Governor Siminalayi Fubara's gratitude underscores the delicate balance of cooperative federalism. States like Rivers, with challenging terrains and economic importance, depend on federal partnership to translate regional aspirations into tangible outcomes. Even partially operational, the road demonstrates the rewards of collaboration over competition.

Economically, the corridor is transformative. Bonny Island, home to Nigeria LNG and other energy assets, has long been a paradox of wealth wrapped in isolation. By linking to the mainland, the road promises reduced logistics costs, new businesses, expansion of existing industries, and a fresh wave of economic vitality. Infrastructure here becomes not just a utility but an engine of inclusive prosperity.

Beyond numbers and commerce, the road reshapes social life. Communities once muffled by remoteness now gain voice and presence. Greater mobility fosters cultural exchange, civic participation, and a renewed sense of belonging. Connectivity, after all, is as much about dignity as distance.

The temporary restrictions—excluding heavy-duty trucks, motorcycles, and tricycles—reflect a careful, phased approach. Rushing full access could compromise both safety and durability. In a country where impatience often leads to premature decay, caution here is not

hesitance but foresight.

Building through mangroves and riverine ecosystems required delicate negotiation with nature. If Nigeria hopes to replicate sustainable infrastructure across the Niger Delta, lessons from this project must become templates for balancing human needs with ecological responsibility.

Politically, the corridor embodies what advocacy and oversight can achieve. Senator Barinada Mpigi's involvement demonstrates that politics, at its best, can be a lever for development rather than a roadblock. Each completed kilometre quietly endorses governance that listens, responds, and delivers.

The road's journey—from conception in 2014 to serious work beginning in 2017—reflects the labyrinthine path of public works in Nigeria. Bureaucratic hurdles, funding uncertainties, and community endurance marked its slow maturation, yet the partial opening proves that persistence from both government and citizens can eventually carve enduring paths.

Looking toward full completion in March 2026, the Bodo–Bonny Road challenges all stakeholders—government, contractors, and communities alike—to sustain momentum. Temporary access is merely the prelude. When fully operational, it will permanently reshape the social and economic map of Rivers State. Etched in asphalt, bridges, and human resilience, it stands as a testament to a people who waited, a government that persisted, and a nation that continues to dream of connection, prosperity, and shared progress.

## My Space Travel

In my dream, I was an astrologer and had touched down on planet Mercury. To view planet Earth and all its activities in the Niger Area or Africa, my parallax lenses became handy and captured some of the captivating moments of the year

On the African continent, the coup de-tat recently in Guinea Bissau in West Africa where ex-President Jonathan had gone to observe election in that country but ended up being escorted to the Airport by soldiers who had seized power was momentous. Ex President Jonathan was seen sent home without his democratic flowers!

In that dream, my parallax lenses also illuminated some frenzy moments in the Niger area- they were equally awesome! The President had imposed emergency rule in one of the states and sent the governor, the deputy and the members of the House of Assembly parking in a democratic era over political misgivings. It turned out to be a saving grace!

Still in the Niger area, I saw political defections - a better part to the ruling party, others to coalitions, ready to give the ruling party the run for its money in 2027. My lenses also captured the Senate President- Godswill Akpabio's altercation with Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan over alledged inappropriate gestures in the year.

The signals for my departure to the moon came and I hurriedly shifted my lenses across the length and breathe of the Niger area-I saw flooding which took lives and the frantic efforts of the First Lady- Sen. Oluremi Tinubu in redemption reign with #1b disbursement to families in Niger State

On the other hand, banditry and invasion by terrorists on communities in Benue, Plateau, Kaduna, Kwara states, Maga amongst others were serious highlights prompting the US President to label Nigeria as a country of particular concern over what he called Christian killings thereby sparking diplomatic tensions

It was time to leave-my oxygen bottle is almost empty and I needed a refill at the station enroute planet earth. I took a last minute gaze and there was sowore in his special goggles running for dear life as he is being chased

after by security agents. I wondered why he couldn't represent Nigeria at the Olympics for the 100 meter dash. His crime, they say is protest and more protest cum landed property exposure in California.

The botched October 1 independence celebration at 65, the rumour of coup, the replacement of all Service Chiefs, the DSS invading Chief Timipre Sylva's home in Abuja and his subsequent declaration as being being wanted in connection with the alledged sponsorship of the failed attempt.



Trump



Tinubu



Akpabio

## Gist Musing By Mat-Max Amazuo