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"Uplift the people, project the nation"

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Abia modular refinery to start production in 2025

Stories by Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Government has said that arrangements are on for the proposed state modular refinery project, to come on stream in 2025, at the Abia Industrial Innovation Park, Owaza, Ukwu West Local Government. The State Commissioner for Information and Culture, Prince Okey Kanu, disclosed this at Government House, Umuahia, while briefing journalists on the outcome of this week's Executive Council Meeting presided over by Governor Alex Otti. Kanu, stated that the landmark project, the first in the innovation park, will generate over 2000 direct and

indirect job opportunities for the teeming, youth population. The commissioner who was accompanied by some members of the Executive Council, emphasized the significance of the modular refinery in providing refined products for Nigerians and boosting the state's internally generated revenue. He noted the importance of the project to the present administration and expressed government's commitment to ensuring the timely realization of the project. The commissioner said that the state government was leveraging on its petroleum and mineral resources



Abia State Commissioner for Information and Culture, Prince Okey Kanu briefing newsmen on the outcome of the Exco meeting.

deposit which are expected to contribute to the economic development and added that investors are eyeing opportunities in Abia State. "The state government is poised to reap from the huge investment provided by the petroleum and mineral

resources endowments of the state. In this regard, there are lots of investors justling to invest in Abia State", he stated. According to him, when these investments are put in place, they would help to provide opportunities for

our youths as such investments would add to our revenue base and generally reflect on the economic development and general well-being of the state. On road infrastructure, the commissioner said that Jubilee Road and three other newly completed ones in Aba, would soon be commissioned. Kanu, who announced an upcoming medical mission in April 2024, set to benefit not less than 5,000 Abians, also disclosed that the renovated Ummunneato and Okpuala-Ngwa general hospitals, would be commissioned soon. On suspected measles

outbreak in Arochukwu and Umunneochi councils, he assured that the Health Commissioner and her team are actively working to curtail it. Speaking also, the Commissioner for Health, Dr Ngozi Okoronkwo, said that government was in control of the reported cases of measles outbreak involving three persons in the two local government areas. She noted that the Ministry was at the mop up stage, to ensure that the out-break does not spread to other parts of the state, adding that the outbreak may not be unconnected to the dry season.

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Gov Otti to champion improved welfare for Nigeria Armed Forces

The 2024 Armed Forces remembrance day celebration has been rounded up nationwide with the laying of wreaths at the tombs of the unknown soldier. Speaking at the event, Abia state governor, Dr Alex Otti promised to champion better welfare packages for service men in the state. Dr Alex Otti, who spoke at the laying of wreaths at the tomb of the unknown soldier at Aguiyi Ironsi cenotaph, Oguruike Layout, during the conclusion of the 2024 Armed forces remembrance day celebration, emphasized the need to redirect attention towards improving the welfare of military personnel both active and veterans in appreciation of their unwavering commitment and sacrifice to the nation's peace and unity. The Governor while emphasizing the integral role security plays in economic and social development, underscored the need for enhanced welfare conditions for the Armed Forces.

He regretted that the welfare of the men and women of the Armed Forces has not received the quality attention that is deserved, and noted that their welfare should be paramount and commensurate with the sacrifices they render in their service and post service years. He said: "As a nation, we should be thankful that our servicemen and women, not minding the failures and wilful amnesia of the political elites, have continued to stand firmly by their lifelong commitment of dedication and loyalty to their fatherland, that nothing, not even poor welfare conditions and reported abandonment of families of deceased colleagues, can dampen their morale. The governor said that it was indeed very regrettable that the welfare of the men and women in uniform, in their service and post-service years, has not received the quality attention commensurate with the sacrifices they made. Dr Otti maintained that the time was now ripe to make a change in the way we treat our active military operatives and the veterans for their bravery even in face of death.

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Abia state Governor, Dr Alex Otti

News

Abia modular refinery to start production in 2025

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Contributing, the Commissioner for Petroleum and Solid Minerals, Professor Joel Ogbonna, while noting that Abia State is endowed with 17 solid mineral deposits, said investors from Europe and other parts of the world, have indicated interest to partner with the state government, in the solid mineral sector. On the reported extortion of motorists, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Media and Publicity, Mr. Ferdinand Ekeoma, emphasized that

government has taken a firm stance against extortion and touting activities in Aba and its surroundings.

The Special Adviser to Governor Otti, revealed that the governor had directed the Special Adviser on security, to apprehend those involved in any form of extortion.

Ekeoma, noted that the governor had previously issued a directive to halt all illegal revenue and levy collections, but expressed concern on recent reports of extortion under the guise of

loading fees.

Reiterating the commitment to preventing hoodlums from controlling any form of levies in the state, Ekeoma assured that the government will not tolerate such activities and added that government plans to crack down on illegal motor parks and markets, while relocating traders operating in unauthorized markets to enhance the overall sanitation of the Abia environment.

Royal father sues for peace in communities

From Nwokoma Blessing, Aba

The Chairman of Osisioma Ngwa Traditional Rulers Council, His Royal Highness Eze Chidi Obisike Nkoro, has tasks traditional rulers as custodians of culture and traditions of the people to ensure absolute peace and tranquility reigns in various domains.

This he stated at the coronation ceremony of their traditional ruler, His Royal Highness, Eze Chigozie Christopher Court at Umumba play ground.

He stated that peace remains the only panacea for progress and positive development to thrive in the communities across the state.

He opined that the traditional institution if built on proper foundation of peace and word of God, would create a safe heaven for both government and indigenes.

Performing the coronation, the OCHAM 11, task the newly coronated traditional ruler to rule with the fear of God and carry everybody along and give every positive minded citizens a level playing ground. Reading from the Bible book of 1Samuel

10:1, 24 and 26.

The Chairman of the traditional rulers Osisioma council admonished the citizens of IYIUKWU Autonomous community to work in synergy with their brand new traditional ruler to bring the needed peace and progress.

Speaking, the Chairman of the occasion and traditional ruler of Ibeku Ngwa Autonomous community, HRH Eze Ngoking eulogized the governor of the state, Dr Alex Otti for his outstanding performance especially in the area of harmonizing the traditional institution in the state, with the emergence of HRM Eze Nto Mba as the Chairman of traditional rulers council and cautioned the newly coronated traditional ruler to rule with the laydown rules and principles of the traditional institution.

In his address earlier, the community through their palace secretary, Mr Iheanacho said that the community which was curved out from Umunneise Autonomous community in 2001 had series of challenges to grapple with which include

political demarcations where some indigenes feel or believe that they belong to River State but the community expressed their gratitude to both the state and local government levels for intervening in various social projects which includes the rehabilitation of the only government primary school in the community, erecting of new blocks/building in the school; rehabilitating and resuscitating of the community Healthcare Centre.

Correction Of Names

This is to affirm that Chunyere Egbuchuram which appeared in my Bank Verification Number (BVN) was wrongly written. I now wish to be called, known and addressed as ANTHONY ONWUEGBUCHULAM CHINYERE.

All documents bearing my former names remain valid. Zenith Bank Plc and the general Public should please take note.

ANTHONY
ONWUEGBUCHULAM
CHINYERE.

This is to affirm that Stanley Onuabuchi Nwaosu which appeared in my Bank Verification Number (BVN) with UBA was wrongly arranged. I now wish to be called, known and addressed ONUABUCHI STANLEY NWAOSU.

All documents bearing my for names remain valid. UBA Plc and the general public should please take note.

ONUABUCHI STANLEY
NWAOSU.

Otti to champion improved welfare for Nigeria Armed Forces

Contd from Page 1

The Governor therefore called on well-meaning individuals, corporate organisations and community leaders to initiate projects and programmes in support of the Armed Forces, in appreciation of the sacrifices they made to promote peace and restore order and stability within the country, and across international borders.

The Abia Chief executive commended the contributions of the Armed

Forces to the security of Abia State and pledged the continued support of his administration towards the security of the state.

He noted that their contributions to the state government has culminated to the resumption of economic and social activities in areas that had hitherto served as safe haven for men of the underworld.

"Until the end of my tenure, the security formations, especially those operating in the state, can count on my

consistent support for their welfare because our economic and social programmes would be sabotaged or fatally impaired without adequate security in all parts of the state.

"We shall also not forget the families left behind by those who paid the ultimate price in service of our fatherland, defending its territorial integrity or keeping criminal elements at bay", Governor Otti pledged.

He called on citizens to uphold patriotism by

prioritizing the nation in honor by Governor Otti, their daily actions and expressions in addition to contributing to the pursuit of a just and equitable society. High points of the celebration included the inspection of a guard of

laying of wreaths at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Special prayers and a minute silence for the fallen heroes as well as the release of pigeons, signifying peace.

Government to re-enroll pupils of shut down private schools

By Ifeanyichukwu Faith

Abia state government has announced plans to re-enroll pupils of some private schools in the state recently shut down over low standard.

The government said that it was to ensure that their educational pursuit do not suffer any setback.

To this end, the Ministry of Education has directed pupils/students whose schools were sealed to move to nearby government schools at no cost to the parents pending when their schools would meet the government approved standard of operation.

The Commissioner for Education, Prof. Uche Eme-Uche who gave the directive after a three day meeting with Proprietors of private schools whose schools were sealed across the state, reiterated the ministry's readiness to withdraw the licence of those who continue to

operate their schools against government directives.

Prof. Uche-Eme while frowning at the proliferation and citing of schools in church halls, over crowded spaces and unconducive environments without considering the health hazards it removed on the lives of learners, maintained that the state government would no longer tolerate the continued existence of such sub-standard schools.

The Commissioner used the opportunity to advised private school owners to employ teachers with a minimum qualification of NCE, whose emoluments will be nothing short of the national minimum wage to ensure enhanced productivity and welfare of the teacher's.

She thanked the proprietors for honoring the Ministry's invitation, pointing out that the government of Dr. Alex

Otti in the state was not out to witch-hunt any private school owner but to encourage them to do the right thing.

According to her, the approval of operation for

those who refused to honor the invitation but went ahead to reopen their schools against government directives have been withdrawn while a minimum grace

period of six months was given to some offenders to upgrade their schools.

Out of about 302 schools sealed, only 47 honoured the invitation.

Supreme Court judgment: Time to address challenges confronting Abia-Gov Otti

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia state Governor, Dr. Alex Otti has assured that with the conclusion of the Supreme Court judgment, his administration is committed to focusing on addressing and improving the challenges confronting the state.

Governor Otti gave the assurance at the 3rd quinquennial session of Eastern Union Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, held at Ahiaba Umueze in Osisioma LGA.

The Governor said that one of the major reasons he contested election was the genuine concern for the development of the state and the desire to eradicate the shame of being referred to, as an Abian due to the state's

perceived deterioration.

He recall that a lot of people confronted him over the rot in the state prior to his election as Governor, noting that people would dismiss you anytime, Abia was mentioned.

"Now that the storm is over, we will invite people to come and see Abia", Governor Otti said.

The Governor while emphasizing that all powers belongs to God, thanked God for fulfilling His words by granting him victory at the Apex Court.

Governor Otti recall that he was unperturbed even when people were panicking over the outcome of the judgement adding that he anchored his faith on Jeremiah 1:9 and Jeremiah 15:20.

He counseled Christians to lay their burdens on God who he said, will perfect all that concerns them.

Governor Otti thanked the Church for the prayers and support for his administration and enjoined them to continue in the same vein.

He noted that one cannot achieve anything meaningful without unity and advised them not to do things that would disunite the church.

Preaching a sermon on the topic; "Chosen for Mission, embracing unity and purposeful year", the West Central African Division President of the SDA, Pastor Robert Ossei-Bonsu, emphasized that the lives of Christians should convey a

meaningful message to the world.

The man of God highlighted the divine calling for the church to fulfill the mission of reaching out to the world, recruiting, and baptizing all people and stressed the importance of the church moving forward in unity, which aligns with God's expectations.

He noted that the church's existence was framed as a mission to evangelize the message of God for the repentance of sin.

The Pastor underscored that achieving the great commission requires unity among Christians, stating that unity is crucial for effective mission work.

Education

ABSCOHMAT regains accreditation in community health as Rector pours encomiums on Dr. Alex Otti



By Blessing Don Nwokoma
The College of Health Sciences and Management Technology, Aba has regained its lost accreditation in community health. The feat was achieved in December 2023 via a letter conveying the reaccreditation by the Board of Community Health Practitioners Registration of Nigeria to the College.

The Rector of the College, Mr. Aloy Okezie E. while addressing the press on the achievement, poured encomiums on the State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, for his encouragement and support throughout the period of the reaccreditation process by the board.

Mr. Okezie said that it is a significant development for the school, as the regaining of the accreditation will enable the College to regain its pre-eminent position in the Community of Colleges of Health Sciences as well as, assist the students to study with pride and certainty of their professional indexing and licensure at the completion of their academic studies.

Mr. Okezie also opined that it will enable the graduands to practice professionally with

dignity and satisfaction in fulfillment of their professional vocation and destiny amongst other advantages.

It will be recalled that the Abia State College of Health Sciences and Management Technology (ABSCOHMAT) Aba, a premier institution of higher learning in the old Eastern region was established in 1948 (it was originally established as a school of Hygiene).

The college unfortunately lost its accreditation, 6 years ago to mount and run courses in Community Health, during the 2017/18 Academic session through the withdrawal of the Board's recognition of the College's Community Health graduands certificates, refusal to issue them the appropriate Board's Certifications and license.

According to the Rector, such loss of Accreditation had severe negative consequences as the Department of Community Health and its students became a pariah amongst other health professionals in the country as well as the global community.

He also said the loss of accreditation of its Community Health affected the student population enrollment, as well

as, loss of revenues.

The Rector said that the regaining of the accreditation is significant as two preceding administrations specially under the past state government administration, had made efforts to regain the accreditation, but all proved abortive.

He said all these setbacks have now become part of their past history as the school under the able watch and guidance of the State Governor as its visitor, has been repositioned to not only to restore the lost glory through the reaccreditation of lost courses and introduction of new and relevant ones but is also engaged in massive infrastructural upgrade as well.



News

Govt unveils road expansion plans for Owerri, Onuimo roads

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

The Commissioner for Information, Prince Okey Kanu, has disclosed of government plans to kick off construction on expansion of the Owerri and Onuimo Roads. During a press briefing to journalists on the outcome of the executive council meeting chaired by Governor Alex Otti. Prince Kanu assured that in addressing the forthcoming Onuimo phase of the project, due process will be meticulously followed to manage the displacement of individuals. He noted that government have drawn from the successful experience with Owerri road, where communities and those affected were handled seamlessly, is committed to replicating the approach in the Onuimo phase, which he stated would unfold in due course.

The Commissioner emphasized that the smooth execution on Owerri road would serve as the state government's blueprint for ensuring a similar positive outcome in Onuimo. Kanu said that, "Due process would be followed in terms those who would be displaced by the

project would be handled. We've had an experience with Owerri road and we are aware of how smooth it was at Owerri, how we handled the communities there and all those who were affected by the new road.

"The same thing will apply at Onuimo because Owerri road is the first phase, the second phase is Onuimo and that would come up in due course.

"The same way we handled the Owerri, is the same way government will handle Onuimo and Owerri."

He said the Governor has transformed the state into a massive construction zone, implementing road projects throughout the three Senatorial Zones of the state.



Engr. Otumchere Oti
Commissioner for Works

Abia lawmaker sues for peace over land encroachment

By Okere Ugochinyere

The member representing Ukwu-East State Constituency in Abia State House of Assembly, Hon. Lewis Obianyi, has decried the unauthorized construction of Uzo nta road in Azumini by Akwa-Ibom State.

Obianyi who expressed his dismay to newsmen shortly after the inspection of over five kilometers graded portions of the Azumini road recently, lamented that many economic crops and farmlands belonging to rural peasant farmers have been destroyed due to the illegal excavations on the road by Akwa-Ibom State government. He said that the constituents drew his attention that the Akwa-Ibom State government through Ika Local Government Area authorities are using tractors, to encroach deep into some part of Azumini Ndoki Community in Ukwu-East and from his observation in the inspection, they have gone about 5km deep into Abia territory without any form of authorization or consent from appropriate quarters within Abia state government.

The Lawmakersaid that he had inform the Chairman of the council, Dame Ngozi Nwagbara, who said that she was not aware of any inter-state project.

The Chairman, House Committee on Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Abia State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (ASOPADEC) and Ministry of Petroleum, further alleged ulterior motives by the Akwa-Ibom State, maintaining that there was no agreement, nor Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) from both states (Abia and Akwa-Ibom) on inter-state road construction to warrant such road grading.

Hon Obianyi called on the Governor, Umo Eno of Akwa Ibom to resist the temptation from any parochial interest group as a man of integrity, do the right thing.

"He is a religious leader and should do everything within his powers to forestall any act capable of undermining peace and generating inter-state conflict or crisis between Azumini Ndoki in Abia state and the people of Ika LGA of Akwa-Ibom State", he further noted.

Hon. Obianyi called on Azumini youths to remain calm and vigilant, while the matter was being resolved.

Meanwhile, the Traditional Ruler of Azumini Ndoki, Eze (Prof) Ebere Eule, acknowledged that some delegates from Akwa-Ibom State visited him earlier and informed him of an inter-state road project from NDDC.

The royal father, said that he demanded for a detailed documentation or MoU of the project but that they never came back, but started the illegal grading of Abia roads.

He called on Abia State Government to intervene on the matter to avoid the ceding of some part of Azumini Ndoki into Ika LGA of Akwa-Ibom, noting that similar case of Akirika-Obu Ndoki, still remain a contenting issue in the court.

Eze Eule who thanked the Abia lawmaker for his efforts in resolving the situation amicably, called for peace while the matter are being resolved by relevant authorities.

Correction service decorates 147 officers in Akwa Ibom

From Lovina Emole (Uyo)

About 147 officers and men of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS), Akwa Ibom State command have been promoted to a new rank.

In a statement issued by the Public Relations Officer of the command, ASC Richard Metong, those promoted officers were part of the 4,498 Officers of the Service whose promotion to new ranks was approved by the Hon Minister of Interior, Hon. Olubunmi Tunji-

Ojo, and the Controller General of Corrections, Haliru Nababa.

While decorating the officers in Uyo, the Controller of Corrections, Akwa Ibom State Command, Julius Ezugwu, charged the decorated Officers to be dedicated, committed, and more professional in the discharge of their duties to earn more promotions.

He further encouraged Officers who missed out on the promotion not to lose hope adding that it would be their turn next time.

He also appreciated the Hon Minister and the Controller General of Corrections for approving the promotions, noting that it has boosted the morale of the Officers for better performance.

"The Akwa Ibom State Command of the Nigerian Correctional Service decorated one hundred and forty-seven (147) Officers with new ranks on Friday 12th January 2024 at the State Correctional Headquarters, Uyo.

NEWS

Royal father prays for peace in Ossah

By Charles Ogbonnaya, Okereke Kate

The Traditional Ruler of Eziama/Mgbaja Autonomous Community, Ossah-Ibeku in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State, His Royal Majesty, Eze Chiabuotu Emenike, has prayed for the peace of Ossah Communities and the state at large, as Ossah celebrates their 2024 Ekpe festival.

Ekpe festival which is an annual event, is celebrated across Umuahia communities to usher in the new year.

In an interview with National Ambassador Newspaper, the monarch who disclosed that the Ekpe festival was adopted from the Efik tradition, said it started in Umuahia between the 16th and 17th century.

He stated that the festival is celebrated in January of every year, for the purpose of entertainment and merriment, stating that today was the turn of the three communities that make up the Ossah clan, Eziama/Mgbaja Autonomous Community, Uhabiri Umuchime na Amanso and Uzzi na Akpa-izu.

The Traditional ruler added that the festival apart from its fun fair, it's done to showcase the cultural heritage of the people of Umuahia and as well, promote cultural recreation and entertain observers.

Eze Emenike also disabused the minds of people, who perceive the culture as being fetish, stressing that the Ekpe festival has no fetish inclination



Traditional Ruler of Eziama/Mgbaja Autonomous Community, Eze Chiabuotu Emenike

Don seeks verification of foreign acquired degrees

From Nzeuzor Jane Port Harcourt.

A Professor of Communication in the faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Rivers State University of Port Harcourt, Professor Barigbon Nsereka, has attributed corruption and laziness as the reasons many Nigerians go abroad to pay for degree certificates.

He said that Nigerians youths are not ready to study hard hence the option to pay to acquire these certificates from universities in Togo and Benin Republic.

He also put the blame on education, where even the leaders do not have genuine certificate, adding that the youths feel that they are even better off than leaders who could not have gone to any school but would claim that they did.

Professor Nsereka who is the Head of Journalism described as laughable and shameful that fake degrees acquired from schools in neighbouring countries are recognised in Nigeria without verification. According to him, such will bring down the name of our country and advised the

government to ensure that proper investigations are carried out to sanitise the education sector in the country.

In another development, a lecturer of economist is asking the federal government to reaccess its fiscal policy strategy in 2024 to align with its monetary policies. Dr. Peter Medee in an interview with our

reporter said previous economic polices fall short in addressing the key economic challenges in the country. He observed a noticeable service of statism among Nigerians arising from the severe repercussion of these economic deficiencies. He said in this 2024,

we are looking forward to situations where some of the fiscal policy direction should be able to complement the banking policy direction.

Dr. Peter Medee however emphasize the necessity for the state government to formulate

polices that align with the economic direction by the federal government. He further pressed for the implementation of the living wage policy of the federal government, aiming to enhance the direct impact on production.

Eze Ogwuru honours Onovo, others with chieftaincy titles - By Ebere Eme

Former Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Ogbonnaya Onovo has been conferred with Chieftaincy title of Ochiagha 1 of Ngodo Ukwu Kingdom of Ngodo Ukwu, Umunneochi Local Government, Igwe Emeka Ogwuru as part of his 24 coronation anniversary and maiden Ebube Araka Ofala festival.

Mr. Onovo was honoured along with five others for their contribution to the development of Ngodo Ukwu Kingdom in particular, and humanity in general.

Speaking at the event held at Igwe Araka palace, Igwe Ogwuru of Ngodo Isuochi said that the event was to appreciate and celebrate the grace, kindness and mercy of God on the kingdom.

He described Ngodo Ukwu, made up of eleven autonomous communities as the most prosperous community in Umunneochi, being the food basket of the council, with rich cultural heritage and noted for

their self development efforts.

The traditional ruler regretted the state of banditry, kidnapping and robbery and other forms of social vices affecting social, economic life activities and expressed the hope that situation would soon be brought under control.

Igwe Ogwuru commended the pragmatic efforts of the governor, Dr. Alex Otti, for his timely intervention that has seen normalcy returned in Umunneochi and challenged other political leaders to cooperate and support the governors in finding lasting solution to the state of insecurity in the area in particular, Abia and Nigeria as a whole.

Speaking at the event, Gov Otti, represented by the Commissioner for Housing, Mr Chaka Chukwmerije commended the traditional ruler for presiding over the affairs of his people in the last 24 years and prays to God to continue to give him the grace and wisdom in years to come.

Gov Otti assured that no community would be left behind in the transformation projects of his administration and urged to people not to relent in their support to the government and the traditional ruler.

Some of the traditional titles recipient thank the Igwe for the honour done to them and pledged to continue to identify with the development of Ngodo Ukwu land.



H.R.M IGWE EMEKA OGWURU (ARAKA 1 OF NGODO-UKWU KINGDOM)

WHO partners NDDC for better health delivery services

From Aligwe Stella, P/H

The World Health Organisation (WHO), has agreed to partner with the Niger Delta Development Commission, (NDDC), for the betterment of the overall health benefits of Niger Deltans.

NDDC Managing Director, Dr. Samuel Ogbuku, who disclosed this recently, during an interview with newsmen at the Commission's headquarters in Port Harcourt, revealed that the commission recently held a meeting with WHO officials, where it made a presentation on a Health Insurance Project for the Niger Delta region; adding that NDDC was also in a discussion with the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, in the areas of youth development and rebuilding public trust to enhance service delivery within the region.

According to him:

"Partnership is one of the major ways to achieve sustainable development in the Niger Delta region and it is important that NDDC, as the driver of development in the region, stays at the forefront of building the right partnerships.

"The World Health Organisation is discussing with us on our health programmes. In fact, they have written to us, saying that they want more meetings to explore collaborations in the execution of our free healthcare programme. They want to add professionalism and credibility to what we are doing.

"We are not only looking at what they will bring to us in terms of funding, we are looking at their contacts, reach and expertise in the medical field.

"The participation of WHO in our medical outreach programme will ensure that those vaccines that we don't

have access to, are procured through them for the benefit of our people."

Furthermore, Ogbuku announced that right from the very day the commission embraced Public-Private Partnership, PPP, as a major policy thrust, it had experienced significant gains; maintaining that the PPP arrangement went beyond collaborations with International Oil Companies, IOCs, as it extends to other critical sectors such as health, education and youth development.

"In some areas, we are seeking technical assistance, not necessarily money. I can assure you that the PPP programme is gaining momentum and it is also gaining the interest of a lot of people.

"We are currently looking for technical support in the area of training for our staff, because we need properly trained staff that will be able to lead most of our

programmes and they need to be updated on a regular basis.

"Some of these collaborations, especially the ones from the private sector, need to be studied carefully, because we can't afford to mortgage the interest of our people. We are not just working for ourselves; we are representing the people of the Niger Delta and we must ensure that the right decisions are made", Ogbuku stated.

Ogbuku, cited the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding, MOU, between the NDDC and the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited, NLNG, to collaborate on diverse fronts in the delivery of sustainable development projects as a proof that the commission had experienced positive fall-outs from the partnership arrangements.

NPC to develop quality data from NDHS

By Charles Ogbonnaya.

The National Population Commission (NPC) has revealed that it is spearheading the implementation of the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, in close collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health, and other key partners.

Abia State Director of the Commission, Lady Juliana Ada Ezebuio, who disclosed this during a press conference in

Umuahia, also expressed the NPC readiness to have quality data from the 2023-24 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, NDHS.

According to her, the programme symbolizes the culmination of strategic planning, collaborative efforts, and unwavering commitment from all participating stakeholders.

Lady Ezebuio noted that the survey has been instrumental in providing invaluable insights that inform evidence-based

policies, enhance public health interventions, and contribute to the broader development agenda of the Nation. She, therefore, urged the public to cooperate and give necessary support to the field workers who would be deployed to various locations and areas in the state for data collection.

In her address, Abia state commissioner for Health, Dr Ngozi Okoronkwo represented by the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health, Dr Ifeanyiwa Blossom Uma-Kalu stated that the present administration in the State led by

Dr. Alex C. Otti, remains committed to making health care delivery very accessible, affordable, timely and of good quality, to the Abia citizenry.

She thanked the National Population Commission and the Federal Ministry of Health, adding that their mission in Abia State would set the stage for making critical decisions concerning Abia citizens, especially women, and children.

Dr Uma Kalu maintained that the state government is therefore looking forward to

positive impacts that will be driven by the data generated through the survey.

Earlier in his address, the South East Coordinator of NDHS, Mr Cyril Obike said the survey which would be held in 30 households in each selected cluster in Abia State, would be carried out by well-trained personnel from NPC and the Federal Ministry of Health.

Obike said the data on maternal and child mortality, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, primary healthcare accessibility

etc, would be collected while anemia tests would also be run on women and children.

The South East Coordinator, however, lamented that his office in the past, faced frosty reception from some communities in Abia.

He also appealed to community youths and religious leaders to welcome and cooperate with the NPC data collectors, even as he assured them that no woman would be sexually assaulted by the NPC personnel.

NATIONAL Ambassador

"Uplift the people, project the nation" Tuesday 16th January 2024

LETTERS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:
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Supreme Court Judgement: A Victory for all Abians

The Supreme Court judgement of January 12, 2024 affirming the election of Dr Alex Otti as the duly elected governor of Abia State brought to an end all forms of judicial proceedings explored by the defeated candidates of All Peoples Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to scuttle the hard-won electoral victory of Dr Otti in the March 18, 2023 governorship election in the state.

When the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Returning officer, Prof Nnenna Otti shunned and withstood all forms of arms twisting, intimidations and threat to uphold the mandate freely given to Dr Otti, the entire state erupted in wild jubulations.

That hard won but sweet victory was seen as a liberation from the shackles of visionlessness, corruption, ineptitude and maladministration that characterized state administration in the state.

Due to the fact of such maladministration, Abia with all her huge potentials both in human and material resources became one of the least developing States in Nigeria. In those times, she continually trailed behind several other states in the most critical sector of the human development index.

Undoubtedly Abia became a laughing stock, acquiring the status of a pariah state amongst the comity of states in Nigeria. Again, Dr Alex Otti of the Labour Party beat the candidates of the other Parties with a very wide margin. He secured 175,467 votes to beat his closest rival Chief Okey Ahaiwe of the Peoples Democratic Party who had 88,529 votes. The All Progressive Congress candidate, Chief Ikechi Emenike who came a distant fourth position had 24,091 votes. None of the candidates excepting Dr Alex Otti was able to secure the mandatory 25% in 2/3 of the Local Government Areas of the State which is also a second mandatory Constitutional requirement apart from the simple majority win for any candidate to be declared a winner in any gubernatorial election in Nigeria.

It was therefore not surprising at the unprecedented and widescale celebrations that engulfed all the nook and crannies of the state on Wednesday February 22nd when the

Returning Officer, Prof Nnenna Otti and her team resisted all the machinations of the opposition elements to subvert the will of the people at the polls and announced Dr Alex Otti of the Labour Party as the winner of the February 18th 2023 Governorship election in Abia State. This is not forgetting that such machination and determination included a desperate attempt to smuggle in a toxic but magic figure of 108,000 votes into the INEC IREV Server at Obingwa Local Government Area which could have effectively overturned the genuine votes of 175,467 of Dr Alex Otti, the winner of the contest.

Besides all these, Dr Alex Otti who on inauguration into office on May 29th 2023 inherited a broken down state and humongous debt profile has since coming into office engineered a renaissance in governance that has seen all the Ministries and Agencies working once again. Under his able watch and leadership, Abia is witnessing an unprecedented level of development that is increasingly marking out the state as the fastest developing state in Nigeria.

The morale of the people that was at its lowest ebbs as people lost faith in governance before Dr Otti came on board is now at an all time high. In fact some discerning observers are beginning to refer to the state as a huge construction site. People are once again proud to tell you that they are from Abia.

Taken all these into consideration, a lot of people had thought that the opposition Parties would have reconsidered pursuing the litigations considering the resources, energy, time and distractions that were inherent in such pursuit. But that didn't happen. While the YPP candidate, Engr Nnanna Nwafor and the AGPA candidate Prof. Greg Ibe congratulated Dr Alex Otti, the winner of the polls and refrained from pursuing any litigation against his mandate. The candidates of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Chief Ikechi Emenike and that of the Peoples Democratic Party, Chief Okey Ahaiwe instituted litigations against the mandate and pursued it diligently, up till the Supreme Court until they lost at that apex level.

There is no doubt that the litigation must have caused a lot of distractions to incumbent Governor, Alex Otti and general anxiety for the people. It is good that the verdict has ended in favour of Dr Alex Otti and the majority of the people that voted for him. It is indeed an Abia victory.

Dr Alex Otti at least can now engage all his attention to the urgent challenge of developing the state. It is also good that the opposition PDP has congratulated incumbent Gov. Alex Otti over the win. That should be the ideal spirit.

We therefore call on the other opposition parties to follow suit.

Abia State has suffered enough and need all the peace that can be enthroned so as to enable the Governor pursue developmental issues without unnecessary distractions.

The need for constructive opposition in Abia State

Dear Editor,

Kindly permit me a space to air my view on the need for constructive opposition in Abia State.

The Supreme Court judgement of Friday January 12, 2024 which affirmed that Gov. Alex Otti of Labour Party was the real winner and duly elected governor of Abia State has brought to an end, all the agitation and claims over the real winner of the March 18, 2023 governorship election in Abia State.

By that judgement, the result is now clear and the governorship seat finally secured in favour of Dr. Alex Otti. Before that day there was apprehension and fear over the likely outcome of the judgement on same election by the courts.

The opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in particular heightened the tension with their interpretation of the sections of the Electoral Act which they believed would give them victory.

The All Progressive Congress (APC) on the other hand, despite their abysmal performance of not winning even one local government hinged their hope on the Imo debacle were the third place political in an election was declared the winner repeating itself repeating half in Abia.

For the first time in the history of Abia State governorship election petition, a court judgment tallied with the position, visionary and aspiration of the people.

Abians voted for Dr. Alex Otti, even the PDP acknowledged this indirectly as they never challenged the election result but laid claim on technicalities to remove Dr. Otti. PDP knows very well that they lost the election and that Abia electorates are displeased about them still remaining in power after eight years of waiting to grow.

Now, that the election suits are over, there is need for the parties, especially PDP to align and support the activities of Dr Otti and end the undue criticism of his policies and actions. Electioneering campaign is over, and now is time for governance and the governor has shown capacity in most of his actions.

Emmanuel Obinna
Umuhia

NATIONAL Ambassador
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Vox Pop

Abians react over supreme court affirmation of Gov Alex Otti's victory

Reactions have continued to trail the recent Supreme Court ruling, affirming the victory of Dr Alex Otti, as the duly elected Governor of Abia State in the March 18, 2023 gubernatorial election in the state. The Apex court had in Abuja on Friday, 12th of January, 2024, ruled in favour of Gov Alex Otti as the authentic Governor of Abia state, bringing to an end the litigations from the People's Democratic Party and the All Progressive Congress. The victory which was long anticipated, came with a lot of excitement and jubilations.

Our Reporters, who went into the streets gathered that majority of Abians are happy with the ruling of the Apex court and accordingly, there were no dissenting voices. Some of the people who spoke with National Ambassador Newspaper, bored their minds on the victory of the Governor and also dropped hints on the areas they want the new government to urgently look into, so that the state can be repositioned.



High Chief Raymond Ofoegbu (Onyinye Ohuhu), an indigene of Ofeme community in Ohuhu, Umuahia North Local Government Area:

We thank the Supreme Court for a well deserved judgement to the Governor. Though it was against my political line but the greater number of Abians have spoken. They say that the will of the people is the will of God. I congratulate the Governor. This is a reward for hard work and also a lesson to the members of the parties that lost that there is no short cut or compromise to what hard-work can do. during the 2023 governorship election, the people couldn't place their hand as to why they should vote for PDP or APC in the state, therefore, they stood their ground to accept the beautiful bride of Labour Party through the intervention of Mr Peter Obi and today, Dr Alex Otti has become the, Governor of Abia state. I congratulate Abians and as well Dr Alex Otti.

You will bear me witness that within the short period in office, a lot of reasons to believe that the Governor is capable to reposition the state. We are in the right track. This might be a prayer answered for Abians. I met Dr Alex Otti twice during the campaigns. I secretly supported him because I like associating myself with a moving train. For what the Governor has done within few months in office, not minding the litigations, we can rate him high. Take for instance, the reconstruction of Ossah road down to Okpara square. The expansion of that road is commendable. We are not expecting the Governor to feed us or to give us money but all we demand as citizens of Abia is quality projects like

road, housing, building of workers Office complexes among others. Putting hope alive, I know the Governor will do better, aggrieved parties should sheath their swords and support the Governor in this developmental agenda.

Areas I would also want the Governor to quickly look into is the area of grassroot development. Take for example in Ohuhu, though we are established people, all thanks to M.I Okpara that made it possible. The government should look into the development of the Uloa North and South Farm settlement, construct the road (Okpara Road) that leads to the farm settlement and the rest will be history. That farm settlement has the capacity to create over 5000 job opportunities annually, it can also generate massive revenue for the state. The farm settlement is a challenge to the government, once it's done, the result is immediate.

Apart from this, the government should also look into investing in tourism. Outside the shores of Nigeria, tourism serves as a very big form of revenue generation. Investment in education, transportation and human development is key to a successful administration. The Governor should not forget to constantly look at the down trodden, create welfare packages to cushion the harsh effect of the economy. The payment of workers, pensioners should be a priority in his government.



**Mrs Adindu Possible Nkechinyere
A Civil servant:**

I feel so excited, am happy about the victory because it has been long expected and it is a divine judgment. We

thank God that at the end of the day, our Governor was able to take his seat to do that which God has assigned him to do in Abia state.

Our Governor is a man of his word, already he has promised that Abia state will take a good look and he said the state will turn out to be a new Abia by investing on road constructions. The Governor has started doing this. Infrastructural development is taking shape. Workers' offices have also received his touch through his massive reconstruction project. We wish he continues in this direction and he should also look into other areas, particularly the ministry of youth, to ensure the youths get their stand in Abia. The changes we are seeing now, we didn't see it for the past 22 years of PDP regime. Any good person can attest that the Governor is trying very well.



**Mr Chinedu Eke
Civil servant Abia State Council for Arts and Culture:**

I am very excited over the Supreme Court ruling. All Abians are happy, there is no dissenting voice. If the Supreme Court had given a contrary verdict, people would have taken to the streets. The outcome wouldn't have been favorable.

I congratulate the Governor. He should not be discouraged and distracted. The past government has left a huge vacuum which he needs to fill up. Our expectations are very high, we see him as the messiah of Abia, he should not disappoint us.

**Mrs Gbaka Edith Amarachi
A Civil Servant:**

I feel happy and grateful to God that the Governor was able to retain his mandate. Unlike what we had in the past, I am feeling the impact of this administration. The Governor



has been doing well on the area of security but there is room for improvement because there is still a lot of kidnappings and robberies that are going on.

In education, we had that the Abia State University, Uturu (ABSU), is threatening to go on a strike action. This is too early for our children to be put off school, the Governor should look into this. He should look into the provision of housing for civil servants whereby houses will be built and given to civil servants at a subsidized rate. So that civil servants can also own a house. The opposition should join hands with the Governor to make Abia better.



**Engr Madu Chukwu
An Abian**

The victory is a welcome development. Am happy he was able to scale through all the judicial processes and now it has been affirmed that he is the executive governor of Abia state.

He should look into capital projects. Though the Governor is on track. About 80% of his budget is going into capital projects, so it's a good one. He should not relent, Abians are behind him.

I enjoin everyone to join hands with the Governor to see how to foster development in

the state there is no point for prejudice. The opposition particularly Governorship candidates of other political parties in the state, should join hands to create a better Abia.



**Comrade Prince Ugwumba Atulomah
from Umuahia South Local Government Area and a Performing Artist with Abia State Council for Arts and Culture:**

I feel excellently good. There is light in Abia state right now. This is away from what we use to see. There is massive infrastructural development ongoing in the state. I thank the Judiciary for being fair. The Governor has been trying since he came on board but he should improve on security. He has improved on the area that concerns civil service, with the prompt payment of salaries and also office renovations.

I have been on ground in Abia state for years now. We have tasted the PDP led government, I can say Otti's government supercedes previous administrations. Though government is a continuum, they have done their own but from what we are seeing now, Otti's government is doing better. Road infrastructure, utility and security, are given top priority



in his government.

In Uyo, Igbos in Akwa Ibom State have joined their counterparts to congratulate governor Alex Otti of Abia State over his victory at the supreme court as the duly elected governor at the 2023 general elections.

The President General of Igbo Community and President, Non indigenes in Akwa Ibom, Dr S.N Orie urged the governor not rest on his oasis but should continue to drive infrastructural and industrial renaissance he is known for.

Orie who is also a native of Umunneochi local council of Abia State noted that before the emergence of gov Otti, his local government was ridden with insecurity and kidnapping adding that peace and security have been restored even as he noted that he spent three weeks holiday in his area without any fear or apprehension.

Orie also urged the governor to focus more on industrialization, road infrastructure and power supply saying that these three focal areas when harnessed would take Abia to an enviable height before the expiration of his tenure.

Orie who is the Managing Director of Ugo Parker Motors advised Abia people to be patient and encourage the governor so that he would be able to bring more dividends of democracy.

His words, "We congratulate the governor of Abia State for his victory at the supreme court. It is a well-deserved victory and we know that a new dawn has come to Abia.

"Our demands are not much, what we want is good road, constant power supply and sitting of industries. All these things will make people to come to Abia for business.

You cannot talk about Nigeria without mentioning Ariaria market, Ngwa where food crops are produced.

"He has done so much in the aspect of security, for instance, in Umunneochi local government that was no go area before, is now cool and calm and we are calling the good people of Abia State to continue to support the governor so that he will take us to the level God has positioned us."

NEWS

Gov Otti seeks Indonesia's partnership for seaport in Ukwa East

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Otti has expressed the state's keen interest in foreign partnerships for economic growth and development of the state, assuring that the partnership will culminate in the building of a seaport at Ukwa East Local government.

Otti who stated this, when he received the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Nigeria, Dr. Usra Hendra Harahap, announced plans for a collaborative venture between the government and the private sector to construct a new seaport in Ukwa East council of the state.

The governor also requested support for establishment of an entrepreneurship and technology development center and assured the ambassador of the state's commitment in providing a conducive environment for investors.

"We have decided to build a sea port. Government will partner with the private sector to build a seaport in one of our local governments, Ukwa East, close to Ukwa-West, where we have the oil and gas deposits. We have identified an area where we can build a seaport.

"If you do have skills and companies that can assist us, we will be very, very interested in working with them.

"I want to reassure you that we are a very serious-minded government in Abia. We have opened the state up for business. Your nationals that

want to, not just support but also make money out of trade, industry, commerce, technology, we will give them all the necessary supports to set up their businesses.

"We will also give them security and provide enabling environment for their businesses to grow", the governor declared.

Governor Otti further emphasized Abia's willingness to collaborate with Indonesia in areas such as education, agriculture, health, SMEs, entrepreneurship and technology.

He thanked the ambassador for identifying Abia State as a worthy partner as well as carrying out an independent assessment on the state's potentials, expressed optimism that the collaboration would be fruitful.

Speaking earlier, Ambassador Harahap, who was accompanied by his wife, Neny said that his visit was to demonstrate his country's "sincere commitment to fostering diplomatic co-operation", with Nigeria and "with the great state of Abia".

He said: "Our visit today signifies Indonesia's keen interest in establishing meaningful partnerships in crucial sectors namely: Trade, Investment, Agriculture, Education, Technology, Construction and Works, Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals, as well as Entrepreneurship".

According to him, those sectors hold the key to unlocking shared economic prosperity and creating opportunities for the people of Indonesia and Abia State.



Gov. Alex Otti in a handshake with Major Gen. Lagbaja during a visit to the Governor

Security: Gov Otti strengthens resolve to secure Abia, South-East

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State, has reaffirmed his administration's unwavering commitment to collaborate closely with the Nigerian Army, to ensure the security of the state and the entire South East Zone.

Otti made this known when he received the Chief of Army Staff, Lt-Gen. Taoreed Lagbaja and other senior officers, who accompanied him to Abia, on a routine visit to areas under the 82 Division of the Nigerian Army.

The governor, who underscored the critical need for security, to attract the much needed inflow of Foreign Direct

Investments for the state's development, emphasized that security is paramount for the prosperity and growth of Abia and the entire South East Zone.

He acknowledged the support provided by the military in addressing security challenges in Abia and the South East and disclosed that the governors would converge, to collectively address security concerns, in the South East region.

Otti said: "Our people want security. If you do not have security, you cannot talk about investment. Security is very important.

"If you are not secured, you cannot operate, not to talk of inflow of

Foreign Direct partner with you and Investments which we work together to secure not just Abia but the South East".

The governor noted that the implementation of "Operation Crush"; a special inter-agency operation launched by his administration and led by the army, has yielded positive results in restoring peace and normalcy across the state.

"I believe that in no distance future, we will be sitting down with you again as South East Governors. Because if you solve the security problem in Abia, and then there's security issue in Ebonyi, Enugu, Anambra or Imo, then the problem has not been solved.

"We have collectively, as Governor's Forum, decided to tackle security in the South East Zone and your visit has further strengthened our resolve to do whatever we can do to the state

Abia Governor's wife visit; presents gift to first baby of the year

By Chibuma Ikeokwu

The wife of the Governor of Abia state, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, has welcomed the first baby of the year for 2024 at Okpulo ukwu health centre in Isiala Ngwa North Local Government Area of the state and presented him with gift items and cash donation to care for the mother and the child.

The baby, Master Chiziterem Ikechukwu was born at exactly 12:02 am on 01/01/2024, and weighed 2.5 kg at the point of delivery.

At the health centre, the Governor's wife described as a thing of joy to welcome the first baby of the year into 2024, with so much joy and blessings.

commitment of the state government towards improving the health sector I advise the mother to do exclusive breastfeeding, it benefits a lot and help the baby grow with proper nutrients.

While the Governor's wife prayed for the baby, she called on the parents to devote maximum time in the up bringing of the baby with good morals in such a way he should not depart from it.

In her remarks, the manager of the health centre, Ms. Ihiesienye Uloaku thanked Mrs. Otti for her kind gesture towards the baby and for choosing the health centre for her visitation.

However, the father of the baby, Mr. Albert Ikechukwu, who hailed from Mbubo in Isiala Ngwa North Abia state who could not hide his joy but thanked the Abia governor's wife for paying the hospital bills of their child and donating gifts to them.

In a related development, the wife of the Governor also visited the state hospital at Amachara in Umuahia, where she received the second baby of the year whom she named Ihuoma and the third, she called Nmesoma, while showering them with gifts and cash donations described the children as the first gift God has given to Abia this year.



According to her, "the birth of a baby brings so much joy to the mother and with the

Body seeks for disabled persons

By Blessing Anienwe

As the world celebrates the year 2024 World Braille Day, a non-profit organization, Harrison Goodness Foundation (HGF), has called on the government and other critical stakeholders to help connect innovators with the disabled community, through the provisions of inclusive, assistive and adaptive technologies.

The theme for 2024 for celebration, "Empowering Through Inclusion and Diversity," underscores the commitment to creating a world where individuals with visual impairments are fully included in all aspects of society.

Speaking with our Reporter recently, the Chairman of the Foundation, Chief Richard Harrison also called on the government and non-governmental organizations to continually provide sight-saving surgeries, eyeglasses, medicine,

and other eye care services to help reduce sight problems.

The HGF chairman also observed that some visually impaired Nigerians rather than resigning to fate due to lack of adequate support from society, has remained resolute on engaging in productive ventures.

Citing the data by the Nigeria Optometric Association (NOA) which showed that about 50 million Nigerians had one visual disability or the other, while nearly seven million Nigerians were blind, Chief Harrison called on the government to establish braille printing presses that would help the blind and visually impaired pupils, students and others, who are not in school to have their books, magazines and other publications put into braille.

Chief Harrison who expounded the free medical and educational programmes carried out by Harrison Goodness Foundation, also stated the Foundation had

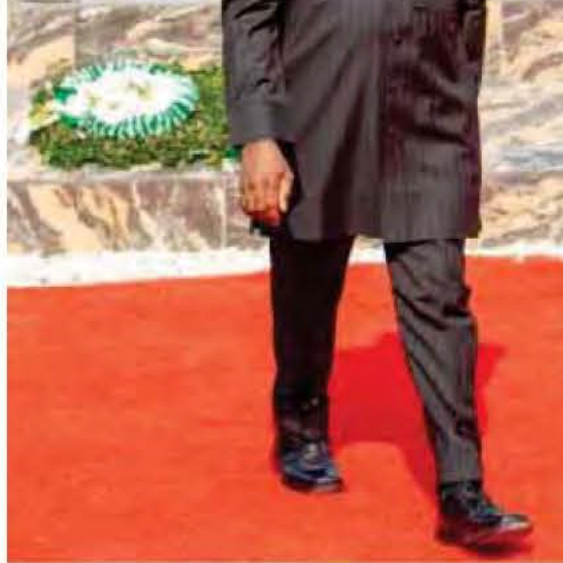
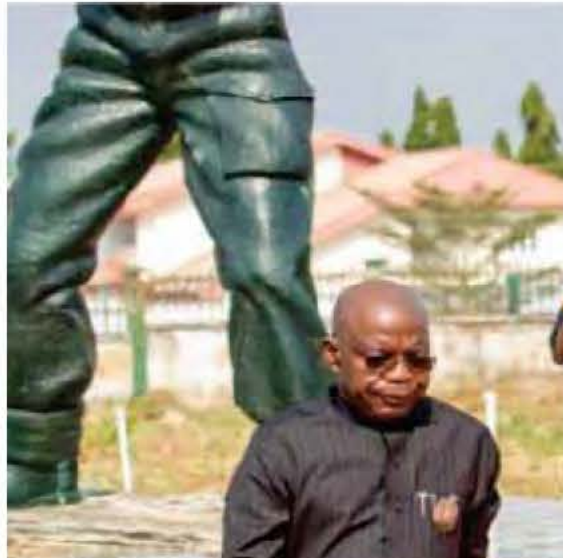
motivated a fund-raising to assist in the rehabilitation and equipping of Otampa Primary Healthcare centres in Isuikwuato L.G.A of Abia State which is in state of near comatose.

He lauded the administration of Abia State Governor Alex Otti for providing hundreds of white canes to the visually impaired during the recent white cane day celebration.

World Braille Day is annually celebrated on January 4, the birthday of Braille inventor, Louis Braille. The day recognizes the contributions of Louis Braille in helping blind and visually impaired people to read and write.

Braille is used by partially sighted and blind people, to read books and periodicals. Braille is a representation of numerical symbols and alphabets, using six dots to represent each letter and number; including mathematical, musical and scientific symbols.

PICTORIAL ACTIVITIES OF THE 2024 ARMED FORCES REMEMBRANCE DAY CELEBRATION IN UMUAHIA



Family Matters

The aftermath of the Christmas celebration

By Ihuoma Egbeogu

Christmas is an annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. However, it is basically observed on December 25 as a religious and cultural celebration among billions of people around the world. Moreso, it is a celebration of Christ death and God's unspeakable gift to the world. It is usually a time that brings our families together.

A whole lot of things transpire as a result of Christmas celebration. Despite the fact that messages by various public officials try to draw people's attention to the lessons of humility of Christ's birth, His purpose of coming to the world and the hope He offers, this hardly reflect in the actual celebration. Otherwise people need not resort to unrestricted merry making and spending only to become sober in January when bills start piling. Thereafter, they come to the realization that Christmas was just an ordinary day like all other days. What actually sets them apart are human attachments to the dates.

However, the aftermath of Christmas celebration is enormous. It is imperative that people are well acquainted with these challenges, so that they will become meticulous while celebrating.

Moral decadence is one of the aftermath associated with the Christmas celebration. This is very visible among the youth as a result of uncultured attitude portrayed by the youths during Christmas celebration which ranges from excessive intake of alcohol, smoking, partying, insatiable appetite for sex, quest for quick wealth, ritual killing, kidnapping, rape etc. Moral decadence in the society has become a menace to contend with. The rate of unwanted pregnancies among the young girls increase. So many youths usually test positive to sexually

transmitted diseases thereafter. Marriages suffers untold pains and break up's because of infidelity of either partner during the Christmas celebration. A celebration that ought to be merry with good tidings now produces so much anguish thereafter. People should come to the reality that there is life after the celebration and should be more conscious while celebrating. Failure to take cognizance of that could lead to the morning after the celebration turning to the mourning after.

Furthermore, a heightened feeling of anxiety, depression or grief is another aftermath of the Christmas celebration. These emotions could be associated with various factors such as family conflict, absence of loved ones. As the euphoria of the season gradually fizzle out, the reality of life comes to play, depression immediately sets in. The aged parents begin to miss their children and grandchildren. At this point it dawns on everyone that the time to face life again is here. People begin to make adjustments which

becomes so difficult. It is expedient that while planning for the Christmas celebration, reservations should be made to cushion the aftermath associated with this celebration. So many unresolved conflicts that emanated during the celebration linger on. There are usually so many negative news regarding accident of family members, people's houses being bugged up thereafter as a result of absence of the family members who incidentally travelled for this celebration. So many mishaps associated with the season of merry. The mental health aftermath of this celebration is enormous. Be it as it may, caution should be taken to minimize these mental health aftermath.

However, as a result of insatiable appetite for food during this period, a lot of people become obsessed thereafter which will result to so many health challenges ranging from high blood pressure, diabetes etc. These health challenges could have been averted if only people exercised caution while the celebration

was ongoing. It is important that people are abreast with these negative challenges to avoid "had I known" which usually comes at last. Perhaps bill boards on the roads with inscriptions such as "eat wisely" boldly printed could awaken the consciousness of such erring people.

Finally, the financial mess as an aftermath of the celebration can not be over emphasized. The celebration, which is associated with so much expenditure usually, end one up in a financial mess thereafter. During this time, everyone craves for new things. The children look forward for new clothing, the females are engrossed with new looks ranging from artificial hair, fixing of nails, new clothings etc. While the men are not left out, new cars, new buildings, social gathering expenses (drinks and foods), clubings etc. is on the hick. So many big budgets are made during this time. However, in a twinkle of an eye, when the hustle and bustle are over, the heat of financial mess comes to play. So many bills are piled up ranging from house rents, school fees, feeding budgets etc. The reality of life glares at the face, people are seen running helter skelter trying to meet these financial needs to no avail. The entire situation becomes very gloomy.

It is imperative to have a good budget while planning for Christmas. This will help to reduce financial mess after the celebration. A good budget if strictly adhered to, will definitely prevent one from being financially unstable after the celebration.

In conclusion, families should take cognizance of these factors that could hamper their well being after the Christmas celebration. When these aforementioned factors are curtailed, the family and the society will experience a serene and beautiful life even after the celebration.



COMMENT

Automated labour process and its impact

By Okechukwu Ukegwu

Currently, the human race has a major crisis at hand. Human labour activities are now highly threatened by automation. Automation is a process whereby machines, such as robots have taken over labour processes that should have been ordinarily undertaken by human beings. The major implication of this is that in the nearest future human labour will suffer crucial set back in major cities of the world.

New technologies are even now replacing traditional work with radically new systems of production and communication, causing enormous changes in both industrial and traditional agricultural societies. Will potential developments in biotechnology render traditional food producers obsolete? What is the role of robotics in a world where millions of new jobs are needed each to absorb the fast-growing population?"

No wonder that former Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo few years back raised a touching concern on the growing threat posed to human labour by the deployment of robots and artificial intelligence in work places. The Vice-President's concern further explained that in the next few years, Nigeria would be

contending with having one of the largest youth populations in the world.

According to him, we will be the third most populous nation in the world. What sort of skills will these young men and women require? Where will they work? Already, we are contending with how technology is redefining the structure of industry but more disturbing is the and commerce and the skills required to function in them. But more disturbing is the growing apprehension of redundancy of many who today work in the millions of jobs that may be unnecessary as robots and artificial intelligence perform the same functions far more efficiently and even cheaper".

The former Vice-President's concern should not be wished away, as it is characteristic of our governments.

The question that demands urgent attention here is: "How prepared is Nigeria in this situation where automated processes, such as robotics and artificial intelligence, are threatening to displace human labour?"

On this, Osinbajo said that to brace up for the challenge, the Federal Government was focusing on imparting employable skills on students from primary school to tertiary institutions.

According to him, no sensible discussion of the economy can be done without acknowledging the role of the people, adding that the third major pillar of the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan is on human capital development.

In fact one of the most important features of that Human Capital development plan is science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) education. Therefore, the focus should be on employable skills from

primary school all the way to tertiary education, using all of the new techniques, such as code-writing skills, software writing skills, and all that the new developing technologies seen today clearly hows that anyone in the coming generation will be left behind if they are not at the cutting edge of technology.

To this end, the Nation's educational system must incorporate the new curriculum which focuses on science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Indeed, it will not be out of fashion if a model adopted in Japan is implemented here.

Most large companies in Japan have a policy of lifetime employment: This guarantees that a worker whose job has been taken over by a robot will not be fired but retrained and redeployed to the organization or sister companies within the conglomerate. By so doing, the fear of negative impact of Automated Labour Process in Nigeria will be assuaged.

GOV. ALEX OTTI'S GIANT STRIDE IN ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

The coming on board of Dr Alex Otti on May 29, 2023 as the fifth executive governor of Abia State has brought great transformation in the infrastructure development of the state. The governor through the numerous roads construction/rehabilitation turned Abia into a huge construction site. Within the last six months, more than 80 roads have either been constructed, reconstructed or works on-going. A look at some of the fully constructed/rehabilitated roads, shows that completed roads such as Omuma, Omoba, University, Cemetery, Kent/Ehi, People, Amuvi-Amakohia, Arochukwu among others have ease difficulties in transportation, enhanced economic activities and aesthetic values of the affected cities and communities. The construction of Port-Harcourt Road, Aba, dualisation of Express Tower-Ossah and the reconstruction of Umuahia - Uzuakoli-Ohafia Express Roads stand out as the signature projects of this administration.



■ Flag Off Ceremony Of Portharcourt Road Aba



■ Omuma By Eziukwu Road Aba



■ Different Views Of Omuma Road Towards Slaughter, Aba



■ Umuimo Road Aba



■ Engr Don Otunchere Oti, Hon. Commissioner works



■ Ossah Road Expansion, Umuahia



■ Different Views Of People's Road Aba

■ Uwalaka by shoprite Umuahia after maintenance

■ Uwalaka towards Oriogba Umuahia after maintenance

■ Old Umuahia rail way crossing, Umuahia after maintairace



■ Emelogu Road Aba



■ Green Avenue Road Aba: Before and after maintenance



■ No. 1 Portharcourt Road Aba



■ Udeagbala Road Aba



■ Umuoba/New Umuahia Road Aba



■ Portharcourt Road By Hollywood Aba



■ Agbama Road, Umuahia: Before and after maintenance



■ Ehimiri Road, Umuahia Under Maintenance



■ World Bank Road by World Bank Primary School, Umuahia



■ Shalom Road, Aba



■ MCC/Old Express Road Aba



■ Cemetery Road By Railway, Aba



■ Cemetery Road across the Rail, Aba



■ Cemetery Road By Osusu, Aba



■ Cemetery Road Phase 1 Aba



■ Uzuakoli Road, Umuahia after maintenance

NEWS

Otti's Chief Of Staff Task Transport Officials to support government's Transformation agenda Abia

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

The Chief of Staff to Abia State Governor, Pastor Caleb Ajagba has emphasized Governor Alex Otti's vision for an organized transport sector with a call on Transport officials to support the Governor's effort geared towards positive transformation of the state.

Pastor Ajagba who made the call at Government House Umuahia during an enlarged meeting with Transport officials in the state, noted that a good transport system enhances trade, commerce, economic development and investment.

He disclosed that the essence of the meeting is to interface with them and work towards actualizing the vision of Governor Otti for an organized transport system.

He enjoined them to ensure



Pst. Caleb Ajagba

relative peace and unity in their various unions as well as stressed the need for them to discharge their duties in line with the

Governor's vision of creating prosperity for Abians.

Also speaking, the Commissioner for Transport,

Comrade Sunny Onwunma and the Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Transport, Dr Obioma Reuben-Nwogbe disclosed that the essence of collapsing the various motors unions in the state into one union is for easy and effective management and enjoined them to come up with laudable ideas that will help move the transport sector forward.

In their responses, Comrade Dannie Ubani, the state president, Cooperative, Mr Azode Chukwuma, Chairman, Abia State Tricycle Operators Union, Aba Zone, Mr Azubuikwe Victor and Mr Ugboaja Chiemela commended Governor Otti for his transformational strides in the state especially in the transport sector, and promised to live up to expectations.

Police Service Commissioner Lauds Governor Otti On Improved Security

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has commended the National Commissioner representing the South East in the Police Service Commission, Cgie Onyemauche Nnamani, for notable improvements in the state's security.

Mr. Nnamani who is in Abia State to supervise the ongoing screening exercise of the recruitment of Police constables, gave the commendation when he paid a working visit to Governor Otti.

Nnamani while commending the state government's strategic efforts in ensuring peace and calm in Abia, emphasized the need for continuous improvement in addressing insecurity.

"We commend you for those efforts and I urge you to do everything possible to ensure that there is adequate security in the State.

"I also want to say, that coming here, nobody warned me including my wife, nobody

panicked.

"If I had said I was going to neighbouring states, a lot of warning would have come and I would have gone to Police to get extra security.

"I came here on my own without anybody, which means there is calm, but it is not yet Uhuru? there is still room to improve," he said.

Nnamani commended Abia government's commitment to mobilizing youths for the police force, noting that it would aid in tackling apathy to police recruitment in the state and Southeast region.

He emphasized that only about two thousand candidates applied from Abia compared to 30 thousand applicants in some Northern states and called for increased participation to meet upcoming quotas.

He said that the commission had been mandated to recruit 10,000 persons into the Police Force and added that President Bola Tinubu had approved the additional recruitment of another 30,000 persons from

Abia origin into Police Force.

Nnamani pointed out that the recruitment exercises would greatly help in solving the manpower problem experienced in the Police Force.

He said that "Abia must be ready for that recruitment. I am not sure it would be fair if any State loses her required number".

Responding, Governor Otti while highlighting the key role security plays in development, expressed concern over general apathy in police recruitment and attributed it to the perceived difficulties in rising through the ranks.

The Governor's aide stressed government's commitment to making the Police Force an attractive career option and affirmed plans to enhance recruitment success in the upcoming exercise.

He emphasized the importance of creating awareness about the benefits of joining the police force saying, "I believe we still have to keep nudging our people, reorientating them, letting them

understand that the Police Force is a good place to make a career.

"We have seen a lot of senior people who entered the police force just like these people being recruited and ended up being Commissioners of Police, IGs, DIGs, AIGs".

Governor Otti directed the Commissioner for Information and Culture, Prince Okey Kanu, and the security team to intensify efforts in mobilizing Abia residents, through town criers, churches, and community centers.

The Governor suggested the appointment of liaison officers, utilization of town criers, and reaching out to churches and community centers to disseminate information.

He pledged the state government's commitment to mobilizing the people for future recruitment exercises including incentive packages for interested individuals, especially those facing financial constraints.

Ex Abia Lawmaker Calls For More Support Towards Peace In South East Project

By Chibunna Ikeokwu

The Immediate past Majority Leader of the Abia State House of Assembly, Hon Chijioko Chukwu, has called for more support towards the Peace in South East Project (PISE-P), an initiative powered by the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt Hon Ben Kalu.

Hon Chijioko Chukwu who is currently the Special Assistant to the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives on Intergovernmental Affairs, during an interview recently, lauded the PISE-P initiative which according to him, is centered around the use of a non kinetic approach that involves negotiations, dialogues, development of infrastructure and training of the unemployed youths to foster the course of peace in the South East region.

He said the course of peace is very important in the Southeast region, being the hub of enterprise in Nigeria, but lamented how the economic potentials of the region are gradually eroding, with the rising unemployment in the area, inflation and security threats.

Hon Chukwu disclosed that the PISE-P recognizes the urgency to address these challenges, restore peace and unlock the region's untapped potential, calling on Ndigbo to rally round the Deputy Speaker, to move the project forward.

"The Southeast has become the shadow of itself in terms of economic activities and security

challenges. Our people can no longer come home. The weekly sit at home has greatly crippled commercial activities in the region. Our people who were once known for being, hardworking, entrepreneurs and also their brother's keeper, are now living like enemies.

"The current situation in the Southeast calls for moral restitution, reconciliation and rebirth. This is what PISE-P seeks to address and we must give it the needed support to restore the region to its old glory", he said.

Hon Chijioko Chukwu, while urging the Deputy Speaker not to deviate from the part of truth and righteousness, said he must remain focus, committed and also, run an all inclusive government devoid of party affiliation or hatred.

He added that Bende federal constituency and the South East at large is lucky to have the position of the number six citizen, which he described as an honour to the region, lauding the leadership qualities of the Deputy Speaker, whom he attested would give the region robust representation.

"The Deputy Speaker represents a new blood. He was not part of the old order, but a blend of modern practices in governance and we must support him in this initiative.

"He has been around the corridors of power for some time, so he knows the challenges facing the region and he is ready to tackle the security challenges head long", Hon Chukwu assured.



Hon Chijioko Chukwu

Perm Sec cautions staff on absenteeism

By Blessing Anienwe

The Permanent Secretary Ministry of Trade, Commerce and Industry, Lolo Magdalene Onwu Kalu has charged staff of the Ministry to always be regular and punctual to work.

Lolo Magdalene Onwu who gave the charge during a familiarization meeting with staff of the Ministry, reminded them that habitual lateness and absent to work would not be tolerated, stressing that they cannot keep absenting themselves from work and expect to be paid at the end of the month.

The Permanent Secretary advised the staff to work with their conscience emphasizing

that this is a new government and they have been given a mandate to change the face of the Civil Service to what it should be.

Lolo Onwu Kalu lauded the efforts of the Directors and Heads of departments and appealed that they Keep the Staff busy and give the workers a sense of direction by incorporating them in weekly meetings where the schedule for the week would be made known to the workers, stressing that if workers have no duties assigned to them they would be bored and leave before the close of work. She added that the weekly reports which would form the basis of quarterly reports and subsequently annual reports.

The Permanent Secretary

admonished the staff to put all complaints in writing following the order of hierarchy and due process as the era of staff taking laws into their hands are over.

Addressing the Issue of staff not resident in the town of their posting, the Permanent Secretary stated that If any staff decides to come to work from

anywhere he/she resided, he/she must be punctual and have no right to choose the days of the week to come to work and reminded the staff about the penalty for absenteeism.

On the merger of Ministry of Trade and Investment with Ministry of Industry, the Permanent Secretary urged the

staff to stop running a separate policy, and stop acting as if there are two separate Ministries, because they have been merged by the state government and should run the same salary structure. and the welfare schemes should be harmonized.

In his speech, the Director of Commerce, Elder Mecha Udonsi urged the staff to bring themselves up to date with the Civil Service rules and Code of Conduct, especially as regards discipline and respect. He stressed that there is misconduct and serious misconduct and each one has serious penalties.

Elder Udonsi reminded the staff of orderliness for doing things in the Civil service and the rules should not be flouted. He decried the high level of

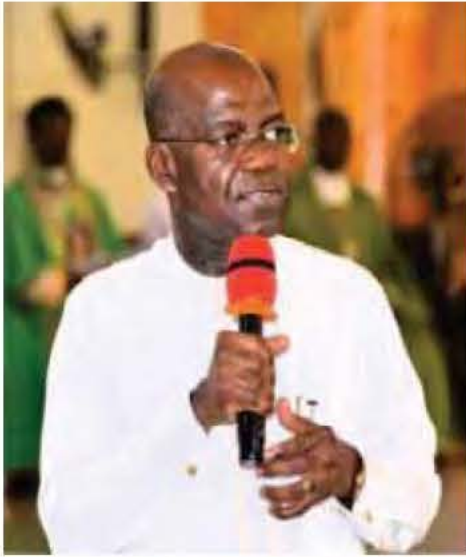
disrespect in the Civil Service and warned the staff to learn to respect the authorities and their seniors.

In a vote of thanks on behalf of the staff, Mr. Chidobe Ogbonna, thanked the Permanent Secretary for interacting with the Staff and her clarification on issues concerning the Ministry as raised by some Staff and pledged that the staff would do more than her expectations stressing that they are happy with the administration of Dr Alex Otti which has change the narration of the civil servants for good. He also appealed to the Permanent Secretary to use her good offices to bring the two staff welfare together.

Give the workers a sense of direction by incorporating them in weekly meetings where the schedule for the week would be made known to the workers

PICTORIAL ACTIVITIES OF THE 2024 ARMED FORCES REMEMBRANCE DAY CELEBRATION IN UMUAHIA

CONTD.



News



Erondu Jnr greets constituents at new year

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

The Abia lawmaker representing Obingwa-West State constituency in the Abia State House of Assembly (ABHA), ErondU Uchenna ErondU Jnr, has congratulated his constituents for witnessing the year 2024.

Erondu Jnr in a New Year message from his Media Office and made available to newsmen, urged his constituents to remain hopeful and prayerful, adding that the year 2024 would be better than 2023.

The former Obingwa Local Government Council Boss, who decried the high level of hardship in the country, and urged Nigerians not to despair.

In his words: "Remain patriotic as ever and believe that no matter how difficult things may be, there would be light at the end of the tunnel".

The Chairman, House Committee on Public Service who further expressed optimism about the opportunities that lie ahead, urged his constituents and Nigerians to remain resolute and determined as a people.

The Uhie-born legislator charged Nigerians to continue to pray for their leaders at all levels for the wisdom to lead right.

The statement further reads thus: "On behalf of my family and constituents, I wish to heartily rejoice with you, wishing you all a blessed 2024".

Gov. Otti commissions school building, reaffirm stand on giving education a facelift in Abia

By Charles Ogbonnaya.

Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Otti has commissioned a two-block classroom built by Ubakala Secondary School Old Students Association with an assurance of according priority attention to the education sector for excellent and quality delivery.

Dr Otti who stated this during the commissioning of two blocks of classroom and reunion ceremony of Ubakala Secondary School Old Students Association, held at the School premises, Nsukwe, Ubakala in Umuahia South LGA reiterated that because of the importance Government attaches to education it allocated about 30 percentage of this year's budget to the education sector.

The Governor represented by his Deputy, Engr Ikechukwu Emetu commended the Old Students of Ubakala Secondary School for their thoughtfulness and patriotic zeal to give back to the school that nurtured them by embarking on renovation of dilapidated structures, which in extension is complimenting Government's efforts at uplifting the standards of education across the State.

He reassured the Old Students and management of the School of the Government's commitment to do more in keeping to all the promises made to them as it will leave lasting legacies and footprints in the school and urged other Old Students Association to do more and impact on their Alma Mater.

In her remarks, the Commissioner for Education, Prof Uche Eme Uche noted that despite inheriting huge problems in the



Gov. Otti Speaking at a commissioning Ceremony

school education system across the State, Government will not renege in it's responsibilities of giving adequate attention to the education sector and commended the Old Students Association for not forgetting to give back to their School.

Also speaking, an Old Student and Commissioner for Budget and Planning, Sir Kingsley Anosike pointed out that the sad trajectory of rote in the sector will be addressed as the about 30 percentage of budget allotted to education will soon impact on them and appreciated members of the Old Students Association for coming out strong in effecting positive change in their school.

In his address, the President General, Ubakala Secondary School Old Students Association, Chief Sam Uba said the good foundation provided them at their

formative levels in the school have gingered them to support their Alma Mater both in projects, provision of academic materials, moral support and listed their challenges to include, modern laboratories, restrooms, Corper's lodge, furniture for teachers and students, security among others.

The event featured goodwill messages from the President General of Ubakala Improvement Union Federated, Chief Friday Ogbuehi, represented by Chaplain Charles Mbakwe and Chairman, Chief Executive SLOT, Chief Nnamdi Ezeigbo, while the Special Adviser to the Governor on Security, Commander Mark Uba Rtd was decorated with an Honorary member of Ubakala Secondary School Old Students Association for his outstanding contribution to the development of the school.

Technocrat hails Tinubu's reforms, urges patience for renewed hope agenda

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

Abia-born technocrat and the 2023 Vice Presidential Candidate of Young Progressive Party (YPP), Kasarachi Enyinnah has applauded President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's performance since assumption of office, describing him as a reformist. He noted that so many reforms were taking place in the country with a lot of international collaborations that would put Nigeria on the limelight.

The investment banker who disclosed this with newsmen at his hometown, Ogwe, Ukwu-West Local Government Area (LGA), Abia state, maintained that President would not disappoint Nigerians owing to his antecedents especially in Lagos State.

He urged Nigerians to be patient with the Renewed Hope Agenda reforms of President Tinubu, stating that the masses would benefit greatly eventually.

Enyinnah further noted that Tinubu developed the blueprint that helped Lagos state to emerge the fifth largest economy in Africa, maintaining that the in his capacity as president, Tinubu would fix the country back to fruition.

Addressing other concerns, he commended the Deputy Speaker, Federal House of Representatives, Benjamin Okezie Kalu for his Peace In Southeast - Project (PISE-P) initiative, adding that it would



solve the complex security challenges of the Southeastern region of the country.

He explained that "No meaningful development can take place without peace. I urge stakeholders within the region to support the PISE - P initiative."

Enyinnah who further decried the agitation by different groups in the southeast region, called on youths and other critical stakeholders to support President Tinubu's administration and sheath their swords. This is even as he lauded National Assembly lawmakers for the accelerated attention

given to the South-East Development Commission (SEDC) bill, explaining that it would help the region rebuild the damaging effects occasion by the civil war of over 50 years ago.

He commended the state Governor, Alex Otti on his performance in ensuring the growth and stability of the state, urging Abians to support Otti-led administration noting that the governor would rebuild and reposition the state for enviable development.

NEWS

Umuopara clans honours illustrious sons

By Okereke Kate

Three illustrious sons of Umuopara clan in Umuahia South Local government, Chikezie Nwosu, Ugochukwu Inyama and Sonny Mbagwu have been honoured with "Ugwu Umuopara" titles by Umuopara Council of Traditional Ruler.

The title which is given to only those who have served and contributed meaningfully to the development of their communities, saw the recipients crowned as the "Ugwu Umuopara" representing Ngodo Autonomous Community, Eluama Na Mgbedeala Autonomous Community and Ohiaocha Community respectively.

Prominent sons and daughters of the clan came out in their large numbers to celebrate these illustrious sons who have resonated hope in their various communities through dedication and commitment to the development of their communities.

"Ugwu Umuopara" is a lifetime title given to only one person from each community that make up Umuopara Ahia Asaa and no two persons from the same community are pronounced and bestowed with this reverend chieftaincy honour.

Speaking, the newly installed Ugwu Umuopara, Ugwumba

community, encouraging him to do more for his community.

He said the honour is not one that should be paraded like a peacock but one that holds the custodians accountable for the development of their communities.

He said, "The Ugwu Umuopara title is not to be paraded. You must be ready to give back to the community you are representing. If you are not ready to make impacts in your community, when you are approached for that title, simply tell them you are not interested, so you don't truncate its essence". He said aside attending festivals, weddings and burial ceremonies, the purpose of the 'Ugwu Umuopara' title is basically

to make an impact in the community and also promote positive development.

Ugwumba Nwosu added that there is a need to change the narrative of 'Ugwu Umuopara' from being seen as a title paraded to receive accolades and encomiums from subjects to one that is given for developmental impacts.

"I told the other Ugwu Umuopara that we have to change the trajectory and do something impactful. By January 2024, we will have a meeting where we can select one impactful project like building a health care center, a market or education system, but most importantly, it will be a project that is tinted towards development. We are starting with just one project, we believe by the years to come, we will be doing more. Our impact must be felt in Umuopara".

Ugwumba Nwosu who also spoke on the threatening challenges on the Igbo culture, said the recent worship of money affected the survival of the Igbo culture and until this idea is changed, the Igbo culture would keep facing challenges.



Ugwumba Chikezie Nwosu, one of the recipients of 'Ugwu Umuopara' title

Nwosu, hinted at journalists on the culture of Umuopara, particularly the Ugwu Umuopara festival.

According to him, the Ugwu Umuopara is a title given in recognition of one's impacts to his



Gov Otu

GOV. Otu harps on need to obey separation of power

From: Julie Okoroafo

The Cross River State Governor, Senator Bassey Otu has reminded the Judges that the principle of separation of power between the three arms of government is purely for checks and balances and not opposition and friction as it seems to be.

The governor who stated this, during the swearing in of three newly appointed high court Judges in the State, stressed that lots of Judicial expertise are expected from them especially now that the Judiciary nationwide appears to be under unbridled public criticism.

The three new Judges, Justices Ama Edet Ekpo, Theresa Ansa Agom and Jariath Ogar Agim as well as other members of the Judiciary were advised to reinvent the Judiciary through self-cleansing procedure as the governor

also advised them to live above board to rekindle the faith and trust of the common man in the Judiciary. Gov. Otu however commended the Executive, Legislative and the Judiciary in the state for the current symbiotic relationship that existing between them and ascribed it as the reason for the seamless movement of the machinery of government, accelerated growth and development in the State, and further charged the Judiciary to help decongest the correction centers through making use of Alternative Dispute Resolution.

Pipeline vandalism: NDDC Chief seeks help from royal fathers

By: Aligwe Stella

The NDDC Executive Director, Finance and Administration, Alabo Boma Iyaye, has called on the traditional rulers in the Niger Delta region to assist the Federal Government and security agencies in oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the Region.

Iyaye, who disclosed this recently, during an interactive session with members of the Rivers State Council of Traditional Rulers at their Council Headquarters in Port Harcourt; tasked the monarchs to take drastic measures towards checkmating the activities of oil thieves.

He further added that they need the traditional institution to assist the government and the security agencies to protect the oil assets; noting that their majesties, have very

big roles to play to protect our oil assets and projects in the state. He maintained that If there is no oil theft, there will be more allocation for the Niger Delta.

Iyaye, therefore, urged all to try as much as possible to protect our resources and stop economic sabotage in our region; while acknowledging the importance of traditional institutions, as he addressed the council and the entire Rivers State through traditional rulers, representing the 23 local government areas of the state.

According to Iyaye, "Rivers State is one of the major oil producers in Nigeria, contributing about 33 per cent of the oil revenue of the country. No government can afford to disregard the state.

"I want to assure you that

2024 will be a better year for all of us. The NDDC board will meet with you again at the appropriate time to exchange ideas. The National Assembly has approved over 300 billion years but we assure you in the budget for the Niger Delta and the NDDC board will deploy the money for the development projects in the various states".

Responding, the Rivers State Representative on the Board of NDDC, Chief Tony Okocha, said that the NDDC has had a negative trajectory over the years but we assure you that this new NDDC, through the initiatives of the current Board, will bring positive change.

Commissioner advices market executives on unity of purpose

By Blessing Anienwe

Abia state Commissioner for Ministry of Trade, Commerce and Industry, Dr. Chimezie Isaac Ukaegbu has charged market chairman to carry the members of the Executives along in decision making.

Dr. Chimezie gave this charge during a meeting in his office with the Chairman and members of the Aba North Shoe Industrial Market (Shoe Plaza) Taskforce, at the Ministry's Secretariat Complex. He

stated that leadership would be easier if all the executives in an office are carried along in the running of the office, revealing that If all the executives are aware of how an office is run, there will be more understanding.

The Commissioner revealed that many issues of misunderstanding among the executives of market leadership are issue of trust and stated that the aim of having executives in the market was to represent the government in

markets.

He therefore stressed the need for harmony among the executives. and urged the Chairman Aba North Shoe Industrial Market (Shoe Plaza) to build trust among the executives and involve them in all the running of the office.

Chimezie warned that if the Executives of the Aba North Shoe Industrial Market (Shoe Plaza) do not resolve their differences, government would have no option than to dissolve them and new executives appointed immediately.

OPINION

Towards sustaining a peaceful and secure environment in Abia – Eze Uras

Abia State, God's own State is widely acclaimed as one of the safest, peaceful and secure states in Nigeria. This widely held claim is based on the fact that major robbery incidents and uprisings have been at very low and minimal level in the State.

Many Police Commissioners who worked in Abia, and other Heads of Security Agencies attested to this. Unlike other States in Nigeria where bank robberies, banditry, rampaging killers and unknown gunmen and constant kidnapping have held sway, even in neighbouring states.

Regrettably, Abia once peaceful and serene state has been faced with incidences of kidnappings, car thefts which have been in the rising coupled with street and home robberies.

Successive administrations in Abia have made frantic efforts toward supporting and empowering various security agencies through donating security vans and patrol vehicles with other logistics, to maintain secured environment.

These supports, no doubt has gone a long way in making Abia State peaceful for economic and other socio-political events to thrive. Indeed, Abia is a rising economic giant of the South East, especially, the

Enyimba City, and no good development can come out of a place where there are incidences of crime, such as was being witnessed in Abia in the last couple of months.

It is on this premise that Dr. Alex Otti, an astute economic manager of repute, and his lieutenants thought it wise, to launch a security outfit code-named, 'Operation Crush.

This security outfit has within few months of operation lived up to its reputation. For a society to witness progressive development, there must be peace and tranquility, and everyone should be involved.

Interestingly, the traditional rulers have promised their unflinching support for this security project. Here lies the need for all and sundry, especially, the rural dwellers, the farmers and hunters, to report every suspicious

Regrettably, Abia once peaceful and serene state has been faced with incidences of kidnappings, car thefts which have been in the rising coupled with street and home robberies

movement in our bushes to checkmate the activities of the criminal elements who have chosen to derive pleasure in frustrating the peaceful and secure Abia environment.

A stitch in time, they say saves Nine.

Tackling the menace of counterfeit.

By Dickson Paul

The recent negative development on food and drugs counterfeiting in Nigeria has kept most people worried.

Counterfeiting is the act of producing a particular product(s) below the stipulated or required standard/specifications.

Apart from the health related hazards, the fakers make so much profit from this criminal engagement not minding both legal and health implications.

These unpatriotic Nigerians who take delight in this unlawful act, consider it as a lucrative venture as they even make more sales than the producers of the original products. The intent of these criminal elements, is never to improve on the health system of the innocent Nigerians who unknowingly consume the harmful packagings. Honesty, fakers and fake products are on the increase. It seems we are losing the war against sub standardization and fake products.

It is well known fact that an Agency was established by law with the responsibilities to oversee the production, administration and control of food (drinks included) and drugs in Nigeria.

This watchdog, the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control, (NAFDAC), now is seen as merely exist and perform below expectations of most Nigerians.

Nigerians remembered with nostalgia the late Prof Dora Akunyili, former NAFDAC Director General for her formula that tackled the menace of counterfeiting.

This amazon made almost suicidal attempts to wipe out long entrenched fake producers and marketers in the country.

By the time she stepped down as NAFDAC's DG, in 2008, following her

appointment as Minister of information and communication, she had succeeded according to the World Health Organization, WHO, survey in bringing down the volume of counterfeited products in circulation in the country from 70 to 16.7 per cent.

This was very commendable and a very secret weapon used by the then boss of this very important Agency should be reinvented to fight the monster in today's society where counterfeited products are swiftly putting our health and lives in jeopardy.

The recent discovery of fake drinks in Abia-Abia State and Lagos and there are other places yet to be spotted where sub standard products are packaged, confirmed the fact that we are on the verge of becoming a fakers' society.

Let me say it without being apologetic, late professor Dora Akunyili became a success nationally and internationally but unfortunately, the agency could not keep up the war against counterfeiting as stakeholders in the health sector and Nigerians look up to the approving authorities to consolidate on the past achievements, as well, extend the frontiers of drug and food administration in the country.

People now see it that the war has slow down, wondering if the agency is still

measuring up to expectations.

The shock of what was saw in Aba where fake drinks were produced in an unhygienic environment coupled with unknown chemical mixture, convinced us that the vibrancy that characterized NAFDAC's advocacy and law enforcement has drastically reduced.

In the past, Nigerians were sensitized and mobilized to fight the monster of fake products and the law was vigorously enforced, without any compromise.

Laughable as it is, peddlers of counterfeited items now appear to be having a field day all over the country. Most times, we read in the newspapers how several billions of naira worth of fake products were destroyed by NAFDAC and one wonders how those items got to the market in the first place.

Candidly speaking, it will be very wrong to write this article without mentioning the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, FCCPC, which also has a role in fighting sub standard products.

The FCCPC should collaborate with NAFDAC to stem the tide. Faking undermines the right of a consumer, the right and safety and that of good medical services.

The strict monitoring and enforcement should cover both food and drug, rather than seeing any of them as less problematic.

This watchdog, the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control, (NAFDAC), now is seen as merely exist and perform below expectations of most Nigerians

Comment

Restoring The Culture Of Respect In Igbo Land

By Ogbonnaya Akomas

According to one dictionary, the verb "Respect" means to have differential regard for, esteem, to treat with propriety or consideration, and to regard as inviolable, avoid intruding upon, among other meanings. Without doubt, these beautiful attributes that constitute what respect means have always made Ndigbo to respect their elders from the time immemorial as a part of their cultural heritage and traditional norm. It was a taboo to do otherwise in the olden days. The Igbo person actually reveres those elderly and accord

the deep respect throughout the geographical entity where Ndigbo reside in Nigeria, and wherever they live. In many parts of Igbo land, it was customary for the younger ones to call their elders "daa or dee" to show respect to such people, particularly among family members and the extended family. In other Igbo communities, such as Arochukwu, the junior ones prostrate before their senior in a show of unalloyed and deep respect. Other communities have various ways

peculiar to them which they greet their elderly. However, from what we see today the respect for elderly in Igbo society is no longer what it used to be and this trend in decline has continued to dwindle unabated. Today, the younger ones in our midst no longer care to respect their older ones. Apart from not respecting the elderly, many youths, no longer care to greet people and even neighbours they see in the morning, particularly the youths born or living in towns who it appears their parents fail to inculcate Igbo values and culture.

Furthermore, some members of the communities who feel they are rich or highly educated neglect to greet their fellow community members or accord them respect because the latter people have not achieved wealth.

This should not be so, Ndigbo should continue to show and respect the elders and older ones.

This aspect of our cultural heritage and traditional value must never be jettisoned. Therefore, parents and guardians should always teach their children and

wards the culture and values of Igbo people especially the respect and greetings to their senior and older ones and greet them always.

Indeed, the value of according respect, care and dignity for the elderly ones in Igbo land can never be over-emphasized. It marks us out as a distinct people. Since children usually emulate what their parents and guardians do, parents should set example to their children by greeting their elders and respecting them.

On their own part, the older and elderly ones must engage in acts that are in consonance with their age and shun ignoble acts that can put them to reproach and dishonor.

It is quite disturbing that, today, many of the elderly ones in our midst engage in ignoble and inglorious acts that they should not engage in, and in doing so, often attract disrespect and disrepute to themselves and those around them.

Indeed, the invaluable cultural value of according respect to the older ones in Igbo land is an age long culture which we must preserve and propagate.

Late Pa Nwankwo laid to rest

Christian faithful have been charged to return to God as the only source of their existence.

Preaching a topic entitled, "Great Mistake" at the Funeral service of Late Mr John Mgbuchi Nwankwo Harbor, recently, at Nde Ubani, Aro Ajatakiri, Ikwano local government, the priest in charge of Living Faith Church, Umosu, Rev. Richard Emmanuel Ogolo, said that life without Christ remains the greatest mistake.

Rev. Ogolo, while urging all to live a Christlike life like the deceased, noted his humility, sincerity, commitment and love for Christ should be emulated by Christians as God takes records of our lives here on earth.

In his tribute, one of the deceased relatives, Super High Chief Okeosisi Harbor, described Late John as a sincere man who had passion for his agricultural job adding that he would be remembered for his passion for God, humanity, strength of character, while urging all to not mourn like those without hope but to take solace by the fact that he lived an exemplary life of reverence to God.

News

The daughter of the deceased and a staff of Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation (ANPC), Mrs Uchechi Chimezie in her tribute, described her father as one who lived a life of generosity, dignity, love and peace, adding that his selflessness was like no

other.

Late Mr John Nwankwo who died at the age of 76 after a brief illness was survived by his wife, children, brother and a host of other relatives among them is the retired Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information, Mr. Nathan Harbor.

Environmental scientist links hot weather to human activities

From Nzeuzor Jane. PH

The harsh and humid harmattan weather being experienced in Port Harcourt and some parts of the country have been attributed to human factors.

Speaking on this, environmental scientist in Port Harcourt, Dogbora Beresibe attributed the rise in

temperature to increase human activities particularly the mixture of green house gasses such as carbon dioxide.

She said the accumulation of green house gasses in the atmosphere, primarily, carbon dioxide tract heat and contribute to the earths warming and further explained that human

activities such as bush burning, illegal refining and others are negatively affecting the environment.

Mrs Beresibe said when the gasses are released, it affects the ozone layers and frown at the fact that people do not seem to be paying attention, stating that it is not business as usual this time, that climate change is real.

The environment scientist also said the alteration in temperature and weather pattern have the potential to disrupt cropping season, affect crop yields and increase the prevalence of pest and diseases adding that the imbalance in the system would greatly affect crops and food security.

SPORTING AMBASSADOR

NPFL: Enyimba storm Jos for Plateau United

By Joseph Jacob

The People's Elephant, Enyimba International of Aba will today take on Plateau United in one of the rescheduled week 18 matches of the Nigerian Premier Football League.

The match was moved from yesterday to today to enable Nigerian soccer fans focus on the Super Eagles AFCON opener against Equatorial Guinea.

Enyimba is fourth with 29 points and a single point above their opponents, who will leapfrog the Aba

side if they get all three points.

Other matches taking place today across the country will see Sporting Lagos host Shooting Stars as Bayelsa United welcome Bendel Insurance.

It will be a battle of who-disunites-who as Rivers United welcome Akwa United while Katsina United will attempt to dim Remo Stars.

Table toppers, Lobi Stars will attempt to outshine Kano Pillars when they lurk horns at the Aper Aku Stadium.



■ Enyimba International FC

Mentoring

Top 8 most common entrepreneur challenges

Being an entrepreneur can be incredibly rewarding. At the same time, there are challenges of starting a business that every entrepreneur face. No matter how much we plan, unexpected things happen. One of the many entrepreneur challenges is to expect the unexpected and to find a solution to move forward. Keep reading to learn about common problems entrepreneurs face and how to overcome them.

Getting into Entrepreneurship

If you haven't already given yourself a pat on the back for starting your own business, go ahead and do that now. This is a big decision, and one you should be proud of. Entrepreneurship comes with flexibility, creative control, and a sense of freedom. It can be a rewarding career path that allows you to embark on work that you truly love and enjoy doing.

On the flip side, part of being a business owner involves understanding some of the issues in entrepreneurship. You'll undoubtedly encounter various obstacles throughout your journey. Every business owner deals with setbacks and hurdles at some point in their career. Without a boss over you to report to, the weight of responsibilities falls on your shoulders. But don't worry, we know you can handle it. So, what are challenges that you can expect? We've narrowed down some of the most common issues and solutions to prepare you for your entrepreneurial journey.

Starting your own business is an exciting endeavor. To ensure a successful and smooth experience, keep these challenges in mind so you know how to overcome them.

Finding the right idea

Before your business can take off, you need to have a viable, profitable business plan. This starts with your idea. Does your business offer something of value? Is there a target market for your business? Many beginners struggle with creating a business that can be sustained years down the line. Focus on the product or service you'll offer and how it can solve a problem for your target audience.

Lack of funding

As a business owner, you take on the financial responsibility needed to successfully run your business. Small business owners often begin as solopreneurs, who handle all the work themselves and don't have a need to hire employees or outsource their work—at least not yet. If your goals involve hiring a team or expanding offices and locations, you'll need some way to secure funding in order to grow.

Hiring and managing employees

Assuming you have the financial resources to hire and manage a team, the next hurdle comes with finding the right people to work with you. In the age of gig work, it may be easy to find low-cost employees or contractors, but will their work be the kind of quality you're looking for? One of the problems entrepreneurs face is hiring top-talent employees who still fit within their budget.

Time management

Entrepreneurs often wear multiple hats, especially during the beginning stages of their business. From the moment the decision is made to start your business, to your launch, to actually running your business, you're constantly involved in the process. It can be more time-consuming than expected, and many entrepreneurs run the risk of burnout. Finding a healthy balance between their work and personal lives can be a challenge.

Marketing and sales

As with every other aspect of your business, you're now in charge of promotion and marketing. You need to get the

word out about your services or products so customers know what you offer and how to find you. A lot of time and strategy go into developing a successful marketing plan. For people who aren't experienced in marketing or sales, this aspect of being an entrepreneur can feel daunting and intimidating.

Competition

Due to the sheer amount of businesses that exist today, many industries are over saturated with people trying to establish themselves as experts in their field. Whatever type of business you decide on, it's important to realize the competition you'll be faced with. As the industry grows and inevitably changes, so will your competition and your strategy to stand out among the crowd.

Adapting to change

Part of the growth challenges as a business owner is the ability to adapt to changes within your industry or field. These changes can come in the form of a shift in market conditions, technological advancements, and customer

that there are other ways to obtain funding and support to help your business grow.

Consider applying for loans or grants to help get your business off the ground. Another option is to connect with your community and host a crowd funding event or ask for donations. You'll be surprised how many people are in your corner who want to support you. You can also look into participating in an incubator program, where you often receive funding, mentorship, and networking support during the early stages of your business.

Build a strong team

The best business owners and CEOs are pivotal leaders in their industry. They recognize the value of hiring top-talent employees and invest time and money into their training and development. Cultivating a team that shares your vision for your business is an integral part of being a successful business owner. Take the time to recruit the best possible candidates for your team. These are the people who will represent your company and support you in your

success.

Prioritize and delegate

Part of being a good leader in the workplace is the ability to prioritize work and know when to share the responsibility of getting it done. Even though you may feel comfortable doing all the work yourself, your team is there to support you.

As your business continues to grow, you'll find more tasks and responsibilities to share. In order to maximize your time and work efficiently, allow yourself to delegate work to other people on your team. This can also help you maintain a healthy balance between your work and personal life.

Develop and strong brand and marketing strategy

By now we know that brand voice and a strong marketing strategy are essential elements of building a business. No

matter your service or product, consumers want to connect with the brand and the person behind the brand. Create your own unique brand identity that showcases your place in the market that will help you stand out.

Embrace change and innovation

Every industry goes through waves of change, so it's important to stay up to date with the latest trends and developments in technology. As business owners, it's our responsibility to evolve with the times. It might be scary, and it may mean investing more time and effort into these changes, but they'll be worth it so long as you remain relevant to your audience.

Find the right platform for you!

Being a business owner can be truly rewarding and lead to many wonderful opportunities in your career. Will it be tough? Yes. Will it require time, some research, and a bit of planning? You bet. Do you have to do it alone? Absolutely not. Practice is your one-stop-shop CRM (customer relationship management) software to run your small business. You can manage your clients, accept payments, and you can even message your clients easily and effortlessly through our platform.

For those entrepreneurs who need a bit more customization, our Pro Plan is for you. Add a custom domain, include your own branding, plus add digital signatures into your workflow. Don't forget our integration ability to connect Practice to all your other tools for seamless automation. Run your business with Practice for the stress-free client management system you've been looking for.



needs. Entrepreneurs need to be mindful of industry trends and anticipate the change in order to remain competitive.

Managing finance

Unless you have a background in finance, many small business owners aren't familiar with managing finances and cash flow. It's a challenging aspect of being an entrepreneur, as keeping track of your budget and profitability isn't an easy task. Without the proper knowledge or guidance on how to manage your finances, you run the risk of doing harm to your business's finances.

How to overcome difficulties: main tips

Now that you're familiar with some of the most common entrepreneur challenges business owners face, here are a few tips to help you navigate through these obstacles.

Research and planning

The best way to prepare yourself is to do your research before launching your business. As excited as you may be to start your business, creating a solid business plan will help guide you throughout your journey. You want to go into this endeavor feeling confident and secure in your marketing strategy.

Identify your priorities, potential pain points, and brainstorm ways to overcome these challenges. It's a good idea to come up with a Plan B, maybe even a Plan C, just in case you need it. You never know what kind of situations you may encounter with your business. This is where problem-solving can come in handy and help get you through these hurdles.

Seek funding and support

Many entrepreneurs assume they have to foot the bill for their business completely on their own. For many, this might be your only option as you're starting out. But know

SPORTING AMBASSADOR



EPL Loses African Stars to AFCON

By Joseph Jacob

The ongoing 34th edition of the African Cup of Nations in Cote d'Ivoire has stripped the English Premier League of many African stars.

League leaders, Liverpool will miss the services of their top scorer, Mohamed Salah who is the captain of the Pharaohs of Egypt. He led his team against Mozambique in their opening match.

Besides being Liverpool's top scorer this season with 14 goals, he has provided eight assists.

His manager in Liverpool, Jurgen Klopp, has taken Salah's absence in good fate. "We knew the Africa Cup of Nations from time to time appears and Mo

has to go," Klopp said, "We have [Wataru] Endo as a participant of the Asian Cup as well, so it is like it is. We have to deal with it and we will."

AFC Bournemouth have lost two players. Their forward Dango Ouattara is with the Stallions of Burkina Faso in Cote d'Ivoire, while another forward Antoine Semenyo has teamed up with the Black Stars of Ghana.

Arsenal will not have the services of mid-fielder, Mohamed Elneny as he will be serving his father land, Egypt in the AFCON.

Bertrand Traore is in Egypt for Burkina Faso, as his club Aston Villa will have to do without him as

the challenge for the league title.

Brentford will have to continue their battles in the EPL without their mid-fielder, Frank Onyeka, who is with the Super Eagles of Nigeria and forward Yoane Wissa who is in Cote d'Ivoire doing business for DR Congo.

Brighton and Hove Albion will spend weeks without Simon Adingra, who is lasing his boots for Cote d'Ivoire as nthe Elephants battle to win their second AFCON title on home soil.

Wobbling Chelsea are already missing the services of Senegal forward, Nicolas Jackson, who has scored eight goals in 23 appearances for Chelsea this season.

With two goals and six assists in 23 matches, Crystal Palace will miss the contributions of Jordan Ayew as he lase his boots for Ghana in search of their first AFCON title since 1982.

Idrissa Gueye is with the Teranga Lions of Senegal as they defend their AFCON title. The fans at Goodison Park will miss him greatly, especially as Everton struggle to move away from the relegation zone after the ten point deduction they suffered.

Fulham are missing the services of three key players. Defenders Fode Ballo-Toure and Calvin Bassey are with Senegal and Nigeria respectively. Mid-fielder, Alex Iwobi is also with the Super Eagles of Nigeria.

Issa Kabore is rendering his defending services to Burkina Faso at the AFCON in the expense of Luton Town who are struggling to leave the relegation zone.

Sofyan Amrabat who is on loan from Fiorentina will be missed by Manchester United as he plays for Morocco at the AFCON. Similarly, Amad Diallo is representing the host Cote d'Ivoire. Andre Onana is expected to join the Indomitable Lions of Cameroon, after he delayed his arrival in order to play against Tottenham Hotspur in English Premier League on Sunday.

Nottingham Forests are the worst hit as six of their first team players are in international duties in Cote d'Ivoire. They are Nigerian defender, Ola Aina, Ivorian trio of Serge Aurier, Willy Boly and Ibrahim Sangare. Cheikhou Kouyate and Moussa Niakhate are with

the Teranga Lions in their title defense.

Bottom placed Sheffield United are missing the services Yasser Larouci of Algeria and Anis Ben Slimane of Tunisia.

After losing their captain Son Heung Min to the Asian Cup, Tottenham Hotspur are also without Yves Bissouma of Mali and Pape Matar Sarr of Senegal as both players are playing at the AFCON.

West Ham United's challenge for a Champions League place is suffering as their goal king, Mohammed Kudus is with the Black Stars of Ghana. Kudus have scored 10 goals in 24 appearances for the

Hammers.

They are also missing Nayef Aguerd one of their most dependable defenders, he is with the Atlas Lions of Morocco fighting for a second AFCON title after they became the first African team to reach the semi-final of the World Cup.

Wolverhampton Wanderers have lost a measure of their devouring powers without Rayan Ait-Nouri and Boubacar Traore , who are bearing arms for Algeria and Mali respectively against their opponents at the AFCON.

2023 AFCON Records in the making



As hostilities resume at the AFCON last Saturday, here are some records that could be broken.

Egypt are the most successful side at the AFCON with seven titles and could extend this record if they emerge champions in Cote d'Ivoire.

Samuel Eto'O of Cameroon holds the record as the all-time top scorer of the AFCON with 18 goals. Andre Ayew of Ghana has scored 10 goals and will have to score nine goals to break that record.

If he does that, he would have equaled Ndaye Mulamba record of scoring nine goals in a single tournament. Mulamba accomplished this feat for then Zaire, now Democratic Republic of Congo, in the 1974 tournament.

The Elephants of Cote d'Ivoire will become the ninth team to host and win the AFCON. Egypt did so in 1959, 1986 and 2006. Ghana won on home soil in 1963 and 1978.

Ethiopia, Sudan, Nigeria, Algeria, South Africa and Tunisia hosted and won the AFCON in 1962, 1970, 1980, 1990, 1996 and 2004 respectively.



SPORTING AMBASSADOR

AUSTRALIAN OPEN: Djokovic, Swiatek Lead the Challenge



By Joseph Jacob

Playing true to their ranking, defending champion Novak Djokovic and Iga Swiatek are the top seeds at the ongoing first Grand Slam tournament of the year, Australian Open.

The men's seeding mirrors the ATP rankings, with 24-time major winner Djokovic followed by Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz, the only player to beat him in a Grand Slam event in 2023.

The women's seeding followed the WTA

rankings from number one to eight, then Barbora Krejcikova is promoted to number nine at Melbourne Park because of the injury-forced absence of her fellow Czech Karolina Muchova, the French Open finalist last year.

Muchova hasn't played since losing to eventual champion Coco Gauff in the US Open semi-finals last September.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova is pregnant and skipping the year's first major,



and last year's US Open semi-finalist Madison Keys has an injured shoulder, taking the players ranked 17th and 18th out of the equation for Australia.

The seeding means that players in the top 32 avoid each other in the early rounds when the bracket are determined for the major tournaments. The top two seeded players cannot meet before the final.

MEN'S SEEDING

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Novak Djokovic. | 21. Ugo Humbert. |
| 2. Carlos Alcaraz | 22. Francisco Cerundolo. |
| 3. Daniil Medvedev | 23. Alejandro Davidovich Fokina. |
| 4. Jannik Sinner. | 24. Jan-Lennard Struff. |
| 5. Andrey Rublev. | 25. Lorenzo Musetti. |
| 6. Alexander Zverev | 26. Sebastian Baez. |
| 7. Stefanos Tsitsipas. | 27. Felix Auger-Aliassime. |
| 8. Holger Rune. | 28. Tallon Griekspoor. |
| 9. Hubert Hurkacz. | 29. Sebastian Korda. |
| 10. Alex De Minaur. | 30. Tomas Martin Etcheverry. |
| 11. Casper Ruud. | 31. Alexander Bublik |
| 12. Taylor Fritz. | 32. Jiri Lehecka. |
| 13. Grigor Dimitrov. | |
| 14. Tommy Paul. | |
| 15. Karen Khachanov. | |
| 16. Ben Shelton. | |
| 17. Frances Tiafoe | |
| 18. Nicolas Jarry. | |
| 19. Cameron Norrie. | |
| 20. Adrian Mannarino. | |

WOMEN'S SEEDING

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Iga Swiatek | 18. Victoria Azarenka. |
| 2. Aryna Sabalenka | 19. Elina Svitolina. |
| 3. Elena Rybakina. | 20. Magda Linette. |
| 4. Coco Gauff. | 21. Donna Vekic. |
| 5. Jessica Pegula. | 22. Sorana Cirstea. |
| 6. Ons Jabeur. | 23. Anastasia Potapova. |
| 7. Marketa Vondrousova. | 24. Anhelina Kalinina. |
| 8. Maria Sakkari | 25. Elise Mertens. |
| 9. Krejcikova. | 26. Jasmine Paolini. |
| 10. Beatriz Haddad Maia. | 27. Emma Navarro. |
| 11. Jelena Ostapenko. | 28. Lesia Tsurenko. |
| 12. Zheng Qinwen. | 29. Zhu Lin. |
| 13. Liudmila Samsonova. | 30. Wang Xinyu. |
| 14. Daria Kasatkina. | 31. Marie Bouzkova. |
| 15. Veronika Kudermetova. | 32. Leylah Fernandez. |
| 16. Caroline Garcia. | |
| 17. Ekaterina Alexandrova. | |

Culled from Associated Press.