

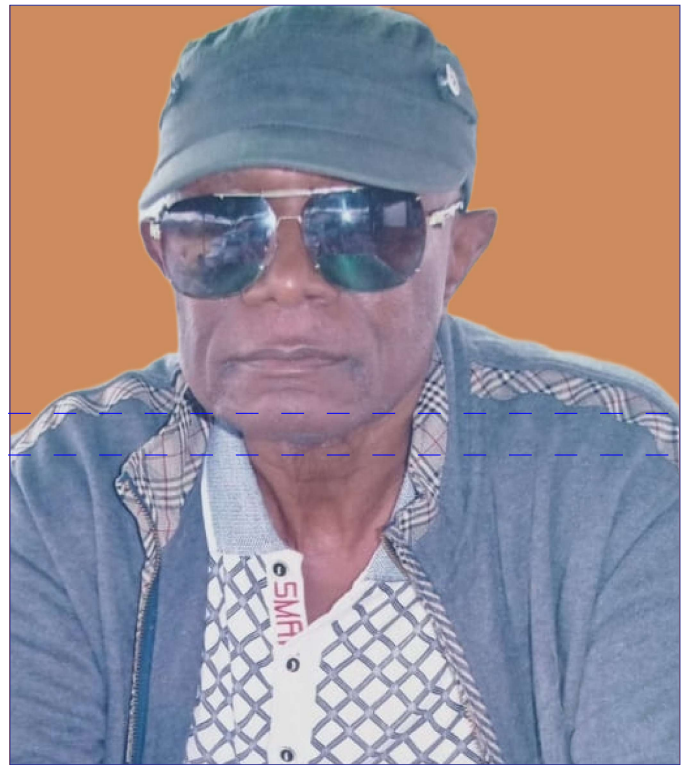
What are governors doing with money?

One of the benefits being touted by the current administration as being derivable from the removal of fuel subsidy on petroleum products is that state governments now have more money at their disposal to executive projects and programs for their people, on a scale far larger than they were able to do before May 29, 2023. President Bola Tinubu is wont to say, as he did when the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria visited him on July 29, 2026, that 27 state governments were unable to pay workers salary when he assumed office. But, not only are they now able to do so as and when due, but have been able to clear backlogs of pension arrears and maintain regular payment.

While it is true that state governments now pay workers' salaries regularly, the point must be made that not all the states have been able to pay the N70,000 new minimum wage that came into effect in 2024. At the last count, eight states Bornu, Gombe, Kaduna, Zamfara, Yobe, Taraba, Benue and Kogi states have yet to pay the minimum wage. However, beyond ability to pay workers' salaries, there are growing questions about what state governors are doing with the quantum of money that flows into their states every month from the Federation Account.

These questions have become necessary in view of the fact that apart from salaries and infrastructure, mostly construction of roads and bridges, there is no state in the country today where the standard of living can be said to reflect the financial status it has acquired in the last three years. There is a general tendency to focus on the federal government while assessing the standard of living of Nigerians since the Tinubu administration came into being, and blaming it for the woes the people are trying to grapple with. This is natural, more so since the president is the one that put in place the economic policies that have brought untold hardship to Nigerians. It is therefore normal to expect that relief for the pains should come from Abuja. But many Nigerians have forgotten that the state and local government levels are where the impact of development should be felt most. Indeed, the micro-economic outcome of the policies of the federal government should be felt in the cost of food items, transportation fares, accommodation, medical care, etc., in the lives of people at the urban, sub-urban and rural areas. It appears that the focus on the federal government by Nigerians has provided a cover for state governors to carry on as though they have nothing for which to account to people in their states. This is why you hardly hear people at the state level ask their governors what they are doing with the huge allocations they get from Abuja. To the average Nigerian, Tinubu is the cause of their problems, and only he is the solution. And while this misdirected accusation goes on, governors embark on, at best, white elephant projects that have little or no direct bearing on the lives of the people.

The reason governors focus attention on gigantic



infrastructure projects like roads and bridges is not difficult to fathom. One, those are projects that easily catch the eyes of the people, giving them a false sense of accomplishments by the governors. People who have never seen a flyover are likely to temporarily forget their hunger, lack of access to quality healthcare and illiteracy to commend the governor for changing their environment. Secondly, and most importantly, too, infrastructure projects constitute the source from which governors allegedly misappropriate public funds. The higher the cost of an infrastructure project, the higher the percentage of kickback built into it. Among state governors today, it is something of a competition to build flyovers, even where they are not needed. You find governors of states where roads are literally empty and devoid of vehicles building flyovers, more for environmental beauty than for necessity. Tinubu had cause recently to advise governors to desist from the practice of building flyovers where they are not needed, but focus on building of roads that easily provide economic benefits to the people. For such an advice to come from the president means that he knows the amount of wastage that is going on in the states, including, mostly, states where his party is in power. It is not possible to chronicle in detail the total amount of money each state has received from the federal allocation from June, 2023 till date. But available records show that federal allocations to states jumped from N907.05 billion in June, 2023, to over N3trillion in mid-2026. Between 2023 and 2025, the three tiers of government shared N47.25 trillion.

In the first quarter of 2026, the 36 states shared a total of

N2.2trillion. Where have all the monies gone? Despite the huge allocations each state receives from Abuja every month, there is no state in the country where the standard of living has improved, since 2023. There is no state where citizens have access to pipe-borne water. There is no state where the standard of healthcare delivery has improved through building and equipment of primary health centers. There is no state where the standard of education has improved through building and equipment of schools, from primary to secondary. It is common to see, on videos and pictures, in 2026 Nigeria, primary and secondary schools where pupils and students sit on the floor to receive lectures. We never saw such videos and pictures in the past, even up to the last 15 years when allocations to states were not anywhere what is being received today. The videos and pictures you see on sponsored television programs are a sharp contrast to what is truly on the ground in the states. In fact, if you rely on what you see on television, you would think citizens are living in paradise in the states. You would think the excess money from fuel subsidy removal is rubbing off on the lives of the people. But a visit to the states would enable you to see, in close range, the poverty that is written on the faces of the people. The situation is worse in states where government is the sole employer of labor civil service states where the private sector is non-existent. It must be pointed out that the question about where the huge federal allocations are going does not apply in all the states. There are states with observable evidence of the money that flows in every month. In such states, especially states where the governor is going for a second term, it would be difficult for the governor to be replaced by any challenger. Their performances would do the campaign for them.

In Abia State, for instance, Governor Alex Oti has broken what was hitherto considered a jinx of development. He has done what previous governors since 1999 could not do. Oti has done so well in probably all areas of human development there is no challenger in sight who can frustrate his second term ambition. Such is the level of popularity and acceptance he enjoys in the state that Benjamin Kalu, the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives who had boasted about replacing him in 2027 has since realize it would be an exercise in futility to join the governorship race. He has had to beat a retreat to focus on winning re-election to the lower chamber of the National Assembly where he can try his luck in retaining his position.

Other governors that have performed creditably are Peter Mbah of Enugu, Babagana Zulum of Bornu and Bassey Otu, in Cross River. Otu deserves particular mention for praise, because of the relatively paltry allocation he receives, which he has used to develop the state to the best of his ability. In the first quarter of 2026, Cross River State received a total of N35.15 billion, placing second to the last among the 36 states. In the first four months of this year, the state received its highest allocation of N12.635 billion in April, and a miserable N10.177 billion in March. Its a miracle Governor Otu has been able to make considerable progress with the little he receives, especially when repayments on massive debts accumulated by previous administrations are brought into the mix. If we are asking the question about what governors are doing with the monies they receive every

month while citizens still live in abject poverty, the answer may be located in the 2027 general election, both for those that are seeking re-election and those rounding off their two-term tenure. For governors that are going for a second term, part of the allocation is being stashed away for campaigns and vote buying, since the election is going to be decided chiefly by money, not by performance.

For those that are completing their second tenure, a substantial part of the monthly allocation would go into funding the election of their successors. No governor wants to leave office and be completely detached from power. Some of the two-term governors that are going to the rehabilitation home which is the Senate need money to fund their election. Those ones need to remain in the corridors of power to stay politically relevant, and also be able to keep an eye on their successors. But beyond the aforementioned reasons for alleged misappropriation, many of the governors are stashing away a good chunk of their allocations to save for the rainy day, for themselves and their generations, both the living and the yet unborn. Having lived a life of luxury for eight years, they cannot imagine a life in which they would have to spend from their pockets, despite being paid huge sums in pension, in addition to numerous benefits. They are buying up properties within and outside the country, some in which they may not sleep in or even enter in one or more years. If Nigerians are waiting for the effects of the removal of fuel subsidy to reflect on their lives, they may have to wait much longer because some of the governors are not thinking along that line.

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4. Boost of the libido.
5. Prevention of malaria
6. Management of HBP
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9. Recommended for insomniacs, particularly the alcohol variant.
10. Cleans the Kidneys.

Senator Patrick Offiong Ani (FCA)

National Coordinator
The 4th Force
08033326547