

CRIME & OTHER STORIES

'How syndicate killed my son and officials to withdraw N1m from

A 57-year-old father of 10 has commended the Lagos State Police Command for apprehending a suspected member of a robbery gang responsible for the death of one of his children. Mr. Mercelemiu Mba, a farmer and native of Ihueze Neye, Alaniri Local Government Area of Enugu State, said the arrest of 65-year-old Joseph Akpan, whose alleged role in the gang was to get bank officials to collaborate with the gang, was a major breakthrough by the police in the state.

Akpan was said to have masterminded the transfer of huge sums of money from two bank accounts belonging to Mba's late son, Chinedu, with the collaboration of some bank officials. A police source told our correspondent that the matter was reported to the Commissioner of Police in Lagos State, Mr. Kayode Aderanti, who immediately ordered the transfer of the case from Lion Building to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

CP Aderanti also ordered the officer in charge of SARS, Mr. Abba Kyari, a Superintendent of Police (SP), to personally handle the matter and fish out another member of the gang named Benson, who was said to have supplied the documents with which Akpan withdrew money from Chinedu's bank accounts, as well as other members of the syndicate who are still at large.

Police sources said that while Mba stayed in Neye, Enugu State, with eight of his children, the late Chinedu lived in Gindiri, Plateau State, with the fourth child, Tochukwu. After a few days of investigation, Kyari and his men's efforts were said to have yielded some results while investigation is still ongoing.

Narrating the events that led to the arrest of Akpan by SARS operatives, Mba said: "On the 9th of September last year, at about 8pm, I was in my house at Neye, Enugu State, when I heard my son, Obinna, shouting, 'Daddy, Daddy, have you seen it?' He shouted for more than three times as he was answering a phone call from Gindiri.

"I asked him what the call was all about and he said that armed robbers had shot Chinedu. I told him to calm down; that even if Chinedu had died, would he (Obinna) kill himself? I said he should let us hear the details on the phone to know whether he was taken to hospital or not.

"I then called one of my relations, who

■ Ebele BONIFACE ■

lived very close to Chinedu, to know whether he knew about the shooting, but there was no response.

"Luckily, one of our town's men named Ndubuisi Nwangene, who lives in Gindiri, said they (villagers and police) said they had taken Chinedu to the hospital but he died there and they were preparing to deposit the corpse in the mortuary. Then the phone went off. We cried throughout the night.

"The following morning, our people in Gindiri said I should drop whatever I was doing and come to Gindiri to see what was happening. They said the door had been locked because the whole house was ransacked and scattered and that for security reasons, nothing should be touched until I come.

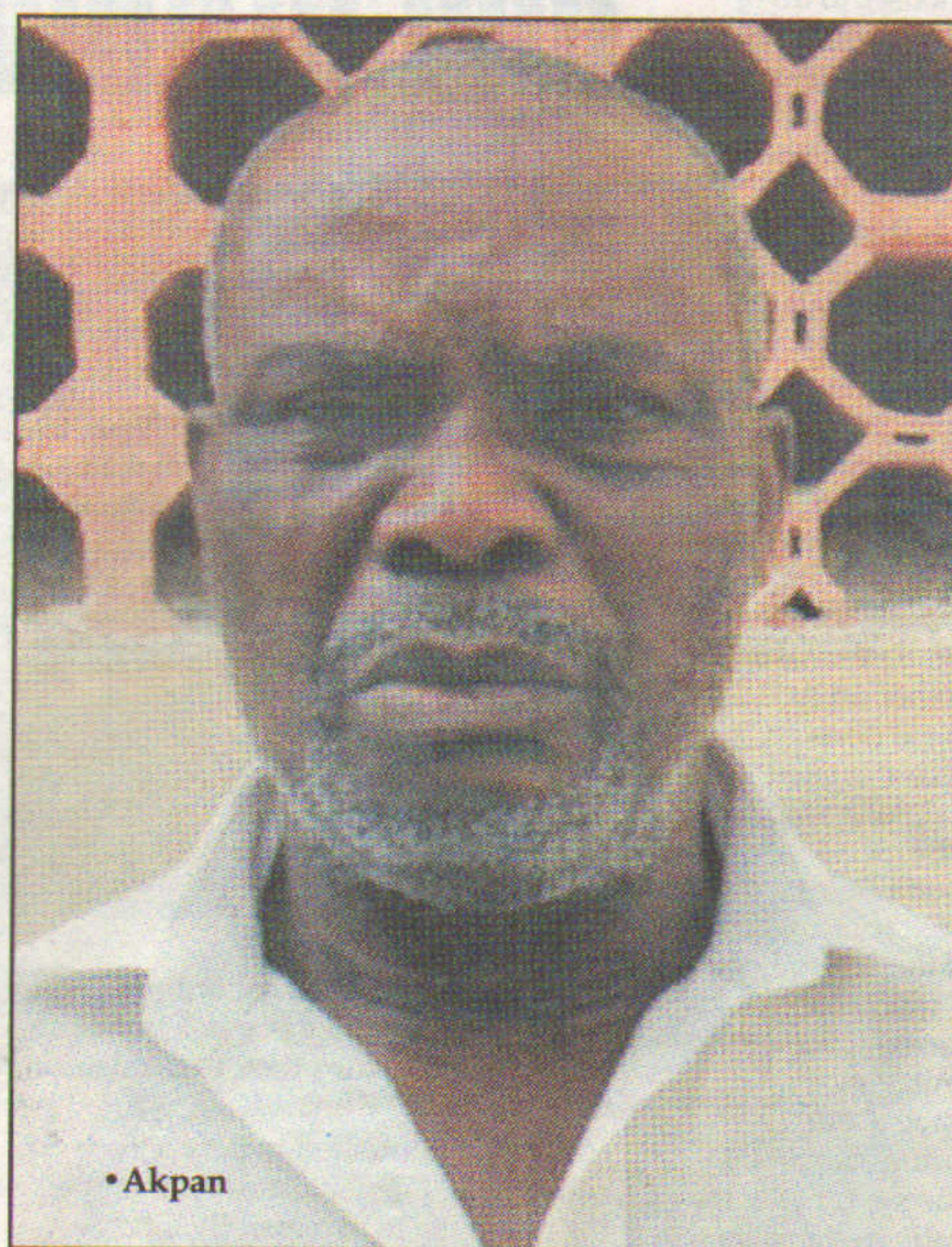
"I decided that my two sons, Obinna and Uchechukwu, should go to Gindiri, with an instruction that they should bring Chinedu's remains home, and they did. The corpse was brought back by representatives of the Hausa community, the Emir of Gindiri and the Christ Embassy, who also footed the transport cost from Gindiri to Enugu State.

"God had blessed Chinedu in Gindiri and he became rich. I later planned to go back to Gindiri with Obinna to strengthen the security at Chinedu's compound. The guard was paid N20,000 every month and we paid him the November salary so that he would continue to guard the place until the family would take control of everything.

"I also instructed Obinna to start selling some of Chinedu's property in order to reduce the burden of transporting the entire property home. Along the line, we found the teller with which Chinedu was paying money into his two accounts in two banks.

"We took the teller to the two banks to check the balance of his accounts. The banks' staff sympathised with us and asked us to go to court to get a letter of administration. We took the letter of administration to the two banks and they gave us his statements of account.

"At one of the banks, the balance in his account was N6 million plus, while at the other, the balance was N1 million. We paid the court N400 for the processing of documents. The court also advised me to pay



• Akpan

N3,000 for publication in one of the national newspapers for due process. I asked why and they explained that if Chinedu owed anybody, they would know that he is now late, while anybody who owes him could come and pay 21 days after the said publication.

"After that, I would be given the power/authority to withdraw my son's money from the two banks. I then went back to Enugu State, while Obinna stayed back at Gindiri.

"A few days later, Obinna called me on the phone and told me that the letter had been released. I got to Jos on December 21 and went with Obinna to collect the letter of administration.

"We could not go to the bank on that day because before we got to Mangu town, the banks had closed. We went back to the

banks the following day and submitted the letters.

"On January 5, we went to the two banks to withdraw money but the cashier said we should go; that he would do it for us and we would receive the Union Bank alert. We later went back to tell them that we could only find N5 million plus in the account.

"We went back the following day to tell the bank our experience. The cashier welcomed us warmly and took us to the manager. The manager asked me whether I had seen any of Chinedu's phones since he died and I said no, adding that maybe those who killed him also collected his phone because they had been tampering with his account.

The manager said we should go to Abuja to see the person in possession of my son's phones. The bank gave us a po-

liceman to accompany us to Abuja. When we got to Abuja, he handed us over to the Abuja Police. Later we were put in the plain for flight to Lagos.

"On getting to the airport in Lagos, we were handed over to another policeman who took us to Union Bank's headquarters on Lagos Island. From there, I was taken to the Lion Building Police Station on Lagos Island. That was on the 9th or 10th of January 2015.

"The Divisional Police Officer, Aisha Haruna, a Superintendent of Police, called my son and me to his office. There she ordered them to bring two suspects from the cell and asked me whether I knew both of them and I said no. The DPO then said I came with my son, Obinna, and the other man also came with his son. He then asked who between us was Chinedu's genuine fa-

Family, police disagree over cleric detained